
The Effect of Fleeting Attraction on Compliance to Requests

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Three studies examined the effects of fleeting attraction on compliance to a request. Participants in Study 1 who either spoke with a confederate for a few minutes or sat quietly in a room with the confederate were more likely to agree to a request from the confederate than were participants not exposed to these manipulations. Findings from Study 2 replicated the mere exposure effect and argue against alternative interpretations based on priming and mood. Study 3 participants were more likely to agree with a request when led to believe the requester was similar to themselves. The findings support the notion of automatic responding to requests, with individuals reacting to fleeting feelings of attraction as if dealing with friends and long-term acquaintances.

Investigators find support for the commonsense notion that we are more likely to go along with requests from friends than with those from strangers (Cialdini & Trost, 1998; Clark, Ouellette, Powell, & Milberg, 1987; Frenzen & Davis, 1990; Williamson & Clark, 1992). Neighborhood children selling fund-raising candy, coworkers recruiting volunteers to organize an event, and relatives who invite us to Tupperware parties have an advantage over unfamiliar sellers and unacquainted solicitors making the same requests.

But why do we agree to requests from friends more often than when approached by a stranger? Several explanations for this effect can be advanced. First, it is pleasing to do nice things for those we care about. Studies find that agreeing to small requests from friends creates positive feelings (Williamson & Clark, 1992), whereas refusing these requests leads to negative affect and might even endanger the relationship (Williamson, Clark, Pegalis, & Behan, 1996). These reactions are espe-

cially likely in what Clark and Mills (1979) refer to as “communal” relationships, in which individuals are concerned about the needs of the other person. We are more likely to help people with whom we feel a communal relationship than those for whom we have a less intimate relationship (Clark et al., 1987). Another reason we comply with requests from friends is that we may anticipate future exchanges with these people (Frenzen & Davis, 1990). Most people in our society abide by the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960). This social rule maintains, among other things, that favors must be returned. Thus, we may comply with a request from a friend with the understanding that, when needed, we can count on that friend to help us. Finally, it also is possible that the tendency to help friends is influenced by our evolutionary heritage (Caporael, 1997). Evolutionary theorists argue that members of a society are more likely to survive when they help one another than when they act only in terms of self-interest (Wilson & Sober, 1994). Thus, from this perspective, we would expect a tendency to help those with whom we feel some sort of association. In sum, there are many reasons to believe that we are more likely to agree to a request from someone we know and like than from someone we do not know or do not like.

But what about more ephemeral experiences with liking? Are we more likely to buy a car from a friendly sales-

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PSPB, Vol. 27 No. 12, December 2001 1578-1586
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person who appears to be a great person or donate money to a pleasant solicitor who seems like the kind of individual we would like to know better? We propose that even short, fleeting feelings of attraction can lead to an increased likelihood of compliance to a request. These feelings of liking can be very brief and can occur in situations in which the association with the other person is obviously temporary. Nonetheless, we argue that fleeting increases in attraction can lead to significant increases in compliance.

But why might this be the case? Clearly, none of the reasons we comply with friends are present in these short-lived associations. The answer is that people typically do not invest a lot of thought into deciding their response when presented with a request. Investigators find that compliance to simple requests often reflects automatic or heuristic information processing rather than a thoughtful, reasoned consideration of relevant facts (Cialdini, 2001). Face-to-face requests in particular require a quick, somewhat mindless response (Langer, 1989). For example, we often respond to a free gift by donating money or buying a product from the person who gave us that gift (Burger, Horita, Kinoshita, Roberts, & Vera, 1997; Regan, 1971). This is true even if we did not ask for the gift and even if we do not like the gift giver. Rather than consider the obvious manipulation, people typically rely on the well-learned reciprocity principle that says favors must be returned in some form. On the other hand, in some cases, the practiced, automatic response to a request is refusal. Santos, Leve, and Pratkanis (1994) found mindless refusal to a panhandler's request for change was the typical response from passersby. The investigators succeeded in overcoming this mindless response, and thereby increasing the amount of money collected, only when the panhandler asked for an unusual amount (17 cents or 37 cents).

We propose that a similar mindless heuristic comes into play when presented with a request from someone for whom we feel a fleeting amount of attraction. Over the course of a lifetime, most of us come to understand that it is appropriate and rewarding to agree to requests from friends and others with whom we have close relationships. As a result, we rely on a heuristic that says we agree with requests from people we like. When the request comes from a friend, we respond appropriately with little or no thought. However, when the request comes from an individual for whom we have only a fleeting feeling of attraction, we may still apply the heuristic and thereby comply in an automatic fashion to the request. This is the experience we describe when we donate to a solicitor's cause "because he was so nice" or

purchase unnecessary cookies from the Girl Scouts "because they were so cute."

The kind of fleeting attraction that is likely to trigger this automatic response is, of course, different in many ways from the kind of emotional attachment we feel for long-term friends. However, studies demonstrate that people often experience a kind of liking for individuals with whom they share but a short conversation, a plane ride, or a common task. The history of social psychology provides ample examples of experimental manipulations designed to increase these temporary feelings of liking. For example, self-disclosure to and by a randomly assigned partner has been found to increase self-reported levels of attraction in structured laboratory conversations (Collins & Miller, 1994). Similarly, 10-min get-acquainted discussions have been found to produce higher levels of liking toward the discussion partner than toward someone not part of the conversation (Insko & Wilson, 1977). Researchers even find that repeated exposure to a student who sits in the same classroom without direct interaction increases self-reported liking for the unknown student (Moreland & Beach, 1992).

Although we know of no study that has demonstrated increased compliance with fleeting attraction, findings from several investigations are consistent with this notion. For example, we often are attracted to people who share similar values, interests, and personality characteristics (Byrne, 1997). This is true even when we have relatively little information or exposure to the person in question. Consistent with our reasoning, one study found that passersby were more willing to give money to a stranger for a phone call when that stranger was dressed in a manner similar to themselves (Emswiler, Deaux, & Willits, 1971). Other research finds that we tend to like physically attractive people more than less attractive people, at least during initial encounters (Hatfield & Sprecher, 1986). When individuals in one study were asked for donations to a charitable cause, they gave more money to physically attractive requesters than to less attractive requesters (Reingen & Kernan, 1993). Finally, waitresses in one study received higher tips when they used their first names with their customers, something we associate with friends (Garrity & Degelman, 1990).

We conducted three studies to test the hypothesis that small, ephemeral increases in liking toward a stranger will lead to an increased likelihood of complying to a request from that person. To test this prediction, we used procedures previously demonstrated to increase liking in laboratory studies. We then presented participants with a request from the newly attractive individual or

from a stranger. We predicted higher rates of compliance in the liking conditions.

STUDY 1

We manipulated liking in this study two ways. First, investigators find that simply talking to another person increases our attraction to him or her. Insko and Wilson (1977) demonstrated this phenomenon in a study in which three participants were seated in a small room. The three people—identified as Participants A, B, and C—were instructed to engage in get-acquainted conversations. First, A spoke with B while C listened. Then, B spoke with C while A listened. Although Participants A and C heard everything that was said in the room, these two never interacted directly. The researchers found that the participants reported greater liking for the individual they spoke to than for the one they did not. Insko and Wilson explained this increased attraction in terms of unit relationships (Heider, 1958); that is, the interacting participants perceived that they shared a special association that the noninteracting participants did not. Consistent with this explanation, Arkin and Burger (1980) found that strengthening or weakening the perceptual salience of the unit relationship in the three-person discussion situation (such as placing one of the participants out of view) affected the level of liking in the predicted direction.

Second, investigators also find increased liking for an individual with repeated exposure to that person. This “mere exposure” effect appears robust and is not limited to feelings about people (Bornstein, 1989; Harrison, 1977; Zajonc, 1968). Researchers find an increase in liking for people who are frequently seen but not spoken to (Moreland & Beach, 1992; Saegert, Swap, & Zajonc, 1973; Swap, 1977). For example, Saegert et al. (1973) had participants stand next to other participants either 0, 1, 2, 5, or 10 times as they moved about from station to station in what was described as a taste-test experiment. Participants were instructed to not talk or use nonverbal gestures among themselves. Each silent exposure lasted for no more than 40 seconds, yet this was sufficient to increase liking ratings for the individuals for whom the participants had been repeatedly exposed. Interestingly, researchers find that exposure effects work as well and sometimes even better when the individual is not aware that exposure has occurred (Bornstein, 1989).

We manipulated attraction to a stranger either by allowing some participants to talk with the stranger for a few minutes or by having the stranger sit silently in the same room with the participant. We predicted that participants in both of these conditions would be more likely to agree to a subsequent request from the stranger than participants not exposed to these liking manipulations.

Method

Participants. The study consisted of 114 female undergraduates who served as participants in exchange for class credit.

Procedure. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions. After arriving to the study, participants in the interaction condition were seated at a table in the lab room. Approximately 30 seconds later, a female confederate posing as another participant entered the room and was seated across the table from the real participant. The two sat approximately 2 meters apart. The experimenter explained that the study concerned “manual dexterity and cognitive recognition skills.” She then gave each participant a sheet of paper that contained several rows of randomly typed letters. The experimenter explained that they would begin the study with a simple manual dexterity task. She explained that the participants would have 3 minutes to cross out as many of the letters *l*, *k*, and *s* as they could find on the sheet. The experimenter also said that she was running several participants simultaneously and that she would not be in the room during the task. She placed a timer in the middle of the table and instructed the participants to stop when the timer went off. The experimenter then started the participants on the task, started the timer, and left the room. The participant and the confederate worked on the task until the timer went off 3 minutes later, but the experimenter did not return for another 2 minutes. During that time, the confederate, who was blind to the hypotheses, initiated a conversation with the participant. Confederates were instructed to be appropriately friendly but to limit topics to school, classes, and professors. All participants joined in the conversations, which lasted approximately 2 minutes.

After returning, the experimenter explained that the participant and confederate had been part of a control group and that their role in the study was now over. She gave the two credit for their participation and dismissed them. After the participant and confederate left the room and were heading out of the laboratory area, the confederate presented the target request. She explained that her English instructor had required class members to get someone they did not know to critique an essay they had written. The confederate then pulled an essay from her backpack and said, “I wonder if you could read this eight-page essay for me and give me one page of written feedback on whether my arguments are persuasive and why?” The confederate added that she would need the written feedback by approximately this time the following day. After the participant agreed to or declined the request, the experimenter (who had been hiding out of sight) appeared and asked the participant and confederate to return to the lab room with her. The experi-

menter explained that she forgot to debrief them. She then probed for suspiciousness (none was found) and fully debriefed the participant.

Participants assigned to the mere exposure condition went through an identical procedure, except the experimenter instructed the participant and confederate that they were not to talk during the time between the end of the manual dexterity test and when she reentered the room. All participants obeyed these instructions. Thus, the confederate and the participant sat quietly throughout the study and exchanged no words until after they were out of the lab room. Confederates were instructed to spend most of their time looking over the completed test, making appropriate but limited eye contact with the participant. The first words spoken by the confederate to the participant were the target request.

Participants in the control condition took the manual dexterity test alone. As in the other conditions, they stopped when the timer went off and waited 2 minutes for the experimenter to return. As the participant was gathering up her things to leave, the confederate approached the lab room door (presumably from another lab room) and handed the experimenter her credit form to be signed. The experimenter signed the form in full view of the real participant, thanked both the confederate and the participant for their time, then quickly retreated out of view. At this point, the confederate presented the real participant with the target request.

Results and Discussion

We compared the number of participants who agreed to the request in each of the two experimental conditions against the number who complied in the control condition. As expected, participants in the interaction condition (19/39, 48.7%) were more likely to agree to the request than participants in the control condition (10/38, 26.3%), $\chi^2(1, N=77) = 4.11, p < .05, \phi = .23$. Similarly, participants in the mere exposure condition (18/37, 48.6%) were more likely to comply with the request than participants in the control condition, $\chi^2(1, N=75) = 4.00, p < .05, \phi = .23$. The interaction and mere exposure conditions did not differ significantly on this measure.

The findings thus support the notion that small, fleeting increases in liking between strangers can result in an increased tendency to comply with a request. In this study, 2 minutes of small talk with the confederate increased liking sufficiently to nearly double the rate of compliance to the confederate's request. Similarly, consistent with research on mere exposure, simply sitting across the table from the confederate momentarily increased liking enough to significantly increase compliance. We were a little surprised to find that the two liking manipulations were equally effective. That is, consistent

with the unit relationship notion and earlier research that finds increased attraction with interaction, we might have expected that talking with the confederate would lead to greater liking—and thus more compliance—than simply seeing the person across the table. It is possible that we hit an upper limit on the number of people who would go along with the request, regardless of the strength of the liking manipulation. However, we were not interested in the relative strength of the two liking manipulations but rather whether either or both of these would increase compliance relative to the control condition.

STUDY 2

The findings from Study 1 suggest that carrying on a short conversation or simply sitting in the same room with someone significantly increases compliance to a simple request from that other individual. We argue that this effect can be best explained in terms of fleeting feelings of attraction that trigger the use of heuristic information processing. However, it also is possible that other aspects of the situation used in the first study contributed to the increase in compliance. For example, engaging in conversation or being in the presence of others may have focused the participants' attention on social interactions. Another way to say this is that information about social interactions may have been primed by the experience, thus making thoughts about social interactions more accessible for these participants. This process is similar to that demonstrated in numerous investigations on automatic activation and nonconscious processing (Bargh, 1989; Bargh & Chartrand, 1999; Higgins, 1996). As a result of this increased accessibility of social information, it is possible that the participants in the interaction and mere exposure conditions more readily responded to the social request. This interpretation is not entirely inconsistent with our automatic processing explanation for the Study 1 findings. However, we argue that temporary feelings of attraction, rather than merely being in a social setting, trigger the automatic response.

Another possibility is that the conversation or mere exposure situation used in the first study altered the participants' moods. That is, because we typically find social interactions pleasant and solitude unpleasant (Larson, 1990), it is possible that participants in the two experimental conditions were in a more positive mood than the participants who sat in the room alone. Past studies have found a positive relation between good mood and helping behavior (Isen, Shalcker, Clark, & Karp, 1978). Thus, at this point, we cannot rule out the possibility that the participants' mood was responsible for the higher rates of compliance in the two experimental conditions in Study 1.

Study 2 was designed to rule out these two alternative accounts for the effect uncovered in the first study. Specifically, we replicated the mere exposure condition and the control condition used in Study 1. We also included a condition similar to the mere exposure condition in which participants sat in a room without conversation. However, in this latter condition, the request was presented to participants by someone other than the individual to whom the participants were exposed. If fleeting feelings of attraction were responsible for the Study 1 results, then we should see increased compliance with mere exposure only when the request comes from the person who was actually in the room with the participant. If either of the alternative explanations are correct—priming social interaction information or mood—then the presence of the confederate should increase compliance regardless of who presents the request.

Method

Participants. The study consisted of 120 female undergraduates who served as participants in exchange for class credit.

Procedure. Female experimenters were used for all conditions. Participants were randomly assigned to three conditions. The mere exposure–same condition was identical to the mere exposure condition used in the first study. The control condition also was identical to the comparable condition in Study 1. The mere exposure–different condition was identical to the mere exposure–same condition with the following exceptions. As in the control condition, the experimenter gave the impression that she was conducting simultaneous experimental sessions. After the experimenter announced the study was over, the participant and the confederate who had been in the room with the participant were joined by another confederate who presumably had been part of the study but working in another room. The experimenter gave the three individuals experimental credit, always signing the credit form for the confederate who had been in the participant’s room first. That confederate quickly left the setting while the experimenter signed the credit form for the confederate who presumably had been in another room. The real participant always had her credit form signed last so that the experimenter could leave the participant and the remaining confederate together. At that point, the confederate presented the request. As in Study 1, no participants expressed suspicion when asked and all were debriefed at the end of the study.

Results and Discussion

We examined the number of people who agreed to the request in each condition. Participants in the mere exposure–same condition (22/40, 55.0%) agreed to the

request significantly more often than did participants in the control condition (8/40, 20.0%), $\chi^2(1, N = 80) = 9.01, p < .004, \phi = .34$, thus replicating the findings from the first study. More important, the mere exposure–same participants complied with the request more often than did participants in the mere exposure–different condition (9/40, 22.5%), $\chi^2(1, N = 80) = 7.58, p < .007, \phi = .31$. The mere exposure–different and control conditions did not differ significantly.

The findings provide additional support for the notion that small, ephemeral increases in liking can lead to a significant increase in compliance. As in Study 1, participants who were simply exposed to another person for several minutes were more likely to comply with a request from that person than a request from someone they had not seen before. More important, the findings from the second study argue against alternative explanations for the effect uncovered in Study 1. Although it is possible that participants in the two-person conditions were better able to process social information or were in a different mood than participants who sat in the room alone, these reactions did not appear to affect compliance behavior in this study. Increased compliance was found only when the person to whom the participant was exposed asked the request. When the request came from someone for whom the participant had no exposure and thus no increased liking, she was no more likely to agree to the request than were participants in the control condition.

STUDY 3

The purpose of the third study was twofold. First, we wanted to replicate the liking–compliance effect produced in Studies 1 and 2 using another type of liking manipulation. In this way, we hoped to demonstrate a consistent pattern of results that could not be attributed to some unique feature of the procedures used in the first two studies. Second, we wanted to include a manipulation check measure to ensure that we were indeed manipulating liking. Directly assessing liking was not possible in the earlier studies without raising suspicions about the true nature of the investigation. Therefore, we developed a procedure that would provide us with a measure of liking without alerting participants to the hypothesis.

We manipulated liking in Study 3 by altering the degree of perceived similarity between the participant and the confederate who presents the request. Numerous investigations have found an increase in liking with perceived similarity (Byrne, 1971, 1997; Smeaton, Byrne, & Murnen, 1989). Although a variety of methods have been used to manipulate perceived similarity in attitudes, personality, values, and so forth, many researchers have produced increased liking simply by providing false

information about the other individual in a laboratory setting (Byrne, 1997). Thus, we also used a false information procedure to manipulate degree of liking. We predicted an increase in liking and subsequently greater compliance with an increase in perceived similarity of personalities.

Method

Participants. The study consisted of 90 female undergraduates who served as participants in exchange for class credit.

Procedure. Participants arrived at the experimental room alone. The experimenter explained that the study was concerned with first impressions. She explained that the participant and another female participant waiting in a nearby lab room would exchange information about themselves and form first impressions of one another. The two participants were being kept apart supposedly to control for the effects of physical appearance. The experimenter then handed the participant a questionnaire containing 50 adjectives. The participant was instructed to read over the adjectives and indicate the 20 that described her best. The experimenter explained that she would give the other participant the same questionnaire and that a little later the two participants would see each other's responses. The experimenter then left the room, presumably to administer the questionnaire to the other participant.

When completed, the experimenter collected the questionnaire, supposedly to give to the other participant. Once she left the room, the experimenter checked a list that randomly assigned participants to one of three conditions. She then quickly filled out a blank adjective checklist. If the participant was assigned to the similar condition, the responses on this new checklist indicated that 17 of the 20 adjectives selected by the "other" participant were identical to those the real participant used to describe herself. Questionnaire responses for participants in the dissimilar condition indicated that the other individual selected only 3 of 20 items that matched those of the real participant. Finally, if participants were assigned to the neutral condition, the experimenter selected items to indicate that the other participants' self-descriptive adjectives matched on 10 of 20 items.

The experimenter allowed the real participant about 2 minutes to study the "other participant's" questionnaire. She then administered a final questionnaire supposedly to assess first impressions. Participants answered several questions about the confederate on 7-point scales. The last three items on this questionnaire were designed to measure the participant's degree of liking for the confederate. These three questions were as follows: Do you think you would like this person if you got to know her better? Would you enjoy time spent with this

TABLE 1: Liking Scores and Compliance Rates—Study 3

	Liking	Compliance
Similar condition	17.93	23/30 (76.7%)
Neutral condition	16.63	18/30 (60.0%)
Dissimilar condition	15.23	13/30 (43.3%)

person? and Do you think you could be long-term friends with this person?

The experimenter collected the completed questionnaire and, as in the previous two studies, brought the real participant and a confederate playing the other participant together to give each credit. The experimenter then quickly excused herself, leaving the participant and the confederate alone to exit the laboratory setting. At this point, the confederate presented the same request used in the earlier studies. After responding to the request, the experimenter probed for suspicion (none was found) and debriefed the participants.

Results and Discussion

Responses to the three liking items on the second questionnaire were highly correlated (r s between .64 and .79). Thus, we summed the three response values to form an overall liking measure ($\alpha = .87$, $M = 16.6$, $SD = 2.96$). As shown in Table 1, the mean liking score differed significantly across the three conditions, $F(2, 87) = 7.12$, $p < .001$. Specific cell comparisons revealed a significant difference between the similar and dissimilar condition, $p < .001$, Tukey's honestly significant difference (HSD) test. The difference between the neutral condition and the similar and dissimilar conditions fell short of statistical significance, $p < .17$ and $p < .13$, respectively. Thus, the manipulation appears to have been successful.

Next, we compared the number of participants who agreed to the request in each condition. When each of the specific conditions was compared against the others, only the similar and dissimilar conditions were significantly different, $\chi^2(1, N = 60) = 6.94$, $p < .008$, $\phi = .34$.

Although the pattern in the data reported in Table 1 conforms nicely with our expectations, it is easier to interpret the results if we compare only the similar and dissimilar conditions for the moment. Consistent with past research findings, participants who thought the person in the other room was similar to themselves held greater liking for that person than when they thought they had little in common with that individual. More important, these participants also were more likely to agree to a request from that person than when they thought the person was dissimilar.

Finally, we used a series of regression analyses to look for evidence that the relationship between similarity and compliance is mediated by liking. As described by Baron

and Kenny (1986), mediation or partial mediation would be demonstrated in this study when each of the following relationships is found: (a) similarity (condition) is related to liking, (b) liking is related to compliance, and (c) a previously significant relation between similarity and compliance is no longer significant when the mediator variable (liking) is included in the analysis. Partial mediation is indicated if this relation is reduced but remains significant when the mediator variable is included. Because the strongest evidence for our hypothesis was found when comparing the similar and dissimilar conditions, we used only these two conditions in the mediation analyses.

The first necessary relationship—between similarity and liking—has already been presented. Participants in the similarity condition reported significantly higher liking than those in the dissimilar condition. Because the dependent variable in our study was a dichotomous variable, we used a series of logistic regressions to demonstrate the remaining relationships. The key statistic when examining mediation with logistic regression is the chi-square value. When we used liking to predict compliance—the second necessary relationship—we produced a significant chi-square value of 4.11 ($p < .05$). Finally, when predicting compliance from similarity without the liking score entered into the analysis, we obtain a chi-square of 7.11 ($p < .008$). However, when we entered the liking score into the regression equation first, the chi-square statistic for this relationship dropped to 5.28 ($p < .03$). The results of the logistic regressions thus suggest partial, but not full, mediation.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

In each of three studies, we found that small manipulations that intended to increase fleeting feelings of attraction resulted in increased levels of compliance with a request from the liked individual. Three procedures often used by social psychologists to increase liking—interaction, mere exposure, and perceived similarity—produced the effect. The findings are consistent with a general description of compliance behavior that emphasizes automatic processing over reasoned, thoughtful responding to requests (Cialdini, 2001). It appears that most people reply quickly and mindlessly to requests for small favors and purchases, relying on heuristics to determine if they should or should not go along with the request. Indeed, most of the explanations proposed for the effectiveness of the sequential-request compliance procedures (e.g., foot-in-the-door, door-in-the-face) assume that individuals are unaware of why they respond the way they do (Burger, 1999; Cialdini, 2001). In our studies, participants appeared to rely on a heuristic that says, “I go along with requests from friends and people I like.” We argue that the heuristic was acti-

vated by the presence of fleeting feelings of liking toward the confederates. A thoughtful analysis of the request and situation probably would have led participants to realize that their feelings of attraction were fleeting and that the reasons they typically help friends were not present. However, because they relied on the simple heuristic, participants in the liking conditions complied with the request almost as if they had been asked by a friend.

We also need to acknowledge some of the limitations and unanswered questions about the research reported here. To avoid practical complications arising from women asking men for favors, we used only female participants and female requesters in our investigations. Although we have no reason to expect the effect would not also be found with men, the question of gender differences remains open. Another concern has to do with the possibility of experimenter bias; that is, although confederates were kept blind to hypotheses in Studies 1 and 2, we cannot rule out that they nonetheless suspected the hypotheses and inadvertently altered the way they delivered the request in some conditions. Arguing against this possibility is the finding that the interaction and mere exposure conditions did not differ in their rates of compliance. If our confederates suspected any hypothesis, most likely they would have guessed that interaction would lead to greater compliance than noninteraction. Finally, Study 3 confederates did not know which condition the participant was in and thus could not have altered their behavior according to condition. Nonetheless, the relation between liking and compliance was demonstrated in this study.

Another set of questions concerns unanticipated participant reactions to the liking manipulation in the first two studies. For example, it is possible that the brief encounter with participants in Studies 1 and 2 did more than create a fleeting feeling of attraction. The short encounter with the confederate also might have generated an increased sense of trust. If that were the case, participants in these conditions may have agreed to the request more often because they trusted the confederate and felt more assured that the request was a valid one. Arguing against this interpretation is the fact that none of the participants voiced any suspicion about the request and its validity during the debriefing.

The manipulation of liking in Study 3 also raises some questions. First, it is possible that participants described themselves with flattering adjectives on the checklist. If that were the case, then the adjectives used to describe the confederate would have been more desirable in the similar condition than in the other two conditions. Therefore, one might argue that participants liked the confederate because she possessed desirable characteristics, not because she was similar. Although future studies are needed to tease out the answer to this question,

we should note that we are concerned here with the effects of fleeting feelings of liking regardless of their source. Another concern about the Study 3 procedures has to do with the possibility that we primed cognitions related to attraction when we asked participants how much they liked the confederate and that such priming could have had an effect on compliance rates. Although this is a possibility, because participants answered these questions in each condition, we cannot attribute the differences among conditions to possible priming.

Finally, there is some disagreement about whether participants in similarity-attraction studies are attracted to similar people or reject dissimilar people (Byrne, Clore, & Smeaton, 1986; Rosenbaum, 1986); that is, although we argue that similarity leads to attraction, we cannot rule out that our effects are due to an increased dislike of the confederate in the dissimilar condition in Study 3. Of course, this concern does not apply to the findings from the first two studies, in which there is no dislike condition and no reason to suspect that control condition participants disliked the confederate. Nonetheless, if future studies demonstrate that dissimilarity leads to a decrease in liking and thus a decrease in compliance, we might have to expand our notion of fleeting attraction to include fleeting repulsion.

We also can identify some issues that might be explored in future investigations. One of these issues concerns the size of the request. It is reasonable to speculate that people are more likely to respond in a mindless fashion to a small request than a large request; that is, at some point the request is so costly that the individual will be forced to consider it carefully before responding. One can only determine where mindlessness ends and mindfulness begins empirically. However, it is interesting that the request used in our studies—writing a page of criticism—was not trivial yet apparently was not sufficient to shake our participants out of heuristic processing. Another issue worth exploring is the relationship between similarity, familiarity, and what we call fleeting attraction. Investigators find that these concepts are highly related and may combine to form a psychological connection called affinity (Moreland & Beach, 1992; Moreland & Zajonc, 1982). We have been operating on the assumption that familiarity (Studies 1 and 2) and similarity (Study 3) lead to feelings of liking. However, further examination into how these concepts affect one another might prove useful.

Our final observations have to do with some of the broader implications of the research. Our description of the mindless manner in which individuals respond to requests is consistent with other social psychological models that assume people often rely on relatively effortless shortcuts when processing information (Chaiken &

Trope, 1999; Smith & DeCoster, 2000). In most cases, relying on heuristics allows us to proceed through life smoothly and efficiently. Automatically agreeing to requests from people we like probably works well in most cases. Unfortunately, this type of mindless responding also makes us vulnerable to those who understand how to exploit these tendencies (Cialdini, 2001). This observation leads to our final point, that our results have obvious practical applications. To those interested in sales, recruiting, and the like, the findings suggest yet another way to increase agreement to requests. Any action that makes the requester appear to be a likable person may trigger the liking-compliance heuristic described here. Thus, in the hands of a clever salesperson, a hearty smile, a friendly conversation, or some similarity in appearance or background can become a very valuable tool.

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June 2, 2000

November 15, 2000