

What's in a Name? A Complimentary Means of Persuasion

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Three experiments demonstrate that remembering someone's name facilitates their compliance with a purchase request made by the rememberer. Experiment 1 shows that name remembrance increases request compliance, but name forgetting does not cause a decrease in compliance. Experiments 2 and 3 show that name remembrance is perceived as a compliment by the person remembered, which mediates compliance with the purchase request. Experimental manipulations of the likelihood of name remembrance (experiment 2) and need for self-enhancement (experiment 3) provide results consistent with a complimentary explanation for the findings.

Remember that a person's name is to that person the sweetest and most important sound in any language. (DALE CARNEGIE 1936, p. 83)

After an initial introduction, it seems to be a common experience for people to "feel good" when someone remembers their names at a later point in time. Such a reaction is understandable in view of the argument that there is perhaps no personal possession as fundamental to the self as a person's name (Allport 1961). This series of studies will examine whether, and why, remembering someone's name facilitates persuasion, measured through compliance with a request made of the person remembered.¹

No empirical studies have yet examined the influence of name remembrance on cognitive, affective, or behavioral measures of the person remembered. Similarly, the literature outside memory processes (see Burton and Bruce 1992; Cohen 1990) has all but ignored the issue of a person's name as an important theoretical variable, with the exception of Allport (1937, 1961). However, discussions with sales personnel reveal that the importance of remembering customers' names is an accepted professional principal. The applied sales literature not only emphasizes the wisdom and importance of re-

membering and using customers' names (e.g., Futrell 1988; Marks 1991) but also suggests that doing so should result in an increase in sales (Levy and Weitz 1992; Witsman 1987) and general influence power (Carnegie 1936).

Despite the lack of empirical support for the effects of name remembrance on compliance behavior, there do appear to be theoretical grounds for expecting such an outcome. Such expectations are founded in the literature on the self-serving bias and reciprocal positive regard.

The self-serving bias is the tendency to perceive oneself in a favorable light, often by assuming personal responsibility for desirable outcomes and blaming undesirable, or even neutral, outcomes on situational factors (see Myers [1987] and Zuckerman [1979] for reviews). Such egocentric interpretations are observed across a broad range of social events, including perceptions of athletic (Myers 1987) and gambling outcomes (Gilovich 1983), contributions to joint activities in dating and marital relationships (Ross and Sicoly 1979; Thompson and Kelley 1981), performances on scholastic exams (Arkin and Maruyama 1979; Griffin et al. 1983), acceptance and rejection of academic papers submitted for publication (Wiley, Crittenden, and Birg 1979), driving ability (Svenson 1981), ethical standards

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¹We use the term "persuasion" in its literal sense: "to induce someone to believe or do something" (*Merriam-Webster's Dictionary*). Friestad and Wright (1994) have a similar view of persuasion as "presenting information designed to influence beliefs, decisions or actions" (p. 2). The studies reported here examine purchase request compliance behavior and thus can be viewed as studies of persuasion.

(Brenner and Molander 1977), intelligence (Wylie 1979), and general fairness (Fields and Schuman 1976).

The evidence clearly supports the position that people tend to make and believe self-serving attributions across a wide diversity of occurrences. This research will examine another such occurrence: someone's ability to remember our name. We argue that name remembrance is likely to facilitate self-serving attributions (by the person remembered), because individuals' names are an integral component of their sense of self (Allport 1937, 1961; Hermans 1987; Hymer 1985).

But what would be the specific consequences of one person's remembering another's name? We would expect little effect if the act of name remembrance could be easily attributed to external circumstances, such as time (e.g., "I would expect her to remember my name given that we were introduced only an hour ago") or unusual events (e.g., "I'm sure he remembers my name because I tripped and fell after we were introduced"). In such cases, the person remembered might attribute the act of name remembrance to those external circumstances. Let us also assume that the person remembered has not engaged in negatively valenced behavior that might explain the act of name remembrance (e.g., "I'm sure she remembers my name because I acted like such an idiot when we met"), which is a reasonable expectation at least when a person is initially introduced to someone else.

Under the remaining circumstances—which define many second and subsequent encounters between people—the act of name remembrance should be interpreted as a compliment. The grounds for this position are a view of the self as an affectively biased system that strives to enhance feelings of general self-worth (see Bowerman 1978; Bradley 1978; and Myers and Ridl 1979) and does so through self-serving interpretations of personally relevant events (i.e., a self-serving bias). In the case of name remembrance, we would expect the person remembered to infer that the rememberer perceived something favorable in him/her that caused the act of name remembrance. Such an interpretation would be congruent with studies showing the tendency of people to perceive themselves as playing a causal role in events (Fenigstein 1984; Langer and Roth 1975), especially when such beliefs are consistent with a favorable view of themselves (Ross and Sicoly 1979).

We believe such an assessment should increase the likelihood of compliance with requests made by the rememberer. Ample literature exists demonstrating that one person's perception of another's positive regard can produce reciprocal positive feelings (Curtis and Miller 1986; Drachman, de Carufel, and Insko 1978; Jacobs, Bersheid, and Walster 1971; Regan 1976), as well as increased compliance behavior (Berscheid and Walster 1978). Hence, because we tend to like those who like us (see, e.g., Curtis and Miller 1986; Regan 1976) and agree with requests made by those we like (see Cialdini

1993), the perception of name remembrance as a compliment should facilitate request compliance.

The three studies reported here examine the effects of remembering someone's name on their willingness to comply with a purchase request made by the rememberer. All three studies examine predictions derived from the literature on the self-serving bias. The first study tests for the compliance-facilitating effects of name remembrance. The last two studies test for the form of self-serving bias driving the results: the interpretation of name remembrance as a compliment.

In the first study, name remembrance is expected to increase request compliance. An alternative explanation examined is whether name forgetting decreases compliance. These two possibilities are assessed through comparisons to another condition in which the issue of a subject's name is never raised. If compliance in the name-recall group is greater than the group where the issue of a subject's name is never raised and the group where a subject's name is forgotten, it would suggest that name recall facilitates compliance. On the other hand, if name forgetting results in less compliance than in the group where a subject's name is never mentioned, it would suggest that a failure to remember someone's name decreases compliance.

A lack of name recall might decrease compliance if, for example, people felt offended or insulted by someone's inability to remember their names. However, the literature on the self-serving bias indicates that people tend to accept information compatible with, but discount information incompatible with, a favorable view of the self. Thus, name remembrance was hypothesized to facilitate request compliance.

EXPERIMENT 1

Method

Procedure. The context was a university classroom setting. The experimenter was the professor in the target classes. All of the classes, in this and subsequent experiments, had first-day enrollments between 39 and 56 students. On the first day of class, the professor asked each student to publicly introduce himself/herself and to briefly indicate his/her background or interests. All students provided their first and last names as part of their introduction. Background and interest statements generally focused on academic or work-related issues, and sometimes a student reported his/her hometown. Each individual's total introduction took on average about 15 seconds. In this and subsequent experiments, the professor avoided making reference to students' names after the initial introductions.

After the introductions, the professor announced that he wanted to talk with each student individually to determine level of preparation for the class. A sign-up sheet was then distributed for office appointments on

the following day, which was prior to the second class meeting.

When students in the name or no-name conditions arrived at the office for their appointment the professor stated:

Don't tell me your name. Let me see if I can remember. I'm terrible at names and I'm trying to train myself to be better at it. . . . I haven't looked at the appointment sheet, so don't tell me. . . . I remember you introducing yourself in class.

The professor then stared intently at the student for approximately three seconds, holding a finger in the air as a "wait" signal. Administration of the name/no-name treatment then followed. In the name condition, the professor correctly stated the student's first and last name. In the no-name condition he shrugged his shoulders and stated, "I can't remember. What's your name again?"

When students in the neutral-name condition arrived at the office, the professor stated, "Hi, how are you? Have a seat." The professor did not make reference to the student's name throughout the meeting, and in most cases the student did not volunteer the information.

Next, in all three conditions, the professor discussed with each student (using a predetermined set of questions) his/her academic and work experiences and how they would relate to the course.

At the end, the professor stood up and stated:

Oh, I have to ask you something else. My wife is selling some cookies for the church. If you want any, they're only 25¢ each.

During this part of the procedure the professor gestured to a small table behind and to the left of the students. The table was covered with a cloth and a tray containing seven varieties of cookies. A cup on the table contained dollar bills and change. A sign hanging over the ledge of the table read, "Saint Patrick's Bake Sale." A sign above the table said, "25¢ each, credit accepted." The table was positioned in the office in such a way that no student would notice it until it was indicated by the professor.

Measured Variables. Two dependent variables were examined. The first was whether subjects purchased any cookies (yes or no). The second was the number of cookies purchased.

Subjects and Design. Thirty subjects were randomly assigned to the name, no-name, and neutral-name conditions. Students who knew the professor prior to the first day of class were eliminated from treatment consideration.² Two students in the neutral-name condition reintroduced themselves to the professor on entering his office and were eliminated from the analysis, which

resulted in a final sample size of 28. A one-factor between-subjects design was examined.

Results

The first analysis examined whether subjects purchased any cookies (yes vs. no) as a function of the three treatment groups. The likelihood ratio chi-square statistic ($LR-\chi^2$) for the 3×2 contingency table was not significant ($LR-\chi^2(2) = 4.11; p < .13$). However, when the two control groups (the no-name and neutral-name conditions) were combined (purchase rate was 60 percent for the no-name and 50 percent for the neutral-name conditions), the chi-square value for the 2×2 table attained significance ($LR-\chi^2(1) = 3.93; p < .05; R^2 = .40$), where 90 percent of the name-recall but only 55 percent of the neutral-name or no-name-recall subjects purchased cookies.³

One-way ANOVA results for the number of cookies purchased were significant ($F(2,25) = 4.47; p < .02; \omega^2 = .24$). Cell comparisons were performed by means of *t*-statistics with critical value adjustments based on the Bonferroni procedure (Hays 1981; Rosenthal and Rubin 1983, 1984). The mean number of cookies purchased by subjects in the name condition ($\bar{X} = 1.70$) was found to be significantly higher than those purchased by subjects in the no-name ($\bar{X} = .80; t(25) = 2.40; p < .05$, one-tailed) or neutral-name ($\bar{X} = .63; t(25) = 2.85, p < .03$) conditions. There was no significant difference between the no-name and neutral-name conditions ($t < 1$).

Discussion

The results of experiment 1 do not support the possibility that the inability to remember someone's name reduces compliance. The inability to remember a student's name produced compliance results no different from those of a condition in which the issue of the student's name was never raised. On the other hand, the higher purchasing rate for name-recall subjects relative to both control groups indicates that name remembrance facilitates compliance.

³All contingency tables in this research were examined by hierarchical log-linear analysis (see Reynolds 1977; Upton 1978). The log-linear model states that the natural logarithm of an expected cell frequency can be written as an additive function of a grand mean, main effects, and interactions, similar to ANOVA models. The goal is to derive estimations of the observed data based on a set of proposed effects to see whether the discrepancies between the estimated and observed data are sufficiently small. If they are, the model is said to "fit." Goodman (1972) argues that the $LR-\chi^2$ value for the null model (containing only the grand mean) can be considered analogous to the total sums of squares in ANOVA (or regression) problems. Thus, the $LR-\chi^2$ contributions for individual effects (to the reduction of this total) can be used to calculate R^2 , an estimate of the total cell frequency variation accounted for by the addition of a particular model effect. In experiment 1, the effect in question was the association between name remembrance (yes/no) and compliance (yes/no).

²This selection procedure was used in all three experiments.

One might argue that perhaps subjects in the two control conditions felt equally insulted, which equally lowered compliance in both groups, producing the observed pattern of means. However, there do not appear to be reasonable grounds to support such an interpretation. Concerning the neutral-name condition, subjects in debriefing indicated greetings in the style of "Hi, how are you, have a seat" are among the most common, and expected, greetings utilized by professors when visited by students, especially at the start of the semester. This "reasonable expectation" view of the neutral-name greetings would argue against students' feeling offended or insulted at their professor's failure to use their names. Hence, the lack of compliance differences between the no-name and neutral-name subjects is consistent with the suggestion that both treatments were equivalently inoffensive.

Although the facilitation of compliance by name remembrance in experiment 1 is compatible with a complimentary explanation for the results, clear evidence of such an interpretation was not obtained. This issue was examined in experiment 2.

EXPERIMENT 2

A complimentary explanation for the results implies that the act of name remembrance makes people feel special in some way. Likewise, if subjects feel that name remembrance is expected or the norm in a particular situation, a complimentary interpretation of that event should not occur, nor should increased compliance. For example, the shorter the period of time between an introduction and attempted recall of one's name, the higher the expectation that name remembrance should occur naturally. Anyone's name should be recalled given a short enough period of time since name review; in that case, the likelihood that such an event would be interpreted as a compliment will be low. This low likelihood of interpretation as a compliment is consistent with the discounting principle of attribution theory (Kelley 1972). According to this principle, when someone perceives another's behavior (e.g., name remembrance) as being caused by external or situational circumstances (e.g., a short time since you heard my name), that someone should be more uncertain whether the other's behavior is a reflection of (caused by) his/her inner feelings or attitudes. Quite simply, if students know that an instructor has recently learned their names, there is no reason for them to interpret remembering their names as a reflection of admiration or respect (i.e., a compliment). In experiment 2 it was hypothesized that the effects of name remembrance on purchase behavior would be significantly less in a condition where the instructor was believed to have recently learned a student's name.

Alternative mediational explanations were also examined in experiment 2. The hypothesized mediational

construct was complimentary perceptions. However, the possibility that name-remembrance effects on purchase behavior are mediated by positive affect also deserves examination. In experiment 1, we observed that students visibly brightened and seemed happy when their professor remembered their names. A large body of literature has indicated that positive affect can increase the tendency to help others (e.g., Isen 1970; Isen and Levin 1972; Levin and Isen 1975; Weyant 1978). This may be a particularly viable alternative explanation for the purchase behavior results in experiment 1 given that the cookies were being sold for a church (charity) bake sale. Positive affect has previously been shown to facilitate giving to charity (see, e.g., Isen 1970). Thus, the position could be taken that the results previously found (and hypothesized for experiment 2), could be explained alternatively by the effects of positive mood.

It makes sense for students to be in a good mood when their professor remembers their names, and there is no reason not to expect that mood to influence their compliance behavior. However, there are grounds to argue that the mediation of name-remembrance effects on purchase behavior should be *stronger* for flattery perceptions than for positive mood.

It has been argued that the purchase of cookies is a reciprocal reaction to a perceived compliment. If this reciprocation reasoning is correct, flattery perceptions should mediate purchasing more strongly than mood. This should be found because flattery is a more recognizable exchange than mood. The perception of one person receiving something from another is a necessary component of the reciprocation process (Gouldner 1960). Flattery perceptions, by definition, involve the conscious recognition of interpersonal relations and the exchange of favorable information. Mood effects, on the other hand, may or may not be attributable to a particular source, and one may or may not even be cognizant of a mood (Clark and Isen 1982). In summary, we expect flattery perceptions to mediate purchase compliance more strongly than positive mood.

Mediational tests were conducted according to Baron and Kenny's (1986) method. Baron and Kenny state that three regression equations must be estimated to establish a mediational model, and the following effects must hold: (1) there must be a significant effect of regressing the mediator on the independent variable, (2) there must be a significant effect of regressing the dependent variable on the independent variable, and (3) when the dependent variable is regressed on both the mediator and the independent variable, the effect of the independent variable must be weaker than in the second regression equation. If all three of these conditions hold, the mediational model is supported. Baron and Kenny note that the "strongest demonstration of mediation" (p. 1176) occurs when the independent variable is reduced to nonsignificance in the third regression equation.

Method

Procedure. On the first day of class students again introduced themselves publicly and briefly mentioned their background or interests as in experiment 1. Toward the end of the class students were told that a longitudinal study on student class evaluations was being conducted and extra credit would be given for participation in that study. Sign-up sheets were then distributed. All students participated on the day following initial classroom introductions.

As each student arrived at the professor's office, the name and no-name treatments were executed as in experiment 1. However, a third, name-discounted condition was also implemented as follows:

Don't tell me your name. Let me see if I can remember. I'm terrible at names and I'm trying to train myself to be better at it. . . . I looked at the appointment sheet about half an hour ago, so don't tell me.

The professor then stared intently at the student for approximately three seconds with his finger in the air as a "wait" signal. The person's first and last name were then stated.

Thus, the name-discounted procedure varied from both the name and no-name procedures in the time element made salient to subjects. The name-discounted procedure made salient the recency of name learning (i.e., "I looked at the appointment sheet about half an hour ago, so don't tell me"), whereas the name and no-name procedures made salient a less recent time interval since name learning (i.e., "I haven't looked at the appointment sheet, so don't tell me. . . . I remember you introducing yourself in class"). Next, in all three conditions, the experimenter explained the "class evaluation" study.

It was described as a study of how student perceptions of a course and its instructor change over the course of a term. Thus, the university wanted students to complete a brief questionnaire on their initial perceptions of one of their courses and instructors; the same questions would be asked again at the end of the term. However, because the course instructor they were being asked to evaluate was also the person administering the study, they were told to seal the questionnaire in an envelope on completion and place it in a box in another professor's office. They were told the questionnaire would not be examined until the end of the term and that this was being done to help assure candor in their answers.

Students were then given the questionnaire (in an envelope) and taken to a separate room to complete it. The questionnaire (two pages plus a cover sheet) contained two open-ended questions on the course and instructor to support the cover story, items measuring the professor's regard for the student (i.e., complimentary perceptions) and a "personal information" section that contained filler questions and mood measures. They

were also shown the office to which they were to take the questionnaire on completion. Students were told to return to the experimenter's office when they were done to sign a sheet showing completion of their extra credit assignment.

When students returned to the experimenter's office they were thanked, signed the extra credit sheet, and were briefly engaged in conversation about course (but not instructor) evaluations. At the end, the experimenter stood up and made the cookie purchase request as described in experiment 1.

Measured Variables. The same dependent variables were examined as in experiment 1. Six items, with seven-point scales, were used in mediational testing. Extensive pretesting was utilized to develop three items measuring the receipt of a compliment, as reflected in student perceptions of how their professor evaluates them. Students were asked to complete the statements, "My [course title] professor" likes me/does not like me, does not think I'm important/thinks I'm important, and values my individuality/does not value my individuality. These items were found to consistently measure the same underlying construct ($\alpha = .91$) and were summed to form a flattery index. Three items were used to measure positive mood and were modified from Wood, Saltzberg, and Goldsant (1990). Subjects were asked "to place an 'x' in the space that corresponds to how you feel now" and presented with seven-point scales for the following descriptions: happy/not happy, not hopeful/hopeful, and cheerful/not cheerful. These items reliably measured positive mood ($\alpha = .84$) and were summed to form an index.

Subjects and Design. Thirty-one subjects were randomly assigned to three experimental conditions represented by the name, no-name, and name-discounted conditions. Thus, a one-factor between-subjects design was implemented.

Results

Purchase Behavior. The first analysis examined whether subjects purchased any cookies (yes vs. no) as a function of the treatment groups. These two variables were found to be significantly associated ($LR-\chi^2(2) = 7.44$; $p < .02$; $R^2 = .43$), where 100 percent of the name-recall subjects but only 60 percent and 70 percent of the name-discounted and no-name subjects, respectively, purchased cookies.

One-way ANOVA results on the number of cookies purchased were significant ($F(2,28) = 5.57$; $p < .009$; $\omega^2 = .27$). Multiple comparisons were again performed by means of *t*-statistics with critical value adjustments based on the Bonferroni procedure (Hays 1981; Rosenthal and Rubin 1983, 1984). The difference between the name ($\bar{X} = 2.18$) and no-name ($\bar{X} = 1.10$) conditions was significant ($t(28) = 2.53$; $p < .05$), demonstrating

for the second time that the ability to remember someone's name facilitates compliance. The difference between the name and name-discounted ($\bar{X} = .90$) conditions was also significant ($t(28) = 3.00$; $p < .03$), demonstrating that recency of name learning eliminates the compliance facilitation effect found with name recall. No significant difference was found between the no-name and name-discounted means ($t < 1$).

Mood and Flattery Indices. One-way ANOVA results were significant for positive mood ($F(2,28) = 4.02$; $p < .03$; $\omega^2 = .20$). A comparison between the name ($\bar{X} = 18.18$) and no-name ($\bar{X} = 14.40$) conditions revealed a significant effect of name remembrance ($t(28) = 2.61$; $p < .05$), indicating that students' moods became more positive when their professor remembered their names. A comparison between the name and name-discounted ($\bar{X} = 15.20$) conditions was also significant ($t(28) = 2.06$; $p < .05$, one-tailed), demonstrating that students' moods became less positive when told that their professor reviewed their names just prior to recall. No significant difference was found between the no-name and name-discounted means ($t < 1$).

One-way ANOVA results were also significant for the flattery index ($F(2,28) = 10.82$; $p < .0001$; $\omega^2 = .42$). The difference between the name ($\bar{X} = 17.73$) and no-name ($\bar{X} = 11.20$) conditions was reliable ($t(28) = 4.27$; $p < .0005$), indicating that name-recall subjects felt more flattered than those whose names were not recalled. However, the difference between the name and name-discounted ($\bar{X} = 12.50$) conditions was also significant ($t(28) = 3.42$; $p < .005$), demonstrating that the effect of name recall on flattery perceptions is eliminated when recency of name learning is present. No significant difference was found between the name and name-discounted means ($t < 1$).

Mediational Testing. Tests were run comparing the flattery and mood indices as rival mediators. Name remembrance was found to have a significant effect on both indices ($F(1,29) = 21.11$; $p < .0001$; $F(1,29) = 7.92$; $p < .009$). Name remembrance also had a significant effect on the number of cookies purchased ($F(1,29) = 11.21$; $p < .002$). Finally, regressing the number of cookies purchased on name remembrance and both rival mediators revealed only a significant effect for the flattery index ($t(29) = 7.50$; $p < .0001$). Name remembrance was reduced to nonsignificance ($t < 1$), and mood failed to enter the model ($t(29) = 1.64$; $p = .11$).

Discussion

The results of experiment 2 indicate that name-remembrance effects on compliance behavior are eliminated when subjects are told the rememberer recently reviewed their name. The results also indicate that people consider the lapse of time since someone learned

their name to decide whether remembrance should or should not be considered a compliment. In accordance with attribution theory, the greater the ability of subjects to attribute name remembrance to external factors (i.e., a short period of time since he saw my name), the less the likelihood of attributing the event to internal causes (e.g., he must like me or think I'm important). This makes sense given that there is a natural expectation for one person to remember someone else's name given a short amount of time since name review. Under such circumstances, there is no reason for the person remembered to feel special (i.e., to interpret that event as a compliment). Complimentary perceptions, in turn, mediate compliance with a purchase request made by the rememberer.

As we expected, name remembrance had similar effects on both positive mood and flattery perceptions, although name remembrance was found to influence flattery perceptions more strongly than it influenced mood ($\omega^2 = .42$ vs. $.20$). Both mediational constructs were also related to purchase request compliance. However, flattery perceptions revealed the stronger effect. The possibility that differential measurement quality could explain this result seems unlikely given the high reliability of both constructs (flattery $\alpha = .91$; mood $\alpha = .84$). Rather, the mediational results are congruent with reasoning that flattery perceptions, to a greater extent than positive mood, may engage the reciprocal exchange of a favor. Thus, compliance with a request made by the rememberer was more strongly related to perceived compliments than to mood.

A third experiment was conducted to determine whether the complimentary explanation for the name-remembrance effect behaves in a theoretically consistent manner across levels of need for self-enhancement.

EXPERIMENT 3

The third experiment was run in two stages by two separate experimenters. The first stage utilized a success/failure task known to manipulate self-image and the need to self-enhance (Beggan 1992; Pittman and Pittman 1979). The second stage of the study employed the name/no-name manipulation followed by a purchase request. The second stage of the study also examined items designed to determine whether reactions to perceived flattery again mediated the name-remembrance effect on compliance behavior.

If name remembrance is perceived as flattery, or a compliment, its effect on compliance should be particularly strong for those with a wounded self-image and a greater need for self-enhancement. This hypothesis is grounded in self-enhancement theory (see, e.g., Horney 1937; Rogers 1961), which argues that people are motivated by a general desire to improve and maintain perceptions of self-worth (see, e.g., Epstein 1973). A central tenet of the theory is that the need for

self-enhancement is especially pronounced in persons with low self-regard (see, e.g., Jones 1973). Thus, people who lack self-esteem experience a stronger drive to compensate for that deficit and do so by a variety of self-aggrandizing means (see Baumgardner and Arkin [1987] and Baumeister [1986]). One of the most common means is the embracing of favorable (and rejection of unfavorable) information about the self.

A variety of experiments have shown that persons with low self-esteem (relative to those with high self-esteem) are more attracted to, and evaluate more highly, persons who provide them with favorable feedback or information regarding themselves. This has been found with experimental manipulations of self-esteem using the bogus feedback technique (Baumgardner, Kaufman, and Levy 1989; Jacobs et al. 1971), as well as with measurements of self-esteem as an individual differences variable (Dittes 1959; Smith and Smoll 1990). Baumgardner et al. (1989) found that these reciprocal positive evaluations by low-esteem subjects were especially likely in public situations (i.e., when subjects believed their judgments concerning the person who evaluated them would be communicated to that person). Baumgardner et al. explained these results by suggesting that low-esteem persons prefer public self-enhancement as a means of testifying that the positive information they received about themselves is valid. Thus, they engage in observable behaviors that are intended to reinforce the notion that they are valuable and likable individuals. This is done by approving of those who provide them with positive feedback. Individuals with high self-esteem, however, do not need to resort to public self-enhancement because they have access to "cognitive buffers" that allow them to maintain their views even when threatened (Baumgardner et al. 1989).

Experiment 3 will attempt to replicate the effect discussed above with two key differences: (1) name remembrance will be utilized as the means of providing positive feedback to subjects, given that it is expected subjects will interpret name remembrance as a compliment; and (2) reciprocal favorable reactions will be measured by the number of cookies purchased from the name rememberer, because request compliance can be viewed as a means of reinforcing or approving of the person who provided the compliment. Thus, a two-way interaction between need for self-enhancement and name remembrance is hypothesized with respect to purchase behavior. Specifically, the difference between the name and no-name recall conditions will be greater under conditions of high need for self-enhancement as opposed to low need for self-enhancement. Further, flattery perceptions will mediate the effects of name remembrance on purchase behavior.

Method

Procedure. On the first day of class, students again introduced themselves publicly and briefly mentioned

their background or interests. Toward the end of the class students were told that the professor who was leading the class and another professor were conducting studies and that extra credit would be given for participation in both studies. Students were told that although the two studies were not related, participation in both was necessary for the extra credit given the limited amount of time involved. The first study was described as a perceptual judgment test and the second as a longitudinal examination of student class evaluations. Sign-up sheets were distributed such that participation in the perceptual judgment test (the cover story for the manipulation of need for self-enhancement) was always immediately followed by the class evaluation study (cover story for the name-remembrance manipulation, mediator assessment, and purchase request). Participation slots were scheduled on the same day and the day after the initial classroom introductions.

The perceptual judgment task was a success/failure manipulation of need for self-enhancement previously described by Pittman and Pittman (1979) and Beggan (1992). Beggan's (1992) methodology was utilized. Subjects were presented with 32 stimulus pairs that differed on five characteristics: letter (*A* vs. *T*), color (red vs. black), letter size (uppercase vs. lowercase), shape around the border of the letter (circular vs. square), and letter underline (dotted vs. solid). The subjects' task was to uncover the rule that determined the presentation of an item in a pair and then to verbally indicate which item was correct. After each trial, the experimenter would say either "right" or "wrong," although no rule actually existed (i.e., bogus feedback was provided). In the success condition, subjects were informed they were right 75 percent of the time; in the failure condition, subjects were told they were wrong 75 percent of the time. Subjects in the success condition were also told, prior to the start of the trials, that the task was "fairly difficult"; subjects in the failure condition were told the task was "fairly easy." This procedure was intended to reinforce the performance feedback.

After the perceptual judgment task, subjects completed a "Task Feedback" form containing manipulation check measures. Next, subjects came to their course professor's office for the class evaluation study. As each student entered the office and sat down the professor executed the name/no-name treatments as described in experiments 1 and 2.

The professor then explained the class evaluation study, and the rest of the procedure was identical to experiment 2. However, the questionnaire that subjects completed was modified to contain different filler items, and the mood measures were not included.⁴

⁴Perceptions of the professor's cognitive abilities were also measured, tested, and not supported as an alternative mediational construct in experiment 3. For reasons of space, no discussion or analysis of this construct is presented.

Measured Variables. The same dependent variables were used as in previous experiments. The same items were used as in experiment 2 to measure complimentary perceptions for mediational testing. All items consistently measured the same construct ($\alpha = .92$) and were summed to yield a flattery index.

Subjects and Design. Forty subjects were randomly assigned to four experimental conditions represented by the high/low need for self-enhancement and name/no-name recall conditions. Thus, a 2×2 between-subjects design was implemented.

Results

Manipulation Checks. Two seven-point scales were used to check the task success/failure manipulation of need for self-enhancement. On completion of that task subjects were asked, "My performance in the experiment makes me feel" good about myself/bad about myself and in need of an ego-boost/not in need of an ego-boost. A main effect of task success/failure was found with both items, and no other significant effects emerged. Subjects experiencing task failure felt worse about themselves ($\bar{X} = 5.45$) than those experiencing task success ($\bar{X} = 3.45$; $F(1,36) = 20.99$; $p < .0001$; $\omega^2 = .37$). Subjects who experienced task failure also stated they were more in need of an ego-boost ($\bar{X} = 3.15$) than task-success subjects ($\bar{X} = 4.93$; $F(1,36) = 9.97$; $p < .01$; $\omega^2 = .22$). These results suggest the task success/failure operation manipulated self-esteem and the resulting need for self-enhancement in the expected manner.⁵

Purchase Behavior. The first analysis examined whether subjects complied with the request to purchase cookies (yes vs. no). This was examined as a function of name recall (yes vs. no) and need for self-enhancement (high vs. low). Thus, a $2 \times 2 \times 2$ contingency table was analyzed, again by hierarchical log-linear analysis (see Reynolds 1977; Upton 1978). The association between name recall and whether subjects purchased cookies was significant ($LR-\chi^2(1) = 5.81$; $p < .02$; $R^2 = .36$), where 85 percent of those in the name-recall condition, but only 50 percent of those in the no-name condition, purchased cookies. The three-way interaction effect was also significant ($LR-\chi^2(1) = 5.36$; $p < .02$; $R^2 = .33$), indicating that the association between name recall and purchasing changed over levels of need for self-enhancement. Specifically, no association between name recall and purchase behavior was found for subjects low in need for self-enhancement ($LR-\chi^2 < 1$), although compliance was directionally

higher in the name-recall (70 percent) than in the no-name condition (60 percent). However, a strong association was found for those high in need for self-enhancement ($LR-\chi^2(1) = 10.74$; $p < .001$), as shown by 100 percent and 40 percent compliance rates in the name-recall and no-name conditions, respectively. Thus, the hypothesis was supported with respect to whether subjects complied with the purchase request.

A two-way ANOVA model was examined to test the hypothesis on the extent of compliance, measured by the number of cookies purchased. A main effect of name remembrance was seen ($F(1,36) = 21.35$; $p < .0001$; $\omega^2 = .33$), where subjects with remembered names ($\bar{X} = 2.35$) purchased more cookies than those whose names were not remembered ($\bar{X} = .70$). The hypothesized interaction between name remembrance and need for self-enhancement was also significant ($F(1,36) = 4.41$; $p < .04$; $\omega^2 = .06$). Comparisons between the name and no-name conditions within each level of need for self-enhancement were made by means of two orthogonal contrasts. For subjects with a low need for self-enhancement, name remembrance resulted in a greater number of cookies purchased ($\bar{X} = 1.80$) than for those in the no-name condition ($\bar{X} = .90$; $t(36) = 1.78$; $p < .05$, one-tailed). However, the name-remembrance effect was more significant for subjects with a high need for self-enhancement: subjects whose names were remembered purchased almost six times the number of cookies ($\bar{X} = 2.90$) than those whose names were not remembered ($\bar{X} = .50$; $t(36) = 4.75$; $p < .00001$).⁶ Thus, the hypothesis was also supported for the extent of compliance with the purchase request.

Flattery Index. The ANOVA results for the flattery index mirrored the purchase behavior means. A main effect of name remembrance was found ($F(1,36) = 25.77$; $p < .0001$; $\omega^2 = .38$), where name-recall subjects felt more flattered ($\bar{X} = 17.55$) than no-name-recall subjects ($\bar{X} = 12.45$). The interaction between name remembrance and need for self-enhancement was also significant ($F(1,36) = 3.96$; $p < .05$; $\omega^2 = .05$). A significant difference was found between the name ($\bar{X} = 16.70$) and no-name ($\bar{X} = 13.20$) conditions for those with a low need for self-enhancement ($t(36) = 2.18$; $p < .05$). However, a much larger difference was found between the name ($\bar{X} = 18.80$) and no-name ($\bar{X} = 11.70$) conditions among subjects with a high need for self-enhancement ($t(36) = 5.00$; $p < .00002$).

Tests of Mediation. Regression analyses were run to test flattery perceptions as a mediator of the results. Name remembrance was found to have a significant

⁵Self-enhancement theory (see, e.g., Epstein 1973; Jones 1973) suggests that need for self-enhancement varies inversely with self-esteem. The lower the self-esteem, the higher should be the need for self-enhancement. This was found to be true in this study. The two manipulation check items were correlated at $-.85$.

⁶Another way to examine this interaction is to note that name-recall subjects complied significantly more under high ($\bar{X} = 2.90$) than under low ($\bar{X} = 1.80$) need for self-enhancement ($t(36) = 2.18$; $p < .05$). No significant difference ($t < 1$) was found for subjects whose names were not recalled (high = .50; low = .90).

effect on the flattery index ($F(1,38) = 24.35; p < .0001$). Name remembrance also had a significant effect on the number of cookies purchased ($F(1,38) = 19.61; p < .0001$). Finally, regressing cookie purchases on both name remembrance and the flattery index revealed a significant effect only for the flattery index ($t(38) = 7.47; p < .0001$). Name remembrance was reduced to non-significance ($t(38) = 1.27; p > .20$).

Discussion

The third experiment again provides clear support for the position that name remembrance is perceived as a compliment and that such perceptions mediate name-remembrance effects on purchase behavior. Name remembrance was found to facilitate the *extent* of purchasing across levels of need for self-enhancement, indicating that the technique works at influencing both those who feel "better" and "worse" about themselves at a particular time. A significant name-remembrance effect on *whether* subjects complied with the purchase request was also found. However, this effect was particular to subjects with a high need for self-enhancement.

The lack of a significant effect under low-need conditions may have been due to a loss of treatment sensitivity because of dichotomizing the ratio-level purchase-compliance variable (Hays 1981). However, support for the hypothesized *stronger* effect for *both* compliance measures under conditions of high (as opposed to low) need for self-enhancement suggests that name remembrance functions as a compliment in a theoretically predictable manner—as a means of providing positive feedback to people, which has its strongest impact on those who need it most. Self-enhancement theory (see, e.g., Baumgardner et al. 1989) would suggest that the greater number of cookies purchased by those with a high need for self-enhancement is due to a stronger need to reinforce and confirm the favorable evaluation implied by the act of name remembrance (i.e., "He likes me, thinks I'm important, and values me as an individual"). Request compliance can be viewed as a means of reciprocating those favorable implications of name remembrance. The mediational effects of the flattery index were again pronounced, fulfilling Baron and Kenny's (1986) criteria for the "strongest demonstration of mediation" (i.e., the effect of the independent variable [name remembrance] on purchase behavior was reduced to nonsignificance in the third regression equation).

GENERAL DISCUSSION

This series of studies suggests that the ability to remember someone's name facilitates compliance with a request made by the rememberer. This effect appears to be a robust one and is demonstrated consistently

across three experiments. Further, the experiments revealed a consistent effect both for whether subjects complied and the extent of compliance with the purchase requests. The last two experiments also provided mediational evidence explaining the results.

The first experiment indicated that the locus of the effect was in the facilitation of compliance by remembering someone's name, not in impairment by forgetting the name. This finding is understandable because students had a plausible explanation for the forgetting: memory failure after a single introduction in the middle of many other similar introductions is quite reasonable. Further, the self-serving bias predicts that people will discount information that is incompatible with a favorable view of the self. Thus, there was an absence of any negative effect on compliance associated with such forgetting.

Experiments 2 and 3 provided replicable evidence explaining the compliance facilitation effect: subjects perceived remembrance of their name to be a compliment. They then reciprocated the compliment by being more willing or motivated to comply with the professor's request. Specifically, when the professor remembered a student's name, the student was more likely to believe the professor liked him/her more, thought he/she was more important, and valued his/her individuality more highly. Such perceptions were found to mediate strongly purchase-request compliance behavior. Experiment 2 eliminated positive mood as an alternative mediator. The stronger mediational effects of flattery perceptions (relative to mood) are consistent with the view that purchase request compliance is a reciprocal reaction to interpreting name remembrance as a compliment.

What we feel is most striking about the complimentary explanation for the compliance results is that nothing occurred or was conveyed during the course of the introductions or the initial classes to provide a basis for students to rationally explain name remembrance in a complimentary fashion. Students' classroom introductions lasted, on the average, about 15 seconds, and additional professor/student interaction on the first day of class was minimal. Nevertheless, students clearly assumed that the act of name remembrance said something positive about themselves. This suggests that there is a special and unique value that people attribute to their names. The strength of this name-remembrance effect can be seen by examining the effect sizes for each of the experiments.

The average ω^2 statistic for the main effect of name remembrance on request compliance across the three experiments was .28. The average R^2 statistic for the association between name remembrance and whether subjects complied with the purchase request in the last three experiments was .40. The higher value of R^2 , relative to ω^2 , is probably due to the fact that it is easier to explain variation in contingency table cell frequencies

than it is to explain variation with individual subjects as units of analysis (Reynolds 1977). However, both values appear substantively significant given Ajzen and Fishbein's (1980) observation that few effect sizes in behavioral science research exceed .25. The obtained values also compare favorably with Cohen's (1977) description of effect sizes over .14 as "large." We believe these effect sizes mirror the importance that people attribute to their names, their consequent sensitivity to the use of their names by others, and an inherent self-serving bias. These studies contribute to the wide diversity of occurrences in life that illustrate the tendency of people to interpret events in a manner favorable to themselves.

In all three experiments, the rememberer was a professor in the subject's class and was always present when he/she responded to the compliance request. Thus, one might argue that perhaps subjects complied out of fear of retribution from the professor. Such fears might be greater in the name than in the no-name condition, where the professor—having already associated an individual's name with his/her face—might be more likely to remember the number of cookies a particular student purchased. If students reasoned that those memories might influence their grades, or other evaluations, the compliance results might be explained by fear of retribution. Several pieces of evidence, however, argue against this alternative explanation for the results.

First, fear of retribution should have been operative in the name-discounted condition in experiment 2. Equivalent compliance between the name-discounted and no-name conditions argues against fear of retribution explaining the results. Second, if fear of retribution were operative, it should have been equally so in both of the name-recall conditions across levels of need for self-enhancement in experiment 3. The significantly greater compliance effect for name recall in the condition of high need for self-enhancement than in the condition of low need cannot be explained by the fear-of-retribution hypothesis. Finally, and most important, a fourth experiment was conducted (not reported here for space reasons) to provide additional evidence ruling out fear of retribution. In that experiment, name recall facilitated compliance whether or not the professor had knowledge of students' purchasing cookies. An effect of name remembrance on purchasing when subjects' compliance is observed by no one but themselves cannot be explained by the fear-of-retribution hypothesis.

The generalizability of the results reported here might be questioned on the grounds that the typical salesperson-customer dyad is very different from the professor-student encounters examined in this research. For example, remembrance of a customer's name by a salesperson might not have a high likelihood of being interpreted as a compliment if the customer is consciously aware of the salesperson's vested interest in

remembering the name. Customers might infer that name remembrance is a tactic used to help facilitate sales. Student-professor dynamics also differ from those between customers and salespeople on issues such as the balance of power and possibly the expectation of the duration of the relationship. These external validity concerns must be considered when evaluating the real-life marketplace implications of these findings. On the other hand, the results obtained here are quite consistent with the suggestions of the sales and marketing literature. The importance of remembering someone's name has long and frequently been argued as a critical factor influencing sales. In our studies, sales increased an average of 239 percent in conditions where the professor remembered students' names. In real-life marketplace encounters, sales increases of only one-tenth the size observed here would be more than worth the effort, irrespective of the product or service being sold.

This research will hopefully be only a starting point for a long-neglected area of investigation. For most people, their names are "the sweetest and most important sound in any language" (Carnegie 1936, p. 83). The effects of managing or mismanaging people's names should provide a rich stream of future research endeavors.

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