

Automatic Responses, Target Resistance, and the Adaptation of Compliance-Seeking Requests

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Based upon politeness theory and a cognitive rules perspective, it is argued that anticipated resistance to a persuasive message should effect compliance-seeking message behavior. Using controlled interviews to elicit persuasive messages, results indicate that persuaders used a greater number of strategies when confronting a positively predisposed target who refused to comply. Beyond an initial opening gambit, negative sanctions were employed more extensively against positively predisposed targets. Overall, a pattern of compliance-gaining behaviors involving a gradual shift to negative sanctions was observed. The findings are explained in light of current perspectives on information processing, possibly shedding light on past failures to find evidence of strategic adaptation based on situational factors. **Key words:** compliance-gaining, compliance-resisting, adaptation, interpersonal communication, persuasion.

Miller, Boster, Roloff and Seibold (1977) not only introduced the study of compliance-gaining message strategy research to the speech communication discipline, but began the trend of scrutinizing situational factors accounting for differential strategy selection. A proliferation of research in this area has since appeared (for reviews, see Cody, Canary & Smith, 1994; Cody, Greene, Marston, Baaske, O'Hair, & Schneider, 1986; Dillard & Burgoon, 1985; Seibold, Cantrill & Meyers, 1994; Wheelless, Barraclough & Stewart, 1983; Wilson, 1997). Cody and McLaughlin (1980) and Cody, Woelfel and Jordan (1983) identified the perceptual dimensions relevant to compliance-gaining situations. Among these were personal benefits, situation apprehension, resistance to persuasion, rights, intimacy, dominance and relational consequences.

A substantial number of studies examined these situational dimensions; however, clear cut trends were not detected and scholars challenged the validity of the findings (e.g., Dillard, 1988) and the salience of situational cues in message strategy choice (Dillard & Burgoon, 1985). A further problem with research in this area is that, often, little differentiation in initial compliance-gaining behavior has been detected. A majority of respondents across situations have utilized strategies such as hinting (Cody, McLaughlin & Jordan, 1980), altruism (Tracy, Craig, Smith & Spisak, 1984) or a direct request/simple offer (Dillard & Fitzpatrick, 1984; Wright & O'Hair, 1999). Cody, Canary, and Smith (1994) examined the production of compliance-gaining tactics across a wide variety of interpersonal goal types. Direct request, rationality, and other-benefit (altruism) tactics were overwhelming favorites for first-attempts at compliance, while many other tactics were never utilized at all.

Since that time, a paradigm shift has occurred, characterized by Seibold, Cantrill and Meyers (1994) as a move away from the "strategic choice model" and toward a "goal limitation model" (pp. 544-545). This shift involved a recognition of the

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cognitive factors implicated in the persuasion process, including the recognition that individuals often possess multiple goals, such as gaining compliance as well as maintaining positive and harmonious interpersonal relationships.

In addition, the cognitive perspective, as seen in theoretical positions such as action assembly theory maintains that much human behavior is scripted and nonconscious (Greene, 1997). Initial behaviors in interactions are particularly prone to be scripted and the more mindful processing of situational factors may not occur until later in communication transactions. Evidence of this is found when individuals have been shown to adjust their plans for goal achievement in failure situations (Berger, 1997). Since most of the compliance gaining literature has not examined complex patterns of interaction, it is quite possible that past failures to find message strategy differences based on context and situation has been due to the lack of consideration of these cognitive processes.

In light of this paradigm shift, a reexamination of situational variables and their impact on persuasive messages is warranted. In this study, an historically important situational variable, target predisposition toward message (anticipated resistance), is investigated within the longitudinal context of compliance-seeking interaction.

Background and Statement of the Problem

While resistance to persuasion has received significant attention, most of that attention has been from the perspective of the receiver, or target of persuasive effort (for example, see Fitch, 1994; Kearney, Plax & Burroughs, 1991; McLaughlin, Cody & Robey, 1980; O'Hair, Cody, & O'Hair, 1991; Wright & O'Hair, 1999). The lack of research from the persuader's perspective is all the more remarkable when one considers that traditional public speaking texts have stressed the importance of determining audience predispositions toward the speaker and message (e.g., Applebaum & Anatol, 1982; Lucas, 1995; Sprague & Stuart, 2000; Verderber, 1999). Brooks (1981) listed five audience types, two committed and three neutral: favorable, hostile, indifferent, uninformed and undecided. When dealing with hostile audiences, speakers have been advised to use a common ground approach in order to make their positions seem minimally discrepant from their audience's positions (Brooks, 1981; Simons, 1986). This is consistent with the substantial, albeit dated, research conducted on latitudes of acceptance and rejection in social judgment theory (Sherif, Sherif, & Nebergall, 1965).

A study, conducted by Hazen and Kiesler (1975) prior to the advent of compliance-gaining paradigm asked participants to prepare speeches by selecting from a deck of 28 cards, each containing a different strategy. The hypothetical, public audience to which the speech was to be presented was represented as very opposed, moderately opposed, or in favor of the topic. Results indicated a preference for problem (vs. solution) centered arguments when facing a hostile audience. Although Hazen and Kiesler's work has minimal contextual and methodological relevance to more recent studies of interpersonal compliance-gaining, it is worth noting since the situational variable studied, degree of resistance, did have an impact on message selection.

The issue of target predisposition is informed by a more recent theory. Wilson (1990, 1997) proposed a cognitive rules model of influence messages based upon the criteria of fit, strength, and recency. Regarding the criteria of fit, Wilson (1997) suggested, ". . . the probability of goal formation increases when individuals perceive that a larger rather than a smaller number of conditions represented in the rule are

present in the current situation” (p. 25). The refusal of a target to comply with a request may activate a *consistency* rule if the target had initially appeared positive about engaging in the behavior. In fact, the importance of consistency is highlighted in the cognitive rules model (Wilson, 1990) and demonstrated in subsequent research (Wilson & Kang, 1991). Conversely, initial failure may activate a *try harder* rule in all cases which could result in differing, possibly more assertive, strategies.

This perspective is under-girded by politeness theory. First applied to compliance-gaining research by Baxter (1984), politeness theory proposes that individuals attempt to manage complex and occasionally competing desires to maintain positive face (a positive personal identity, social approval from significant others, recognition and ratification of values and attributes) and negative face (maintaining freedom from constraint, accorded respect, not having privacy and autonomy violated without due cause) in behavioral choices (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Most important to the present discussion is the claim that individuals work very hard to maintain the face of conversational partners as well as their own. This respect for maintaining the face of others is so strong that individuals have risk social sanctions when they have violated the implied contract (Afifi & Lee, 2000; Cupach & Metts, 1994). Indeed, being inured, arbitrary, and disrespectful toward others without cause may be more difficult than being disrespected by others.

Recently, Wilson, Aleman and Leatham (1998) proposed a revised analysis of face threatening acts in compliance-gaining situations. In this analysis, the authors suggested that face threatening acts are defined in some measure by the logical preconditions for seeking compliance related to specific interaction goals. When asking favors, interactants showed great concern for maintaining both positive and negative face; however, when enforcing unfulfilled obligations, “participants displayed more concern about the primary goal of seeking compliance and less concern about secondary goals. . . participants expressed less approval and exerted greater pressure for their friend to comply when enforcing obligations than when pursuing other influence goals” (Wilson, Aleman & Leatham, 1998, p. 90). It should also be noted that the participants in the Wilson et. al study indicated that they would continue making persuasive efforts until the target finally complied. Finally, these findings are in accord with the presence of the consistency rule, discussed earlier.

Based upon the Wilson et al. (1998) analysis of politeness theory, one would expect less concern for negative face when making requests of targets who have already indicated a predisposition to comply. Seen as enforcing an unfulfilled obligation, the target should comply, the persuader has high rights to make the request, and failure to comply may involve a challenge to the positive face of the persuader. At any rate, avoiding threats to the negative face of the target give way to the greater salience of the primary goal of gaining compliance in this scenario. In the present study, both the consistency rule and a message oriented analysis of politeness theory suggest the following hypothesis:

- H1: Target predisposition toward the topic will affect the generation of compliance-seeking messages. Specifically, more socially risky strategies, as well as more strategies overall, will be used with a positively predisposed target who resists compliance.

deTurck (1985) pointed to the “one-message-and-done” approach to the study of compliance-gaining as a major shortfall of social influence research. While the study of initial behaviors may be interesting, it can be argued that communication is characterized by adjustment and adaptation to situations and receivers. Further,

since initial communicative behaviors are often linked to ritual, later behaviors in a sequence may best display the efforts of a message source to adapt to situational contingencies. Often, investigators have found a preponderance of participants choosing to utilize one particular strategy; for example, altruism (Tracy, Craig, Smith & Spisak, 1984) or a simple, direct request (Dillard & Fitzpatrick, 1984). It may well be that this is an opening gambit, designed to seek an easy victory in the quest for compliance. Should the opening gambit fail, it would be expected that alternative and more differentiated message types would occur later in the interaction.

A predictable change in behavior would be the use of more socially risky compliance-gaining strategies. The premise here is that compliance-gaining strategies may be classified according to the social threat (McCampbell & Ruback, 1985) or threat to face (Brown & Levinson, 1987) inherent in their use. While safe strategies which maintain face (e.g., altruism, direct request, explanation) may be used initially, a lack of success and/or certain situational contingencies may mandate the use of more negative, dangerous strategies (e.g., guilt, threat, warning). In fact, increasingly coercive sequences of behaviors have been observed when participants become frustrated in attempts at exerting influence (deTurck, 1987).

Clearly, communicators have multiple goals in mind when they engage in transactions (Dillard, 1997; Dillard, Segrin & Harden, 1989). Typically, people want to achieve the goal of harmonious social relations, maintain both positive and negative face, as well as accomplish the goal of gaining compliance. It should be expected that pro-social strategies will be replaced over time as communicators realize that the attainment of both social goals (saving face) and compliance is unlikely.

Additionally, with respect to cognitive rules theory, a try harder rule also suggests the following hypothesis:

H2: Strategies based on negative sanction will increase as persuasive interactions continue over time.

Gender differences in persuasive communication have been studied fairly extensively. Females have been shown to use more politeness-related strategies than males (Baxter, 1984; Fitzpatrick & Winke, 1979). As Baxter (1984) pointed out, "The greater politeness. . . associated with females is fully compatible with the substantial body of work that reports greater deference behavior in general on the part of females" (p. 428). And, although deTurck (1985) found that females employed more punishment-oriented strategies in seeking compliance, deTurck (1987, p. 107) later suggested that "females are expected to avoid coercive compliance-gaining strategies. . ." and indeed found that females were less willing to use violence against a noncomplying target.

Still, unclear and often mixed results have characterized much of the research on gender and message strategies. In reviewing this mixed literature, Cody, Canary and Smith (1994) reconceptualized gender research on the basis of differing interaction goals. They argued cogently, supporting their arguments with a series of three compliance-gaining studies, that college-age females "show a marked preference for communal [social] goals" (p. 79). Given this reconceptualization on the basis of differences in goals, along with the fact that the majority of previous research has not involved resistance to initial strategies or the observation of actual behaviors, it is likely that gender differences are present to some degree. It is expected that females

will persist in the desire to attain both the goal of a positive relationship as well as the goal of compliance, whereas men will more quickly abandon the social goal.

H3: Males will use more strategies based on negative sanction than will females.

Method

Participants

One hundred twenty undergraduate students (58 males and 62 females) enrolled in speech communication courses voluntarily participated in the study. Participants were initially told that they would be assisting in a project to recruit students for a "campus cleanup campaign" ostensibly to take place the weekend preceding homecoming.

Procedure

Participants met with the researcher individually and were given the following stimulus message:

Thank you for volunteering to help obtain support for a (school name) fall clean-up campaign. On the first Saturday in October, student volunteers will help repair, pick-up and spruce-up the campus. You will meet and talk with other students in an attempt to persuade them to participate in the campaign. You will need to prepare a brief, persuasive appeal in an effort to get the students to sign a pledge (agreeing to help).

In fact, participants met with and attempted to persuade only one student, who was a research confederate. Participants were asked to conduct this persuasive interview after waiting from ten to fifteen minutes. The interview was conducted in a small conference room equipped with ceiling-mounted microphone and camera. Participants were given pledge cards which they attempted to persuade the confederate to sign.

Assignment was made randomly to three groups: favorable target, unfavorable target and undecided target. In the case of the favorable target, information on a small card accompanying the pledge form read: "Questionnaire results indicate that she is in favor of helping in a fall clean-up campaign." In the case of the unfavorable target and the undecided target, the words "is opposed to helping" or "is undecided about helping" were used. Participants were allowed to talk with the target for as long or brief a time as they wished. In fact, the interviews ranged in duration from 90 seconds to 22 minutes.

Validation

Following the interview, participants were asked to complete an instrument which operationalized the Cody, Woelfel and Jordan (1983) situational dimensions on 5-point Likert-type scales. Both positively and negatively stated items were used and presentation order of items was mixed with respect to subscales.

A one-way analysis of variance was computed for group assignment and the resistance to persuasion subscale of the Cody, Woelfel and Jordan (1983) instrument. Alpha reliability for this subscale was .83. Results indicated significant variation between experimental groups regarding perceptions of resistance ($F(2, 117) = 21.02, p < .000, \eta^2 = .203$). As expected, the "target is in favor of helping" group indicated the lowest levels of resistance ($M = 15.35, SD = 6.26$), followed by the "target undecided" group ($M = 19.9, SD = 4.12$) and the "target opposed group" ($M =$

23.15, $SD = 5.6$). Scheffe multiple range tests indicated significant differences between all group means ($p < .05$). As an additional manipulation check, participants were asked to recall the target's pre-interview opinion of the clean-up campaign. All 120 participants were able to recall with no apparent trouble that the target was favorable, opposed, or undecided.

Confederates

Two female graduate research assistants functioned as confederates in this study. The use of confederates as targets of persuasive appeals has a precedent in research using telephones (Wilson, Cruz, Marshall, & Rao, 1993). These were first year Master's candidates and therefore quite similar in age to participants. Confederates were given both written and oral instructions requiring them to remain uncommitted and not sign the proffered pledge card. They were told not to say whether they would or would not participate in the clean-up campaign. Rather, they were instructed to say, "I'll think it over." If pressed for a reason, confederates were permitted to say that they were unsure of their Saturday schedules and would have to check. In addition, confederates were given a series of instructions regarding behavior in the interview. (1) Do not volunteer any additional information. (2) Attempt to be a neutral listener. Speak only when introducing yourself, answering direct questions, or when it would be inappropriate or awkward not to speak. (3) Make sure your facial expression is neutral (don't smile or frown unless it would be inappropriate not to). (4) Maintain eye contact most of the time, but don't stare down the other person. (5) Avoid affirmative or negative head nods. (6) Behave as much the same with each participant as possible.

The confederates were given the opportunity to practice correct responses and were asked to observe both the verbal and nonverbal responses of one another in order to behave as much alike as possible in data collection. As final precautions, use of confederate was balanced with respect to treatment group and confederates were unaware of participant treatment condition.

Coding and Reliability

Videotaped persuasive interactions were coded using the typology developed by Wiseman and Schenck-Hamlin (1981). Evidence of the appropriateness of this typology has been provided in the areas of both unitizing (number of strategies observed) and coding (agreement on particular strategies observed) reliability. The taxonomy was used successfully by Tracy et al. (1984), who conclude (p. 516): "Thus this. . . strategy set possesses theoretical coherence and, more important, a degree of ecological validity missing in earlier schemes." Due to the fact that the taxonomy was developed inductively, based upon participants perceptions of context-relevant features of persuasive situations, its use in contemporary research continues (Honeycutt, Cantrill, Kelly & Lambkin, 1998).

In the present study, two independent raters were used. Training consisted of memorizing both the descriptive and assumptive definitions of strategy types to be looked for and in analyzing sample interviews, negotiating discrepant codings until ratings stabilized. One problem that surfaced for the raters was the disposition of altruism strategies. It should be noted that altruism caused some differences of opinions among raters in both the Schenck-Hamlin, Wiseman and Georgacarakos (1982) and the Tracy et al. (1984) studies. In the present study, raters had difficulty

differentiating altruism from direct request. Since the request to help with a clean-up campaign did not directly (or even indirectly) benefit the persuader, statements indicating the value of the compliance to the persuader were notably absent. Raters found only 3 incidents of altruism. A decision was made to classify altruism, along with direct request and explanation as a non-sanction, rationale based strategy. Debt, ingratiation, promise, esteem and allurements were analyzed collectively as strategies based on positive sanction while aversive stimulation, threat, guilt and warning were analyzed collectively as strategies based on negative sanctions. Interrater reliability was determined by computation of Cohen's k (Cohen, 1960). Cohen's k yields the proportion of inter-rater agreement with marginals (levels of agreement to be expected by chance) removed. Satisfactory levels of agreement were obtained for positive sanctions, .81, negative sanctions, .84, and rationale-based strategies, .80.

The decision to use these categories of message strategies for analysis was based upon several considerations. First, were all 12 strategies to be used independently in subsequent analysis, even a very large n would not be sufficient to assure adequate cell sizes, power, and to prevent the occurrence of empty cells. Second, investigating strategies based upon their collective, logical properties, is an appropriate approach. The categories used in the present study were recommended by Schenck-Hamlin et al. (1982) and have emerged as significant predictors of strategy choice in other work (Neuliep & Mattson, 1990). Finally, the choice of categories is consistent with the rationale for the present study which involves observation of naturally occurring behavior. Since participants do not respond to a checklist derived a priori, the factor structure of such classification schemes should not be crucial.

Results

The first hypothesis dealt with the effect of target predisposition toward the topic on verbal compliance-gaining behavior. A first line of analysis was to explore the number of strategies generated by participants between the experimental conditions. Consequently, a one-way analysis of variance was computed for group membership and total number of strategies employed. A significant relationship was found between experimental condition and number of strategies employed in the effort to gain compliance, $F(2, 117) = 10.53, p = .0001, \eta^2 = .15$.

Group means ranged from 2.5 ($SD = 1.22$) for the group expecting the target to be opposed to the message to 4.03 ($SD = 1.99$) for the group expecting the target to favor the message. The group which anticipated an undecided target generated a mean of 2.95 strategies ($SD = 1.24$). Scheffe tests, with alpha set at .05, confirm a significant difference between the target favors group and the other two treatment groups.

While the preceding analysis dealt with the number of strategies employed by participants, further analysis investigated whether type of strategy used differed between treatment conditions. A series of contingency tables were constructed to allow a test of independence on group membership (target favors, target opposes, target undecided) and strategy types (positive sanction, negative sanction, rationale-based). One approach to the analysis of categorical, longitudinal data is panel analysis. Each identifiable message strategy forms a category (wave) which is examined based on assumptions of equal distribution or from frequency distributions in previous waves. Independent analyses were conducted for the first four

TABLE 1
TEMPORAL SEQUENCE OF SPECIFIC MESSAGE STRATEGIES

Strategy	Sequence of Occurrence (Percentage)				
	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Last
+ <i>Sanction</i>	21	58	31	16	43
Debt	0	3 (2.8)	2 (2.9)	1 (2.2)	5 (4.2)
Ingratiation	7 (5.8)	5 (4.7)	1 (1.5)	0	1 (0.8)
Promise	1 (0.8)	7 (6.6)	2 (2.9)	2 (4.3)	5 (4.2)
Esteem	3 (2.5)	9 (8.5)	4 (5.9)	2 (4.3)	6 (5.0)
Allurement	10 (8.3)	34 (32.1)	22 (32.4)	11 (23.9)	26 (21.7)
- <i>Sanction</i>	2	25	27	23	56
Aversive Stimulation	0	0	1 (1.5)	0	2 (1.7)
Threat	0	1 (.9)	2 (2.9)	2 (4.3)	5 (4.2)
Guilt	2 (1.7)	20 (18.9)	18 (26.5)	12 (26.1)	38 (31.7)
Warning	0	4 (3.8)	6 (8.8)	9 (19.6)	11 (9.2)
<i>Rationale</i>	97	23	10	7	21
Altruism	2 (1.7)	1 (0.9)	0	0	0
Direct Request	31 (25.8)	6 (5.5)	3 (4.4)	3 (6.5)	7 (5.8)
Explanation	64 (53.3)	16 (15.1)	7 (10.3)	4 (8.7)	14 (11.7)
Column Total	120	106	68	46	120

waves observed, in numerical sequence. By the time the fourth wave was used, almost two-thirds of the original 120 participants had discontinued their efforts; however, a separate analysis was also conducted for the *last* strategy employed by all participants.

Testing the hypothesis that strategy type would differ by group membership, non-significant chi squares were found for the first (1.3), second (5.4), third (1.1) and fourth (3.9) strategies used. The second and fourth waves did approach significance, yielding contingency coefficients of .22 and .29, respectively. Power for this test, anticipating a moderate effect size of .30, is .75 (Cohen, 1988, p. 236).

A significant relationship, $\chi^2(4) = 11.86, p = .018$, was found for the last strategy employed. Participants in the target favors condition relied heavily on negative sanctions while participants in the target opposes condition made more frequent use of positive sanctions.

The second hypothesis was tested by directly comparing the frequencies by which positive, negative and rationale-based strategies were used. For the purpose of this analysis, the first wave was tested against an assumption of equal distribution across message types while subsequent waves were tested against the frequencies observed in the subsequent wave. As a result, the analysis tests the hypothesis of *strategy change* between waves. First, as an opening gambit, 97 of the 120 participants utilized a rationale-based strategy, $\chi^2(2) = 126.3, p < .001$. By far, the most common specific strategy used was explanation. Although strategy-specific analyses were not conducted, the particular strategies used are shown in Table 1. After the first strategy failed, 14 participants terminated the interview while 106 attempted a second time. This time, the preponderant type of strategy employed was based on positive sanctions (58, as opposed to 25 negative sanctions and 23 rationale-based strategies, $\chi^2(2) = 429.23.89, p < .001$. When the second strategy was unsuccessful, only 68 of the participants remained to try again. Again, positive strategies were used most often, 31 times, $\chi^2(2) = 10.15, p < .01$, although several participants used negative strategies (27) while few used rationale (10). By the time a fourth strategy was needed, fully half (23) of the remaining participants used negative strategies, $\chi^2 =$

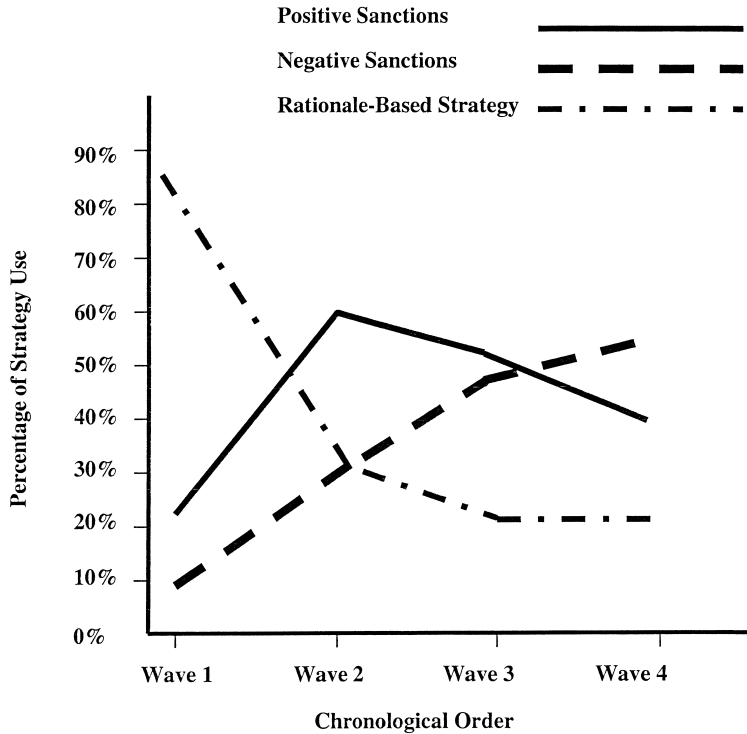


FIGURE 1
PERCENTAGE OF STRATEGY USE BY CHRONOLOGICAL SEQUENCE

2.39, *ns*. Frequency distribution of the last strategy used indicates that almost half of the participants utilized negative sanctions, 43 used positive sanctions and 21 used rationale. The results are depicted in figure 1.

In response to hypothesis three, two lines of analysis were pursued. First, an independent samples *t*-test was computed to compare gender of persuader with total number of persuasive strategies employed. A significant difference was found, $t(1, 118) = 2.0, p = .047, d = .37$. On the average, men used 3.47 strategies per interview while women used 2.87 ($SD = 1.83, 1.41$). As a second step, contingency tables were developed to compare gender with strategy choice. Significant interactions were found for both the third, $\chi^2(2) = 8.32, p = .015, V = .35$, and last strategies used, $\chi^2(2) = 10.71, p = .005, V = .30$. These results demonstrate that in the later steps of the message strategy sequence important gender differences began to emerge. For example, in the last wave, males were more likely to use negative sanctions than females (36 to 20), and less likely to use positive sanctions (15 to 28) or rationale-based strategies (7 to 14). Nonsignificant chi squares were found for the first, .007, second, 2.38, and fourth, .19 (all *dfs* = 2; *ns*), strategies employed by participants. Power for these tests, anticipating a .30 effect size, is .85 for $n = 120$ (Cohen, 1988, p. 235).

Exploration of a possible treatment group by gender by message strategy interaction was of some interest. Examination of more than two nominal variables simultaneously is possible utilizing log-linear procedures. The likelihood ratio chi square (*LR*) can be partitioned into main-, two-, and three-way interaction effects.

Using this procedure, a main effect is considered to be the deviation of a single nominal variable from expected frequency patterns. Two-way effects involve the interaction of two variables and three-way effects involve three variables. (Burggraf & Sillars, 1987, p. 285).

A low LR and high probability supports the hypothesis that k -way and higher effects are zero. All tests examined the three-way interaction between group, gender and strategy use. There was no indication of three-way interaction effect for first strategy, $LR(4) = 3.89$, $p = .42$, second strategy, $LR(4) = 3.07$, $p = .55$, third strategy, $LR(4) = 2.64$, $p = .62$, or last strategy used, $LR(4) = 3.03$, $p = .55$. The fourth strategy used was not examined since, as previously discussed, the number of participants continuing efforts to persuade had dropped to only 46.

Discussion

Although important questions remained unanswered by the present investigation of compliance-seeking behavior, several conclusions are warranted. The study provides some very interesting insights into the role which target predispositions can play in determining message strategy selection. In a significant two-way interaction, participants who were told that their targets favored helping with a clean-up campaign often used negative sanctions as a last effort toward persuasion, while participants whose targets opposed helping relied more heavily on positive sanctions. In addition, participants with favorably predisposed targets used significantly more compliance-seeking strategies than participants in the other two conditions. Participants may be viewing these noncomplying targets as inconsistent (with their supposed favorable inclination) and that their role is to enforce a commitment, an interaction goal previously established to require less attention to negative face, permitting the use of more negative strategies. Or, participants may believe that favorably predisposed targets are at least close to complying and that a little more effort (try harder rule) may lead to compliance. Conversely, targets who are undecided, or especially, those who are opposed, may not be worth added effort since likelihood of success is low, since these targets are not behaving inconsistently, and since asking favors requires great attention to positive and negative face (Wilson, Aleman, & Leatham, 1998).

The politeness explanation is bolstered by an attributional perspective. Consistent with Weiner's (1979) attribution theory, Wilson et al. (1993) found that differences in situational stability impacted message use and persistence. Stability assesses whether the cause for an event (failure to comply) is always present, or varies over time. Targets who were consistent in indicating an unwillingness to comply likely produced differing attributions of stability than targets who appeared to change their minds and decide to refuse only during the interview.

These results seem to reflect the presence of a consistency rule in which refusal to comply appears inconsistent for the positively predisposed target (only). Thus, activation on the basis of *fit* (Wilson, 1990) leads to a reordering of goals and the message behaviors which seek goal attainment. Once activation occurs, it may be that a greater perceived *right* to utilize assertive strategies appears warranted. Or, the goal of attaining compliance is viewed as more prominent than other goals, including social maintenance goals.

On a cautionary note, it may be argued that target predisposition to comply is confounded by an expectation violation variable. In short, are observed differences

due to perceptions of target predisposition or the unexpected failure of that target to comply? While participants were never told that targets would or would not sign the pledge card in any condition, it is reasonable to argue that violation of expectations is an inherent part of the predisposition variable. In fact, it is essential to the concept of consistency. Multiple strategy sequences of successful persuasive efforts do not exist since goal attainment occurs immediately. It is only in conditions of resistance or failure that multiple messages are produced. As a result, any longitudinal examination of the target predisposition variable will involve potential violation of expectations for the favorably predisposed group. The potential confound does not vary independently from the manipulated variable of target predisposition. With this understood, the results of the present study are informative. Initial message strategies (where expectations have not been violated) do not vary based upon target predisposition while last-ditch efforts do vary.

Hypothesis two, that strategies would become increasingly negative over time, was supported by the panel analysis. What appeared was an interesting pattern of message use. A preponderance of participants began by using explanation or a simple request. This may be conceptualized as an opening gambit. Participants may hope for quick compliance or may wish to set the stage for further persuasive efforts by developing a rationale.

Although it is not reflected in the analysis of message strategy types, participants would typically follow up on this gambit by attempting to draw out the target with questions. This was apparently an effort to get the reasons for non-compliance onto the table so that these reasons could be refuted. This is of some theoretical interest. In both the cognitive rules and the politeness perspectives advanced earlier, the target's reasons for failure to comply may be an important factor in predicting message strategy use. Attempts by participants to uncover these reasons demonstrates the salience of these constitutive rules.

Encountering no success, the typical participant would be likely to turn to prosocial, positive sanctions. For example, suggesting that the fall clean-up work would not be physically tiring, that lots of friends would be on hand and that a good time would be had by all. The more tenacious participants were likely to then turn to negative sanctions. When analyzing the last persuasive strategy used by all participants, almost half (56 of 120) used negative sanction as a last ditch effort to gain compliance.

Studies which examine only initial efforts at compliance-gaining may find little variation in message use due to the existence of an opening gambit. Future research should involve longitudinal analysis of persuasive interactions and should seek to better explain the cognitive or social forces which work to inhibit greater and more rapid differentiation of message strategy types.

Data in the present study support current views of information processing such as action assembly theory (Greene, 1995, 1997). Early efforts to seek compliance are static, pro-social and direct. Later attempts are differentiated and receiver-adapted. Early efforts may evidence the presence of a persuasion schema, supported by the uniform initial messages. This may correspond to Greene's *unitized assembly* of procedural records in action assembly theory. The differentiation of later message strategies reflects the use of executive processes, or conscious processing, necessary to activate less common responses. The activation of executive processes may be due to situational novelty, initial failure of one's behavior to accomplish goals, or, as

discussed by Greene as a feature of his second generation theory, the activation of procedural records for an extended period of time (Greene, 1997).

In addition, the fact that initial strategies are pro-social tends to confirm the view that actors attempt to simultaneously satisfy multiple goals. In the present study, interest in maintaining negative face may account for message use. After it became apparent that social facilitation and compliance could not both be achieved, many participants may have forgone the former goal.

Hypothesis three suggested that males would employ more negative sanctions than females. While this was not true for the first two strategies utilized by participants who were all, regardless of gender, reluctant to use negative sanctions during the initial phases of persuasive interactions, it was true for later stages of the persuasion process. Males were more likely to turn the use of negative strategies while females were more likely to continue using positive sanctions, explanations, or to simply exit the interview altogether. Consistent with Andrews (1987) findings, this may result from an inference by females that continued effort, particularly in the area of negative sanctions, will not result in success. Or, as discussed in the rationale, it could indicate that the goal of social maintenance is more salient to females than to males.

In addition to differential strategy use, men, on the average, used more persuasive message strategies than women. Present analysis does not clarify whether this is because males used a wider range of strategies than females, but Hunter and Boster (1987) suggest that the use of greater numbers of strategies is consistent with perspectives of compliance-gaining as a unidimensional construct based on verbal aggressiveness and/or argumentativeness (p. 82). Again, this finding can be linked to theoretical differences in the salience of the social maintenance goal. These findings should not be generalized to male targets.

Hopefully, future research in message production will seek to enhance ecological validity by employing observational methodologies. Importantly, information processing perspectives such as action assembly theory are geared toward longitudinal interactions. Early work in compliance-gaining message production has been hampered by the methodological constraint of examining only single behaviors. Largely, this is due to the fact that messages are chosen from a list or produced from memory, raising questions of ecological validity. Perhaps this explains the poor relationship between recall and selection methods and actual behavior (Dillard, 1988) just as attitudes and behaviors lacked correspondence in older persuasion work (Wicker, 1969). Also, longitudinal analysis of communication behavior, beyond the opening gambit, may point toward a more sophisticated view of compliance-seeking message production and a renewed importance for situational variables.

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