



# But You Complied Anyway: Acquiescence to Social Factors

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## Introduction

This study was influenced by Stanley Milgram's (1961) classic obedience experiment that focused on the issue concerning obedient behavior. More specifically, by Freedman & Fraser's (1966) foot-in-the door technique (FITD), centered on attaining compliance without pressure, which found that participants were more likely to acquiesce to larger demands when they had already performed shorter requests. Limited research has been conducted on the construct of compliance, which is seen as an antecedent step towards obtaining obedient behavior. Compliant behavior is a consequence of social forces to help induce conforming behavior (Aronson, 2011).

## Research Design - Independent Variables

The experimenters sought to investigate the influence of feedback (positive or negative), time pressure (15 or 45 seconds to complete the task) and the experimenter's facilitation style (directive or non-directive) on attaining compliance without forceful commands of an authority figure. An authority figure is an individual who tries to establish credibility and use it to influence others in a situation. Aronson (2011) states that individuals are more likely to comply if they seek reward or fear punishment. In relation to the independent variable of feedback, positive feedback represented a type of reward and negative feedback a form of punishment. Furthermore, according to Cialdini and Goldstein (2004) the more pressure you place on an individual the more likely they are to comply. This was represented through the two independent variables: experimenter's facilitation style and time. For example, in the directive conditions of the experimenter's facilitation style, participants were more likely to comply because they were led step by step throughout the trials as opposed to the non-directive conditions where participants were given brief instructions at the beginning and were then to complete the tasks independently. Also, time served as a type of pressure because the less time given to complete the trial, the less time to think, and the more likely they are to comply.

## Hypotheses

### Main Effect:

- Participants are more compliant with positive feedback than negative feedback.
- More compliant with directive style of administration than the non-directive style of administration.
- More compliant with the short time constraint (15 seconds) than the longer time constraint (45 seconds)

### Overall:

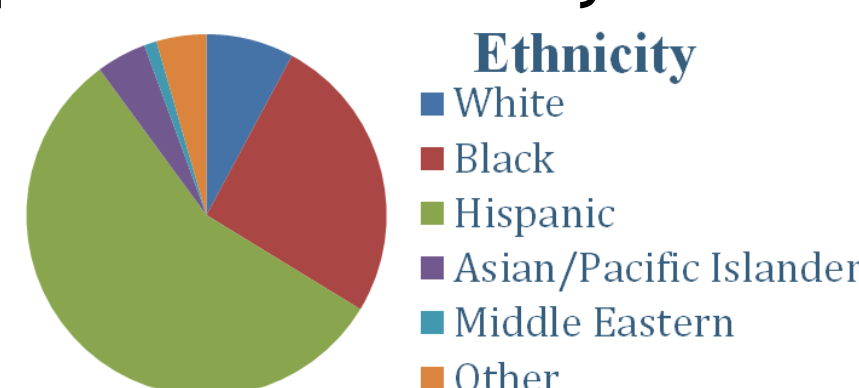
- Compliance will be generated with combined effect of positive feedback, directive experimenter style and short time trial.



## Method

### Participants

- 89 ethnically diverse undergraduates from California State University, Dominguez Hills participated in this study.
- Gender:** 17 males and 72 females
- Age:** 18-55

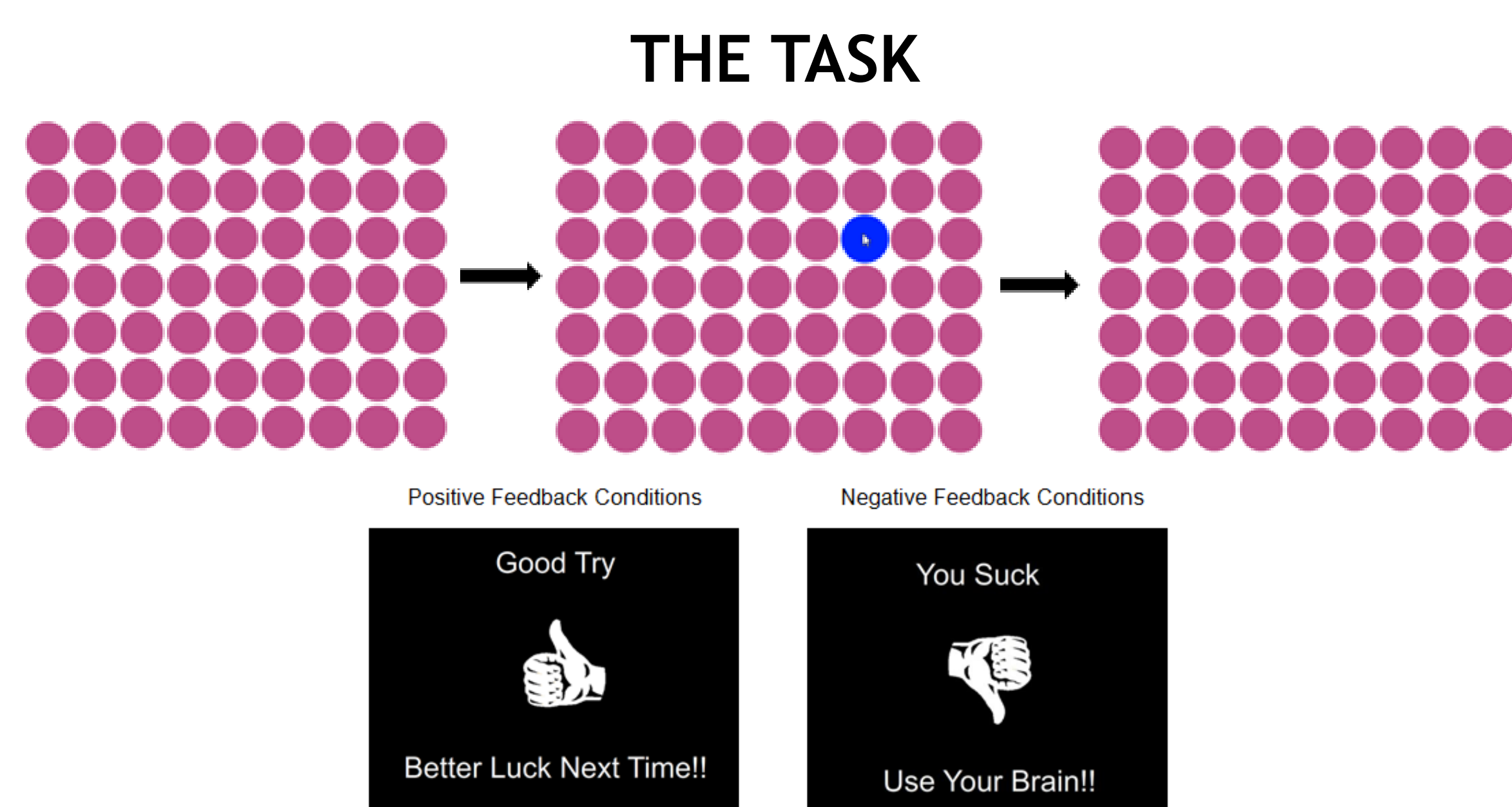


### Setting and Materials

- The experimental setting required two participants.
- The participants were both equipped with a laptop and a mouse.
- The website used to run the protocol is called [kwiksurveys.com](http://www.kwiksurveys.com)
- There was one experimenter who administered in a directive or non-directive manner as well as observed
- One additional observer was used for the second participant.

### Procedure

- The study used a series of five technological task trials. For each task Participants were to use a pre-designed computer application to find a green circle amongst a series of circles. When a circle was clicked on, it would briefly reveal an alternate color and the circle would then revert to its original state. However, there was no green circle to be found. After each trial participants were given the pre-determined computerized feedback assigned to that condition. Subsequent to the feedback participants were asked to move on to the next task. The first four trials were shorter (all either 15 or 45 seconds) than the duration (five minutes) of the final and fifth trials. Compliant behavior was measured as the total time that participants spent on the fifth trial; essentially the more time spent on the trial, the more compliance was attained. Thus, the experimental trials and 3 independent variables exposed participants to the Foot-in-the-door technique.



## Dependent Measures

### Measured by Observation:

- Trial abandonment or any deviations
  - i.e.) Hand lifts, skipped trials
- Time stopped during trial 1-4
- Time spent on Compliance Trial (5 minutes)
  - More time, more compliant

### Self Report:

- Perception check
- Manipulation check

## Results

### 3-Way ANOVA

A 3-Way ANOVA was conducted and two factors, administrator style  $F(1, 81) = 17.732, p = .000$ , and the effect of all social factors of feedback, time, and style of administration  $F(1, 81) = 5.765, p = .019$ , were significant in attaining compliance for the fifth task as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Results of 3-Way ANOVA for Trial Five

Factors	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F value	P value
Feedback (A)	11792.303	1	11792.303	1.169	0.283
Time (B)	2201.043	1	2201.043	0.218	0.642
Administrator Style (C)	178902.73	1	178902.729	17.732	0.000*
(A) x (B) x (C)	58163.2	1	58163.2	5.765	0.019*

\*Significant difference at  $P < .05$ .

### Main Effect Means for Compliance Trial (Trial 5)

Table 2 displays the means for the independent factors for the five minute trial. To the far right the means were converted into minutes from seconds. In an effort to test the hypotheses it was found that positive feedback generated more compliance than negative feedback, the 45 second condition generated more compliance than the 15 second time constraint, and the directive style of administration generated more compliance than the non-directive style.

Table 2. Main Effect Means for Experimental Style, Feedback, & Time in the Fifth Trial

Factors		Mean	SD	In Minutes
Feedback	Positive	215.15	15.17	3:35*
	Negative	192.10	14.98	3:12
Time	15 seconds	198.64	14.82	3:18
	45 seconds	208.61	15.33	3:28*
Experimenter Style	Directive	248.53	14.98	4:09*
	Non-Directive	158.72	15.17	2:38

### Multi-Factor Means for Compliance Trial (Trial 5)

Table 3 shows the overall effect of all three social factors. It was found that the hypothesis is correct. Altogether, positive feedback, the 15 second time constraint, and the directive style of administration generated the most compliance.

Table 3. Means for Experimental Style\*Feedback\*Time in the Fifth Trial

Feedback	Time	Experimenter Style	Mean	SD	In Minutes
Positive	15 seconds	Directive	282.92	28.10	4:42*
		Non-Directive	99.73	30.29	1:39
	45 seconds	Directive	253.36	30.29	4:13
		Non-Directive	224.60	31.76	3:44
Negative	15 seconds	Directive	230.18	30.29	3:50
		Non-Directive	181.75	28.10	3:01
	45 seconds	Directive	227.64	30.29	3:47
		Non-Directive	128.82	30.29	2:08

### Time stopped for Compliance Trial (Trial 5) for Experimenter Style

For the Directive Conditions participants given positive feedback and exposed to the 15 second timed trials where much more compliant than were those in the negative feedback as seen in Figure 1. Those in the Non-Directive conditions receiving positive feedback in the 45 second timed trials where more compliant which appears to represent the fact that they spend more time on the first 4 trials. The participants in the negative feedback and 15 second timed trials behavior seems to represent the less time given to think and to simply continue with the requests being made of them. It appears that in the Non-Directive conditions, because participants were not being led through the trials, that there was less of a tendency to be compliant as seen in Figure 2

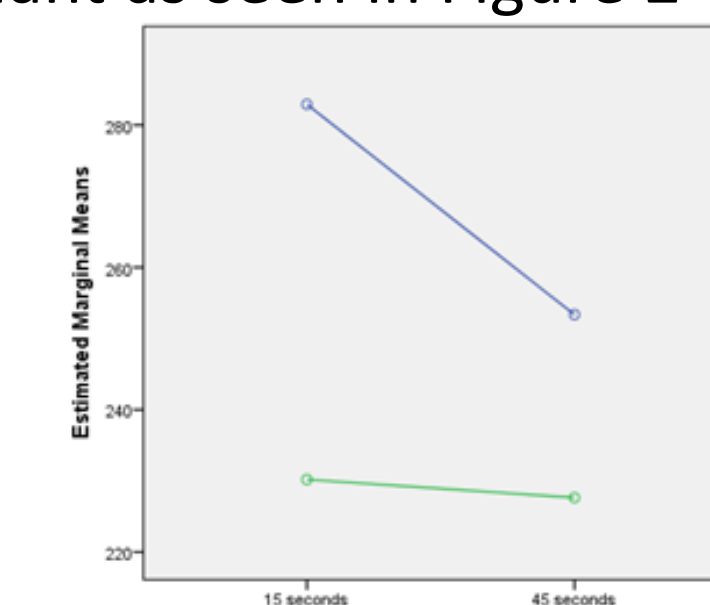


Figure 1. Estimated Marginal Means of Time stopped for Compliance Trial (Trial 5) for Directive Experimenter Style

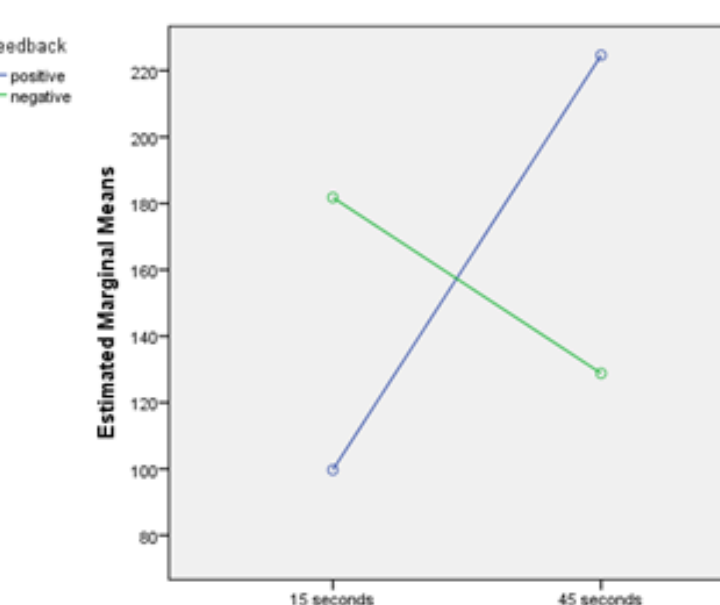


Figure 2. Estimated Marginal Means of Time stopped for Compliance Trial (Trial 5) for Non-Directive Experimenter Style

## Discussion

### Main Effect Hypotheses results:

- Supported:
  - Positive Feedback gained more compliance than negative feedback
  - Directive experimenter style gained more compliance than the non-directive experimenter style
- Unsupported:
  - 45 second trials gained more compliance as opposed to the 15 second trials which was hypothesized to garner more compliance

### First four trials:

- Time induced mindlessness and seems to have desensitized participants because of the repetitive nature of the trials.
- The three social factors generated compliance

### Compliance Trial

- Experimenter style
- The three social factors generated compliance
  - All 3 are necessary to get a full understanding of the nature of compliance

### Self-Report Measures

- The self-report items had certain factors that were significant. It is speculated that better designed items would have produced more significant results.

### Application

- After concluding that feedback, experimenter style, and time are crucial factors that help induce compliance it is important to apply these influences into real world settings. For example, applying these factors into an academic scenario where students are given mindless tasks by an authority figure can create an environment where mindless compliance takes place. This is especially more likely with negative feedback where students are not allowed to think and simply follow instructions.

## References

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