Does social psychology persist over half a century?

A direct replication of Cialdini et al.'s (1975) classic door-in-the-face technique

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Abstract

Many failed replications in social psychology have cast doubt on the validity of the field. Most of these replication attempts have focused on findings published from the 1990s on, ignoring a large body of older literature. As some scholars suggest that social psychological findings and theories are limited to a particular time, place, and population, we sought to test whether a classical social psychological finding that was published nearly half a century ago can be successfully replicated in another country on another continent. To this end, we directly replicated Cialdini et al.'s (1975) door-in-the-face (DITF) technique according to which people's likelihood to comply with a target request increases after having turned down a larger request. Thereby, we put the reciprocal concessions theory – the original process explanation of the DITF technique – to a critical test. Overall, compliance rates in our replication were similarly high as those Cialdini et al. (1975) found 45 years ago. That is, participants were more likely to comply with a target request after turning down an extreme request than participants who were exposed to the target request only or to a similarly small request before being exposed to the target request. These findings support the idea that reciprocity norms play a crucial role in DITF strategies. Moreover, the results suggest that at least some social psychological findings can transcend a particular time, place, and population. Further theoretical implications are discussed.

Keywords: Door-in-the-Face; Social Influence; Replication; Reciprocal concession

In the last decade, many failed replications in (social) psychology have questioned the validity of the field (e.g., Nosek & Lakens, 2014; Open Science Collaboration, 2015), reducing public trust in psychological science (e.g., Anvari & Lakens, 2018; Wingen et al., 2020). The vast majority of these replications have focused on studies published within the last two decades. Thereby, classical findings obtained earlier in the last century have been neglected. In this article, we advocate extending the scope of replications to classical findings that are often seen as foundations of the field. We regard replications of these findings as particularly important, because a large body of research and theories builds on them. Replications of classical findings would, thus, lead to a more accurate picture of the replicability of the field. As an exemplary case, in the present article, we test the replicability of a landmark finding in the literature on social influence and attitude change that was published nearly half a century ago – the door-in-the-face technique (Cialdini et al., 1975).

Previous replications in (social) psychology

Within the last decade, psychologists have begun to focus more strongly on replications of previous findings. A substantial proportion of these replications failed to support the original findings. For example, when repeating 100 studies reported in three top psychology journals in the year 2008, the Open Science Collaboration (2015) could only replicate less than 40% of the original findings. Likewise, when replicating social science experiments published between 2010 and 2015 in the journals *Nature* or *Science*, Camerer and colleagues (2018) successfully replicated only 13 of 21 experiments based on observed statistical evidence ($p < .05$).

Similarly, different researchers (Doyen et al., 2012; O'Donnell et al., 2018; Rohrer et al., 2015) reported difficulties in replicating findings in specific areas of research, such

as priming effects originally reported from the late 1990s on (see also Genschow et al., 2019). Other researchers failed in replicating mortality salience effects (Klein et al., 2019), ego depletion effects (Hagger et al., 2016), the link between mimicry and different personality factors, such as perspective-taking, empathy, and autistic traits (Genschow et al., 2017), or downstream consequences of disbelief in free will manipulations (e.g., Genschow et al., 2020; Nadelhoffer et al., 2020) — to name just a few examples.

In an attempt to get a more comprehensive view of social psychological findings, a special issue published in the journal *Social Psychology* included 15 papers that replicated 27 different classical studies with mixed results (for an overview, see Nosek & Lakens, 2014). Interestingly, 18 of the studies were originally published no earlier than 1995, and only 6 original articles were published earlier than 1980. A reason for the underrepresentation of early social psychological studies in recent replication efforts might be that these early studies were often carried out in a very effortful way. That is, many classical studies involved multiple experimenters or confederates that interacted with participants face-to-face.

Taken together, previous replications cast doubt on the reproducibility of a large body of psychological findings. However, this implication is largely based on replications of studies originally published within the last two decades thereby ignoring classical social psychological studies published much earlier. We believe that in order to get a more accurate picture about the state of (social) psychology, researchers need to strive for replications of earlier studies as well. Moreover, given that these landmark studies make up the foundations of the field – relevant for theory building, hypothesis generation, research planning, and teaching –, we regard it as particularly important to replicate these classical findings.

However, whether classical findings are actually replicable is rather unclear. Some scholars argue that social psychologists should develop basic scientific principles to detect and understand factors that are responsible for stable relationships between events (e.g., Jones & Gerard, 1967). That is, social psychologists should aim at discovering causal relationships that allow establishing basic human principles (Mills, 1969). In contrast to this idea, a prominent view sees social psychological findings and theories as limited to a particular time and place (Gergen, 1973). That is, with cultural changes, basic social psychological principles will be altered, and already established premises will be invalidated. Indeed, recent investigations suggest that the success rate of replications in social psychology strongly depends on contextual factors, such as time, culture, location, and population (Van Bavel et al., 2016).

Hence, some scholars have suggested that social psychological findings and theories do not persist over time. As an initial step to test this hypothesis, we sought to replicate a classical social psychological finding that was published nearly half a century ago in another country on another continent. To this end, we directly replicated Cialdini et al.'s (1975) door-in-the-face (DITF) technique—a classic textbook finding in the social influence literature.

Social influence and the door-in-the-face technique

Social influence is a pervasive force in human social interaction (e.g., Asch, 1956; Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004; Festinger et al., 1950; Milgram, 1963). Within the larger field of social influence and attitude change (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004; Dillard et al., 1984; Fern et al., 1986; O'Keefe & Hale, 1998; Wood, 2000), one of the best known persuasion strategies is the door-in-the-face (DITF) technique (Cialdini et al., 1975). The DITF technique increases the likelihood that individuals will comply with a small target request

after turning down a larger request. The original Cialdini et al. (1975) paper was published 45 years ago in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* and became a landmark finding in the research of social psychology. To date, the paper has elicited 860 citations on Google Scholar as of August 11, 2020 and is a classic in introductory psychology courses. Moreover, the DITF technique has received, and still receives, prominent attention in a great variety of press releases, books, and applied workshops illustrating the widespread impact on scientists, but also on practitioners.

In Cialdini et al.'s (1975) seminal paper, student research assistants approached potential participants who were passing by alone on the campus and asked them whether they would be willing to take a group of young delinquents to the zoo for two hours. When the experimenters asked this question directly, the request was accepted by fewer participants than when that request was preceded by the refusal of an extreme request – that is, working as a volunteer in a juvenile detention center for two days a week during a two-year period.

Four meta-analyses (Dillard et al., 1984; Feeley et al., 2012; Fern et al., 1986; O'Keefe & Hale, 1998) have been already carried out and found that DITF effects are strongest when the requests are pro-social, there is a brief delay between requests, or when compliance is verbal (instead of behavioral). Overall, the meta-analyses suggest the effectiveness of the DITF technique. However, one open question is whether these meta-analyses aggregated all existing evidence as all of them focused only on published experiments and only the Feeley et al. (2012) meta-analysis assessed publication bias. With $p = .087$, the crucial publication bias analysis was significant according to the $p < .10$ criterion proposed by Egger and colleagues (1997). Although Feeley et al. interpreted this finding as support for the inexistence of publication bias, with such a p -value, the evidence against publication bias is at the very least doubtful. Moreover, recent research (Friesen &

Frankenbach, 2019) demonstrates that even at medium levels of publication bias, the results of meta-analyses can contribute to biased conclusions. Thus, although previous meta-analyses suggest that DITF techniques may work, it remains unclear whether there are studies in the file drawer and whether including them would change the meta-analytic results. Consequentially, doubts remain to which degree the DITF is replicable. A beneficial tool to assess the strength of a certain effect is a high-powered pre-registered replication, because it prevents publication bias (cf. Carter & McCullough, 2014).

Processes underlying the door-in-the-face technique

Besides the strength of the DITF technique, another open question concerns its underlying mechanism. Over the last few decades, different theories have been proposed to explain the underlying processes of this DITF effect (for an overview, see Feeley et al., 2012) that have all been refuted over the years (Abrahams & Bell, 1994; Fern et al., 1986; O'Keefe & Figgé, 1999; O'Keefe & Hale, 1998; Turner et al., 2007).

However, there is still a debate between two other explanations. First Cialdini et al. (1975; Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004) interpreted DITF effects in line with reciprocity norm theory (Gouldner, 1960) and formulated the reciprocal concessions theory. The authors suggested that shifting from an extreme request to a smaller request is perceived as a concession from the requester. After rejecting the extreme request, individuals may feel the need to respond to this concession by accepting the subsequent smaller request (Diekmann, 2004; Hale & Laliker, 1999; Reeves et al., 1991; Turner et al., 2007). The idea of reciprocity as an underlying mechanism has found support within a number of different theoretical and empirical articles (e.g., Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004; Cialdini et al., 1992; Feeley et al., 2017; Lecat et al., 2009).

However, despite support for reciprocal concessions as the main driver of DITF effects, this view has also received criticism (e.g., Abrahams & Bell, 1994; Dillard et al., 1984; Tusing & Dillard, 2000). In particular, it has been argued that individuals' motivation to comply with the second request is to avoid two successive rejections (Turner et al., 2007; Tusing & Dillard, 2000). That is, saying no to the first request may provoke negative feelings and, as a consequence, responders avoid saying "no" a second time. It is important to note that besides some supporting evidence (Feeley et al., 2012), other results do not support this explanation (Turner et al., 2007).

Interestingly, a very promising, but widely forgotten test of this alternative explanation has been offered by Cialdini et al.'s (1975) Study 3. In this experiment, the authors implemented three between-subject conditions. In the *rejection-moderation condition*, student research assistants approached participants on the university campus and initially made an extreme request. Specifically, they introduced themselves as being with the County Youth Counseling Program and then asked whether participants would be willing to work voluntarily as a nonpaid counselor at the County Juvenile Detention Center. The position would require two hours of their time per week for a minimum of two years. After participants denied this extreme request, the experimenters brought forward a smaller request. That is, they asked whether participants would be willing to act as chaperones for a group of juvenile delinquents on a two-hour trip to the zoo. In the *smaller-request only control condition*, experimenters asked for the small request only (i.e., two-hour trip to the zoo). In the *equivalent request control condition*, the researchers tested whether participants' likelihood to agree to the small request would increase if they rejected another similar small request beforehand. In this condition, the experimenters first asked participants whether they would act as chaperones for a group of juvenile delinquents on a two-hour trip to the city museum and then brought forward the same small request

(i.e., two-hour trip to the zoo) as in the other conditions. The reciprocal concessions account predicts a larger amount of agreement with the second request in the *rejection-moderation condition* than in the *equivalent request control condition*, because participants should perceive a concession in the *rejection-moderation condition*, but not in the *equivalent request control condition*. In contrast, if individuals' motivation to comply with the second request is to avoid saying no twice accounts for the effect, one would assume that the *equivalent request control condition* would lead to the same amount of agreements with the second request as the *rejection-moderation condition*, because in both conditions participants should be motivated to avoid saying no twice. Interestingly, this is not what Cialdini et al. (1975) found. Rather opposite to this prediction, participants in the *smaller-request only control condition* and participants in the *equivalent request control condition* were both less likely to agree with the small request as compared to the *rejection-moderation condition*. It is important to note, however, that with $\chi^2 = 2.88$, $p = .09$ this result did not reach conventional levels of significance. Moreover, to the best of our knowledge, Cialdini et al.'s (1975) Study 3 has never been directly replicated within a large sample. Thus, it remains unclear whether a high-powered replication of this experiment would actually support Cialdini et al.'s (1975) reciprocal concessions theory.

The present study

The fact that most previous replication efforts in social psychology have focused on recent publications, coupled with the claim that social psychological findings are limited to a particular time, place, culture, and population (Gergen, 1973; Van Bavel, et al., 2016), motivated us to directly replicate a classical finding published nearly half a century ago in another country (i.e., Germany) on another continent (i.e., Europe). Given the ongoing debate on the underlying mechanisms and the fact that Cialdini et al.'s (1975) critical test

of the alternative explanation that individuals avoid saying no twice was not statistically significant, we chose to directly replicate Cialdini et al.'s (1975) Study 3 with more precision allowed by a larger sample. We preregistered our experiment at aspredicted.org (<https://aspredicted.org/jq5fe.pdf>) and made all our materials and data openly accessible at the Open Science Framework (OSF; <https://osf.io/t6zaw/>).

Method

The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki and in line with the rules of the local ethic guidelines.

Power considerations and participants

Cialdini et al.'s (1975) main finding of Study 3 had an effect size of $W = .20$. Based on a power analysis with G*Power (Faul et al., 2007), 395 participants are needed to detect such an effect with a power of $1 - \beta = .90$ and an alpha probability of $\alpha = .05$. Given that we might have to omit the data of some participants according to the a priori exclusion criteria, we aimed at recruiting more than 400 participants (see preregistration for details). As the experiment was a direct replication, we did not sample stimuli or adapt the measures. However, to increase the generalizability of the effect, thirty different experimenters took part in the replication project. The average amount of surveyed participants per experimenter was 13.67. This roughly corresponds to the average amount of participants each experimenter surveyed in the original Cialdini et al. (1975) studies¹.

In total, 410 (317 female, 93 male) people took part in the experiment. The percentage of female participants (77.31 %) was similar to Cialdini et al.'s (1975) Study 3, which involved 75 % female participants.

¹ In Cialdini et al.'s (1975) Study 3, each experimenter assessed an average of 18 participants.

Participants' age was rated by the experimenters. One-hundred-and-ninety participants were rated between 18 and 22, one-hundred-and-eighty-seven participants between 23 and 27, and twenty-nine participants between 28 and 32 years old. Two participants were rated as older than 32 years old.

We applied the same exclusion criteria as Cialdini et al. (1975) and excluded participants who complied with the extreme request (i.e., $N = 19$). The final sample for our analysis consisted of 391 participants.

Procedure

Prior to data collection, the different experimenters, who were students at the University of Cologne, received detailed instructions. First, the first author of this paper informed the experimenters during a 90 minute session about the replication crises in (social) psychology. The experimenters learned that many social psychological findings do not replicate as previously assumed. Afterwards, the experimenters were informed about Cialdini et al.'s DITF technique. Crucially, the experimenters were told that Study 3 was rather underpowered, the crucial statistical test was not significant, and that, so far, it had never been directly replicated. Due to these reasons, it was stressed that the outcome of the replication is completely open; meaning that it might be that the study perfectly replicates or does not replicate the original findings. Moreover, it was explained that any results, even a non-successful replication, would be very interesting.

After agreeing to take part in the replication project, the experimenters received another detailed oral and written briefing for conducting the experiment. The content of the briefing mirrored the information provided in the Cialdini et al. (1975) paper. That is, we told the experimenters that they were allowed to approach only participants of the same sex as themselves. Moreover, experimenters approached only participants who were passing by

alone on the university campus. Experimenters walked alone across the campus themselves and did not approach participants within ten minutes before the start of a university class.

Each experimenter received a booklet of randomly assorted questionnaires. Each questionnaire contained the title of the respective request condition (i.e., rejection-moderation condition, smaller-request only control condition, or equivalent request control condition). Beneath the title of the condition, the exact wording of the respective request was written down. The requests were German translations from Cialdini et al.'s (1975) Study 3. Experimenters were told that they should follow the written instructions as closely as possible when bringing forward the requests.

After approaching potential participants who met the inclusion criteria, experimenters introduced themselves as being with the Cologne Youth Counseling Program. Afterwards, they told participants that they were recruiting university students to work as voluntary, nonpaid counselors at the Cologne Juvenile Detention Center. In the *rejection-moderation condition*, experimenters first started with the large request by telling participants:

“The position could require two hours of your time per week for a minimum of two years. You would be working more in the line of a Big Brother (Sister) to one of the boys (girls) at the detention home. Would you be interested in being considered for one of these positions?”

If participants rejected this large request, the experimenters brought forward the smaller request to act as a chaperone for a group of juvenile delinquents on a two-hour trip to the zoo. Specifically, the experimenters said:

“We’re recruiting university students to chaperone a group of boys (girls) from the Cologne Juvenile Detention Center on a trip to the zoo. It would be voluntary,

nonpaid, and would require about two hours of one afternoon or evening. Would you be interested in being considered for one of these positions?”

In the *smaller-request only control condition*, the experimenters only put forward the small request.

In the *equivalent request control condition*, the experimenters initially brought forward another similarly small request. That is, they asked whether participants would act as chaperones for a group of juvenile delinquents on a two-hour trip to the Cologne city museum. After participants responded to this first request, the experimenters then brought forward the same small request as in the other two conditions.

After participants responded to the different requests, the experimenters wrote down whether participants agreed to the respective request. Then, each experimenter noted participants' gender and rated their age on a 4-point scale (1 = between 18 and 22 years old; 2 = between 23 and 27 years old; 3 = between 28 and 32 years old; 4 = older than 32 years old). After the experiment, participants were debriefed and thanked.

Results

Nineteen participants in the rejection-moderation condition and forty-three participants in the equivalent request control condition complied with the first request. In line with Cialdini et al. (1975) and our preregistered analysis plan, we discarded those participants who complied with the extreme request in the rejection-moderation condition from the analyses.

Preregistered analyses

In a first series of preregistered analyses, we ran the exact same chi-squared tests as performed by Cialdini et al. (1975). The first analysis tested for a statistical difference

between the two control conditions (i.e., smaller request only condition vs. equivalent request control condition). As in the Cialdini et al. (1975) study, we did not find a significant difference between these conditions, $\chi^2 = 2.11, p = .146$. The second analysis tested for a difference between the rejection-moderation condition and the combined control conditions (i.e., smaller request only condition & equivalent request control condition). Similar to Cialdini et al. (1975), participants in the rejection-moderation condition (51.28 %) complied more often with the smaller request than participants in the combined control conditions (33.58 %), $\chi^2 = 10.82, p = .001$.

In a second series of preregistered analyses, we performed additional analyses that were not conducted by Cialdini et al. (1975). First, we compared participants' compliance rate with the small target request between the rejection-moderation condition and the equivalent request control condition. The reciprocal concessions theory would predict a larger amount of agreement with the second request in the rejection-moderation condition than in the equivalent request control condition. In contrast, if individuals' motivation to comply with the second request is to avoid saying no twice, one would assume that the two conditions would not differ. The results support the reciprocal concessions theory, as participants in the rejection-moderation condition (51.28 %) complied more often with the small target request than participants in the equivalent request control condition (29.58 %), $\chi^2 = 12.66, p < .001$.

In a final analysis we found that participants in the rejection-moderation condition (51.28 %) complied more often with the small request than participants in the smaller request only condition (37.88 %), $\chi^2 = 4.52, p = .034$.

Table 1. *Percentage of participants complying with the smaller request in the original Cialdini et al. (1975) Study 3 and the present replication study.*

Treatment	% Compliance Cialdini (1975)	% Compliance Replication
Rejection-moderation condition	54.1	51.3
Equivalent request control	33.3	29.6
Smaller request only control	33.3	37.9

Non-preregistered explorative analyses

In the previous analyses, we excluded only participants who agreed to the extreme request in the rejection-moderation condition — in line with Cialdini et al. (1975).

However, one may argue that a more conservative test of the assumption that individuals' motivation to comply with the second request is to avoid saying no twice would be to also exclude participants who agreed to the first request in the equivalent request control condition. Indeed, this explanation would predict that especially those participants who said “no” to the first request perceive negative feelings, which should lead them to avoid saying “no” a second time. Thus, we repeated the previous analyses without participants who agreed to any of the first requests.

In contrast to Cialdini et al. (1975) and our previous analysis, the two control conditions differed, $\chi^2 = 28.89, p < .001$, indicating that participants in the smaller request only condition (37.88 %) agreed more often to the small request than participants in the equivalent request control condition (7.07 %). We also tested for a difference between the rejection-moderation condition and the combined control conditions. Replicating the previous findings, participants in the rejection-moderation condition (51.28 %) complied more often with the small request than participants in the control conditions (24.68 %), $\chi^2 = 24.64, p < .001$. Further analyses indicate that participants in the rejection-moderation condition (51.28 %) complied more often with the smaller request than participants in the small request only condition (37.88 %), $\chi^2 = 4.52, p = .034$.

Finally, in line with the preregistered analyses, we tested for a difference between the rejection-moderation condition and the equivalent request control condition. If individuals' motivation to comply with the second request is to avoid saying no twice, one would predict that the two conditions would not differ. In contrast, the reciprocal concessions theory predicts a difference between the rejection-moderation condition and the equivalent request control condition. Our results support the reciprocal concessions theory, because participants in the rejection-moderation condition (51.28 %) complied more often with the small target request than participants in the equivalent request control condition (7.07 %), $\chi^2 = 48.99$, $p < .001$.

Discussion

In the present article we report a direct replication of Cialdini et al.'s (1975) DITF technique. Overall, the data were consistent with the findings obtained by Cialdini et al. (1975). In fact, the agreement rates were similarly high as those in the original study even though we ran the study almost half a century later in another country on another continent. Our results demonstrate that participants are more likely to comply with a small target request when they are confronted with a larger request beforehand, as compared to when they are confronted with the small request only or with two equally small requests. These results have important implications for the theory underlying DITF strategies and for the crises of confidence in social psychology.

Theoretical implications

Cialdini et al. (1975) assumed that the DITF technique's success is based on reciprocity norms (Gouldner, 1960). Accordingly, a shift from an extreme request to a smaller request is perceived as a concession from the requester. After rejecting the extreme request, participants may feel the need to reciprocate to this concession by accepting the

subsequent smaller request (Diekmann, 2004; Hale & Laliker, 1999; Reeves et al., 1991; Turner et al., 2007). This theoretical assumption has been challenged by previous research (Tusing and Dillard, 2000; see also Turner et al., 2007). According to this critique, saying “no” to the extreme request elicits negative feelings in participants, leading them to avoid saying “no” a second time. Consequently, individuals’ motivation to comply with the second request is to avoid two successive rejections. If this is indeed the case, one would predict that participants are more likely to agree to the small request when they have rejected another small request beforehand. However, we do not find this effect as participants were less likely to agree with the second request when they had rejected another similarly small request beforehand. Thus, our data support the idea that DITF effects are driven by reciprocity norms (Gouldner, 1960).

Besides this implication, our findings are also important in light of the current debate on the crisis of confidence in psychological research. Past research has reported difficulties in replicating some (social) psychological findings (e.g., Caruso et al., 2017; Flore et al., 2019; Hagger et al., 2016; Open Science Collaboration, 2015; Wagenmakers et al., 2016), which led to the widespread assumption that classical (social) psychological textbook findings are not robust (e.g., Schimmack, 2018). However, as previous research has mostly focused on replicating findings published within the last few decades, a rich area of the psychological literature has been ignored. We would like to argue that in order to get a more complete and accurate picture of the replicability of the field, it is essential to replicate classical findings published earlier in the last century as well.

By replicating one of the landmark findings in the literature of social influence and attitude formation, our research is a first step in this direction and indicates that classical studies can be replicable. This contrasts the view that social psychological findings and theories are limited to a particular time, place, culture, and population (Gergen, 1973; Van

Bavel, Mende-Siedlecki, Brady, and Reinero, 2016). To test to which degree this is indeed the case, future replication efforts may further aim at replicating classical textbook findings that were originally published in the 1970s and earlier. Moreover, to accurately depict the actual replication rate within (social) psychology it might be worthwhile considering not only replicating a priori assumed weak effects, but also potentially strong effects. This would allow an assessment of to what degree social psychological findings represent basic scientific principles that are responsible for stable relationships between events (Jones & Gerard, 1967).

Limitations and further directions

Despite these implications, there are some potential limitations. First, one may argue that in our replication, as in Cialdini et al.'s (1975) experiments, the experimenters were not blind to conditions, which could have biased the effect. However, it is important to note that before the experiment we made it clear that given the crisis of confidence in psychological research (e.g., Open Science Collaboration, 2015) and the limited statistical power of the original result, it is unclear whether the DITF technique would actually replicate. Moreover, we stressed that any results, even a non-successful replication would be very interesting. Thus, although the experimenters were not blind to conditions, we tried our best to keep them blind to the hypotheses and, thus, as unbiased as possible. Moreover, if experimenters' blindness to conditions should have played a crucial role, it should have played a similar role in the original Cialdini et al. experiment, which could not guarantee blindness of the experimenters either.

Second, a limitation of our results concerns the assessed sample. As our experiment was a direct replication, we assessed, in line with Cialdini and colleagues (1975), only students, who were predominantly female. Moreover, similar to Cialdini et al., we did not

emphasize diversity or inclusiveness. Hence, our findings leave open to which degree they can be generalized to other samples. Nevertheless, our experiment extends the findings obtained by Cialdini et al. concerning the sample properties. That is, 45 years after publication of the original finding, we were able to replicate the DITF effect in another country (i.e., Germany) within another culture. In line with previous research (Dillard et al., 1984; Feeley et al., 2012; Fern et al., 1986; O’Keefe & Hale, 1998), this suggests that the DITF technique works across cultures and different samples.

Third, another limitation of our replication as well as the original DITF research concerns the potential influence of self-selection. That is, only passersby who actually talked to the experimenters could be included in the experiment. Thus, one might argue that only participants with a certain pro-social orientation took part in the experiments, which might have influenced their pro-social response (i.e., acting as a chaperone for a group of juvenile delinquents on a two-hour trip to the zoo). However, as previous research indicates that the influence of self-selection on the results of experiments involving pro-social behaviors are negligible (Abeler & Nosenzo, 2015; Falk et al., 2013), we regard the influence of self-selection in our experiment as rather small. Nevertheless, future research may aim at testing to which degree self-selection influences the effectiveness of DITF effects.

Conclusion

In the present research we directly replicated Cialdini et al.’s (1975) door-in-the-face technique. The results are almost identical to those obtained in the original paper and support the assumption that reciprocity norms play a crucial role in sequential persuasive strategies. The finding shows that a fundamental finding in social psychology can be

reproducible in a close replication almost half a century later in a different country on a different continent.

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