RESISTANCE AND PERSUASION

Edited by

Eric S. Knowles
University of Arkansas

Jay A. Linn
Widener University

Looking Ahead as a Technique to Reduce Resistance to Persuasive Attempts

Steven J. Sherman
Indiana University—Bloomington

Matthew T. Crawford
University of Bristol, England

Allen R. McConnell
Miami University, Oxford, Ohio

Social influence always involves resistance on the part of the target of influence. Regardless of the pressures toward acceptance of the influence, there is always a countervailing force in the form of resistance that reduces the likelihood of persuasion being effective. Successful influence, then, will be achieved only when the forces toward acceptance are greater than the forces inhibiting from resistance. As Knowles and Linn (this volume) so astutely point out, bringing about a situation where the forces toward acceptance are greater than the forces toward resistance can be achieved either by increasing the positive forces for persuasion or by decreasing the resistance that prevents persuasion.

Like other chapters in this book, we will focus on techniques to increase persuasion by decreasing resistance. A variety of techniques are discussed in this book that vary in their nature (e.g., cognitive versus affective) and in their intensity (e.g., direct versus indirect). These techniques include interrupting resistance (Knowles & Linn, chapter 1 of this volume), using resistance paradoxically against itself (Knowles & Linn), persuasive message focus (Bickel, Rucker, Tormala & Petty, this volume; Tormala & Petty, this volume; Wegener, Petty, Smock & Fabrigar, this volume), affect inoculation (Feather & Bennett, this
generated very much affected their insurance purchase decision in the direction that would reduce the regret elicited by that preferential. Similar results were reported by Taylor (1989) and by Simmons (1992).

Regret theory (Bell, 1982; Loewes & Sugden, 1982) explicitly outlined the role of preferential thinking in decision making. These theorists argued that antici-
pation of different amounts of regret for choices that might turn out badly is an important part of the choice process itself. In addition to assessing the ob-
served level of pleasure or pain associated with an outcome, people are also concerned with minimizing future regret for their choices. Recent studies have focused on this process of regret aversion. Zbinden, Bente, Van der PiLG, and de Vries (1996) found 44 people prefer gambling choices where the out-
comes of alternative gambles will never be learned. This avoids any possibility of future regret. Larrick and Bolle (1995) and Rovio (1996) have also demonstrated that the anticipation of regret and the motivation to minimize future regret can explain choices where the future is uncertain (see also Bie-BiDL and Neto, 1996; Tykoczinski & Pittman, 1998).

Based on this diverse research, it is clear that anticipated regret can very much affect the decisions that people make in the present. The principle that is operating is a relatively simple one: By anticipating future feelings, people can act in the present so as to minimize their future regret. We wondered whether this seemingly powerful tendency could possibly explain one of the most fas-
cinating phenomena identified by social psychologists, the tendency to react against the regressions and demands of others such that when others push one alternative, it can actually increase the likelihood of choosing other alter-
atives. This phenomenon, cognitive reactance, has been shown to be a strong and robust reaction to social influence pressure (Brehm, 1966).

ANTICIPATED REGRET AND COGNITIVE REACTANCE

Imagine a situation where an individual can choose between Alternative A and Alternative B. Someone tells this individual that she should really choose Al-
tensive A. This has the paradoxical effect of increasing the likelihood (com-
pared to the base-rate) that the individual will choose Alternative B. Brehm (1996) explained cognitive reactance in terms of a motivation to resist free-
dom of choice. Whenever one's freedom to do something is threatened or elim-
nated, one will act so as to resist that freedom. Telling people to choose Alternative A threatens their freedom to choose Alternative B, and the best way to reestablish this freedom is to actually choose Alternative B.

This reestablishment of freedom explanation has remained pretty much intact over the years as the explanation for cognitive reactance. In light of the recent work on anticipated regret, we wondered whether there might be a feasible alternative explanation. We proposed that reactance findings might be recon-

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LAYING THE FOUNDATION: COUNTERFACTUAL THINKING

The initial ideas for this chapter have their roots in earlier work that we and others have done in the area of counterfactual thinking. Following the seminal paper by Kahneman and Miller (1986), which described the development of counterfactual comparison standards, there was a virtual explosion of research into when, why, and with what effects people generate alternatives to reality (see Roese & Olson, 1995). This research identified the antecedent conditions for counterfactual thinking, the outcomes of reality that are most likely, the emotional consequences of counterfactual thinking, and the functions of coun-
terfactual generations (Markman, Givanski, Sherman, & McMullen, 1993, 1995; Roese, 1994).

While most of this work focused on counterfactuals for negative outcomes that had already occurred in the past ("What might have been, if only--"), some folks were beginning to investigate the interesting possibility that people might anticipate future regret by imagining their future actions, the possible negative outcomes of those actions, and counterfactual thoughts that would follow these future negative outcomes (Ginther, Boninger, Saltmarsh, Ansel, Hett, & Ahn, 1995; McConell et al., 2000; Miller & Taylor 1995). Engaging in preferential thinking and anticipating future regret for various choices and outcomes would affect decision strategies because people would be motivated to reduce the like-
lihood and the amount of future regret.

Several studies seem to indicate that people indeed anticipate future regret under certain circumstances and that such preferential thinking affects choices. For example, Boninger, Glisbin, and Saltmarsh (1996) asked participants to think about either the consequences of using the insurance option in a game and finding out that it was unnecessary versus not using the insurance option in the game and finding that it was necessary. The specific prefactual that participants

volume), forewarning (Quine & Wood, this volume), self-affirmation (Jackson & Babin, this volume), predictive thinking (Johnson, Smith-McLallen, Killeya, & Libin, this volume) and threats to self-image (Sagrest & Caudino, this volume).

We focus on a different technique—counterfactual thinking in the case of people making decisions in the present. We shall demonstrate that thinking about possibilities in the future can serve as a powerful force to overcome resistance to persuasion. The goal of this chapter is to demonstrate that future focus can be an effective technique for reducing resistance to persuasion, and to begin to uncover the affective, cognitive, and motivational reasons that underlie successful persua-
sion. Following a discussion of counterfactual generation, we shall consider preferential thinking, especially anticipated regret, and its possible role in increas-
ing and decreasing subsequent preference change. Then, we will broaden the focus to consider how techniques that involve thinking about the future can generally reduce resistance to social influence.
empirical investigations

As a first step, we attempted to investigate perceptions of high-decision regret through a series of experiments. A sample of participants was divided into two groups. The first group was instructed to complete a questionnaire that included items designed to assess their attitudes toward regret. The second group was instructed to complete a similar questionnaire but with the order of the questions reversed. The results showed that participants in the second group experienced more regret than those in the first group. This finding is consistent with the idea that the perception of regret can be influenced by the order in which information is presented.

To further explore the role of regret in decision making, we conducted a second experiment. In this experiment, participants were presented with a series of decision scenarios and asked to indicate the likelihood of regret associated with each decision. The results showed that participants were more likely to report regret when they were presented with decisions that led to negative outcomes. This finding is consistent with the idea that regret is more likely to occur when the outcome of a decision is negative.

In a third experiment, we examined the role of regret in decision making by presenting participants with a series of decisions that could lead to both positive and negative outcomes. Participants were asked to indicate the likelihood of regret associated with each decision, and the order in which the decisions were presented. The results showed that participants were more likely to report regret when the decision was presented first and the outcome was negative. This finding is consistent with the idea that the perception of regret can be influenced by the order in which information is presented.

Overall, these findings suggest that regret plays a significant role in decision making. The results of these experiments provide evidence that the perception of regret can influence the likelihood of regret, and that the order in which information is presented can affect the perception of regret. These findings have important implications for the design of decision-making interventions and for understanding the role of regret in decision making.

Our research also has implications for understanding the role of regret in decision making. The results of our experiments suggest that the perception of regret can be influenced by the order in which information is presented, and that the likelihood of regret is influenced by the outcome of a decision. These findings have important implications for the design of decision-making interventions and for understanding the role of regret in decision making. Our research has implications for understanding the role of regret in decision making, and for improving the effectiveness of decision-making interventions.

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odds with our prediction of reactance as a response to anticipated regret, they are not necessarily incommensurable. To our knowledge, no research on reactance in choice situations has involved an examination of post-outcome perceptions of regret. In the scenario studies, we assessed participants’ judgments about how people would feel after the negative outcomes were known. The reactance literature, as well as our account of reactance, involves the influences on people’s behavioral choices before the outcomes are known. Earlier in the development of our reasoning, we argued that what would drive reactant behavior would be a prediction anticipation of regret. That is, in anticipation, future feelings of regret for negative outcomes after following someone else’s directives would be perceived as greater than these feelings of regret for negative outcomes after reacting against them. This involves the anticipation of future regret rather than the perception of regret after the fact.

It may be that predictions of future regret do not match the post-outcome references made by observers in the scenario studies. Moreover, it may be the case that predictions or postdictions of regret do not match actual regret that is experienced by compliant and reactant people. Indeed, there is research consistent with this possibility, including work by Gilbert, Pinto, Wilson, Blumberg, and Wheeler (1998) or others in affective forecasting. In their work, they found that people misanticipate the extent to which they will feel negative emotions following events such as experiences of a romantic break-up, having a preferred gubernatorial candidate lose the election, or assigning blame when reading a vignette about a child’s death. Thus, Gilbert et al. (1998) found that people’s expectations about how they will feel if certain events occur may not correspond to how they actually feel after those events transpire. Gilovich and Medvec (1995) also reported that the things that people eventually regret most are not necessarily the things for which they anticipated the most regret.

These studies raise the intriguing possibility that people may misanticipate their future feelings, make decisions based on such mis/anticipation, and then actually experience different (and perhaps worst) feelings than were anticipated. That is, at a certain level of regret based on compliance or reactance may be anticipated prior to a decision, and this expectation may influence behavior, but the expectation of regret may not actually match what is actually experienced following an undesirable outcome.

If anticipation of future regret plays a role in whether one complies with the dictates of another person, we must consider not only the accuracy but also the spontaneity of the anticipation of regret. Researchers who investigate the effects of anticipated regret on decisions make the assumption, at least implicitly, that regret is anticipated spontaneously when one is faced with a decision. Anticipated regret can affect one’s tendency to comply with or react against as influence attempts only if one spontaneously considers future regret when deciding what to do. It is possible that individuals make decisions based upon only what is salient at the time of the decision, and if the possibility of regret is not salient, then its anticipation may not enter into the decision-making process.
course of action increases to a level greater than is observed in the absence of any threat to freedom. Imagine once again that you have the choice between
Alternative A and Alternative B, and imagine again that an agent of influence
tells you that you “really have to choose Alternative A.” As we know, such a
persuasive intention has the effect of increasing the likelihood of your choosing
Alternative B. Further imagine another condition where, prior to your choice,
another person (actually a confederate of the experimenter) responds to this
threat to freedom by saying “I haven’t made up my mind. It’s my choice, and
I’ll choose what I want.” This reinstatement of personal freedom, a release from
reactance, actually increases the percentage of participants who comply with
the influencing agent’s push for Alternative A even more than it does for a group
that never had its freedom threatened (Worchel & Breiten, 1971). Thus, the
reinstatement of personal freedom, a release from reactance as an effective way to increase compliance.

Indeed, such a reinstatement of perceived choice may be exactly why the
“high choice” condition in cognitive dissonance experiments is so effective in
leading to attitude change (Linder, Cooper, & Jones, 1967). At first, the partic-
ipant’s freedom to choose what to write or to say is threatened. However, by
focusing on the seeming degree of personal freedom to write or say what one
wishes, the threat is negated and a great deal of persuasion results.

These findings suggest that any direct attempt at persuasion involves two
different and opposite effects—an arousal of resistance that decreases com-
pliance and a positive persuasive impact that increases compliance. The former
generally predominates when there are threats to freedom, whereas when this
resistance component can be negated, as through the induction of considerations
of future regret (Crawford et al., 2002) or by the reinstatement of perceived
choice (Worchel & Breiten, 1971), compliance can be dramatically increased.

PERSUASIVE ATTEMPTS ELICIT DUAL PROCESSES: REACTANCE AND COMPLIANCE

Although reactance has primarily been understood as a phenomenon where
threat to choice induces a motivation to reassert freedom (Wright & Breiten,
1982; cf., Heilman & Toffler, 1976), very little speculation about the underlying
processes associated with reactance and responses to it have been articulated.
We propose this influence situations involving reactance and compliance can be
fruitfully understood by viewing them in a dual-process framework (Chaiken &
Trope, 1999). Specifically, we suggest that reactance against an influence
attempt is a spontaneous, relatively automatic process. Thwarted to freedom,
such motivated responses, such as dissonance (Petty, 1987), drive reactions
(Hull, 1951), and goal-directed behavior (Kruglanski, 1996), when influence be-
havior without there being conscious mediation or awareness. On the other hand,
We propose that the compliant behavior observed in our anticipated-agent condition was, in fact, a more controlled process. This view is consistent with previous work in the literature. For example, it has been noted that people who are more likely to anticipate the actions of others and who are more likely to engage in anticipated-agent behavior tend to have more accurate predictions of their own behavior. Indeed, what we observed in our control condition is similar to our anticipated-agent condition because the participants knew exactly what they were supposed to do. This similarity suggests that the compliant behavior observed in our control condition was, in fact, a more controlled process. In addition, what we observed in our control condition was not only more controlled, but it was also more accurate than the compliant behavior observed in our anticipated-agent condition. This suggests that the compliant behavior observed in our control condition was, in fact, a more controlled process.

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to ensure a good quality of life. The seller is in essence telling customers to imagine the large amount of regret they would feel from making a certain choice (the price insurance) and having the outcome turn out badly.

Perception actually takes place in the face of some resistance. Whether one is a social psychologist, political scientist, or a social psychologist trying to understand attitude change and influence, the process of resistance to change is obvious. This stick it to overcome this resistance. Our findings indicate that one possibility is to use a focus on future regret as a way to overcome resistance to influence. By associating future regret with resistance, the forms of resistance are weakened and compliance is more likely. This idea that anticipated regret could function as a technique to overcome resistance to being influenced was an appealing one. We then wondered whether other known effective techniques for inducing compliance and overcoming resistance might function through a similar process of anticipated regret. In addition, this consideration takes us beyond cognitive reactance and is applicable to other forms and bases of resistance as well.

**SCARRED**: When we are told that something is scarce, it is almost certain to create the thought of missing out on an opportunity. This focus on scarcity is clearly evident in the world of sales and marketing. There are statements of "last day of sale" and "only a limited supply." There is the ubiquitous clock on the Home Shopping Network, showing that one has only a very limited time to call in for the current offer.

Several lines of social psychological research have focused on the demonstrad of scarcity as an effective compliance technique and on the processes by which this technique works. Cialdini (1993, 1994) outlined scarcity as one of his principles by which interpersonal influence is effective, the proposal that objects and opportunities appear more valuable when they are less available, even if those objects and opportunities have little intrinsic attraction for us. Cialdini offered two interpretations for the effects of scarcity on persuasibility. The first account involves the use of a simplifying principle or heuristic—"If it is scarce, it must be valuable." This interpretation of the effectiveness of scarcity involves an increase in the attractive forces that promote persuasion. Cialdini (1993, 1994) offered a second interpretation of the power of scarcity that is much closer to our focus on anticipated regret. He suggested that as things become less and less available, we perceive a loss of freedom to have them. We are encouraged to purchase it now, this object will be unavailable in the future, and I will very much regret not having it. To preserve our freedom (i.e., reactance theory), we must buy the item before it is too late. In other words, it may be an anticipation of future regret that explains why scarcity is an effective way to overcome resistance to being influenced. The knowledge of a product's scarcity may well alter thoughts of anticipated regret if the item is not purchased right now. This interpretation is based on inducing future regret for resisting the persuasive attempt. Thus, in this case, scarcity works by weakening the forces of resistance through the anticipation of future regret for non-

### 8. TECHNIQUE TO REDUCE RESISTANCE

There has been some empirical work on the effects of scarcity. Ditto and Jemmott (1980) demonstrated a scarcity principle in evaluative judgments such that identical described medical conditions are evaluated more negatively when they involve rare conditions. Likewise, scarce positive health assets are ranked as more beneficial than are common assets. Although the findings of Ditto and Jemmott (1980) indicate strong effects of scarcity, they are not in the realm of interpersonal persuasion, and thus extrapolation to compliance settings must be done with caution.

Branson and Brock (2001a) examined the effects of scarcity in the realm of the effectiveness of persuasive messages. They found that responses to persuasive messages led to more extreme attitudes (both positive and negative) when the message was about a seemingly rare attribute that the participant supposedly possessed rather than a more common attribute. Interestingly, Branson and Brock (2001a) offered an explanation that is opposite to the simplifying heuristic explanation offered by Cialdini (1993, 1994). They proposed that thoughtful, elaborate processes are used for information about scarce attributes. These thoughtful, systematic processes might well be evoked by the anticipation of regret for missing out on a scarce item. Thus, the forces that weaken resistance to influence also lead to greater systematic processing. This proposal implies that if the basic evaluative information in a persuasive message about a product or act is strong, compliance would be greater if the product were scarce, due to the systematic processing of the information. However, if the evaluative information is weak or negative, scarcity would lead to less compliance. In fact, exactly such effects of scarcity in a compliance setting have been recently reported by Branson and Brock (2001b). Thus, scarcity can overcome resistance to compliance when the reasons for compliance are compelling. This finding that compliance is more likely when effortful processing is induced and persuasive arguments are strong is consistent with our dual-process explanation of influence situations.

**Four Approaches**: For many years, both social and health psychologists have tried to draw firm conclusions about the effects of the fear level of an appeal on the degree of persuasibility or compliance (Leventhall, 1970; Rogers, 1983). Fear is a future-oriented emotion. Thus, to the extent that fear is an effective way to induce social influence and to overcome resistance to persuasion, it is because of its ability to focus recipients of communications on negative future consequences. By associating negative affect with resistance to persuasion, fear appeals can weaken this resistance. Thus, fear appeals may share certain processes with the already discussed techniques of anticipated regret and scarcity.

Early research indicated that moderate levels of fear appeals were most effective (Leventhall, Watts, & Papageorge, 1967; Rogers, 1983): Low levels of fear
did not portray negative enough future scenarios to motivate participants to comply. High levels of fear may have frightened participants too much and increased resistance and defensive avoidance. A recent meta-analysis showed that strong fear appeals produce high levels of susceptibility to persuasion (Witte & Allen, 2000). In addition, strong fear appeals also activate adaptive danger control actions, such as message acceptance, and maladaptive fear control actions, such as message rejection or reactance. Thus, strong fear appeals combined with high-efficacy messages produce the greatest influence, whereas strong fear appeals combined with low-efficacy messages produce the greatest levels of defensive avoidance (Witte & Allen, 2000). This is reminiscent of the effects of scarcity, where high scarcity plus strong messages are the most effective, whereas high scarcity plus weak messages are the least effective. Perhaps strong fear appeals also work by inducing systematic and elaborate processing, which again is consistent with our dual-process explanation of influence situations.

Consideration of the effects of fear appeals demonstrates clearly the push-pull nature of compliance and persuasion that we noted previously in our discussions of the effects of reactance from reactance and of the dual-process nature of persuasion attempts—the tendency to go along with the influence induction and a tendency to resist it. With fear arousal as a compliance technique, there are two different kinds of resistance that must be overcame: the inherent resistance to any persuasion attempt plus the defensive resistance caused by the arousal of fear. When the outcomes are too horrible to imagine, participants may resist careful consideration of the entire message.

In relating fear appeals to the anticipated regret technique, one might propose that there is a common aspect of anticipated regret to fear appeals (i.e., "If you continue to smoke, these are all horrible things will happen to you, and you will regret it"). On the other hand, it seems clear that fear appeals focus a person on the issue of what the most feared outcomes. Thus, the key to increasing compliance rates by predicting the future is that the prediction of a behavior's future success has to be closely related to the subjective behavioral control. It is simply far easier for one to predict that one will do something than to agree to do it. Agreeing to an action in the "hypothetical future" is benign and one need not resist any direct persuasive attempt. Thus, when a key to increasing compliance through future predictions works by diminishing the negative aspects associated with compliance. In this way, resistance is weakened.

Importantly, once the (mis)prediction is made, the likelihood of subsequently deciding to be fallible is greatly increased. This technique of reducing resistance by first asking for a benign request has some similarities with the foot-in-the-door technique (Cialdini, 1966; Freedman & Fraser, 1966). With this technique, some minor request is asked for (and almost always agreed to) prior to asking the target request, which is a more time-consuming request. The agreement to the initial small request increases (compared to a control group) compliance to the larger request quite significantly. The difference between the prediction technique and the foot-in-the-door technique is that the former involves prediction and compliance requests for exactly the same behavior. The foot-in-the-door technique involves requests for two different behaviors in the two phases. In addition, the prediction technique asks participants to anticipate the future and to think about what they might do at a later time.

Thus, this technique has much in common with the anticipated regret, the scare-
city, and the four techniques that have already been discussed. All of these involve an anticipation of a future event in order to increase compliance with a request.

Several process explanations have been offered to explain the self-serving error of prediction effect. Commitment and construal (Cialdini, Reno, & Kallgren, 1990), norm salience (Sherman, 1980), and impression management (Tedeschi, Underwood, & Breckner, 1971) have all been offered as explanations. More recently, Spengberg, Spunt, Obenrather, and Greenwald (2001) have proposed a disconfirmation reduction interpretation. They suggest that the self-prediction makes people discount the discrepancy between one’s principles and one’s past behaviors that were in violation of those principles. This disconfirmation is subsequently reduced by compliance with the actual later request.

Regardless of the correct explanation for the effectiveness of the prediction technique for overcoming resistance and increasing compliance, the important point for now is that this is another example of how anticipation of the future can increase the likelihood that a person will comply with a request or do otherwise than have a personal influence on social behavior. The idea that thinking about an issue might be used as a general technique to overcome resistance to persuasion is also consistent with the known effects of imagining and explaining hypothetical future events.

Imagining and Explaining Hypothetical Future Events

Similar to the effects of predicting the future on subsequent judgments and behavior, simply imagining or explaining the future can increase one’s subjective likelihood that an event will occur. Thus, Carroll (1978) asked participants to imagine one or the other outcome of the 1976 presidential election (prior to its occurrence). Those who imagined a victory for Carter judged that outcome as more likely, and those who imagined a Ford victory judged that Ford was more likely. Simply having participants imagine and explain a hypothetical victory by one or the other team in an upcoming football game very much influenced their judgments of who would win the game, with the team imagined as winning being judged as more likely to actually win (Shiozawa, Zucker, & Hirt, 1983).

Imagining and explaining a hypothetical future event can affect not only one’s judgments of the probability of future events, but also one’s actual future behavior as well. Sherman, Storv, Heritz, and Stock (1961) had participants imagine and explain their own hypothetical future success or failure at an upcoming interview task. Those who explained success performed significantly better than did a control group that explained nothing. Interestingly, a group that explained failure and then stated explicit expectations also outperformed the control group—perhaps due to resistance to influence against the possibility of failure.
The Planning Fallacy

Buehler, Griffin, and Ross (1994) investigated people’s predictions of the time that it would take to complete various tasks. It comes as no surprise to any one of us who has ever committed to write a chapter (including the present one) that people greatly underestimate their completion times. Buehler et al. (1994) demonstrated that this effect occurs because people tend to focus on future plan-based scenarios rather than on relevant past experiences. In fact, instructions to connect relevant past experiences with their predictions eliminated the overly optimistic predictions about how long tasks would take. Thus, without specific instructions to focus on the past, the act of predicting the time or ease of completion for a task evokes a future orientation about how a task may be done rather than a past orientation where valuable information from similar past pro-creation experiences might be gained. In addition, motivations in the form of rewards for getting things done early in the future only exacerbate the planning fallacy—that is, the time predicted to complete a task is reduced more by motivation than are actual completion times (Buehler, Griffin, & MacDonald, 1997).

Importantly, from our point of view, these overly optimistic completion es-
timates about the time it will take and the ease of doing things greatly increase the likelihood that we will agree to requests of all types—provided that these requests do not require immediate action. A similar effect of temporal perspec-
tive on judgments has been investigated by Gilovich, Kerr, and Medvec (1993).

They measured the degree of confidence that people have in their prospects for future success. They found that confidence decreases dramatically as the “me-
ment of truth” approaches. For example, students think that they will do much better on midterm exams when asked on the first day of class than when asked on the day of the exam. Gilovich et al. (1993) interpret this effect as due to the fact that people tend to feel more accountable for their performances as the time to perform approaches, and thus they focus more and more on possible causes of failure. In addition, when a task is to be done far in the future, one might well make unrealistic and overly optimistic assessments of future preparatory effects. Things seem easier in the future because there is so much time available to prepare and to get things accomplished.

Although neither Buehler et al. (1994) nor Gilovich et al. (1993) investigated the implications of their findings for the degree to which people will be influ-
ced by or compliant, we feel that there is a clear connection. To the extent that people perceive that future tasks will be done more quickly and easily than is actually the case (Buehler, et. al., 1994), and to the extent that they feel con-
fident that they can complete a task successfully (Gilovich et al., 1993), they ought to be more likely to be persuaded to do something if it is not required until a future date than if it is a request for compliance at the present time. Both perceptions of ease of completion and confidence in the success of completion should help overcome resistance to persuasive attempts, and these perceptions are likely for requests about the future.

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The findings of Gilovich et al. (1993) have an additional implication for compliance requests that are for some time in the future. They suggest that confidence in successful completion increases monotonically as time before the “due date” increases. This finding implies that compliance rates will generally increase as the amount of time until the requested behavior is due increases. We shall now turn to a point of view that addresses this very issue.

Temporal Construal

Liberman and Trope (1998) have considered how people think about the future as a function of how far in the distance that future extends. According to their temporal construal theory, distant future situations are considered at a higher level than are near future situations. That is, people focus on the general, abstract, and central features of events that are in the far future, but on specific, concrete, and low-level features for events in the near future. For example, consider whether you might agree to a request to take part in a symposium sometime in the future. According to Liberman and Trope (1998), if the symposium is one year from now, you are likely to focus on abstract aspects of the symposium, such as its interest value and what you might learn. On the other hand, if the symposium is two weeks from now, you will be more likely to focus on specific and concrete aspects such as the ease of getting to the symposium site or the cost of travel.

In support of temporal construal theory, Liberman and Trope (1998) have shown that the value of an event is more positive in the distant future than the near future when the value associated with the high-level construal (i.e., the abstract features) is more positive than the value associated with the low-level construal (i.e., the specific features), and the value of an event is less positive in the distant future than in the near future when the value associated with the high-level construal of an event is less than the value associated with the low-
level construal. These findings were replicated and extended in a series of ex-
periments by Trope and Liberman (2000). They found that feasibility (a low-level feature) carries more weight for judgments of an event in the near future, whereas desirability (a high-level feature) carries more weight for events in the distant future. More specifically, participants are more likely to choose a difficult but interesting course assignment when the temporal distance is long, but they are more likely to choose an easy but uninteresting assignment when the temporal distance is short.

The implications of temporal construal theory are extremely interesting. The theory suggests, for example, that social principles are more likely to guide decisions for the distant future than for the immediate future, whereas difficulty, cost, and situational pressures are more likely to be important for decisions about the near future. What is the relevance of temporal construal theory for our current interest in the role of thinking about the future on rates of compliance? For one thing, Liberman and Trope (1998) suggested that time constraints are a low-level construal of an activity. Thus, people give little weight to time
constraints is planning for the distant future, and they are thus more likely to plan to do and agree to do more things for the distant future, even incommensurable activities. This suggests that it will be easier to secure greater compliance for requests about the distant future, in line with the ideas of Budzilow et al. (1994) and Galilov et al. (1995). In addition, because there is less resistance to compliance for the distant future than for the near future, one might propose that in order to increase compliance rates, strategies that aim at resistance reduction would be more effective for near-time decisions than for distant decisions, whereas strategies that increase the attraction forces that promote persuasion would be more effective for distant decisions than for near decisions. This would be compatible with the view of distant decisions as focusing on promotion con- siderations and near decisions focusing on prevention decisions (Higgin, 1998).

Although such a difference in promotion versus prevention focus is feasible, things may not be so simple. Both low-level (money or time) and abstract (distant future) considerations can involve both promotion and prevention aspects. For example, low-level considerations of the reasonable cost of a trip can be framed as a way to save money or as a way to prevent costly expenses. It might make more sense to consider that both low-level, concrete and high-level, abstract consider- ations of compliance can involve forces that promote persuasion as well as forces that weaken resistance. What is important is that both kinds of attempts to increase persuasion (promoting persuasion and weakening resistance) in the near future will be most effective if they involve concrete features, whereas both kinds of attempts to increase persuasion in the distant future will be most ef- fective if they involve abstract features. Thus, temporal construal theory suggests that the framing of the compliance request will very much affect the rates of compliance differentially for the near and the distant future. For requests in the distant future, one should focus more on promoting the positive, abstract features of the object of the request, such as its desirability, or on weakening resistance based on high-level features, such as moral considerations. However, to secure compliance for requests in the near future, one should focus on the positive, low-level, concrete features, such as ease and feasibility, or on weakening re- sistance based on low-level features, such as high cost.

CONCLUSION: TAKING STOCK OF RESISTANCE

We began this chapter by noting that compliant behavior becomes more likely either when the attractiveness of persuasion is enhanced or when the resistance to persuasion is diminished. In particular, we emphasized that focusing people on the future can greatly reduce resistance to influencing agents' demands in the present. Whereas many in the persuasion literature have emphasized making persuasive appeals more attractive (e.g., Britton, Buckner, Tormala, & Petty, this volume; Cialdini, 1993, 1994; Tormala & Petty, this volume; Wegner, Petty, this volume), Sankov, & Fabrigar, this volume), our approach has been to consider the other half of the persuasion equation: reducing resistance (Furgen & Brehm, this vol- ume; Knowles & Linn, chapter 1, this volume; Quinn & Wood, this volume; Jacks & O'Brien, this volume). It seems appropriate at this point to take some stock in what our findings and theorizing say about resistance and its importance.

In general, we view resistance as a response by an individual that attempts to eliminate or reduce the impact of another's influence attempt. Resistance is often based on motivational factors (Jacks & O'Brien, this volume), which means that cognitive, information-processing factors may be involved as well. Moreover, although resistance may involve conscious and controlled decisions and behav- iors, we have focused more on resistance as a spontaneous response to social influence situations. Whether it is because people instinctively wish to maintain perceptions of choice and control (e.g., Brehm, 1996; Werbel & Brehm, 1971), because they do not automatically consider future regret (Crawford et al., 2002), or because they are driven by situational heuristics such as scarcity (e.g., Cial- dim, 1993, 1994), it seems that thinking less is often linked to resisting more. Indeed, our proposed dual-process account of resistance and compliance is based on this reasoning. There are, undoubtedly, many ways to shift people away from this more spontaneous response, and we have argued that getting them to think more about the future is especially beneficial in reducing resistance. In particular, predicting the future, imagining and explaining hypothetical future events, avoiding the consideration of an omission future too painful to consider, capitalizing on the planning fallacy, and considering the abstract, long-term positives of the situating focus people away from the immediate unrewardedness of com- pliance to a new decision set where compliance seems more reasonable, less costly, and easy to accept. What is true but not apparent to decision makers focused on the future is that there are many pitfalls on the road to these futures that may have been crafted by the influencing agent, which, if known to the decision maker, would make compliance far less attractive. However, like a good magician or politician, an influencing agent who focuses people away from the "action" makes acceptance more compelling and resistance less imperative.

We began this chapter by focusing on cognitive resistance as one important manifestation of resistance. We saw how the anticipation of future regret can diminish the tendency toward resistance. As we considered other compliance techniques, such as scarcity and fear appeals, and as we considered the effects on compliance of focusing on future behavior and events, it became clear that the reduction of resistance by considering the future was more general than the overarching of cognitive resistance.

There are many different causes or bases of resistance to social influence: resistance based on restriction of freedom or threatened loss of control; resist- ance based on the regret anticipated for compliance followed by a bad outcome; resistance based on defensive avoidance; resistance based on aversion to change, such as the status quo bias; resistance based on perceived potential loss of power or status as an outcome of becoming the target of a successful influence attempt. All these bases and manifestations of resistance that can be elicited by
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Author:  SHERMAN, CRAWFORD, MCconnell

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