Behavioral effects of interpersonal attraction: Compliance with requests from liked and disliked others*

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Sixty undergraduate females participated in an experiment designed to investigate the hypothesis that Ss would be more willing to comply with various requests from liked than from disliked others. Attraction was manipulated by varying both the apparent degree of attitude similarity between Ss and the requester and the favorability of ratings about the Ss ostensibly made by this individual. Results indicated that significantly more Ss complied with the requests of a liked than with those of a disliked other, but only under conditions where the magnitude of these appeals was relatively great. These findings were discussed in terms of their implications for the generalizability of the results of laboratory research on attraction to behavior in naturalistic social situations.

The topic of interpersonal attraction has long been one of major interest to social psychologists. Thus, a large number of experiments have been performed to investigate possible determinants of the degree of liking between human beings (see, e.g., Berscheid & Walster, 1969; Byrne, 1969). In contrast, however, relatively little attention has been directed to the influence of interpersonal attraction on various forms of social behavior. In view of the common observation that our relations with others are often strongly affected by our degree of liking or disliking for them, the current lack of interest in this topic is somewhat surprising. Moreover, the findings of several recent experiments suggest that attraction may often influence subsequent behavior in a complex and unexpected manner. To take only two examples, it has recently been reported that a high level of attraction toward a social model may sometimes tend to *inhibit* Os' imitation of his actions (Baron, 1970) and that a high degree of attraction toward a potential victim of aggression may totally *fail* to reduce the subsequent level of violence directed against him (Hendrick & Taylor, 1971). Considered together, these and other related findings suggest the need for further research designed to examine the effects of interpersonal attraction on subsequent social behavior.

The present experiment was addressed directly to this topic. More

specifically, it sought to examine the influence of attraction on one particular form of social behavior, that of compliance with the requests of others. In order to investigate this relationship, Ss in two groups were first induced by means of standard laboratory techniques (e.g., Byrne & Nelson, 1965; Byrne & Rhamey, 1965) to either like or dislike a stranger and then exposed to a request from this individual. On the basis of previous research which has reported a positive relationship between attraction and the acceptance of social influence (e.g., Sampson & Insko, 1964), it was predicted that greater compliance would be obtained with the requests of a liked other than with those of a disliked other.

SUBJECTS AND DESIGN

Sixty undergraduate females enrolled in sections of introductory psychology at the University of South Carolina participated in the experiment. Students took part in the study in order to satisfy a course requirement.

A 3 by 2 factorial design based upon two levels of attraction toward the requester (low, high) and three levels of magnitude of this individual's request (small, moderate, large) was employed. Ten Ss were assigned randomly to each cell of this design.

PROCEDURE

Manipulation of Attraction Toward the Requester

The procedures employed to manipulate Ss' degrees of attraction toward the requester (a female confederate of the E) were based directly on those employed in previous research (e.g., Byrne & Nelson, 1965; Byrne & Rhamey, 1965). Thus, they will not be described in detail here. Briefly, attraction was manipulated by varying both the apparent degree of attitude similarity between Ss and the

requester and the favorability of the ratings of the S ostensibly made by this individual. Hence, in the high-attraction condition, the confederate appeared to agree with the S on all 12 items of a brief attitude questionnaire and expressed a very favorable opinion of her on Byrne's Interpersonal Judgment Scale (IJS), while in the low-attraction condition, she appeared to disagree with the S on all 12 items and expressed a very unfavorable opinion of her on the IJS.

Magnitude of Other's Request

Following the completion of the procedures employed to manipulate Ss' liking for the requester, the E indicated that she would now sign the experiment cards of both individuals (i.e., the confederate and real S) in order to insure that they received credit for participating in the study. The confederate then stated that she had forgotten her card, and the E left to get a new one for her from the psychology office. During her absence, the confederate, who was totally ignorant of the attraction condition to which the S had been assigned, made one of three different requests to this individual. In the small-request condition, she asked the S to return a notebook to a girl who lived in the same dormitory as herself (i.e., as the S). In the moderate-request condition, she asked the S to return several books to the library for her. Since this necessitated a trip of several blocks carrying the heavy books, the effort involved was considerably greater than that for the small request. Finally, in the large-request condition, the confederate asked the S to return the same books to the library, check them out in her own name, and hold them until she (i.e., the confederate) could pick them up in a few days. Thus, in this instance, she was asked to perform a substantial favor for a total stranger.

If the S agreed to perform the favor asked of her by the confederate, she was given the notebook or books. However, at the end of the session, the confederate asked what time it was and, upon learning that the experiment had not required the full 30 min scheduled, retrieved these materials from the S, indicating that she would perform the relevant task herself. The E then distributed a brief postexperimental questionnaire designed to provide checks on the effectiveness of the experimental manipulations to both individuals. The completion of this questionnaire by the S then terminated the experimental hour.

RESULTS

Manipulation of

Interpersonal Attraction

The Ss' levels of attraction toward the requester was assessed twice during

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Table 1
Number of Ss Complying in
Each of Six Groups

Attraction	Magnitude of Confederate's Request		
	Small	Moderate	Large
Low	9	3	5
High	10	9	10

Note— $N = 10$ in each cell.

the present study, once immediately after their exposure to information concerning the attitudes ostensibly held by this individual and again on the postexperimental questionnaire. In both cases, the dependent measure of attraction was the sum of Ss' ratings of the confederate on the last two items of the IJS (see, e.g., Byrne & Nelson, 1965). Separate analyses of variance performed on these two measures indicated that Ss in the high attraction group expressed a significantly higher level of liking for the confederate in both instances than did Ss in the low attraction group ($F = 46.65, 118.80, df = 1/58, p < .001$). Thus, it appeared that the manipulation of attraction toward the confederate was quite successful.

Compliance with the Confederate's Requests

The major dependent measure obtained in the present study was the number of individuals in each of the six experimental groups who agreed to perform the requests made by the confederate. The data for this measure are presented in Table 1. Inspection of this table suggests that the predicted relationship between attraction and compliance occurred under conditions where the confederate's request was of moderate or large magnitude but failed to appear when her request was quite trivial in nature (i.e., of low magnitude). Consistent with this apparent pattern of findings, chi-square analyses (corrected for continuity) revealed that attraction exerted a significant effect upon compliance in the moderate ($\chi^2 = 5.00, df = 1, p < .05$) and large ($\chi^2 = 4.27, df = 1, p < .05$) request

conditions but failed to produce a similar effect in the small request group ($\chi^2 = 0.00$). Thus, it appeared that attraction was an important determinant of Ss' willingness to comply with requests from a stranger only when these appeals were of relatively substantial magnitude.

DISCUSSION

The results of the present study suggest that compliance with requests from a stranger may be strongly influenced by degree of attraction toward this person, but only when the requests he poses exceed some minimal level of magnitude. This may be the case because under conditions where a stranger's requests are very small, the norm of social responsibility (which dictates that we should help others who need our assistance) is so compelling that factors such as interpersonal attraction can play only a minimal role in determining whether or not compliance will actually occur. This suggestion may be examined in subsequent research by investigating the influence of attraction on compliance under conditions where the salience of the norm of social responsibility can be varied in a systematic manner (see, e.g., Berkowitz & Daniels, 1964).

In addition to providing specific information concerning the influence of attraction on compliance, the findings of the present study also appear to have more general implications for laboratory research on interpersonal attraction. In particular, they indicate that variables which have been shown to influence paper and pencil measures of attraction (i.e., attitude similarity, positive or negative evaluations from another) may also exert important effects upon overt social behavior. This finding is consistent with the results of several recent experiments which have also demonstrated that laboratory-induced attraction may influence various forms of nonverbal behavior (e.g., Byrne, Baskett, & Hodges, 1971; Byrne, Ervin, & Lamberth, 1970). Considered together, the findings of this previous work and those of the present study

provide strong support for the view that manipulations of interpersonal attraction conducted in the laboratory are successful in inducing relatively intense levels of positive or negative affect with respect to another person. Thus, they suggest that the results of such research may, with an appropriate degree of caution, be generalized to naturalistic social situations outside the laboratory. Further experiments designed to investigate the influence of attraction on other forms of social behavior (e.g., altruism, bargaining) are currently planned.

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