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Effects of a Favor and Liking on Compliance[1]

DENNIS T. REGAN
Cornell University

A laboratory experiment was conducted to examine the effects of a favor and of liking on compliance with a request for assistance from a confederate. Liking for the confederate was manipulated, and male subjects then received a soft drink from the confederate, from the experimenter, or received no favor. Compliance with the confederate's request to purchase some raffle tickets was measured, as was liking for the confederate. The results showed that the favor increased liking for the confederate and compliance with his request, but the effect of manipulated liking was weak. Detailed ratings of the confederate as well as correlational data suggested that the relationship between favors and compliance is mediated, not by liking for the favor-doer, but by normative pressure to reciprocate.

Will receiving a favor make a person more likely to comply with a request from the favor-doer? Do favors lead to liking? If favors do increase both liking and compliance, do they increase compliance *because* they increase liking, or for some other reason? The experiment described below was designed to try to answer these questions.

The questions are of both practical and theoretical importance. They are of practical importance because there are many situations where we want compliance or assistance from another person, but either do not have or choose not to use the resources which would put a large amount of pressure on him. In such situations, a favor might be a practicable technique for increasing compliance. The questions are of theoretical importance because there are at least two major and distinct theoretical orientations which predict a positive relationship between favors and compliance. It would be worthwhile both to see whether

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such a relationship obtains, and which approach can more satisfactorily account for it.

One reason why a favor should be effective can be derived from the theorizing of Homans (1961) and Adams (1965) on the problem of distributive justice or equity. They have argued that relations among men can be seen as involving principles of exchange, and that one of the crucial factors to each of the parties in a relationship is his perception of his rewards and costs relative to those of the other person. Within this framework, if A does a favor for B, then A's costs go up while B's rewards go up. This temporarily establishes a situation of inequity in their relationship—A's costs have increased but not his rewards, while B's rewards have increased but not his costs. B can restore equity by increasing A's rewards at some cost to himself. The desire to restore equity, or to comply with the "norm of reciprocity" (Gouldner, 1960), could lead to a greater tendency on the part of the recipient to comply with a request made by a favor-doer. And there is some evidence that favors do generate feelings of obligation and the desire to reciprocate (Goranson & Berkowitz, 1966), although these self-reports are not always correlated with subjects' actual behavior toward the favor-doer (Brehm & Cole, 1966).

If we now consider the feelings the recipient is likely to have toward the favor-doer, we find another reason for predicting a relationship between favors and compliance. The favor might cause the recipient to like or be attracted to the favor-doer, and this attraction could make him more compliant with the favor-doer's request. Jones (1964) discusses the possibility that a favor might be a form of ingratiation, the form he labels "favorable self-presentation." A person who does a favor shows the recipient that he is a kind, thoughtful and generous man. Furthermore, the fact that A takes the trouble to do a favor for B might provide B with information that A has affection for him (Heider, 1958). There is evidence that we tend to like those who have communicated that they like us (Aronson & Linder, 1965; Newcomb, 1956, 1961), and surely we prefer those whom we consider thoughtful and generous. But despite these theoretical considerations and a finding by Nemeth (1970) that a voluntarily helping confederate is liked slightly more than one who helps on the experimenter's orders, the literature on the whole does not support the notion that people tend to like a favor-doer (Brehm & Cole, 1966; Lerner & Lichtman, 1968; Schopler & Thompson, 1968).

Moreover, showing that favors lead to attraction to the favor-doer is just the first of two propositions it is necessary to demonstrate before we can be confident that there is an attraction-mediated association between

favors and compliance. We must also show that a person is more likely to comply with a request, the more he likes the person making it. To provide strong support for this relationship, it is crucial to manipulate liking directly and assess its effects on compliance. It is not, for example, sufficient to show that a favor leads both to greater liking for the favor-doer and to greater compliance with his request, since it is possible that a favor produces greater compliance for reasons, such as the reciprocity norm, which are independent of its effect on liking.

The evidence regarding a positive relationship between liking and compliance is meager. Studies where both liking and compliance have been measured and correlations between the two have been computed have tended to indicate either no relationship (e.g., Nemeth, 1970) or relationships difficult to interpret (Schopler & Thompson, 1968). Few studies have manipulated liking directly and investigated its effects on compliance. A study by Daniels and Berkowitz (1963), in which subjects worked harder for a supervisor whom they expected to like than for one whom they expected to dislike, is consistent with the view that liking may cause compliance.

To summarize the literature on the relationships among favors, liking, and compliance, the available data suggest that a favor can lead to reported feelings of obligation on the part of its recipient. There is not convincing evidence that a favor will lead to greater liking for a favor-doer, and there is almost no evidence relevant to a relationship between manipulated liking and compliance. Correlational evidence tends not to support such a relationship.

Accordingly, an experiment was designed to investigate both the effects of a favor and of liking on compliance with a request. An attempt was made to differentiate among possible mechanisms mediating any effect of the favor on compliance. Both factors—favor and liking—were manipulated directly. The hypotheses were:

(1) Subjects are more likely to comply with a request made by someone who has done them a favor than by someone who has not. This prediction is clearly derivable from the social exchange notions discussed above involving the desire to reciprocate or reestablish equity. The relationship could also be mediated by liking for the favor-doer, if the favor produces increased liking.

(2) Subjects are more likely to comply with a request made by someone they like than by someone they do not like. This prediction, combined with an observed effect of the favor on liking for the favor-doer, is crucial for the liking interpretation of a link between a favor and compliance.

METHOD

Overview of the Design

There were six conditions in this experiment, in a 3×2 factorial design involving three favor treatments and two levels of liking. Liking was manipulated by having half the subjects see the confederate behave pleasantly and reasonably, while the other half saw him behave in an unpleasant, rather nasty manner. One third of the subjects were subsequently given a soft drink by this confederate; another third were given a soft drink by the experimenter; the rest of the subjects did not receive a favor. Later in the experiment, all subjects were asked by the confederate to purchase some raffle tickets. The number of tickets purchased was the measure of the subject's compliance. Finally, all subjects' attitudes toward the confederate were measured.

Subjects

Subjects were 81 freshman males of Stanford University. They were recruited in their dormitory rooms, and were offered $1.75 for participation in an experiment on "aesthetics." Subjects were randomly assigned to the six experimental conditions, with no restrictions to assure exactly equivalent cell *N*'s.

Procedure

When the subject arrived, a secretary asked him to be seated and to wait for the experiment to begin. In a few minues she left on an errand, and the confederate arrived, sat near the subject and began reading a book. Soon thereafter the telephone on the secretary's desk rang, and after five or six rings the confederate answered it.

Liking manipulation. The caller was the secretary, who after referring to a random number table, told the confederate whether to behave pleasantly or unpleasantly. Neither the secretary nor the confederate knew, until the call was placed, what condition the subject had been assigned to. In both liking conditions, the confederate's comments clearly indicated to the subject that the call was intended for the secretary.

In the *Pleasant* condition, the confederate handled the call in a normal, reasonably polite way. He said that he was sorry, but he didn't work in the building and had no knowledge of the secretary's whereabouts. He said that if the caller were to try again a bit later, perhaps the secretary might have returned.

In the *Unpleasant* condition, on the other hand, the confederate attempted to behave in a rude and thoroughly unpleasant way. He said, "Nah, there's no secretary here. . .Look, I don't work here, lady, for chrissake. . .Just call later. . . ." He finally hung up without saying goodbye, clearly in the middle of the caller's conversation.

This method of manipulating liking—varying the perceived pleasantness of the confederate in an interaction with another person—was chosen because it did not directly affect the subject's rewards or costs. Had the confederate's behavior been directed toward the subject, it would be possible to explain any effect of the liking manipulation in terms of the same equity or reciprocity notions we have applied to the favor.

After about a minute and a half, the experimenter appeared and ushered the subject and the confederate into the experimental rooms. He was unable to hear the telephone conversation, and thus remained blind about the liking condition until

the experiment was terminated. The subject and confederate were seated at desks in adjoining rooms, positioned so that they could not see each other but could communicate vocally. The experimenter delivered instructions from the connecting doorway, and paid the subjects in advance.[2]

In a rather lengthy introduction, the experimenter explained that he was studying the characteristics of paintings and of the people who look at them that provide for aesthetic enjoyment. The subjects would be looking at and evaluating reproductions of paintings, and would also provide information about their mood states and aesthetic backgrounds. The first task was to look at one of two sets of reproductions on the subject's desk, and to answer four questions about each painting.

The first rating task took about 5 min. After collecting the rating forms, the experimenter announced a brief pause in the experiment. The confederate then asked if it was all right to leave for a minute, the experimenter gave his assent, and shortly thereafter the experimenter also left the room. The subject was left alone for about 2 min.

Favor manipulation. When the confederate left the experimental rooms, he drew a card which he had not previously seen from his pocket. This card assigned the subject to one of the three favor conditions.

In the *Favor* condition, the confederate returned to the experimental rooms with two Coca Colas. As he entered, he said to the subject: "I asked him (the experimenter) if I could go get myself a Coke, and he said it was OK, so I bought one for you, too." He handed the subject a Coke, and returned to his desk. He refused payment if it was offered; it very seldom was. About 40 sec later, the experimenter returned to resume the experiment.

In the *No Favor* condition, the confederate simply returned to the experimental room after 2 min and sat at his desk, and the experimenter returned 40 sec later to continue the experiment. In this control condition, the subject received nothing from the confederate.

Differences in later compliance between the Favor and No Favor conditions could be due to a general effect of the favor, such as an improved mood, general gratitude, or modeled generosity, rather than to feelings of obligation or liking directly specifically toward the favor-doer. To check for the possibility of such a general favor effect, it was decided to include a control group where the experimenter, rather than the confederate, would give the subject a Coke. In this *Irrelevant Favor* condition, the confederate returned empty-handed to the experimental rooms. Forty seconds later the experimenter entered holding the drinks, and said: "We try to keep things reasonably pleasant in the experiment, so I brought you guys a Coke." He gave a Coke to the subject and the other to the confederate. Thus, subjects in the *Irrelevant Favor* condition received a favor, but not from the person who would later ask them to comply with a request.

When the favor manipulation was completed, the experimenter said that it was time to rate the second set of paintings. After approximately 5 min, he collected the ratings and both sets of reproductions. He then said that there would be a rest pause before continuing, and that while he was gone it was most important that the subjects not talk, since each would be rating the set of paintings previously rated by the other. As he turned to leave the room, the confederate asked from his desk: "If we can't talk at all, is it OK if I give him a note that doesn't have anything to

[2] The reason for this early payment, as will be clear later, was to provide the subject with means to comply with the request the confederate would make of him.

do with the experiment?" The experimenter said this was all right, "but please don't talk at all," and left the room.

Compliance measure. At this point, the confederate ripped a sheet of paper from his notebook and wrote the following:

Would you do me a favor? I'm selling raffle tickets for my high school back home to build a new gym. The tickets cost 25¢ each and the prize is a new Corvette. The thing is, if I sell the most tickets I get 50 bucks and I could use it. If you'd buy any, would you just write the number on this note and give it back to me right away so I can make out the tickets? Any would help, the more the better. Thanks.

When he finished writing the note, the confederate brought it to the subject's desk, deposited it there, and returned to his room. This note procedure was used rather than a direct verbal request because at this point the confederate was not blind as to the subject's condition, and might have been able to bias the results if he spoke directly to the subject. It was felt that this was less likely using a note, although slight opportunities for bias possibly did remain.

Liking measures. After 5 min the experimenter returned to the experimental rooms. Upon entering, he announced that before beginning the second half of the experiment he wanted the subjects to fill out "a few questionnaires designed to test some of our hypotheses." He then handed them a two-page Self-report Inventory. Embedded in the 10-item inventory, ostensibly a check on whether past experiences with art and present mood state might be affecting ratings of the paintings, was one question which attempted to measure the subject's liking for the confederate: "How do you feel toward the other subject?" The subject answered by drawing a vertical line through the appropriate point on the 102-mm answer scale, labeled at the extremes "somewhat negative" and "very positive."

Finally, the subjects were given a two-page semantic differential. On the first page, the subject rated "the other student taking part in the experiment" on each of 10 evaluative bipolar adjective scales. On the second page, he rated "the typical college student" on the same 10 dimensions. (For a previous use of this technique, see Lerner & Lichtman, 1968.) This measure was intended in part as a manipulation check. For example, subjects rated the confederate's generosity and his politeness—two characteristics which should have been related to the favor and liking manipulations, respectively. The 10 scales summed together, with the rating of the typical student subtracted from the rating of the other student in the experiment, also provide an additional overall indication of the subject's liking for the confederate. However, the main measure of liking remains the Self-report Inventory. This is because the semantic differential was less subtle and less convincing as a legitimate instrument in an experiment on aesthetics. Some subjects, during postexperimental de-briefing, said that they began to be suspicious when they were asked to rate "the other subject" in such detail; none indicated suspicion of the single item in the Self-report Inventory.

When the semantic differential was completed, the experimenter excused the confederate, and the subject was questioned about his attitudes toward the experiment and toward the confederate. He received a detailed explanation of the hypotheses and the reasons for the deception, was returned any money he might have paid for raffle tickets, and was pledged to secrecy.

RESULTS

The data from 4 of the 81 subjects were not included in the analysis. One of these subjects refused the favor, another answered the telephone

TABLE 1
MEAN NUMBER OF TICKETS BOUGHT FROM CONFEDERATE

Liking condition	Favor condition: Favor	Favor condition: Irrelevant favor	Favor condition: No favor
Pleasant confederate	1.91 ($N = 11$)	1.50 ($N = 10$)	1.00 ($N = 16$)
Unpleasant confederate	1.60 ($N = 15$)	0.80 ($N = 15$)	0.80 ($N = 10$)

and was therefore not exposed to the liking manipulation, a third was extremely suspicious and answered the confederate's note with a joke, and the fourth was not a student. Of the remaining 77 subjects, all but 2 bought between zero and three raffle tickets; the other 2 spent their entire $1.75, purchasing seven raffle tickets. Because of the skewed nature of the distribution and since these two subjects seemed to choose seven tickets because that was the number of tickets that could be bought with their experimental wages, the two sevens were scored as four. None of the conclusions from the experiment are altered if the data are analyzed with these two scores untransformed.

The major hypothesis of this study was that a favor would increase compliance with a request. The mean number of raffle tickets purchased from the confederate is given in Table 1, and an unweighted means analysis of variance (Winer, 1962) is presented in Table 2. The favor manipulation had a very strong effect on compliance. A mean of 1.73 tickets was purchased in the Favor condition, compared with 1.08 in the Irrelevant Favor condition ($t = 2.28$, $p < .05$) and 0.92 in the No Favor condition ($t = 3.11$, $p < .01$).[3] A contrast between the Favor condition and the two control conditions yields an F of 9.86, significant at better than the .01 level. There was no difference between the two control conditions.

Another way of looking at the effect of the favor on compliance is to divide subjects as closely as possible to the median, into those who

TABLE 2
ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF COMPLIANCE SCORES

Source	*df*	*SS*	*MS*	*F*
Pleasantness of confederate	1	3.00	3.00	3.38
Favor level	2	9.52	4.76	5.36*
Pleasantness × Favor	2	0.07	0.03	<1
Within cell	71	63.01	0.89	

* $p < .01$.

[3] All statistical tests are two-tailed.

TABLE 3
MEAN LIKING FOR THE CONFEDERATE ON THE SELF-REPORT INVENTORY

Liking condition	Favor condition: Favor	Irrelevant favor	No favor
Pleasant confederate	69.09 ($N = 11$)	49.90 ($N = 10$)	55.81 ($N = 16$)
Unpleasant confederate	60.80 ($N = 15$)	49.00 ($N = 15$)	44.30 ($N = 10$)

refused to buy a ticket or bought only one ticket (64%), versus those who bought two or more tickets (36%). Here we see that the favor more than doubled the proportion of the subjects buying more than a single ticket, raising this proportion from 25% in the two control conditions to 58% in the Favor condition. Again we find that significantly more tickets were bought in the Favor condition than in either the Irrelevant Favor condition ($\chi^2 = 4.06$, $p < .05$) or the No Favor condition ($\chi^2 = 3.86$, $p < .05$). Once more the two control conditions did not differ.

These data strongly indicate that people are more likely to comply with a request made by someone who has done them a favor than by someone who has not. The lack of any difference in compliance between subjects who received no favor and those who received a favor from someone other than the requester allows us to reject the notion that simply receiving the soft drink might lead to greater compliance.

The second hypothesis was that people would be more likely to comply with a request made by someone they like than by someone they do not like. Before examining the data on this hypothesis, it is appropriate to see whether the liking manipulation was successful in affecting subjects' feelings toward the confederate. Table 3 presents cell means and Table 4 the analysis of variance on the answers to the relevant question in the Self-report Inventory. The higher the mean, the more the confederate was liked. We can see that the liking manipulation was successful ($F(1,71) = 4.04$, $p < .05$), although the effect was not

TABLE 4
ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF LIKING SCORES

Source	*df*	*SS*	*MS*	*F*
Pleasantness of confederate	1	880.46	880.46	4.04*
Favor level	2	3797.65	1898.82	8.71**
Pleasantness × favor	2	364.88	182.44	<1
Within cell	71	15470.75	217.90	

* $p < .05$.
** $p < .01$.

very strong. In addition the favor manipulation had a powerful effect on this measure of attraction to the confederate. A contrast between the Favor condition and the two controls yields an F of 17.41 ($df = 1,71$, $p < .001$). The same pattern emerges from the ratings of the confederate on the 10-item semantic differential, where both the liking manipulation ($F(1,71) = 10.34$, $p < .01$) and the favor ($F(1,71) = 19.04$, $p < .001$) significantly affected liking in the predicted direction.

The two measures of liking for the confederate, then, indicate that the liking manipulation had a significant, although weak, effect on attraction. We may now return to Tables 1 and 2 to see whether manipulated liking affected compliance with the request. Although in all three favor treatments the mean compliance score in the Pleasant condition was higher than in the Unpleasant condition, the overall difference between the two pleasantness conditions did not reach an acceptable level of significance ($F(1,71) = 3.38$, $p < .10$). Dividing subjects in the Pleasant and Unpleasant conditions at the median, into those who bought no tickets or one ticket, versus those who bought two or more, there is again no more than a suggestion that the liking manipulation might be having a very slight effect on compliance. Of the subjects in the Pleasant condition 46% bought more than one ticket, compared with 28% in the Unpleasant condition ($\chi^2 = 2.08$, $p < .20$, n.s.).

To summarize, the results indicate that a favor will strongly increase compliance with a request. In addition, a favor-doer is better liked than a person who has not done a favor. But manipulated differences in liking in this experiment did not reliably affect compliance.

DISCUSSION

The simplest interpretation of the results is that the favor affects compliance not because it makes the recipient more attracted to the favor-doer—although the favor does indeed have this effect—but because the recipient feels obligated to reciprocate the favor. Nevertheless, caution should be exercised in interpreting the failure of our liking manipulation to affect compliance.

In the first place, the liking manipulation was weak. In fact, its effect on attraction as measured by the single item on the Self-report Inventory ($F(1,71) = 4.04$, $p < .05$) is not much stronger than its effect on compliance ($F(1,71) = 3.38$, $p < .10$). Given the weakness of the liking manipulation, it is perhaps not surprising that it had only a borderline effect on compliance. It would not be warranted to conclude, on the basis of the manipulation used in this study, that liking does not generally affect compliance.

In addition, the nature of the liking manipulation itself bears scrutiny.

It will be remembered that in the Pleasant condition the confederate simply answered the phone in a normal, reasonably polite manner. There is no reason to think that this brief, innocuous conversation increased the subject's liking for the confederate. In the Unpleasant condition, on the other hand, the confederate's behavior was nasty, and possibly seen by the subject as threating and aggressive. Our procedure really was more of a disliking than a liking manipulation. Even though they like him less, people might be *more* compliant with someone they think is aggressive. Perhaps they fear that unless they comply he will behave aggressively toward them. A procedure which created a liking difference without portraying the confederate in one condition as unpleasant or aggressive might lead to a reliable difference in compliance.

Despite these qualifications about the generality of a lack of relationship between liking and compliance, there is additional evidence that the favor affected compliance primarily because of feelings of obligation, rather than liking, created in the recipient. If we look at the correlation between reported liking and compliance, we find a significant relationship for all subjects combined ($r = .43$, $p < .01$) as well as for control subjects who did not receive a favor from the confederate ($r = .46$, $p < .01$). But in the combined Favor conditions, $r = .14$, n.s. There is no significant relationship between measured liking and compliance when a subject has received a favor. Why should there be a significant relationship between liking and compliance when no favor has been received, but no such relationship in the Favor conditions?

One plausible reason can be derived from both dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957) and Bem's self-perception theory (Bem, 1967). In the Favor condition, the subject has an excellent justification for having complied with the confederate's request: compliance was demanded by the reciprocity norm. Compliance in this condition should thus produce little dissonance, and should not lead the subject to reevaluate his attitudes toward the confederate in order to explain or justify his compliance. In the control conditions, on the other hand, compliant subjects part with money on behalf of a stranger who has done nothing for them and whom they do not know. In order to explain or justify this behavior to himself, the subject might well come to find the confederate a relatively attractive person. This would provide a justification for having complied.

An equally plausible explanation is that liking significantly affects compliance only when strong normative pressures on behavior are absent. That is, the liking–compliance correlation found in the control conditions might obtain, not because behavior affects attitudes, but because in these low-obligation conditions, the attitude toward the con-

federate determines how much the subject complies. In the present experiment, compliance was always measured before liking for the confederate; thus we cannot tell whether liking affected compliance, compliance affected liking, or both were true to some degree. The appropriate design for testing between these alternatives involves measuring liking before compliance for some subjects and compliance before liking for others. A study by Fendrich (1967) which utilized this design found a strong relationship between attitudes and willingness to engage in various types of social behavior with Negroes when attitudes were measured after behavioral commitment, but only a weak relationship when attitudes were measured first. Consistent with the notion that attitudes are affected by behavior, but may not strongly influence behavior in situations such as ours, Nemeth (1970) measured liking before compliance and found no correlation between the two in either the favor or the control conditions. In her experiment, unfortunately, the confederate made the request in a face-to-face interaction which presented considerable opportunity for selective bias. On the other hand, Schopler and Thompson (1968) also measured liking before compliance, and found a significant relationship between them in some conditions.

The individual scales of the semantic differential provide information about the precise impressions of the confederate produced by the liking and favor manipulations. This information is also consistent with the view that the favor–compliance relationship is mediated by feelings of obligation rather than liking. Compared with the Unpleasant condition, the confederate in the Pleasant condition was seen as more good-natured ($t = 3.33$, $p < .01$), more likeable ($t = 2.18$, $p < .05$), more humane ($t = 2.11$, $p < .05$), and more polite ($t = 2.11$, $p < .05$). Nevertheless, subjects were not significantly more likely to comply with the Pleasant confederate. Let us now see which specific characteristics were attributed to the confederate by subjects in the Favor condition as compared with controls.

As did the liking manipulation, the favor made subjects see the confederate as more good-natured ($t = 2.94$, $p < .01$) and more likeable ($t = 3.31$, $p < .01$), although not significantly more humane or polite. In addition, compared with control subjects, those in the Favor condition found the confederate more generous ($t = 4.85$, $p < .001$), more altruistic ($t = 3.42$, $p < .01$), more honest ($t = 2.85$, $p < .01$), more good ($t = 2.66$, $p < .02$) and more helpful ($t = 2.58$, $p < .02$). Seeing the favor-doer as more generous, more altruistic, and more helpful can certainly be taken as an indication that subjects who received a favor from the confederate were highly aware that their rewards in the relationship had been concretely increased by his action. Since subjects

in the Pleasant condition thought of the confederate as *in general* a more worthy person—more good-natured, likeable, humane, and polite—but were not reliably more likely to comply with his request, it is plausible that the favor increased compliance, not by affecting general good-will or liking for the confederate, but primarily by making the subject conscious of a sense of indebtedness, inequity, or obligation toward the confederate.

A conclusion consistent with the present study and most of the available evidence seems to be that liking and compliance (or, more generally, attitudes and behavior) tend to be most closely associated when there are not strong normative pressures in the situation. When such pressures exist, such as the norm of reciprocity in our Favor condition, they, rather than attitudes, will govern behavior. Further, having engaged in behavior demanded by strong normative pressures, a person will not be as likely to bring his private attitudes into line with that behavior.

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