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Implicit theories and compliance with the foot-in-the-door technique

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Abstract

Research has shown that entity theorists (individuals who believe in fixed traits) prefer tasks which minimize the risk of failure. In contrast, incremental theorists (individuals who believe in malleable personality) choose tasks giving them the possibility to improve their skills. A series of studies involving 698 students showed that the “foot-in-the-door” effect was significant among incremental theorists in a sequence of relatively difficult requests and among entity theorists when the requests were relatively simple. The results are explained by the differences between incremental and entity theorists in their perception of request difficulty and their assessment of the costs paid in fulfilling a request.

Implicit theories and compliance with the foot-in-the-door technique

Freedman and Fraser (1966) began research on social compliance techniques. The investigators wondered how to induce people to comply with a major request without introducing external pressure. They showed that the rate of compliance with a large request can be increased by first making people acquiesce to a small favor. Freedman and Fraser called the procedure of inducing compliance without pressure the “foot-in-the-door” technique. The most frequently invoked mechanism underlying the effectiveness of the “foot-in-the-door” strategy is the self-perception process (Bem, 1967, 1972). A person who has complied with first request, while searching for possible explanations of his behavior, infers his inner states from his or her overt behavior. This change in self-image is believed to be responsible for the increase in subsequent compliance rates.

Since the original Freedman and Fraser studies were published, a great amount of research using the “foot-in-the-door” tactic revealed its effectiveness (Lepper, 1973; Miller and Suls, 1977; Snyder and Cunningham, 1975; Uranowitz, 1975). Moreover, numerous meta-analyses have confirmed greater compliance with a major request followed by the performance of a minor one (Beaman, Cole, Preston, Klentz and Steblay, 1983; Burger, 1999; DeJong, 1979; Dillard, 1991; Dillard, Hunter and Burgoon, 1984; Fern, Monroe and Avila, 1986). The “foot-in-the-door” effect seems to be a universal strategy. It proved to be effective for marketing and charity uses (e.g. Dillard, 1991) and even when immoral requests were made (Paška, 2002).

Most research on the “foot-in-the-door” strategy has focused on establishing the conditions, which increase or inhibit its effectiveness and finding the process underlying this phenomenon. Little attention has been paid till now to searching for individual differences in the effectiveness of the “foot-in-the-door” device. It seems possible that dispositional differences may affect

compliance with a relatively large request. Cialdini, Trost, and Newsom (1995) found evidence for the influence of dispositional differences on the “foot-in-the-door” technique. They examined individual differences in the preference for consistency. Using the Preference for Consistency Scale (PFC) to measure dispositional tendencies towards consistent response, the researchers showed that only those who scored high on the PFC scale were more likely to comply with the “foot-in-the-door” technique. A similar pattern of results was found by Guadagno, Asher, Demaine, and Cialdini (2001).

Wagener and Laird (1980) showed that obesity is one of the individual features having an impact on the “foot-in-the-door” effect. They anticipated that overweight people would be less susceptible to foot-in-the-door manipulation. The researchers assumed that this group of people has limited insight into their feelings and that the self-perception process is often disturbed among this group of people. Overweight people draw inferences from external stimuli, such as the sight of food, rather than from overt behavior. In accordance with their predictions, Wagener and Laird did not find the “foot-in-the-door” effect among overweight people. Burger and Guadagno (1998) investigated the role of individual differences in self-concept clarity in the “foot-in-the-door” procedure. Self-concept clarity is an individual difference indicating the extent to which a person’s self-concept is accessible. It was shown that only people with a clearer self-concept succumbed to the “foot-in-the-door” compared with low self-concept clarity participants.

The purpose of the present series of studies was to discover whether differences in responsiveness to the “foot-in-the-door” manipulations are apparent among people holding different implicit theories. Studies on implicit theories arose out of the “naive scientist metaphor” (Heider, 1958), which is linked with the notion that a human being is a naive scientist who aims to obtain objective knowledge about people similarly to a professional scientist. According to this view, people create hypotheses and verify them. Heider’s

assumptions had a great impact on the development of social psychology and were tested in numerous studies (e.g. Jones and Davis, 1965; Kelley, 1967; Weiner, 1980, 1985).

Belief in the malleability of human dispositions is a lay theory which has gained a lot of attention recently (Chiu, Hong and Dweck, 1997; Dweck, 1996, 2000; Dweck and Leggett, 1988; Erdley and Dweck, 1993; Gervery, Chiu, Hong and Dweck, 1999; Hong, Levy and Chiu, 2001; Lachowicz-Tabaczek, 1999, 2002, 2004; Levy, Stroessner and Dweck, 1998). The implicit theory concerning the malleability versus stability of human traits is one of the best examined lay theories largely due to the extensive research done by Carol Dweck and her collaborators (Chiu, Hong and Dweck, 1997; Dweck, 1996, 2000; Dweck and Leggett, 1988; Erdley and Dweck, 1993; Gervery et al., 1999; Hong, Chiu, Yeung and Tong, 1999). Their findings indicate that possessing an entity or incremental theory influences various phenomena, such as performing tasks, perception, achievement motivation, emotions, and social behavior.

Dweck was inspired to investigate implicit theories by her early research on children's helpless and mastery-oriented patterns of behavior (Dweck, 1975, as cited in Dweck and Leggett, 1988). Dweck noticed the existence of two types of behavior undertaken when faced with difficult tasks or obstacles. Some children displayed unadaptive, helpless reactions; faced with failure, they underestimated their intelligence and ascribed their defeats to their own dispositions. These children avoided challenges. The other group of children was not discouraged by failures, which were perceived as challenge. They modified their strategies to intensify the effort aimed at achieving success. They sought challenges that were perceived as opportunities to develop themselves.

Further studies showed that people who increase effort after experiencing defeat endorse more general beliefs about the world. It has been proven that these people are oriented towards developing their intelligence by focusing on making an effort. Moreover, they believe that an attribute is a dynamic, malleable quality which is possible to change and improve. They are

achievement oriented and seek opportunities to improve their skills. They develop and internalize developmental attitude. They ascribe setbacks and difficulties to using wrong strategies. Hence, this type of person actively tries to overcome obstacles (Zhao, Dweck and Mueller, 1998, as cited in Dweck, 2000). They choose difficult and challenging tasks that allow them to enhance their abilities (Dweck and Leggett, 1988).

In contrast, people who forgo making efforts after encountering defeats tend to believe that intelligence is a fixed and stable trait. They claim that personality cannot be changed. They prefer easy tasks which guarantee success. Because they endorse such a strategy, they decrease the risk of failure (Dweck and Leggett, 1988). In the field of task-performance they exhibit a depressive pattern of behavior. They display anxiety and strong negative emotions and tend to decrease the level of performance after encountering failure. They lose the hope that they could be successful in pursuing tasks and resign from trying to achieve goals (Zhao et al., 1998, as cited in Dweck, 2000).

Entity and incremental theorists have different self-images. A pattern of neurotic self-perception can be observed among entity theorists (Gamian, 2001). They attribute such traits to themselves as “shyness”, “fearfulness”, and “compliance”. These features compose the content of “neuroticism” defined by Horney (1982), Eysenck (1995) and Costa and McCrae (1995) (as cited in Gamian, 2001). In support of these data, Dweck (2000) showed that entity theorists are more emotionally vulnerable than incremental theorists. Moreover, it was shown that entity theorists are more likely to encounter negative emotions such as anxiety and low self-esteem (Lachowicz-Tabaczek, 1999).

This higher emotional vulnerability of entity theorists led Lachowicz-Tabaczek to formulate the assumption that implicit theories are formed as a reaction to a certain set of temperamental traits and that they play the role of stimulators and the regulators of a multitude of emotion experiences. The results of research have revealed that entity theorists are more emotionally

reactive, vulnerable, and less psychologically resistant than incremental theorists (Fura, 2001; Lachowicz-Tabaczek, 2002). Moreover, people who believe in the stability of human traits are less active. Their set of temperamental traits indicates that they should avoid stimulation and should decrease the level of performance in situations of high emotional load.

Lachowicz-Tabaczek treats implicit theories as a factor linking temperamental traits and behavior. The model presented by the author assumes that entity theory is an element of the emotional-defensive style of behavior regulation. Hence, endorsing entity theory conduces to avoiding situations which are connected with the threat of encountering negative emotions. The self-assurance attitude means choosing easy tasks which decrease the risk of failure.

Accordingly, endorsing incremental theory contributes to the maintenance of a rational-developmental style of behavior regulation. Incremental theorists develop and internalize an active attitude. They undertake new challenges willingly and choose difficult, risky, and costly tasks.

Entity and incremental theorists thus exhibit disparate preferences when it comes to choosing different levels of task difficulty. The present series of studies sought similar connections between implicit theories and reactions to sequential techniques of social influence. It was assumed that entity theorists would comply with “foot-in-the-door” manipulations if the level of request difficulty was relatively low. People who believe that human attributes are fixed perceive small demands as unthreatening, thus guaranteeing their proper performance. On the other hand, incremental theorists would comply with the “foot-in-the-door” when both requests were larger. From their point of view, a higher level of request difficulty creates challenge and the possibility of acquiring new experiences. Psychologically stronger, they are not afraid of possible failure.

Study 1

Overview of the study

In the first study, a “foot-in-the-door” consisting of relatively small requests was introduced. In the “foot-in-the-door” condition incremental and entity theorists were asked to perform a sequence of relatively easy requests. In the control condition, the participants were to fulfill only the relatively small target request. It was assumed that only the entity theorists would comply with the sequence of requests low in difficulty.

Procedure and participants

Ninety-seven undergraduates (68 women, 29 men) sitting in the Wroclaw Institute of Psychology and Political Sciences canteen served as participants. The female experimenter approached randomly assigned students and asked them for help in doing research. In order to avoid conformistic behavior, only students who were sitting alone or in couples were approached¹. Participants were randomly assigned to experimental and control conditions. In the “foot-in-the-door” condition participants were first presented with a small request, which was to write down their concept of an anxious person’s behaviors and to fill out a Polish adaptation of Levy, Stroessner, and Dweck’s (1998) scale, which measures entity versus incremental theories. The questionnaire consists of eight items, four of which diagnose entity theory and the other four incremental theory. Each item directly expresses a belief about the level of malleability or stability of traits. The participants expressed their attitude to each item on Likert’s 5-point scale ranging from 1 (“definitely disagree”) to 5 (“definitely agree”). The reliability of the Polish version of the questionnaire was Cronbach’s $\alpha=0.72$ (Lachowicz-Tabaczek, 2002). The total score for each participant was obtained by summing the scores from the subscale measuring entity theory and the opposite scores from the subscale measuring incremental theory.

¹ Rind and Benjamin’s (1994) study showed that the presence of a colleague witnessing the act of making a request does not influence the “foot-in-the-door” effect.

Immediately after the first request was performed, the experimenter asked the participant to comply with a larger favor. The target request was to fill out a 300-adjective questionnaire. Gaugh and Heilbrun's adjective list was used. Both demands were delivered by the same person, a young woman who introduced herself as a psychology student.

In the control condition participants were asked to fulfil only the target request. The participants completed the 300-adjective questionnaire and the scale measuring implicit theories. The experimenter stressed that the latter scale was more important to fill out. Hence if a person did not agree with the target request, he or she was asked to complete only the independent variable (the implicit theory questionnaire). Such a strategy allowed measuring implicit theories among all the participants.

Results

The initial analysis indicated that a participant's sex had no impact on compliance with the target request ($\chi^2=0.039$, $df=1$, 82 , $p=0.73$). Therefore, this factor was ignored in the further analysis.

The results of 15 participants were not included in the analysis because they left the canteen after performing the first favor. Thus, 82 participants were presented with the target request and the results of these participants were included in the analysis. The first request in the "foot-in-the-door" condition was performed by 38 out of 40 participants (95%). According to the criteria of the "foot-in-the-door" paradigm, all of the participants (those who agreed and those who disagreed to the initial request) were asked the target request (Burger, 1999; DeJong, 1979; see also Freedman and Fraser, 1966).

The reaction to the "foot-in-the-door" manipulation - compliance with the target request was the dependent variable. In the "foot-in-the-door" condition 85% of participants (34 out of 40) agreed to fill out the 300-adjective questionnaire compared with the control condition,

where 52% of participants (22 out of 42) complied. The “foot-in-the-door” effect was significant ($\chi^2=10.067$, $df=1$, $p=0.001$).

The score on the questionnaire measuring implicit theories was the independent variable. The participants' totaled scores were selected on the basis of the median split, which was 24 ($SD=5.5$). The participants whose results were higher than 24 were classified as entity theorists ($n=38$, 30 women, 8 men) and those who scored lower than 24 were classified as incremental theorists ($n=34$, 28 women, 6 men). Ten people obtained a score which equaled the median and were excluded from further analysis.

Multiple tables were used in the analysis: 2 (entity theorists vs. incremental theorists) x 2 (compliance vs. disagreement with the target request) x 2 (“foot-in-the-door” vs. control condition). In the “foot-in-the-door” condition, 16 (42.1%) entity theorists and 14 (41.2%) incremental theorists complied with the large request (table 1). In the control condition, 7 (18.4%) entity theorists and 12 (35.3%) incremental theorists agreed to fill out the 300-adjective questionnaire. The “foot-in-the-door” effect was significant only among entity theorists ($\chi^2=11.5$, $df=1$, $p=0.0007$). The difference between the “foot-in-the-door” and the control condition was not significant in the group of incremental theorists ($\chi^2=0.55$, $df=1$, $p=0.45$). The difference between entity and incremental theorists in the compliance rate was not significant in the “foot-in-the-door” condition ($\chi^2=0.8$, $df=1$, $p=0.37$) nor in the control condition ($\chi^2=3.8$, $df=1$, $p=0.06$).

Table 1

Entity and incremental theorists' level of compliance with a small target request presented according to the "foot-in-the-door" technique (study I)

		Control condition	Foot-in-the-door condition
Entity theorists	Complied	18.4% (7)	42.1% (16)
	Did not comply	34.2% (13)	5.3% (2)
Incremental theorists	Complied	35.3% (12)	41.2% (14)
	Did not comply	17.6% (6)	5.9% (2)

Discussion

The results indicate not only the effectiveness of the "foot-in-the-door" phenomena (the overall effect was reached), but also highlight first of all the discrepancies between entity and incremental theorists in compliance rates. Entity theorists were the only group who displayed the "foot-in-the-door" effect. People endorsing a view of the malleability human attributes acquiesced to the larger request either when it was the second one in the sequence or when it was the only favor to fulfil.

The stronger "foot-in-the-door" effect among entity theorists may be interpreted in terms of behavior consistent with their self-image as compliant people (Gamian, 2001). Moreover, entity theorists, as people who are more vulnerable to failure, highly emotionally reactive, and who prefer easy tasks, were susceptible to the "foot-in-the-door" technique when it consisted of the relatively small initial request followed by the larger, but still relatively easy to perform target request. Being less psychologically resistant, they agreed to do tasks which they estimated as inexpensive and guaranteeing success. Incremental theorists agreed to complete

the 300-adjective questionnaire as willingly in the “foot-in-the-door” condition as in the control condition. The result obtained does not mean that incremental theorists are resistant to “foot-in-the-door” manipulation, but rather indicates that they are in general more compliant in doing favors.

The large rate of compliance with the second request in the “foot-in-the-door” condition as well as in the control condition suggests that both the initial and the target request used in the study were quite easy to perform. The second study was aimed at investigating how entity and incremental theorists would behave in a situation with a higher level of request difficulty. It was predicted that entity theorists would avoid large challenges. They would not agree to do a favor exceeding their subjectively perceived capabilities. Incremental theorists prefer more difficult, challenging tasks. Hence it was anticipated that incremental theorists would succumb to the “foot-in-the-door” technique to a greater extent if the requests in the sequence were relatively more difficult.

Study 2

Overview of the study

In the second study, a “foot-in-the-door” consisting of relatively difficult requests was introduced. In the “foot-in-the-door” condition, incremental and entity theorists were asked to perform a sequence of relatively large requests. In the control condition, participants were to fulfill only the target, relatively large request. It was predicted that only incremental theorists would comply with the sequence of requests high in difficulty.

Procedure and participants

The procedure implemented in the second study was similar to that of the first study. It differed only in the level of difficulty of the initial and target request. As in the first study, undergraduates sitting in the Wrocław Institute of Psychology and Political Sciences canteen served as participants ($n=122$, 85 women, 37 men). The female experimenter approached

randomly assigned students and asked them for help in doing research. The initial request was to complete the 300-adjective questionnaire and the scale measuring entity versus incremental theories. This task was used as a target request in the first study. In the “foot-in-the-door” condition, immediately after fulfilling the smaller favor, participants were delivered a larger one, which was to sacrifice two hours to help doing research. The experimenter explained that during the two-hour assistance period the participants’ task would be to ask their peers to fill out some psychological surveys. The experimenter asked each participant to propose the most suitable time in the next two weeks. As in the first study, the same person presented both requests, without any time lapse between the initial and the target request. In the control condition, participants were only asked to sacrifice two hours to help doing research. Regardless of the participant’s answer, the experimenter had them complete the implicit theories questionnaire.

Results

The initial analysis indicated that a participant’s sex had no impact on compliance with the target request ($\chi^2=0.049$, $df=1$, $n=112$, $p=0.82$). Therefore, this factor was ignored in the further analysis. The results of 10 participants were excluded from the analysis because after performing the first favor they left the canteen. Thus, 112 participants were asked the target request and their results were included in the analysis. The first request in the “foot-in-the-door” condition was performed by 32 out of 56 participants (57%). All of the participants (those who agreed and those who disagreed with the initial request) were asked the target request.

The overall “foot-in-the-door” effect was significant. The difference in the compliance rate between the “foot-in-the-door” and control condition was $\chi^2=8.85$, $df=1$, $n=112$, $p=0.0029$. In the “foot-in-the-door” condition, 48% of participants (27 out of 56) complied with the target request compared with the control condition, where 21% of the participants (12 out of 56)

complied. As planned, the level of request difficulty implemented in the second study was higher. Such conclusions may be drawn from the low percentage of participants who agreed to fulfil the target request in the “foot-in-the-door” condition as well as in the control condition.

The next step in analyzing the results was to take the individual differences into consideration. Fifty entity theorists (32 women, 18 men) and 49 incremental theorists (38 women, 11 men) took part in the experiment. The selection was made on the base of the median split, which was 24 ($SD=3.16$). The results of thirteen participants scoring 24 were ignored in the further analysis.

To investigate the level of compliance with the “foot-in-the-door” manipulation in the groups of entity and incremental theorists, multiple tables were used in the analysis: 2 (entity theorists vs. incremental theorists) x 2 (compliance vs. disagreement with the target request) x 2 (“foot-in-the-door” vs. control condition). In the “foot-in-the-door” condition, 10 entity theorists (20%) and 16 incremental theorists (32.7%) agreed to the major request (table 2). In the control condition, 7 entity theorists (14%) and 4 incremental theorists (8.2%) agreed to sacrifice two hours to help in doing research. The “foot-in-the-door” effect was significant only among the incremental theorists ($\chi^2=7.29$, $df=1$, 49, $p=0.0072$). The difference between the “foot-in-the-door” and the control condition was not significant in the group of entity theorists ($\chi^2=1.2$, $df=1$, 50, $p=0.27$). The difference between entity and incremental theorists in the level of compliance was not significant in the “foot-in-the-door” condition ($\chi^2=1.24$, $df=1$, 52, $p=0.27$) nor in the control condition ($\chi^2=0.4$, $df=1$, 47, $p=0.5$).

Table 2

Entity and incremental theorists' level of compliance with a large target request presented according to the "foot-in-the-door" technique (study II)

		Control condition	Foot-in-the-door condition
Entity theorists	Complied	14% (7)	20% (10)
	Did not comply	38% (19)	28% (14)
Incremental theorists	Complied	8.2% (4)	32.7% (16)
	Did not comply	34.7% (17)	24.5% (12)

Discussion

In the second study, both groups of people, i.e. entity and incremental theorists, were asked to agree to relatively large requests. An overall "foot-in-the-door" effect was obtained. Moreover, a result symmetrical to that of the first study was observed. As predicted, this time incremental theorists were more susceptible to "foot-in-the-door" manipulations when it consisted of a sequence of relatively difficult requests. This group of people, believing in their capabilities, probably treated a large request in terms of challenge. In contrast, entity theorists hardly ever agreed to the target request, neither when it appeared in the control condition nor in the "foot-in-the-door" sequence. Presumably, anticipating negative emotions as a consequence of failure, entity theorists refused to engage in a difficult task.

In the first study, in which relatively small requests were made, people endorsing entity theory were more vulnerable to the "foot-in-the-door" procedure. In the second study, in which participants were presented with relatively large demands, the effect was abrupt. People holding incremental theory were susceptible to the "foot-in-the-door" strategy. Therefore,

entity and incremental theorists exhibited different patterns of behavior in the same situations. This effect may be interpreted on the one hand as a consequence of endorsing discrepant theories of trait malleability, and on the other by the mechanisms underlying the “foot-in-the-door” tactic.

The aim of the third study was to ensure that the results obtained in the first and second studies were reliable and to verify the assumptions underlying the obtained effects. The third study is a replication of the first and second studies in one experimental design. Entity and incremental theorists were presented with all of the combinations of request sequences which occurred in both previous studies.

Study 3

Overview of the study

The third study is a replication of the first and the second study. In one experimental design, a low and a high level of request difficulty was introduced among incremental and entity theorists. In the “small target request foot-in-the-door” condition, incremental and entity theorists were asked to perform a sequence of relatively small requests. In the “small target request control” condition, participants were to fulfill only the relatively small target request. In the “large target request foot-in-the-door” condition, incremental and entity theorists were asked to perform a sequence of relatively large requests. In the “large target request control” condition, participants were to fulfill only the relatively large target request. It was predicted that incremental theorists would comply with the sequence of requests high in difficulty and entity theorists the sequence of requests low in difficulty.

Procedure and participants

In order to verify that the previously obtained results were not misleading, two control conditions and two “foot-in-the-door” conditions from the first and second studies were introduced into the experimental design. One hundred eighty-one undergraduates (130 women,

51 men) sitting in the Wrocław Institutes of Psychology, Pedagogic and Political Sciences and Technical University canteens served as participants. The female experimenter approached randomly assigned students and asked them for help in doing research. In the “small target request foot-in-the-door” condition the participants were first asked to write down fearsome personal behaviors and to complete the implicit theories measure. As the participant fulfilled the first favor, the target request (completing the 300-adjective questionnaire) was introduced. In the “small target request control” condition the participants only filled out the 300-adjective questionnaire and the implicit theories measure scale.

In the “large target request foot-in-the-door” condition, participants were first requested to complete two questionnaires: the 300-adjective scale and the implicit theories measure. After completing the initial request, participants were asked to sacrifice two hours for help in doing research. In the “large target request control” condition the participants were only asked to sacrifice two hours for help in doing research. Regardless of the participants’ answer, the experimenter gave the implicit theories measure. In both “foot-in-the-door” conditions there was no time-delay between the initial and the target request. The same experimenter presented both requests.

Results

The initial analysis indicated that a participant’s sex had no impact on compliance with neither the small nor large target request ($\chi^2=0.73$, $df=1$, $p=0.39$; $\chi^2=0.8$, $df=1$, $p=0.5$, respectively). Therefore, this factor was ignored in the further analysis. The results of 20 participants were not included in the analysis because they left the canteen after performing the first favor. Thus, 161 participants were asked the target requests and their results were included in the analysis. There was a significant overall “foot-in-the-door” effect in both replicated designs. The analyses were conducted separately for the sequence of relatively small requests and for the sequence of relatively large requests.

The first request in the “small target request foot-in-the-door” condition was performed by 30 out of 40 participants (75%). All of the participants (those who agreed and those who disagreed to the initial request) were presented with the target request. The difference in the rate of compliance between the “small target request foot-in-the-door” condition (writing down fearsome personal behaviors and completing the 300-adjective questionnaire) and the “small target request control” condition (completing the 300-adjective questionnaire) was statistically significant ($\chi^2=5.088$, $df=1$, $p=0.024$). In the “foot-in-the-door” condition, 77.5% of participants (31 out of 40) acquiesced to the target request compared with the control condition, where 55% of the participants (22 out of 40) complied.

Taking the individual difference variable into consideration, 36 entity theorists (27 women, 9 men) and 37 incremental theorists (26 women, 11 men) took part in the experiment. The selection was made on the basis of the median split, which was 24 ($SD=6.12$). The results of 8 participants were excluded from the further analysis because their scores equaled the median split.

In the “small target request foot-in-the-door” condition, 13 entity theorists (36.1%) and 14 incremental theorists (37.8%) complied with the target request (table 3). In the “small target request control” condition, 5 entity theorists (13.9%) and 15 incremental theorists (40.5%) agreed to complete the 300-adjective questionnaire (table 3). Once again, the “foot-in-the-door” effect with relatively small (sequence of) requests was significant only among entity theorists ($\chi^2=4.05$, $df=1$, $p=0.044$). Incremental theorists agreed to fill out the long questionnaire both in the “foot-in-the-door” situation and in the control condition. Hence, the “small target request foot-in-the-door” effect was not significant in the group of incremental theorists ($\chi^2=1.38$, $df=1$, $p=0.24$).

In the “large target request foot-in-the-door” condition, 31 participants (77.5%) agreed to performing the first request, but all of the participants who were presented with the initial

request were presented with the second one and were included in the analysis. The difference in the level of compliance between the “large target request foot-in-the-door” condition (completing the 300-adjective questionnaire and sacrificing two hours for helping with research) and the “large target request control” condition (sacrificing two hours for helping with research) was statistically significant ($\chi^2=6.76$, $df=1$, 80 , $p=0.009$). In the “foot-in-the-door” condition, 47.5% of participants (19 out of 40) complied with the target request. In the “large target request control” condition, 20% of participants (8 out of 40) complied.

Generally, after excluding 6 participants whose scores equaled the median ($M=24$, $SD=6.24$), 39 entity theorists (29 women, 10 men) and 35 incremental theorists (23 women, 12 men) took part in the experiment. In the “large target request foot-in-the-door” condition, 6 entity theorists (15.4%) and 13 incremental theorists (37.1%) complied with the target request. In the “large target request control” condition, 4 entity theorists (10.3%) and 4 incremental theorists (11.4%) agreed to complete the 300-adjective questionnaire (table 3). Incremental theorists succumbed to the “foot-in-the-door” technique when it consisted of a sequence of relatively large requests ($\chi^2=6.56$, $df=1$, 35 , $p=0.01$). In this case the effect did not occur among entity theorists ($\chi^2=0.69$, $df=1$, 39 , $p=0.41$).

Moreover, 2 x 2 (implicit theory x sequence difficulty) two-way analysis of variance was performed on the compliance rate. The findings revealed only a significant main effect of the implicit theory ($F=10.98$, $df=1$, 143 , $p<0.001$) and a significant main effect of the sequence difficulty ($F=12.23$, $df=1$, 143 , $p<0.0006$). An implicit theory x sequence difficulty interaction was not found ($F=0.12$, $df=1$, 143 , $p<0.7$). These results confirm the prediction assuming that entity theorists, as people avoiding large challenges and refusing to do favors exceeding their subjectively perceived capabilities, would comply with the “foot-in-the-door” effect composed of a sequence of relatively small requests and would stop acquiescing to larger requests.

Table 3

Entity and incremental theorists' level of compliance with a small and a large target request presented according to the "foot-in-the-door" technique (study III)

		Relatively small requests		Relatively large requests	
		Study I replication		Study II replication	
		Control	Foot-in-the-door	Control	Foot-in-the-door
		condition	condition	condition	condition
Entity	Complied	13.9% (5)	36.1% (13)	10.3% (4)	15.4% (6)
theorists	Did not comply	30.6% (11)	19.4% (7)	41% (16)	33.3% (13)
Incremental	Complied	40.5% (15)	37.8% (14)	11.4% (4)	37.1% (13)
theorists	Did not comply	16.2% (6)	5.4% (2)	34.3% (12)	17.1% (6)

Discussion

The findings of the third study replicated the results of the first and the second studies. As predicted, entity theorists, as persons more vulnerable to failure and preferring easy tasks, complied with the "foot-in-the-door" technique when the requests were relatively small. Presumably being afraid of failure, they rarely agreed to perform a relatively large target request, neither when it appeared in the control condition nor in the sequence. Symmetrically, incremental theorists succumbed to the "foot-in-the-door" strategy when the favors were relatively difficult to fulfil. As they believed in their capabilities, they probably perceived a large request in terms of a challenge. They tended to agree to performing a small target request either when it was presented in the "foot-in-the-door" or in the control condition.

The presented series of studies aimed to prove that entity and incremental theorists exhibit discrepant preferences when it comes to complying with the "foot-in-the-door" technique. People possessing different implicit theories complied with sequences of various level of

request difficulty. It seems that entity theorists are quite vulnerable to potential defeats and they succumb only to unthreatening and unchallenging, and thus success-guaranteeing requests. Incremental theorists, in contrast, agree to more challenging and threatening requests because of their desire for stimulation. To confirm this interpretation, another study was conducted in which a clearer manipulation of challenge as a parameter of request difficulty was introduced. It was assumed that the request must be perceived as costly; fulfilling it should thus be stimulating and connected with possessing some particular capabilities or the necessity of engaging effort. In the fourth study, challenging and unchallenging requests were introduced. Challenge was connected with the necessity of communicating with people, of possessing social skills of self-persuasion.

Therefore, the purpose of the fourth study was, on the one hand, to show that the effect obtained in the previous studies is universal, i.e. entity and incremental theorists exhibit different reactions to different “foot-in-the-door” manipulations. On the other hand, the aim of the fourth study was to verify the interpretation assuming that entity theorists comply with unchallenging, safe requests, while incremental theorists agree to requests which provide more stimulation and fulfilling them requires special capacities.

Study 4

Overview of the study

The fourth study is a conceptual replication of the third study. The aim of this study was to highlight the previously obtained effect indicating that entity theorists comply only with easy and unthreatening requests while incremental theorists are more willing to perform more difficult, challenging requests. The “foot-in-the-door” manipulation consisted either in a sequence of unthreatening, unchallenging requests or a sequence of requests which provide challenge.

Procedure and participants

To verify the previously presented interpretation of the differences between entity and incremental theorists' compliance with the "foot-in-the-door" technique, a clearer manipulation of challenge was introduced. Undergraduates sitting in the Institute of Chemistry (University of Wrocław) and the Technical University of Wrocław canteens ($n=193$, 137 women, 56 men) participated in the study. One of two female experimenters approached randomly assigned students, presented herself as a psychology student collaborating with Local Organization for Blind Children, and asked them for help. In two "foot-in-the-door" conditions, participants were first asked to fill out a short questionnaire concerning organizations which take care of blind children and to complete the implicit theories measure. As the participant fulfilled the first favor, the target request was introduced. In the "no-challenge foot-in-the-door" condition the experimenter explained that psychology students were collaborating with the Local Organization for Blind Children to help the children create, edit, and print crossword puzzles, then sell them as booklets. The experimenter added that she and her friends needed help in preparing the crosswords to be published. She asked if a participant would help write 20 crosswords with 20 entries into a computer. In the "challenging foot-in-the-door" condition, after completing the initial request the participants were asked to find 20 volunteers who would help prepare the crosswords for the Local Organization for Blind Children.

In the two control conditions, participants were only presented with the target request (to type in 20 crosswords or to find 20 volunteers). Regardless of the participants' answer, the experimenter gave the implicit theories measure. In both "foot-in-the-door" conditions there was no time-delay between the initial and the target requests. The same experimenter presented both requests.

Results

The initial analysis indicated that neither the participant's sex (for the "no-challenge" conditions: $\chi^2=0.6$, $df=1$, 101, $p=0.44$; for the "challenge" conditions": $\chi^2=1.6$, $df=1$, 87, $p=0.2$) nor the factor of the experimenter (for the "no-challenge" conditions: $\chi^2=0.8$, $df=1$, 101, $p=0.73$; for the "challenge" conditions": $\chi^2=0.55$, $df=1$, 87, $p=0.36$) had impact on compliance with the target requests. Therefore, these factors were ignored in the further analysis.

There was an overall "foot-in-the-door" effect in both replicated designs. The analyses were conducted separately for the sequence of challenging requests and the sequence of unchallenging requests. The results of 5 participants were not included in the analysis because they left the canteen after performing the first favor. Thus, 188 participants were presented with the no-challenge or challenging target requests and the results of these participants were included in the analysis.

The first request in the "no-challenge foot-in-the-door" condition was performed by 50 out of 51 participants (98%). All of the participants (those who agreed and the one who disagreed to the initial request) were presented with the target request. The difference in the rate of compliance between the "no-challenge foot-in-the-door" condition (filling out the short questionnaire concerning organizations taking care of blind children and typing in 20 crosswords) and the "no-challenge control" condition (typing in 20 crosswords) fell short of statistical significance ($\chi^2=2.85$, $df=1$, 101, $p=0.09$). In the "foot-in-the-door" condition, 60.8% of the participants (31 out of 51) complied with the target request and in the control condition 44% of the participants (22 out of 50) complied.

Taking the individual difference variable into consideration, 49 entity theorists (40 women, 9 men) and 50 incremental theorists (36 women, 14 men) took part in the experiment. The selection was made on the basis of the median split, which was 22 ($SD=6.18$). The results of 2

participants were excluded from the further analysis because they score equaled the median split.

In the “no-challenge foot-in-the-door” condition, 17 entity theorists (65.4%) and 13 incremental theorists (54.2%) complied with the target request (table 4). In the “no-challenge control” condition, 9 entity theorists (39.1%) and 13 incremental theorists (50%) agreed to type in 20 crosswords. The “foot-in-the-door” effect with the sequence of unchallenging requests was significant only among entity theorists ($\chi^2=3.37$, $df=1$, $p=0.06$). Incremental theorists agreed to the unchallenging target request both in the “foot-in-the-door” situation and in the control condition. Hence the “foot-in-the-door” effect was not significant in the group of incremental theorists ($\chi^2=0.08$, $df=1$, $p=0.7$).

In the “challenging foot-in-the-door” condition, 100% of the participants agreed to perform the first request. The difference in the level of compliance between the “challenging foot-in-the-door” condition (filling out the short questionnaire concerning organizations taking care of blind children and finding 20 volunteers who would help prepare the crosswords) and the “challenging control” condition (finding 20 volunteers who would help prepare the crosswords) was statistically significant ($\chi^2=5.5$, $df=1$, $p=0.019$). In the “foot-in-the-door” condition, 50% of participants (22 out of 44) complied with the target request. In the control condition, 25.6% of participants (11 out of 43) complied.

Generally, after excluding 3 participants whose scores equaled the median ($M=22$, $SD=6.69$), 41 entity theorists (31 women, 10 men) and 43 incremental theorists (25 women, 18 men) took part in the experiment. In the “challenging foot-in-the-door” condition, 4 entity theorists (20%) and 18 incremental theorists (78.3%) complied with the target request (table 4). In the “challenging control” condition, 2 entity theorists (9.5%) and 9 incremental theorists (45%) agreed to find volunteers who would be willing to help in the Local Organization for Blind Children. Incremental theorists succumbed to the “foot-in-the-door” technique when it

consisted of a sequence of challenging requests ($\chi^2=5.06$, $df=1$, 43, $p=0.02$). In this case, the effect did not occur among entity theorists ($\chi^2=0.89$, $df=1$, 41, $p=0.34$).

Table 4

Entity and incremental theorists' level of compliance with challenging and unchallenging target requests presented according to the "foot-in-the-door" technique (study IV)

		Unchallenging requests		Challenging requests	
		Control condition	Foot-in-the-door condition	Control condition	Foot-in-the-door condition
Entity theorists	Complied	39.1% (9)	65.4% (17)	9.5% (2)	20% (4)
	Did not comply	60.9% (14)	34.6% (9)	90.5% (19)	80% (16)
Incremental theorists	Complied	50% (13)	54.2% (13)	45% (9)	78.3% (18)
	Did not comply	50% (13)	33.3% (8)	55% (11)	21.7% (5)

General discussion

The findings of the fourth study replicated the results of the third study. As predicted, entity theorists, as persons who tend to withdraw from performing threatening tasks for fear of potential defeat, complied with the "foot-in-the-door" technique when the target request was unchallenging and was not connected with costs. On the other hand, incremental theorists succumbed to the "foot-in-the-door" tactic when the favors provided some stimulation and challenge. These findings indicate that the previously obtained effect is universal as it was replicated with a completely different kind of requests. In all of the four studies, entity and incremental theorists were presented with requests which were more or less challenging. In the first three studies, challenge meant the difficulty of the requests. Agreeing to the target request was connected with losing time, the necessity of communicating with strangers, and the fear of not meeting the expectations. In the fourth study, challenge was induced by the necessity of

proving social skills, the capability of communication and self-persuasion, as the participants had to convince a group of people to perform a certain task. Thus there was a potential threat of meeting refusal. The challenge connected with the possibility of not having a high enough level of social skills was apparent in all four studies.

In all of the four experiments described in the article, specific “foot-in-the-door” conditions were introduced. First, the same person presented both requests. Second, no time elapsed between performing the first request and receiving the second one. Meta-analyses conducted by Burger (1999, see also Chartrand, Pinckert and Burger, 1999; Girandola, 2002) indicate that the same-requester/immediate condition is the least effective one. However, in our studies the general (i.e. without taking individual differences into consideration) “foot-in-the-door” effect was significant. Hence, the manipulation had an effective impact on the compliance rate with the target request. A question can be raised about the mechanism responsible for the obtained effect. Next it is to be pondered whether the process is the same among entity and incremental theorists if the sequence is of relatively small requests and of relatively large requests.

Acquiescence to the target request in the same-requester/no-delay procedure cannot be interpreted by the self-perception process. As Beaman and his collaborators (1983; see also Doliński, 2001) argued, time is required before the self-perception of one’s initial compliance becomes firmly established. A small amount of time between both requests decreases the possibility for self-perception to occur. If the target request is delivered immediately after performance of the initial favor, a process other than self-perception has to be considered as underlying the “foot-in-the-door” technique.

Entity and incremental theorists’ compliance may be explained by mechanisms connected with interaction dynamics. The participants were approached by a young undergraduate (inducing similarity) and asked to help do research. It is presumable that a favor presented in such a way generated thinking in terms of “I will help, for I might once be in a similar

situation”. Entity and incremental theorists might have felt obliged to help a person in need. They were influenced by a social norm which was activated by the previous performance of a smaller favor (Harris, 1972). It would appear that people who believe in the malleability of human personality obey the social norm pressuring them to help people in need to a greater extent than entity theorists do. However, this interpretation seems insufficient in explaining the discrepant pattern of reactions to the sequence of relatively small/large requests among entity and incremental theorists.

The “foot-in-the-door” literature is rife with demonstrations of the effectiveness of the technique. A review of the literature (DeJong, 1979) shows that the “foot-in-the-door” tactic is universal, taking various request subjects into consideration. It is an effective method of convincing people not only to behave positively, as in the case of marketing-oriented demands (Hornik and Zaig, 1990, 1991) and prosocial requests (Pilner, Hart, Kohl and Saari, 1974), but also to perform immoral requests (Paška, 2002). However, the findings presented in this article indicate that some other factors have an impact on the effectiveness of the “foot-in-the-door” technique. The effect seems to be dependent on the participant’s subjective evaluation of the magnitude of the request.

Kulbat (2002) drew attention to the link between “foot-in-the-door” effectiveness and tendencies in the perception of the magnitude of the requests in the sequence. The author argued that people are inclined to overestimate the request magnitude. Such a strategy may prevent a person from acquiescing to demands which are too difficult and allows avoiding negative consequences connected with unmet expectations. On the other hand, such a strategy provides an opportunity to grant a minor favor, which subjectively seems large. Both patterns of behavior (withdrawing from performing demands too difficult and agreeing to objectively small requests) allow one to maintain self-esteem.

In the three studies conducted, we introduced request difficulty manipulation. People endorsing particular implicit theories were confronted with sequences of requests which differed in the level of difficulty. From the pattern of results we obtained we may conclude that entity and incremental theorists differ in their tendencies to evaluate the magnitude of the target request as described by Kulbat. Presumably, entity theorists overestimate the magnitude of the target request more than incremental theorists do. Therefore it is most likely that a task which is trivial for incremental theorists is difficult and threatening for entity theorists. As both groups of people exhibit various patterns of behavior in the same situations, the explanations proposed as processes underlying the “foot-in-the-door” technique seem to be insufficient. The findings presented in this article have to be interpreted with reference to the nature of the individual differences modifying determinants of the effectiveness of the “foot-in-the-door” phenomenon.

In order to answer the question of why people endorsing various implicit theories evaluate the magnitude of the target request differently and succumb to different “foot-in-the-door” technique conditions (with a relatively small or large sequence of requests), we must first consider why people generally agree or disagree to performing minor or major demands. A model proposed by Dovidio and Piliavin and collaborators (Dovidio, Piliavin, Gaertner, Schroeder, and Clark, 1991) is one of the models which explains the causes of fulfilling and the causes of rejecting a request. The model points out the costs and benefits connected with giving and with refusing to give help. Moreover, the model of cost-benefit balance does not impose one unambiguous algorithm of making a decision to help. Dovidio et al. assume that the decision about giving help depends on numerous aspects: situational context, traits of the individual giving help, one’s subjective costs and benefits estimation, and the endorsed hierarchy of values. From the perspective of the obtained results it might be inferred that entity and incremental theorists endorse a different hierarchy of rewards and punishments. They calculate costs and benefits connected with fulfilling or refusing a request differently.

It is likely that people who believe that human traits are stable concentrate to a large extent on the costs linked with giving help. Anxiety caused by performing a request surpasses potential benefits from agreeing to do something good. This threat may be connected with their self-assurance attitude and anticipated failure. Entity theorists may be afraid of not meeting expectations or duties. Agreement to perform a large request may mean a threat to their self-image. On the other hand, incremental theorists, when asked to do a small favor, presumably do not perceive it in terms of costs. They are generally expected to interpret situations of help-giving rather in terms of social rewards than in terms of the negative aspects of a situation that makes the anticipated cost-benefit balance appropriate for deciding to help.

The disparate patterns of compliance with a high or low level of requests difficulty may also result from differences in entity and incremental theorists' temperamental determinants. It appears that the most likely explanation of incremental theorists' higher compliance with large requests is the fact that they are more open to new experiences and curious about new challenges. Difficult and costly tasks give them the opportunity to broaden their horizons. Thanks to their low emotional sensitivity, relatively high stamina, and psychological resistance, they are able to perceive difficult demands as manageable. Thus they are more likely to undertake costly requests rather than concentrate on consequences (time and potential effort connected with fulfilling a task) compared with entity theorists. A strong need for stimulation prompts them to risk the consequences that might come from an unfulfilled task (Kasprzyk, 2003). They are not afraid of defeat. The sequence of requests may be interpreted by people with a belief in the malleability of human personality in terms of growing demands and further opportunities to acquire new skills. Fulfilling an initial request by incremental theorists may, to a greater extent than in the case of entity theorists, activate social norms which pressure one to help a person in need (Harris, 1972) and thus obligate to comply with further demands.

People holding entity theory are more anxious, vulnerable, and susceptible to encounter negative emotions than incremental theorists are. As they adopt an assurance-defensive attitude, they are alert and prepared to withdraw from a situation which subjectively might be too difficult. Being highly emotionally reactive and less active (Lachowicz-Tabaczek, 2002), they avoid stimulation, emotionally overloaded situations, and those demanding long-lasting effort. Hence, completing a questionnaire does not expose entity theorists to failure, but sacrificing two hours to help doing research may run the risk of non-fulfillment of this task.

Follow-up study

The findings of the four conducted experiments raised ambiguity in interpretation. The most probable explanation of the discrepancies between entity and incremental theorists in the level of compliance with the “foot-in-the-door” manipulations is the difference in their temperamental traits. According to this explanation, entity theorists, as highly emotionally reactive, vulnerable, and of low resistance, choose fairly easy tasks, which enable them to maintain a positive self-image. In contrast, incremental theorists, who are less emotionally reactive, less emotional, and more resistant, prefer more difficult tasks, which create a challenge and the possibility to improve themselves. Possessing different temperamental traits should result in different perceptions of request difficulty caused by the differences in interpreting the costs connected with performing a request. It appears probable that entity theorists overrate the costs of fulfilling a favor in comparison with incremental theorists. But it is also possible that incremental theorists comply with more demanding requests because they feel more obliged to obey social norms. If this is true, they should perceive the cost of refusing different requests as higher than entity theorists do.

To verify the hypothetical alternative interpretation of the results, a follow-up study was conducted. One hundred and five undergraduates (from the Departments of Psychology, Pedagogy, and the Wrocław Technical University) participated in a group session, with 48

entity theorists and 50 incremental theorists divided on the basis of the median split, which equaled 22 ($SD=5.2$). They were asked to imagine a situation similar to the one from the previous studies (while sitting in the University canteen a young person approaches and asks a favor). The participants' task was to evaluate some aspects of the requests used in the previous studies. As the predicted effect was replicated in the fourth study, only the requests introduced in the first three studies were taken into consideration. Therefore, three conditions were introduced according to the request presented in the first three studies. In the first group, participants were asked to evaluate the request concerning writing down a fearsome person's behaviors, in the second group, completing the 300-adjective questionnaire, and in the third group sacrificing two hours for help in doing research. After imagining being confronted with one of the three requests (according to the group), the participants evaluated the difficulty of the task, estimated the probability of performing such a request, and evaluated the costs connected with fulfilling and the costs connected with rejecting the request. The costs of fulfilling a request were defined by examples provided: sacrificing one's time or effort, leaving activities they were doing at that moment, and the necessity of overcoming one's fear or reluctance connected with doing a favor. Examples of costs connected with refusing a request were also provided: feeling guilt, shame, and the lack of a sense of responsibility. The participants rated the level of request difficulty and the costs of performing or rejecting a request on a 7-point scale. To evaluate the probability of fulfilling a request, a scale of from 0% to 100% was used. Furthermore, each participant completed the questionnaire that aimed to measure their implicit theories which was used in all of the three previous studies.

In order to test the interpretation assuming that people with different implicit theories evaluate the cost and the level of request difficulty differently, a 2 x 2 (implicit theory: entity vs. incremental x the type of request: to write down a fearsome person's behaviors vs. to complete a 300-adjective questionnaire vs. to sacrifice two hours to help do research) MANOVA was

performed. The dependent variables included evaluation of the difficulty of the request, estimation of the probability of performing such a request, and estimation of costs connected with fulfilling the request.

Two significant main effects were obtained, one for implicit theory ($F=2.95$, $df=3$, 90 , $p<0.04$) and one for the type of the request ($F=2.85$, $df=6$, 180 , $p<0.01$). The effect of interaction between these two factors was insignificant ($F<1$). To understand the influence of implicit theory on the perception of the requests better, three univariate ANOVA with this factor as the independent variable were performed (see table 5). The results show that, in general, entity theorists evaluated requests as more difficult to fulfill ($F=4.81$, $df=1$, 96 , $p<0.03$) and assessed the costs of performing them as higher ($F=4.90$, $df=1$, 96 , $p<0.03$) than incremental theorists did. There was no difference between these two groups of people in the level of subjective probability of performing the request ($F<1$).

Table 5

Means and standard deviations of the evaluation of request difficulty, probability of fulfilling the request, costs of performing the request, and costs of refusing the request among entity and incremental theorists

	Difficulty of the request		Probability of fulfilling the request		Costs of fulfilling the request		Costs of refusing the request	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Incremental theorists	2.75	1.38	0.56	0.27	3.48	1.21	2.85	1.70
Entity theorists	3.42	1.63	0.56	0.26	4.02	1.38	3.18	1.73

To verify the interpretation of the results obtained in the main research assuming that incremental theorists feel more obliged to fulfill the request than do entity theorists, separate univariate ANOVA with implicit theories and the types of request as independent variables for the evaluation of the costs of refusing the request was performed. The result reveals only the main effect of the type of request ($F=4.25$, $df=1$, 92 , $p<0.017$). The effect of implicit theories and interaction of these factors were insignificant (both values of test $F<1$).

The results of the follow-up study confirm the interpretation assuming that entity and incremental theorists rate request difficulty and calculate the costs of giving help differently. People who believe in fixed traits estimate the request difficulty and the costs of fulfilling a favor higher than people who believe in the malleability of traits do. This means that the greater compliance with requests observed among incremental theorists may be caused by their perception of the requests as relatively less costly and demanding. On the other hand, entity theorists' greater unwillingness to perform requests may stem from their evaluation of requests as more difficult and effortful. Furthermore, the data obtained provide no reason to assume that the high compliance with requests among incremental theorists is due to their stronger feeling of obligation to help others compared with entity theorists.

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