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► **To cite this version:**

Nicolas Guéguen, Sébastien Meineri, Alexandre Pascual, Fabien Girandola. The Pique Then Reframe Technique: Replication and Extension of the Pique Technique. *Communication Research Reports*, 2015, 32 (2), pp.143-148. 10.1080/08824096.2015.1016151 . hal-01960623

HAL Id: hal-01960623

<https://univ-rennes2.hal.science/hal-01960623v1>

Submitted on 19 Dec 2018

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To cite this article: Nicolas Guéguen, Sébastien Meineri, Alexandre Pascual & Fabien Girandola (2015) The Pique Then Reframe Technique: Replication and Extension of the Pique Technique, Communication Research Reports, 32:2, 143-148, DOI: [10.1080/08824096.2015.1016151](https://doi.org/10.1080/08824096.2015.1016151)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/08824096.2015.1016151>



Published online: 26 Mar 2015.



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The Pique Then Reframe Technique: Replication and Extension of the Pique Technique

Nicolas Guéguen, Sébastien Meineri,
Alexandre Pascual, & Fabien Girandola

This study examined the pique technique associated with a reframing sentence. Passersby in the street were asked for money, either for a common amount of change (control) or 37 cents (pique technique). In half of the cases, the requester added a direct reframing sentence at the end of the request. Results showed that the pique technique increased compliance with the request. Adding a reframing sentence to the pique did not increase compliance rate with the request but increased the amount of money given by the participants. These results support the theoretical explanation that a reframing sentence could reduce the influence of the script of refusal activated by the money request.

Keywords: Compliance; Pique; Reframe; Request

For a long time, scientists have studied several procedures used for gaining compliance with a request (Marwell & Schmitt, 1967; Miller, Boster, Roloff, & Seibold, 1977; Pratkanis, 2007). Scientists have identified several techniques that lead individuals to comply more favorably with various requests. The more well-known techniques are the Foot-in-the-Door technique (Beaman, Cole, Preston, Klentz, & Mehrkens-Stebly, 1983; Burger, 1999; Dillard, Hunter, & Burgoon, 1984; Fern, Monroe, & Avila, 1986), the Door-in-the-Face (Feeley, Anker, & Aloe, 2012; O’Keefe & Hale, 1998;

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Pascual & Guéguen, 2005), the Low-Ball (Burger & Petty, 1981; Cialdini, Cacioppo, Basset, & Miller, 1978; Guéguen, Pascual, & Dagot, 2002), or Presence of Exchange (Jones, Doughty, & Hickson, 2006).

One of these techniques, the “pique” technique, has received little interest. In the first study on this technique, Santos, Leve, and Pratkanis (1994) asked passersby for money using either a traditional request (“a quarter” or “some change”) or an unusual “pique” request (“17 cents” or “37 cents”). They reported that the pique increased the compliance rate with the request but not the amount of money given by the participant. Burger, Hornisher, Martin, Newman, and Pringle (2007) reported an overall effect of the pique on compliance rate and also reported an increase in the amount of money given by the participant.

Santos et al. (1994) used two theoretical processes to explain their results. Based on a heuristic processing explanation, they suggested that the pique technique was effective to increase compliance because the unusual request disrupts the script of refusal activated when a solicitor asks for money. The authors also argued that the pique technique could have aroused the participant’s curiosity and focused his/her attention on the unusual request. Such attention could have created a legitimization effect: Participants may have considered the unusual amount of money requested and decided that this request was legitimate, which in turn increased the participant’s willingness to give money. In this study, we replicated the pique technique per se and examined the effect of ending the solicitation with a reframing sentence.

The disrupt-then-reframe technique (DTR), introduced by Davis and Knowles (1999), consists in using confusing phrasing or language in the first part of the request (the disrupt) and to follow it immediately with a reason to comply with the request (the reframe). The authors reported that stating the price of a package of note cards in pennies rather than in dollars (“They’re 300 pennies . . . that’s \$3”) and then adding the direct reframe (“It’s a bargain”) increased compliance with the request. A meta-analysis of the effectiveness of the DTR technique (Carpenter & Boster, 2009) based on 14 studies published in six papers reported that the effect size of the increased probability of compliance associated with the DTR was larger than the effect size reported for other compliance-gaining procedures such as the foot-in-the-door (Dillard et al., 1984) or the door-in-the-face (O’Keefe & Hale, 1998).

Davis and Knowles (1999), who were the first to report the effectiveness of the DTR technique for increasing compliance to a request, also found that neither the disrupt alone nor the reframe alone were sufficient to influence compliance. Such results could suggest that a reframe could exert an effect on the target only when the target was previously disrupted by the first sentence. Research reported that the effectiveness of some compliance-gaining procedures increased when a request or a sentence was added to the classic procedure. Dolinski (2000) and Goldman, Creaser, and McCall (1981) examined the factors influencing the effectiveness of the foot-in-the-door technique and reported that an intermediate request between the initial and the final request increased compliance with the final request more than when only the initial request was used. Recently, Guéguen et al. (2013) reported with

the “evoking freedom” technique that telling someone twice when making a request that he/she was free to accept or to refuse the request increased compliance compared with a situation where the “freedom” sentence was used only once.

Our objective in the present study was to examine the effect of adding a reframe to the pique technique. Santos et al. (1994) stated that the pique technique may have acted as a disruption, which in turn increased compliance. Thus, it is posited that

H1: If a pique request is immediately followed by a direct reframe, more compliance will be obtained compared with the pique technique alone.

Method

Participants

The participants were 160 passersby walking alone in the street of a town situated on the southern coast of Brittany in France. All appeared to be between 25 and 60 years of age. They were distributed in four conditions according to a random distribution ($N = 40$ per group).

Procedure

Three 19–20-year-old female undergraduate students in social management acted as solicitors. They were neatly dressed in a traditional way for young people of their age (jeans/sneakers/T-shirt). The experiment took place in a street on particularly sunny winter days. The solicitors were instructed to test a passerby in one of the four experimental conditions according to a prearranged order. The solicitor was instructed to approach the first adult (ranging in age from approximately 25 to 60 years) she saw walking alone. In the control condition, the solicitor approached the participant by saying: “Hello, can you spare a few coins, please?” In the pique condition, the solicitor asked in the same tone: “Hello, can you spare 37 cents, please?” In half of the cases (reframe condition), she added these words after her request “that would help me a lot.” The solicitor then noted if the participant agreed or not to the request and if s/he agreed, she waited for the money and measured the exact amount of money given by the participant.

Results

The 160 participants who complied with the request were defined as the first dependent variable. In the control condition, 15% (6/40) of the participants complied: 20% (8/40) in the reframe condition, 45% (18/40) in the pique condition, and 57.5% (23/40) in the pique +reframe condition. A chi-square test of independence revealed an overall statistical difference, $\chi^2(1) = 21.80$, $p < .001$, $r = .35$. Pairwise comparisons showed that the pique condition was significantly different from the control condition, $\chi^2(1) = 8.57$, $p = .003$, $r = .31$, and the reframe condition, $\chi^2(1) = 5.70$, $p = .017$, $r = .26$, while the pique + reframe condition was statistically different from the control condition, $\chi^2(1) = 15.63$, $p < .001$, $r = .40$, and the reframe

condition, $\chi^2(1) = 11.81$, $p = .001$, $r = .36$. However, neither the difference between the control condition and the reframe condition, $\chi^2(1) = 0.34$, $p = .555$, $r = .06$, nor the difference between the pique condition and the pique + reframe condition, $\chi^2(1) = 1.25$, $p = .263$, $r = .12$, was significant.

The mean amount of money given by the participants in the control condition was $M = 0.13\text{€}$ ($SD = 0.07$), $M = 0.19\text{€}$ ($SD = 0.25$) in the reframe condition, $M = 0.16\text{€}$ ($SD = 0.11$) in the pique condition, and $M = 0.37\text{€}$ ($SD = 0.29$) in the pique + reframe condition. A LSD test for multiple comparisons revealed that only the pique condition and the pique + reframe condition appeared significantly different ($p < .05$).

Discussion

This field experiment study was conducted in a real-world setting and examined real behaviors. It found that, congruent with the findings reported by Burger et al. (2007) and Santos et al. (1994), the pique technique appeared to effectively increase compliance with the request. Moreover, the effect size of the difference appeared identical to those found in these two studies on this technique, suggesting the robustness of the technique. Congruent with the results reported by Davis and Knowles (1999), we found that the reframe-only condition did not increase compliance compared with the control condition. We did not observe that the pique + reframe condition significantly increased the rate of compliance with the request compared with the pique alone condition. However, it was found that the amount of money given by the participants increased.

Santos et al. (1994) proposed two theoretical explanations to explain the effectiveness of the pique technique. First, they argued that the pique technique disrupts the script of refusal. Second, the authors suggested that the pique could have aroused the participant's curiosity and focused his/her attention on the unusual request. Based on our results, the first theoretical proposition helps us to explain why the reframe added to the pique technique increased the amount of money given by the participants. Burger et al. (2007) reported that the pique technique appeared to be effective only with the participants who inquired about the unusual amount requested, regardless of whether the solicitor provided a specific or an uninformative reason. They also reported that in both the specific reason and the uninformative reason conditions, the average amount of money given by the participant was strictly the same as the amount of money requested by the solicitor. In our study, we also found that the amount of money given by the participants in the pique + reframe condition corresponded to the amount requested by the solicitor, suggesting that adding the reframe "that would help me a lot" could have acted as a reason given by the female requester. Thus, the reason could have increased the legitimacy of the request. Research has found that legitimizing a request increases compliance (Cialdini & Schroeder, 1976), probably because it becomes more difficult for the participant to find a reason to refuse to help the solicitor. Thus, the reason activated by the reframe could act as an opposing argument (Allen, 1991) against the script of refusal that is probably activated when a stranger in a street asks someone for money. Fennis, Das, and Pruyn (2004)

argued and found empirically that the DTR is an effective technique because it decreases participants' counterarguments. Overall, the reframe added to the pique technique could have weakened the participant's arguments to refuse, which in turn led him/her to give the solicitor more money. Thus, it would be interesting for future studies to examine if adding a reframe to the pique technique, and perhaps to other compliance techniques, could reduce the number of counterarguments to the request script.

This experiment has some limitations. The solicitors were not informed of the real objective of the study and previous research on this topic. However, they may have unconsciously behaved differently, which in turn influenced the participants' compliance. The experiment was conducted in France, while previous studies on the pique technique (Burger et al., 2007; Santos et al., 1994), were conducted in the United States. Thus, the generalization of the effect of a bow tie on behavior in other countries and cultures should be examined.

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