

Exploring the Efficacy of Compliments as a Tactic for Securing Compliance

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Two studies were conducted to test the efficacy of compliments as a compliance tactic and to explore whether liking could account for their effectiveness. Both studies provided evidence that compliments increased compliance relative to a control condition. Although receiving a compliment did tend to increase liking of the requestor, this increased liking was not responsible for enhanced levels of compliance. This research provides some of the first direct evidence of the effectiveness of compliments as a means of securing compliance and provides data challenging the mechanism most commonly assumed to be responsible for its effects.

People are the targets of attempts by others to obtain their compliance every day. These attempts include such commonplace occurrences as salespeople trying to sell products, friends asking for favors, and charities soliciting donations. Given the prevalence of compliance (i.e., an acquiescent response to a request; Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004) in our daily lives, not surprisingly, a sizable body of research has explored a number of tactics that are effective in producing compliance behavior as well as the principles underlying their effectiveness (see Cialdini, 2009; Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004; Cialdini & Trost, 1998).

Of the many compliance strategies that have been discussed in the literature, perhaps no strategy seems more intuitively compelling than the use of compliments. The widespread belief among laypeople of the utility of compliments is reflected in the many well-known quotes regarding its power, including “Flattery is the infantry of negotiation” (Lord Chandos), “Everybody likes a compliment” (Mark Twain), and most recognizably, “Flattery will get you everywhere” (Mae West).

EVIDENCE FOR THE EFFECTIVENESS OF COMPLIMENTS AS A COMPLIANCE TACTIC

In light of the widespread belief in the efficacy of compliments and the comparatively large empirical literature that has accumulated examining tactics for securing compliance, one would expect that the success of compliments as a compliance tactic has been well established. Surprisingly, little research to date has systematically evaluated the effectiveness of compliments as a method for securing compliance. The sparseness of research on this tactic is all the more striking given that social psychologists have recognized the potential utility of compliments as a compliance tactic (e.g., see Cialdini, 2009) and the fact that the effects of compliments on other social psychological phenomena such as interpersonal attraction have been thoroughly documented (e.g., Byrne, Rasche, & Kelley, 1974; Byrne & Rhamey, 1965; Drachman, deCarufel, & Insko, 1978; Gordon, 1996; Jones, 1990).

The only studies to offer any evidence for the effects of compliments on actual compliance come from studies of tipping behavior. Seiter (2007) found that servers received higher tips after complimenting couples on their dinner selection. Similarly, hairstylists received

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higher tips if they complimented clients on their hair-style after styling it (Seiter & Dutson, 2007).

Although these studies provide intriguing initial evidence for the potential effectiveness of compliments, they have some important limitations. First, tipping behavior is most often a response to an implicit request in that service providers rarely directly request tips. Whether compliments enhance compliance when requests are explicit, and thus more likely to be viewed as an overt means of enhancing compliance, is unclear. Second, tipping in service contexts is typical and sometimes even required; in fact, failure to leave a tip in a restaurant or in a hair salon deviates strongly from social norms. Hence, these data do not establish if compliments have the power to increase compliance when the target behavior is a novel one and compliance with the request is not necessarily normative. Third, the experimenters could not have been blind to condition, and likely were not blind to the hypothesis. Thus, they may have unwittingly engaged in other nonverbal behaviors that influenced tipping behavior in the expected direction. Finally, perhaps the most important limitation of the research on tipping behavior is that the compliment condition was confounded with social validation. By directly complimenting an individual's choice of menu item or hairstyle, the experimenter is providing social validation of that choice. This social validation may enhance the perceived desirability of the service. Therefore, compliments may have increased tipping behavior due to a corresponding increase in perceived value of the service provided, and not because of the compliment *per se*. Thus, the general utility of compliments as a means of securing compliance remains far from established.

COMPLIMENTS AND LIKING

Although evidence for the general efficacy of compliments as a means of facilitating compliance is certainly not definitive, even less evidence exists documenting the mechanism(s) underlying their presumed effectiveness. That being said, the great majority of compliance researchers have assumed that compliments are likely to facilitate compliance because they exert a powerful effect on interpersonal evaluations. For example, Cialdini and Goldstein (2004) argued that the principle of liking is assuredly one link between compliments and compliance. Likewise, liking was the mechanism advanced to explain the effects of compliments on tipping behavior (Seiter, 2007; Seiter & Dutson, 2007).

In support of this assumption, compliments do have extremely robust effects on people's liking of the flatterer. Individuals report greater liking for a stranger when they receive positive evaluations compared to when they receive neutral or negative evaluations (Byrne

et al., 1974; Byrne & Rhamey, 1965). Indeed, a meta-analysis on the impact of ingratiation on judgments revealed that the use of flattery relative to other ingratiation tactics has one of the most powerful effects on evaluations of liking (Gordon, 1996). Moreover, these effects hold even when targets are aware that the flatterer's praise is based on inaccurate information about the target (e.g., Byrne et al., 1974) and when the flatterer has an obvious ulterior motive for flattery (Drachman et al., 1978).

Furthermore, a sizeable body of research exists suggesting that liking of a requestor is an important determinant of compliance. For example, Frenzen and Davis (1990) found that the strength of the social ties between a requestor and a target is a significant predictor of the likelihood of compliance in consumer purchasing contexts. Similarly, Burger, Soroka, Gonzago, Murphy, and Somervell (2001) demonstrated that participants who first engaged in a conversation with a confederate or sat in the same room with the confederate were more likely to comply with a later request from the confederate than participants who sat in a separate room. Burger et al. found that a measure of liking partially mediated the effects of the experimental manipulations on compliance. Other known determinants of liking such as similarity to the requestor (Burger, Messian, Patel, del Prado, & Anderson, 2004; Emswiller, Deaux, & Willits, 1971) and attractiveness of the requestor (Hammermesh & Biddle, 1994; Lynn & Simons, 2000) have also been shown to enhance compliance.

Given the robust effects of compliments on liking as well as the literature showing that liking is associated with compliance, it is perhaps not surprising that researchers have assumed that compliments are an effective compliance tactic and that the principle of liking has been most commonly advanced to explain its efficacy. However, none of the many studies demonstrating effects of compliments on liking has tested whether this enhanced liking actually translated into higher compliance.

The goals of the current research are twofold. The first goal is to provide a more thorough test of the general effectiveness of compliments in producing compliance. More specifically, the first goal is to test the effects of compliments to direct requests for novel behaviors in contexts where compliments are unconfounded with social validation. The second goal of these studies is to test the pervasive assumption in the literature that liking is a critical mechanism underlying the effects of compliments on compliance.

EXPERIMENT 1

To investigate the effectiveness of compliments as a compliance strategy, participants either received a

compliment or did not receive one during an interaction with a confederate, followed by a request from the confederate. Compliance was measured by participants' response to this request.

To test liking as a potential mechanism underlying the effects of compliments on compliance, participants' liking for the confederate after receiving the compliment was measured. If liking is the mechanism underlying the relationship between compliments and compliance, this liking measure should mediate that relationship.

Method

Participants. Because the current study involved compliments about participants' clothing and pretesting revealed that men viewed clothing compliments as non-normative relative to women, only female participants were recruited. One hundred thirty-six students participated. Data from 17 of these participants were omitted due to participants' suspicions about the confederate. Thus, the final sample included 119 participants aged 17 to 21 years (M age = 18.0 years, $SD = 0.87$). Participants were compensated with either course credit or \$5.¹

Procedure. Each experimental session involved 1 participant and one of two female confederates. Upon arrival, participants were greeted by the experimenter and asked to wait for all participants to arrive. The confederate arrived shortly after the participant. Merely sitting in the same room as well as having a short conversation with a requestor can increase compliance to small favors (Burger et al., 2001). Because participants in the current study would be interacting with confederates who were posing as fellow introductory psychology students, ceiling effects on compliance, as well as on liking, were a concern. To avoid these ceiling effects, the confederate initially acted in a dislikeable manner. As the confederate approached the door, she pretended to have a phone conversation during which she made several nasty remarks about someone she had ostensibly encountered the night before. At this point, the experimenter approached the confederate and asked her if she had arrived to participate in the study. The confederate then hung up and entered the room.

As part of a study on "impression formation," participants began by completing an "Impression Formation Questionnaire," consisting of several mundane questions such as "What is your favourite color?" and "What is your shoe size?" The confederate also completed this questionnaire using predetermined responses.

As the participant neared the end of the questionnaire, the experimenter announced that she would need to leave for a few minutes, ostensibly to make photocopies. While waiting for the experimenter to return, the confederate began a conversation with the participant. In the compliment condition, the confederate began by complimenting an article of the participant's clothing. To ensure that the compliment would not be dismissed easily, the confederate repeated a variation of the compliment twice. For example, the confederate might have said, "I like your sweater, where did you get it?" followed by, "I love the color!" and "It's really cute!" In the control condition, the confederate began the conversation by saying, "Do you find it warm (or cold) in here?" The confederate then asked a few more scripted questions,² which eventually led to her revealing that she was responsible for handing out some flyers advertising a Psychology Careers Night. The confederate finally asked the participant if she would hand out some of the flyers in the university center. The confederate waited until the participant gave a definitive yes or no response.

The experimenter then returned and switched the participant's and confederate's completed questionnaires so that each could "read each other's responses and form impressions of each other based on these responses." Participants then completed the Impression Formation Task, comprising eight adjectives on which participants rated the confederate using 9-point scales ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 9 (*very*). Three adjectives selected to measure liking (likeable, friendly, and pleasant) were embedded in this list,³ and were averaged to form one liking measure (Cronbach's $\alpha = .92$). Finally, participants were probed for suspicion and debriefed.

Results

Liking. To document the impact of our compliment manipulation on liking for the requestor, a 2×2 (confederate: Confederate A vs. Confederate B⁴)

¹Initially we planned to test individual differences in reciprocity as a potential moderator of the compliment effect. Participants were thus those who had scored in the upper or lower thirds on the Personal Norm of Reciprocity Scale (PNRS; Perugini, Gallucci, Presaghi, & Ercolani, 2003). Because the PNRS did not result in any theoretically meaningful effects, it was dropped from the analysis. Results were similar regardless of whether the PNRS was included.

²The authors will provide the full confederate script upon request.

³The five other adjectives were *intelligent*, *competent*, *ambitious*, *sincere*, and *honest*.

⁴Two female undergraduates took turns playing the role of the confederate. Chi-square tests confirmed that confederate was unconfounded with compliment condition, $\chi^2(1) = 1.65, p = .20$.

between-subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted on the liking measure. The pattern of means was consistent with our hypothesis such that those in the compliment condition ($M=7.36$, $SD=1.10$) tended to report greater liking than did those in the control condition ($M=7.05$, $SD=1.22$). However, this mean difference was nonsignificant, $F(1, 111)=1.75$, $p=.18$.

Compliance. To examine the effectiveness of compliments, a 2 (compliment: compliment vs. control) \times 2 (confederate: Confederate A vs. Confederate B) loglinear analysis was conducted on compliance. As predicted, an effect of compliment condition emerged; participants complied substantially more in the compliment condition (79%) than in the control condition (46%), $L^2(1)=8.60$, $p<.01$. This finding is particularly noteworthy as it provides the first direct evidence to suggest that compliments are an effective means of increasing compliance to a direct request. Although no effect of confederate was predicted, Confederate A produced marginally higher compliance rates overall (70%) than confederate B (50%), $L^2(1)=3.61$, $p<.10$. Of importance, however, confederate was not confounded with condition, nor did confederate interact with the compliment condition.⁵

Furthermore, additional evidence refuting the hypothesis that liking was responsible for the effects of compliments on compliance was provided by examining the correlation between liking and compliance. Contrary to what would be predicted based on a liking explanation, liking and compliance were uncorrelated, $r(115)=.06$, $p=.50$.

Discussion

Experiment 1 provided the first test of compliments as a means of securing compliance with a direct request to perform a novel behavior. Simply complimenting an individual on an item of her clothing nearly doubled compliance rates to a request to hand out flyers. Of importance, the compliment was unrelated to the request and thus could not be construed as social validation for performing the requested behavior. Experiment 1 was also the first test of liking as a mechanism underlying the effectiveness of compliments. The data do not provide a convincing case for liking as the primary mechanism by which compliments influence compliance. Although compliments did lead

⁵To explore the idea that liking interacted with the compliment manipulation, a logistic regression was conducted including a centered liking measure as an independent variable. Results revealed that liking did not interact with the compliment condition.

to notable increases in compliance, they did not significantly increase liking, nor was liking correlated with compliance.

Despite the contributions of Experiment 1, a few limitations of this study merit comment. First, as in prior research on compliments, the face-to-face interaction used in this experiment required the use of confederates who could not be blind to condition, possibly leading to experimenter bias. Moreover, because of this naturalistic setting, many variables were beyond experimental control. For example, the individual characteristics of the confederates (e.g., attractiveness, similarity to the participant) as well as the nature of face-to-face conversations may have led to large amounts of error variance, possibly obscuring the effects of compliments on liking. Second, the liking measure was administered after the request so it would not interfere with participants' compliance. However, this placement also meant that participants' compliance may have influenced their responding to the liking measure, which may have been problematic in evaluating liking as a potential mediator. Thus, a second study was conducted to replicate the compliment effect in a different setting while addressing the aforementioned limitations.

EXPERIMENT 2

Experiment 2 tested our key hypotheses using procedures that overcame some of the limitations of the prior study. First, this study used a computer-mediated interaction paradigm to eliminate any potential experimenter bias and decrease the effects of extraneous factors. Second, the study measured liking prior to the compliance request and compliance was assessed using a more sensitive continuous measure rather than dichotomous index. Finally, to further accentuate differences in liking for the requestor, Experiment 2 included a condition wherein participants received an insult from the requestor.

Method

Participants. One hundred sixty-two female introductory psychology students between the ages of 17 and 25 participated. Data from 16 participants who reported suspicion were discarded, resulting in a final sample of 146.⁶

⁶Our original intent was to include males in this experiment. However, post-experimental interviews with initial male participants who went through the experimental procedure indicated that they did not find the computer-mediated conversation to be plausible and thus reported high levels of suspicion regarding the authenticity of the interaction.

Procedure. Each experimental session included anywhere from 1 to 6 participants seated at individual workstations. Participants were informed that the experiment was about impression formation and that they would form impressions of another participant based on limited information, and later interact with this participant via an electronic chat.

Compliment manipulation. Participants began by writing a short self-description.⁷ They were then informed that had been paired with a randomly selected participant named "Sarah." Next they read Sarah's self-description, consisting of a few short sentences describing an average university student. After briefly describing their impressions of Sarah, participants viewed Sarah's impressions of the participant, constituting the compliment manipulation. In the compliment condition, participants read the following statement: "Based on what she wrote, she seems really nice. She'd definitely be a fun girl to hang out with." In the insult condition, participants read a slightly negative statement: "She seems ok, I guess. Based on what she wrote, I'm guessing we are pretty different people, so she probably wouldn't be the kind of person I'd be close friends with." In the control condition, participants read a neutral statement: "Based on what she wrote, she seems nice, but I don't really have too much to go on."

Liking measure. Participants then completed the liking measure, consisting of the same three adjectives used in Experiment 1 on 7-point scales ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very*) ($\alpha = .89$).

Compliance measure. Participants were then told that for the chat portion, they would be assigned to either an interviewer or respondent role and that we were interested in studying the types of questions that people ask one another when they are first getting to know each other. Moreover, participants were told that because researchers were primarily interested in the types of questions asked (and not the responses), interviewers should choose "yes or no questions." After learning that they were assigned the respondent role, participants began the chat by receiving a question about whether they lived in the university residence. After participants clicked *yes* or *no*, they waited for

Sarah to ask another question. Participants received several other questions related to classes and instructors, followed by a request, adapted from Burger et al. (2001). Sarah explained that for an English class, she had to find someone she did not know very well to read her three-page assignment and give her some written feedback by the same time the next day. So as not to arouse suspicion, the request also came with an acknowledgment from Sarah that the situation was indeed a strange one to be asking such a favor. After responding, participants received one more question unrelated to the request and were informed the chat session was finished. Participants were then probed for suspicion and given a full debriefing.

Results

Liking. To confirm that our compliment manipulation influenced liking of the requestor, a one-way ANOVA was conducted on the liking measure. A strong main effect of compliment condition was found, $F(2, 143) = 49.57$, $p < .001$. Post-hoc Tukey comparisons confirmed that individuals in the compliment condition ($M = 5.99$, $SD = .59$) reported greater liking than did those in the control condition ($M = 5.02$, $SD = 1.07$, $p < .001$), and participants in the insult condition ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 1.10$) reported less liking than those in the control condition ($p < .001$).

Compliance. Reaction time (RT) was easily measured in Experiment 2, allowing us to construct a continuous measure of compliance. Acquiescing very quickly to a request might be considered more compliant than acquiescing after some hesitation. Similarly, refusing the request after some hesitation could be considered more compliant than refusing immediately. Therefore, an index combining both agreement/disagreement, and the time required to make the response was created to better capture this meaningful variability in compliance. Thus, a reciprocal transformation was conducted on RT to normalize the data (see Fazio, 1990). This transformation resulted in an index in which larger numbers corresponded to quicker response times. The transformed RT was then multiplied by $-10,000$ for refusals and multiplied by $+10,000$ for acquiescent responses to create a continuous measure of compliance, with higher numbers reflecting greater compliance (faster acquiescing) and lower numbers reflecting lower compliance (faster refusing).

To investigate the effect of compliments on compliance, a one-way ANOVA was conducted on the compliance index. As predicted, a main effect of compliment condition emerged, $F(2, 143) = 3.38$, $p = .04$. Post hoc comparisons indicated that compliance was higher in

⁷Initially we planned to test an experimental manipulation of the salience of the reciprocity norm as a potential moderator of the compliment effect. Thus a priming manipulation was included prior to the experiment wherein participants responded to items from the PNRS (Perugini et al., 2003) or responded to neutral questions. This manipulation proved unsuccessful and was thus dropped from analysis. Results were similar regardless of whether reciprocity was included.

the compliment condition ($M = .24$, $SD = .45$) compared to the control condition ($M = -.02$, $SD = .48$, $p = .03$). This effect is notable as it replicates the compliment effect found in Experiment 1 with an entirely different compliment and request, and in a different setting, suggesting that compliments are an effective compliance strategy across a range of situations.

Of interest, receiving an insult did not affect compliance. Participants who received an insult ($M = .07$, $SD = .55$) had similar compliance rates to those who received a neutral comment ($p = .25$). This result was particularly surprising in light of the fact that insults did significantly decrease liking.

Mediation analysis. Although liking was clearly not a mediator of compliments and compliance in Experiment 1, the role of liking as a mechanism in the current study is less clear. On one hand, when examining just the effects of compliments, liking remains a plausible mediator. Compliments increased liking relative to the control condition, and compliments also increased compliance relative to the control condition. On the other hand, when examining just the effects of insults, liking does not seem to be a plausible mediator. Although insults did decrease liking, they did not decrease compliance. Given that liking appears to be a plausible mediator of the effect of compliments on compliance, a more formal test of mediation was conducted only for those conditions that fit this pattern (i.e., the control and compliment conditions). This mediational model appears in Figure 1.

A series of regressions designed to test liking as a mediator were conducted omitting the insult condition. First, compliment condition significantly predicted compliance ($\beta = .27$, $t = 2.74$, $p = .03$). Compliments also significantly predicted liking ($\beta = .49$, $t = 5.54$, $p < .01$). As in Experiment 1, however, the relationship between liking and compliance was nonsignificant ($\beta = .14$, $t = 1.39$, $p = .17$). Therefore, liking cannot account for the effects of compliments on compliance.

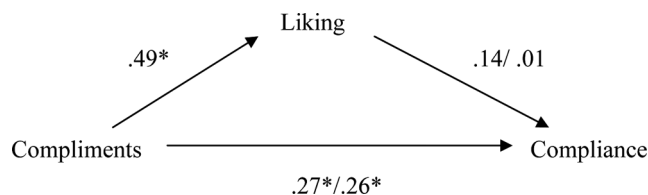


FIGURE 1 Mediation analysis. *Note.* When two coefficients are presented on one pathway, the first coefficient represents the simple effect and the second represents the effect of the partial coefficient. All coefficients are standardized ordinary least squares regression coefficients. $*p < .05$.

Discussion

Experiment 2 replicated the compliment effect found in Experiment 1, demonstrating that the effect can be generalized beyond face-to-face interactions and is not dependent on the particular compliment and request used in Experiment 1. This finding also confirms that the compliment effect demonstrated in Experiment 1 was not due to experimenter bias. As in Experiment 1, the data also strongly suggested that liking cannot be responsible for the compliment effect. Although compliments had substantial effects on compliance and liking, liking was not a predictor of compliance.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Summary and Implications

The present studies provide the first evidence that compliments enhance compliance with direct requests. Although compliments have long been presumed by social influence researchers to be a potentially useful method of securing compliance with a direct request (e.g., see Cialdini, 2009), little research has attempted to test this assumption. The best evidence to date (e.g., Seiter, 2007, Seiter & Dutson, 2007) was limited to tipping behavior and was, as mentioned earlier, subject to alternative explanations such as experimenter expectancy effects or social validation processes.

The second contribution of the present studies is that they are the first attempts to gauge the viability of the dominant explanation for why compliments might influence compliance. The most striking finding of these studies is that both suggested that liking effects were not responsible for the success of compliments as a compliance tactic. Although liking of the requestor was generally enhanced by receiving compliments, liking was not related to subsequent compliance and thus did not mediate compliment effects. This failure to find evidence for the liking explanation is quite surprising, especially in light of researchers' assumptions that liking was doubtlessly an important mechanism (e.g., Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004; Seiter, 2007, Seiter & Dutson, 2007). Indeed, one reason that researchers have perhaps not bothered to test this assumption is because it is so intuitively appealing. Compliments have been shown to have such robust effects on liking that the question of whether this liking was responsible for later compliance may have seemed too obvious to warrant further study.

Our studies confirm the impact of compliments on liking, but they suggest that this enhanced liking was not responsible for greater compliance. Of importance, the failure to find evidence for the liking explanation is difficult to attribute to poor measurement. Our measure of liking was highly reliable, and it was sufficiently

sensitive to result in differences across conditions, both in the positive direction for compliments and in the negative direction for insults. Hence, compliments really do appear to increase compliance independently of any effects on liking of the requestor. Of course, this does not mean that liking never plays a role in the impact of compliments on compliance. It does, however, indicate that liking mechanisms are not necessary for compliments to enhance compliance.

One interesting aspect of our results that provides further insight into the surprising independence of liking and compliance was the finding in Experiment 2 that receiving an insult decreased liking but had no effect on compliance. At first glance, this finding might seem counterintuitive. However, it is consistent with recent research suggesting that when individuals observe negative behavior in others, this behavior has a strong influence on how we evaluate these people, but a much weaker effect on how we behave towards them (Wang, Galinsky, & Murnighan, 2009). Therefore, although evaluations were clearly negatively affected by receiving an insult, participants may nonetheless have been reluctant to refuse the request because of the larger psychological impact a refusal may have on the requestor. Conversely, the fact that compliments did influence compliance behavior in a positive direction is consistent with Wang et al.'s finding that people tend to reward others' positive behaviors more strongly than they punish others' negative behaviors. Thus, the Wang et al. perspective may provide some insight into why interpersonal evaluations and interpersonal behavior are more independent of one another than might be expected.

Future Directions

Although these studies advance our understanding of the utility of compliments as a compliance tactic, as with any set of studies, the present research also raises a number of unanswered questions. Our studies suggest that compliments are an effective compliance tactic and they indicate that liking *is not* responsible (or at least not required) for its efficacy. However, they do not explain what processes *are* responsible for its success. Three alternative possibilities come to mind.

First, receiving a compliment may produce feelings of indebtedness toward the flatterer (see Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). Because compliments can be viewed as a prosocial behavior, the target of the compliment may feel they should reciprocate with some sort of prosocial behavior in return, regardless of whether the compliment produced feelings of liking.

Second, compliments may sometimes provide feedback to people that alter their self-concepts in ways that promote compliance to the request. For example, in Experiment 2, the compliment involved statements

suggesting that the requestor saw the participant as a friendly and pleasant person. Perhaps enhanced extremity and/or accessibility of self-perceptions of friendliness may have in turn made people more inclined to agree to the request in order to maintain consistency between their self-concepts and behaviors. Of course, this explanation, although plausible for Experiment 2, seems less convincing for Experiment 1 in which the compliment involved an article of clothing. Nonetheless, the potential impact of compliments on the self-concept is a potentially fruitful direction for future research.

A third possibility is that perhaps compliments provide a reinforcing experience that leads people to be motivated to maintain or continue to develop their relationship with the requestor. Both studies involved interactions in which participants expected they might be able to have future interactions. Indeed, in both paradigms, agreement to the request would potentially involve additional interaction with the requestor. It is possible that receiving a compliment provided a reinforcing experience that led participants to believe that continued interaction with the requestor might be a positive experience thereby making them more likely to comply. Future studies testing this possibility would be a potentially valuable addition to the literature.

CONCLUSIONS

The present research supports the long-held folk wisdom that compliments can, if not "get you everywhere," certainly help in getting you where you want to be. However, these studies also highlight an important point that folk wisdom has not recognized. Compliments are an effective compliance tactic, but not necessarily for the reasons one might expect. The reasons for the effectiveness of compliments are far more subtle than one might imagine. Indeed, the mechanisms underlying this effect appear to be more complex than even social influence researchers have imagined.

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