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Seeking and Resisting Compliance

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Compliance Gaining

Compliance gaining refers to interactions in which one individual attempts to induce another person to perform a desired behavior that the target person otherwise might not have performed (Wheeless, Barraclough, & Stewart, 1983). Offering advice, asking favors, and enforcing obligations are among the many reasons people seek compliance from others (Wilson, Aleman, & Leatham, 1998). Others may resist attempts to gain compliance for many reasons too: What is being advised or asked for may not be feasible, or the supposed "obligation" may not be something the other person ever promised to fulfill. Seeking another person's compliance might involve such actions as explaining why the request is being made or why the requested action is beneficial, offering flattery, calling in past favors, or threatening dire consequences (Marwell & Schmitt, 1967; Tracy, Craig, Smith, & Spisak, 1984; Wiseman & Schenk-Hamlin, 1981). Others might resist compliance-gaining attempts by refusing or temporarily withholding agreement, asking questions, explaining why they are not able to comply, claiming the request is unreasonable, or suggesting alternative ways the desired outcome can be achieved (McLaughlin, Cody, & Robey, 1980; Sanders & Fitch, 2001; Wilson, Cruz, Marshall, & Rao, 1993).

Compliance gaining was discussed in a chapter on persuasion in the first edition of the *Handbook of Communication Science* (G. R. Miller, 1987). Although both compliance gaining and persuasion involve intentional attempts to influence others, they differ in several respects (see Dillard, Chapter 12, this volume). Persuasion scholars typically focus on **public** or mass communication contexts, whereas compliance-gaining scholars investigate how friends, family members, and coworkers influence one another. Influence in inter personal contexts has unique qualities; for example, participants constantly adapt to each other's behavior (Sanders & Fitch, 2001), and dyadic patterns (e.g., demand-withdraw sequences; Caughlin & Scott, 2009) can be investigated. Persuasion scholars focus on *message processing or effects,* whereas compliance-gaining research also focuses on *message production or choices.* Compliance-gaining research explores the conditions under which individuals are most likely to comply with requests (Goei & Boster, 2005; Cialdini, 2001). Complemen ting this effects focus, however, is a large body of research that explores why individuals say what they do when seeking or resisting another person's compliance. For instance, why are college students more likely to explain their decision when turning down rather than agreeing to a date (Folkes, 1982)? Why do mothers with a predisposition toward verbal aggressiveness issue numerous commands and suggestions when playing with their young children (Wilson, Roberts, Rack, & Delaney, 2008)? Questions about message choices and effects are complemen tary. If particular patterns of compliance gaining are associated with negative relational outcomes (effects), researchers might turn their attention to understanding why participants are producing messages that perpetuate those patterns (choices).

Seeking and resisting compliance are important for such professions as sales, management, and health care. But compliance gaining also offers a glimpse into how relationships are created and sustained. Close relationships are those in which the parties influence one another's thoughts, feelings, and actions frequently and consequentially on a range of topics over time (Kelley et al., 1983; Knobloch & Solomon, 2004; Solomon & Vangelisti, Chapter 19, this volume). Relational power and intimacy shape how participants seek and resist one another's compliance, and reciprocally, such attempts often confirm yet can challenge or renegotiate existing

levels of power and intimacy (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Millar & Rogers, 1987). Compliance gaining also offers insight into cultural and individual differences. People from different cultural backgrounds ascribe different meanings to actions such as telling others what to do or saying what they want clearly and directly (Fitch, 1998; Kim, 2002), and members from the same society may hold different implicit theories or beliefs about what is appropriate or relevant to say when seeking or resisting another person's compliance (O'Keefe, 1988). This chapter describes how compliance gaining as an area of research has evolved from an initial flurry of activity motivated by a groundbreaking study, to the development of theoretical frameworks, and then to a period of applying theory and research to problems of social importance.

In the Beginning …

Within communication, the study of compliance gaining was initiated by Gerald R. Miller and three of his then students in a pioneering investigation of how people select compliance-gaining strategies (G. R. Miller, Boster, Roloff, & Seibold, 1977). The "MBRS" study was couched within a developmental perspective on interpersonal communication. Miller presumed that people want to maintain some control over their social environment and hence acquire strategies for influencing others. When trying to influence individuals whom they do not know well (what Miller termed a *non-interpersonal* relationship), people must rely primarily on sociological and cultural knowledge—that is, information about how the target is similar to others, such as group stereotypes or cultural norms for interaction—to predict the target person's reactions. When trying to influence those who are familiar (what he termed an *interpersonal* relationship), people also can rely on psychological knowledge—that is, information about the target's unique attributes that make him or her different from others—to predict the target's reactions. On the basis of these ideas, G. R. Miller et al. (1977) investigated how compliance-seeking strategies could be grouped and whether people's choice of strategies varied across situations.

To address these questions, G. R. Miller et al. (1977) had participants (a mix of college students and working adults) read four hypothetical scenarios designed to manipulate two situational variables: (a) whether the relationship between the message source and target was interpersonal or noninterpersonal and (b) whether the request had long-term relational consequences or short-term consequences. After reading each scenario, participants rated how likely they would be to use each of 16 compliance-seeking strategies in that situation. A decade earlier, two sociologists (Marwell & Schmitt, 1967) had developed the typology of strategies based on theories of social power, but their typology had received little attention until the MBRS study. [1]

The MBRS study revealed that participants' likelihood-of-use ratings for strategies varied across scenarios. In general, a smaller number of strategies were rated as likely to be used in the interpersonal as opposed to the non interpersonal scenarios. G. R. Miller et al. (1977) speculated that participants may have rated more strategies as likely to be used in noninterpersonal scenarios because they were less certain what would work with unfamiliar message targets and hence tried anything that seemed plausible. Attempts to reduce the 16 strategies to a smaller number of clusters also revealed a different number of underlying factors in different scenarios. Despite this variability, participants as a group displayed a strong tendency to rate "prosocial" or "socially appropriate" strategies (e.g., altruism, liking) as likely to be used and "antisocial" or "socially inappropriate" strategies (e.g., aversive stimulation, moral appeal) as unlikely to be used in all four scenarios.

The MBRS study stimulated a large body of subsequent research. [2] Scholars debated the merits of different typologies of compliance-seeking strategies (Boster, Stiff, & Reynolds, 1985; Clark & Delia, 1979; Wiseman & Schenk-Hamlin, 1981) and developed typologies of compliance-resisting strategies (McLaughlin et al., 1980; McQuillen, 1986). Researchers analyzed dimensions along which people distinguished compliance-gaining scenarios (e.g., rights to request, anticipated resistance, intimacy and power, benefits to self and other; Cody & McLaughlin, 1980) and assessed whether likelihood-of-use ratings for strategies differed across these dimensions (e.g., Cody et al., 1986; Dillard & Burgoon, 1985). They also investigated whether personality variables such as communication apprehension, dogmatism, locus of control, Machiavellianism, self-monitoring, and verbal aggressiveness predicted strategy ratings (see Seibold, Cantrill, & Meyers, 1985). All of these studies

addressed questions outlined by G. R. Miller and his colleagues; most also were modeled on methods employed in the MBRS study. Despite this collective effort, very few reliable predictors of compliance-seeking strategy use were identified. This first generation of research suffered from conceptual and methodological shortcomings that are summarized here briefly.

Conceptually, research inspired by the MBRS study lacked theoretical grounding. Kellermann and Cole (1994) argued that typologies of compliance-gaining strategies were ad hoc lists that did not distinguish strategies systematically using one or a few message features. Strategies can be distinguished based on their underlying basis of power (Wheeless et al., 1983), the degree to which they are polite or socially appropriate (Burleson et al., 1988), and so forth. Because strategies are not clustered or arrayed systematically along any dimension, it is difficult to interpret differences in strategy ratings.

Researchers also investigated predictors of strategy choice in an ad hoc fashion. Although the MBRS study was grounded in G. R. Miller's developmental view, researchers quickly lost sight of this framework as they investigated a host of personality attributes and situational dimensions that might predict strategy ratings. Researchers often began with hunches rather than a clear rationale for why particular attributes might predict particular qualities of compliance-seeking messages. The few attempts to develop theoretical models (e.g., Hunter & Boster, 1987) made unrealistic assumptions such as that people's choices were based on a single factor rather than on attempts to manage multiple, conflicting goals (Dillard, Segrin, & Harden, 1989).

Methodologically, validity concerns were raised about the "strategy selection" procedure. Debate ensued over whether the procedure made the social appropriateness of strategies salient, leading participants as a group to underselect antisocial strategies (Boster, 1988; Burleson & Wilson, 1988; Burleson et al., 1988; Seibold, 1988). Bolstering such concerns were two studies showing that "message selection data … exhibits a degree of correspondence to reported and/or actual compliance-gaining behavior that is less than optimal" (Dillard, 1988, p. 180). G. R. Miller, Boster, Roloff, and Seibold (1987) suggested that participants may be more mindful, face less formidable information-processing demands, and be influenced less by emotion when respon ding to scenarios than when engaging in interaction. They advocated using a broader range of methods to offset concerns about the external validity of scenario-based research.

Although the MBRS-inspired research program suffered conceptual and methodological limitations, it nevertheless highlighted the importance of influence in relationships and initiated a "source-oriented" perspective on influence. Questions from this research also stimulated theories about why people say what they do when seeking or resisting compliance.

The Emergence of Theoretical Frameworks

As the problems just described became apparent, scholars moved toward grounding analyses of compliance gaining in theoretical frameworks. Communication scholars drew on and contributed to theories emerging from cognitive science, social psychology, pragmatics, conversation analysis, and the ethnography of communication. Much of this work can be organized around the concepts of directives, face, goals, and obstacles.

DIRECTIVES

Research on the social uses of language has been used to understand compliance gaining. Speech act theorists have grappled with how speakers are able to make their intentions apparent through talk and how hearers are able to recognize a speaker's intentions (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969). Directives refer to the class of speech acts (e.g., recommending, requesting, commanding) in which a speaker attempts to get a hearer to do something that the hearer otherwise might not have done (Searle, 1976). Directives are defined by a set of constitutive rules (also called felicity conditions) that specify necessary and sufficient conditions for performing that act. When requesting, a speaker assumes that the requested action needs to be performed (or there is no need for action), the target person wasn't going to perform the requested action already (or there is no need to

request), and the target plausibly might be willing or feel obligated to comply (or there is no point in requesting; Labov & Fanshel, 1977; Searle, 1969).

By seeking another person's compliance, a speaker implicitly assumes that the conditions for issuing a directive exist in the current situation; hence, much of what speakers say should function, in part, to justify these assumptions. A study by Tracy et al. (1984) shows this to be the case. Individuals **spoke** aloud exactly what they would say after reading each of 24 favor-requesting scenarios. Scenarios varied in terms of the relative status and familiarity of the speaker and hearer as well as the size of the favor being asked. Across scenarios, speakers nearly always explained why they had a legitimate need to make the request (i.e., established a need for action) and inquired about the speaker's willingness to perform the requested action.

Although speakers may say things relevant to the preconditions for requesting when seeking compliance, the degree to which this occurs depends on relational closeness as well as the size of the request. Drawing on the distinction between communal and exchange relationships (Mills & Clark, 1994), Roloff and colleagues argue that intimacy can "substitute" for persuasion (e.g., the need to explain why a request is being made or to induce willingness) because intimates are "obligated to monitor each other's needs and be responsive to them" (Roloff, Janiszewski, McGrath, Burns, & Manrai, 1988, p. 367). To test this reasoning, the authors asked undergraduates to think about another student in the class whom they considered a stranger, acquaintance, or friend. Participants wrote out what they would say if they wanted to borrow that student's class notes for 30 minutes (small request) or for 3 days (large request). Protocols were divided into grammatical clauses, which were coded for the presence of requests plus four other categories: apologies, explanations, inducements, and contingencies. As predicted, request elaboration (i.e., the number of clauses beyond the request itself) was highest when participants asked to borrow notes from a stranger and lowest when the target was a friend; elaboration also was higher when the request was large rather than small.

In sum, speakers, by seeking compliance, implicitly assume that the preconditions for directives are met, and their talk can be understood as responding to a possible need to justify these assumptions. Because the target may not agree with the speaker's assessment, speech act theory also can be used to analyze potential obstacles to compliance (Ifert, 2000). Speech act theory has been criticized for treating context as given rather than as created in part by speech acts, making overly broad assumptions about the defining conditions for speech acts, and paying too little attention to how actions are recognizable from institutional roles and preceding talk as well as how meanings depend on the goals being pursued via speech acts (Ellis, 1999; Streeck, 1980). These critiques suggest a need to include concepts from speech act theory within larger frameworks that address how speakers strategically use implicit knowledge of the conditions for requesting in pursuit of conversational goals (e.g., Brown & Levinson, 1987; Jacobs & Jackson, 1989; MacGeorge, Feng, Butler, & Budarz, 2004; O'Keefe, 1988; Wilson et al., 1998).

FACE

Face refers to the importance individuals attach to situated identities they try to project during interaction with others (Goffman, 1967). Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory distinguishes two face wants: the desire to have one's actions and attributes approved of by significant others (positive face) and the desire to maintain one's autonomy and not have one's actions or resources restricted without cause (negative face). People want to maintain their own face, but because face wants are interdependent, they also typically have some motivation to support their conversational partner's face.

Many speech acts run contrary to the speaker's or hearer's face and are intrinsically face threatening (called FTAs). For example, directives presume the message target might be willing or feel obligated to perform an action that was not already planned. Making assumptions about what a message target might be willing to do constrains that person's negative face. Consistent with this logic, requesting or recommending nearly always is perceived as creating some constraint on the message target's autonomy and also can threaten the speaker's

own autonomy as well as both parties' desire for approval (Kunkel, Wilson, Olufowote, & Robson, 2003; Lim & Bowers, 1991; Wilson et al., 1998). Message targets in turn constrain the requester's options (negative face) by resisting compliance and also can threaten both parties' positive face (Johnson, Roloff, & Riffee, 2004; Metts, Cupach, & Imahori, 1992).

Although directives constrain the target's negative face, Brown and Levinson (1987) argue that the degree to which this is true (i.e., the "weightiness" of an FTA) depends on three factors: power, distance, and rank. Requests are more face threatening when the hearer has more as opposed to less power (e.g., asking for assistance from one's boss as opposed to a coworker), when the hearer is distant rather than close (e.g., asking to borrow a dollar from an acquaintance rather than a friend), and when the request is large rather than small (asking to borrow $100 vs. $1.00).

When performing an FTA, speakers in any culture have five options: perform it baldly, without redress; with positive politeness (i.e., language that communicates approval or closeness); with negative politeness (i.e., language that doesn't presume); off-record (i.e., in a way that makes the request deniable); or not at all (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Each of these "super strategies" can be enacted in many ways. Negative politeness, for example, is communicated by hedging ("I was wondering whether you might …"), minimizing imposition ("I was *just* calling to see if …"), apologizing (e.g., "I hate to ask this, but …"), and expressing gratitude ("I'd really be grateful if you'd …"). Politeness theory presumes that the five super strategies are rank ordered from least to most polite and predicts that speakers in any culture will use more polite forms as the weightiness of an FTA increases. Differences in politeness may occur if speakers from different cultures have different perceptions regarding the factors influencing the weightiness of an FTA (power, distance, rank).

In a cross-cultural analysis, Holtgraves and Yang (1992) found support for several of these predictions. Korean and American college students rated three situations in terms of perceived power, distance, and request size and then wrote what they would say to gain the target's compliance in each situation. Messages were broken into three components: address forms, the request itself, and supporting moves. Address forms were coded as informal (positive politeness), formal (negative politeness), or missing; the request was coded into one of the five super strategies; and supporting talk was coded for the presence of negative politeness (e.g., apologies) as well as positive politeness (e.g., jokes, small talk). The entire message also was rated for overall politeness by two bilingual coders based on all three message components. As predicted, Korean and American students varied the overall politeness of their written messages based on their perceptions of power, distance, and rank. Cultural differences in message politeness occurred, in part, because Koreans varied their politeness more than Americans did depending on the hearer's relative power. In sum, much of what participants wrote could be understood as striking a balance between asking for what they wanted and attempting to maintain the target's (and perhaps their own) face.

Critics of politeness theory argue that (a) two types of face do not tap the diverse meanings of face across cultures (Lim & Bowers, 1991; Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998); (b) the analysis of face threats pays insufficient attention to goals pursued via speech acts, institutional and cultural contexts, and act sequencing (Fitch & Sanders, 1994; Goldsmith, 2000; Tracy & Baratz, 1994; Wilson et al., 1998); and (c) the five super strategies are not mutually exclusive, and their rank ordering is contextually bound (Craig, Tracy, & Spisak, 1986; Dillard, Wilson, Tusing, & Kinney, 1997). Still, critics concur that face is key to understanding how people seek or resist compliance.

GOALS

Goals are future states of affairs that individuals want to attain or maintain (Wilson, 2002). We seek and resist other people's compliance to elicit desired behaviors, but we almost always have other concerns too (Clark & Delia, 1979). Dillard (1990, 2004) proposed a goal-plan-action (GPA) model that highlights how people manage multiple, conflicting goals.

The GPA model distinguishes primary and secondary goals. At any point in a conversation, the *primary goal* is the objective that for the moment defines the situation or answers the question, "What is going on here?" The primary goal "brackets the situation" and "helps segment the flow of behavior into a meaningful unit; it says what the interaction is about" (Dillard et al., 1989, p. 21). Primary goals also play a motivational function: They energize the actor, stimulate planning, and push the actor toward engaging the target person. Several studies have investigated primary goals related to influence (Cody, Canary, & Smith, 1994; Kipnis, Schmidt, & Wilkinson, 1980; Schrader & Dillard, 1998). Among common reasons for seeking compliance in personal and professional relationships are asking for assistance, giving advice, obtaining permission, and enforcing obligations. Rather than viewing themselves as seeking compliance, people conceive of their actions in terms of more specific goals. [3]

Secondary goals are concerns that arise in a wide range of situations and shape and constrain how individuals pursue their primary goal. Dillard et al. (1989) propose five categories of secondary goals: (a) identity goals, or desires to act consistently with one's beliefs, morals, and values; (b) conversation management goals, or desires to maintain a positive self-image, maintain other people's face, and say things that are relevant and coherent; (c) relational resource goals, or desires to maintain valued relationships; (d) personal resource goals, or desires to avoid unnecessarily risking or wasting one's time, money, or safety; and (e) arousal management goals, or desires to avoid or reduce anxiety or nervousness. Hample and Dallinger (1987), Kellermann (2004), and Kim (2002) have identified similar sets of secondary goals. Although these lists are fairly comprehensive, parti cipants sometimes report other goals when trying to influence others. If the target person has failed to fulfill an obligation, then people often report conflicting desires to attack and support the target's face (Wilson, 1990; Wilson et al., 1998).

The GPA model outlines cognitive processes involved as speakers produce influence messages (Dillard, 1990). Goal assessment refers to an individual evaluating the importance of primary and secondary goals when facing a concrete situation. When concern about the primary goal outweighs secondary goals, the actor decides to engage the other person, which results in plan generation and editing. Sometimes people recall "stock plans" (i.e., mental representations of actions relevant to pursuing goals) from the past, but in other cases, they adapt plans to unique elements of the current situation. When primary and secondary goals are weighted about equally, the decision about whether to engage the other may depend on whether a means can be found for pursuing the primary goal without interfering with secondary goals, and hence plan generation and editing may precede the decision to engage. If suitable means are found, the speaker attempts to put the plan into action (tactic implementation) while monitoring the target person's response, which provides continuous feedback for ongoing goals assessment. Newer research suggests that these processes occur much faster, at more levels of abstraction, and with less coordination than the GPA model seems to imply (Greene, 2000; Meyer, 2007).

The GPA model's distinction between primary and secondary goals suggests two broad behavioral dimensions: the intensity with which the actor pursues the primary goal and the manner in which secondary goals shape such attempts. For example, Dillard et al. (1989) had participants recall a compliance-gaining episode and rate how much time if any they spent consciously planning what to say as well as how much effort they put into accomplishing the primary goal. Participants' conversations were rated by trained coders for how explicit participants were about what they wanted (directness), how many reasons they gave to justify their request (argument), and whether they emphasized positive consequences if the target complied or negative consequences if the target refused (positivity). Importance ratings for the primary goal were the best predictor of planning and effort, whereas importance ratings for secondary goals were the best predictor of message directness and positivity.

The GPA model helps explain Hample and Dallinger's (1998) observation that "when an initial message is rebuffed, follow-up persuasive messages are ruder, more aggressive, and more forceful than the first one" (p. 305). As an example, King (2001) observed college students trying to persuade confederates to participate in a campus cleanup campaign. Students typically started with direct requests and explanations about when or why

help was needed, then stressed how complying would benefit the target or make the target feel good about himself or herself, and finally, if they continued to persist, tried to make the target feel guilty or stressed how the target would be hurt by not complying. Hample and Dallinger found that students who chose to persist after encountering resistance from a hypothetical target reduced the importance they initially placed on conversation management, relational resource, and arousal management goals.

Goals perspectives have been criticized for trying to explain dyadic processes from within the individual (Bavelas, 1991) and for embracing a view of communication that is mechanistic and ahistorical (Shepherd, 1998; for replies, see Dillard & Schrader, 1998; Wilson, 2002). Researchers recently have begun to investigate dyadic and dynamic aspects of goals, such as how individuals make inferences about their conversational partner's goals (Palomares, 2008) and adjust their own goals over time in response to their partner's emotions and behavior (Keck & Samp, 2007). Besides goals, the concept of "obstacles" also highlights the unfolding nature of compliance-gaining interactions.

OBSTACLES

Compliance-gaining interactions usually entail more than a request followed by a grant or refusal (Sanders & Fitch, 2001), and much of what else occurs can be analyzed in terms of obstacles. Obstacles refer to "the message [targets'] beliefs that cause them to be unwilling or unable to respond immediately in the way the [message source] desires" (Clark & Delia, 1979, p. 200). Before asking for a target person's assistance, for example, we might inquire about the target's plans (checking on the person's ability to help, a potential obstacle). If hesitant to help us, the target likely will disclose obstacles; whether we persist likely will depend on the nature of those obstacles. Weiner's (1986, 1995) attribution theory offers a useful framework for understanding people's responses to obstacles.

Attributions are personal judgments about the causes of actions or events, such as why someone did well on an exam or failed to do his or her share of the work on a group project. Causes for events vary in the degree to which they are *controllable* (i.e., the degree to which they can be willfully affected by the actor); for example, a college student might receive a poor grade on an exam because he went out drinking rather than studying (controllable) or because he works long hours to pay for school (less controllable). Causes also vary in the degree to which they are *stable* (usually present or not); for instance, the student might have gone out drinking because it was his 21st birthday (unstable) or because he does not take school seriously (stable). Attributions in turn influence judgments of *responsibility,* or the degree to which the actor should be held accountable for the outcomes of the event. People typically feel anger when they judge others as responsible for negative outcomes (e.g., a student chooses not to do her part of a group project, even though it will adversely affect other members) but sympathy when they judge others as not responsible for negative outcomes (e.g., a student does not complete her part of a group project because her mother was just diagnosed with cancer). Emotions affect people's motivation to help versus to avoid or punish the other.

MacGeorge (2001) reported findings consistent with these assumptions in a study of support situations. Students read one of six scenarios in which a close friend was distressed about a problem and rated the importance of multiple goals. When they judged their friend as responsible for the problem, students rated the goal of getting their friend to take responsibility as more important and providing emotional support as less important. Responsibility judgments were not associated with the goal of providing problem support, perhaps because students felt obligated to advise and assist their friend even if the friend was responsible for the problem (Roloff et al., 1988). Students' feelings of sympathy and anger moderated some, though not all, of the impact of responsibility judgments on goals.

Because responsibility judgments are so salient, people tend to disclose uncontrollable rather than controllable reasons for resisting compliance (Folkes, 1982; Weiner, Figueroa-Munoz, & Kakihara, 1991). Weiner et al. (1991) asked undergraduates to describe a situation in which they gave an excuse to someone that was "not

the truth," including the reasons they told the other person, the real reasons they withheld, and what they hoped to accomplish by giving the false excuse. Most disclosed excuses were uncontrollable and unstable, whereas more than 90% of withheld reasons were controllable. Participants reported that they withheld their "real" reasons to avoid complying with unwanted requests, hurting the other's feelings, making the other person angry, or making themselves look bad.

People also vary whether and how they persist at seeking compliance based on obstacles. In one of my own studies (Wilson et al., 1993), undergraduates telephoned other students (actually confederates) with a reminder to show up for an appointment; some confederates gave reasons for not keeping their appointment that varied in controllability and stability. For example, a controllable, unstable reason was that the person had decided to go to a special happy hour instead, whereas an uncontrollable, stable reason was that the person was taking 21 credit hours and did not have time to keep the appointment. Participants persisted longer, used more antisocial strategies, and addressed the obstacle more directly (e.g., suggesting a way around it) with targets who disclosed unstable and controllable reasons as opposed to stable or uncontrollable reasons. This tendency to differentiate between types of obstacles begins early. As they move from preschool to elementary school, children become increasingly adept at distinguishing obstacles that will be easy versus difficult to overcome (Marshall & Levy, 1998).

Although Weiner's (1986, 1995) theory sheds light on people's emotional and behavioral reactions to obstacles, questions have been raised about the assumption that attributions always mediate people's emotional reactions to influence success and failure (Segrin & Dillard, 1991) as well as about which elements of the theory extend across culture (Choi, Nisbett, & Norenzayan, 1999; J. G. Miller, 1996). These questions highlight important avenues for future research.

Since the late 1980s, scholars have grounded compliance-gaining research in theoretical frameworks that highlight directives, face, goals, and obstacles. More recently, researchers have shown how theoretically grounded analyses can address issues of social importance.

Doing Socially Relevant Work

Several recent programs of research apply theoretical perspectives on seeking and resisting compliance to issues of social importance, including Lannutti and Monahan's (2007) research on the impact of alcohol on women's goals and messages when refusing unwanted sexual advances, LePoire and Dailey's (2006) inconsistent nurturing as social control explanation for how significant others inadvertently reinforce their partner's drug use, Hecht and Miller-Day's (2007) "keepin it REAL" program for teaching drug resistance strategies to middle school students, and my own work on parent-child relational dynamics in families at risk for child abuse or neglect (Morgan & Wilson, 2007; Wilson, Shi, Tirmenstein, Norris, & Rack, 2006; Wilson et al., 2008). Several motives may be responsible for this trend, including a genuine desire to address socially significant issues, pressures to seek external funding and participate in interdisciplinary research, and wanting to extend beyond college student samples and scenario-based methods. Each of these research programs is informed by concepts reviewed in the prior section, as I will illustrate briefly with my own work.

Child abuse and neglect are pressing problems (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2007; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS], 2007) that arise from the interplay of individual, family, community, and cultural-level factors (Belsky, 1993). Despite this complexity, research on parent-child interaction is critical for understanding child maltreatment. Child physical abuse occurs at predictable moments that arise out of larger interactions (Reid, 1986); child neglect involves a lack of care and nurturance manifested through family interaction (Hildyard & Wolfe, 2002).

Oldershaw, Walters, and Hall (1986) offer insight about compliance gaining in families with a history of child maltreatment. The researchers compared 10 physically abusive mothers and 10 comparison mothers as they

completed a 45-minute interaction with one of their children (2–4 years old). Mothers' compliance-seeking strategies were coded into 12 categories and grouped into power-assertive strategies (e.g., threat, negative physical touch, humiliation) and positively oriented strategies (e.g., reasoning, bargaining, modeling). Abusive mothers issued significantly more commands during the play period and used all of the power-assertive compliance-seeking strategies more frequently than comparison mothers. Regarding sequential differences, abusive mothers issued a larger percentage of their initial requests and commands with no rationale (88% vs. 64%) and without a positive tone of voice (0% vs. 51%) relative to comparison mothers. Abused children failed to comply immediately with a larger percentage of their mothers' requests (58%) than nonmaltreated children (28%). Following noncompliance, abusive mothers were more likely than comparison mothers to repeat commands with no rationale or with only power-assertive strategies. When their children did comply, abusive mothers were just as likely to criticize (e.g., "It's about time you did that") as praise, whereas control mothers invariably praised. Other studies also find that abusive parents respond inconsistently to child compliance (Borrego, Timmer, Urquiza, & Follette, 2004; Cerezo & D'Ocon, 1995). As would be expected from these patterns, our meta-analysis of 11 studies shows that maltreated children display higher rates of noncompliance than nonmaltreated children (*d* = .45; Wilson et al., 2006).

Each theoretical framework discussed earlier suggests explanations for these patterns. Regarding obstacles, physically abusive parents are more likely than nonmaltreating parents to attribute child noncompliance to stable and controllable causes (e.g., their child's personality) and to view their child's actions as intentional (Bauer & Twentyman, 1985; Dopke & Milner, 2000; Larrance & Twentyman, 1983). Abusive parents also are more likely to discount their children's positive behavior (e.g., compliance) by attributing it to uncontrollable and unstable causes. As Weiner's (1986, 1995) theory would predict, such attributions lead abusive parents to feel more anger when their children resist compliance (Reid, 1986); anger in turn is associated with using power-assertive strategies (Dix, 1991).

Regarding face and directives, physically abusive parents often perceive interaction as a power struggle where their children, rather than they, drive interactions with negative outcomes (Bradley & Peters, 1991; Bugental, Blue, & Cruzcosa, 1989). Such "low-power" parents are exceptionally reactive to any behavior that could be interpreted as challenging their authority and rely on power assertion and verbal degradation to regain power (Bugental & Happaney, 2000). In the language of politeness theory, abusive parents may use threats or humiliation to emphasize that they need not attend to their child's face (i.e., they are powerful). From the perspective of speech act theory, abusive parents may assume that the conditions for their requests exist simply because they are "the parent" and hence view questions as challenges to their authority. Aside from power, relational intimacy also may filter interpretations. Nonmaltreated children are more likely than abused or neglected children to be securely attached to their parents (Morton & Browne, 1998); hence, nonmaltreating parents may be less likely to view their children's noncompliance as face threatening because the parent-child relationship is secure.

Regarding goals, abusive and nonmaltreating parents may hold different ideas about what is "going on" (i.e., the primary goal) when interacting with their children. In a recent analysis of mothers high versus low in trait verbal aggressiveness (VA) during playtime interactions with their children, we found that high-trait VA mothers issued significantly more commands and suggestions than did low-trait VA mothers (Wilson et al., 2008). High-trait VA mothers appeared to view play as something to be controlled, in that they used directives to dictate what activities they and their child performed, at what speed, and for what duration. Low-trait VA mothers appeared to view the situation as "play for play's sake," in that they were more likely to follow their child's lead and used directives to organize shared activities.

These insights are embedded within parent-child interaction therapy (PCIT), a short-term intervention for families with children between the ages of 2 and 6 with proven efficacy at preventing the (re)occurrence of child abuse and neglect (Chaffin et al., 2004; Herschell, Calzada, Eyberg, & McNeil, 2002). PCIT entails two distinct phases (child-directed interaction and parent-directed interaction) that are taught through instruction,

modeling, role-playing, and coaching. During the first phase, parents learn PRIDE skills (praise, reflection, imitation, description, and enthusiasm). Within free play sessions, children choose the toy(s) they want to play with, and parents are coached to follow their child's lead, demonstrate interest, and avoid commands or criticism. By altering their own behavior and seeing their child's reactions change in response, parents may be less likely to conceptualize play as a power struggle or make attributions that lead to anger. Once PRIDE skills are mastered, the second phase begins, during which parents are taught to issue clear, developmentally appropriate commands and provide consistent responses to both child compliance (e.g., praise) and noncompliance (e.g., warning and time-out). PCIT reduces negative parent-child interactions that put children at immediate risk of injury and damage their self-esteem and social competence in the longer run (Chaffin et al., 2004).

Summary

"Compliance gaining" as an area of study has been traced in three parts: an initial flurry of research modeled on a groundbreaking study; a move toward developing theories that coalesce around the concepts of directives, face, goals, and obstacles; and a transition toward applying theory to problems of social importance. The newest phase of research highlights how compliance-gaining interactions both reflect and define participants' ongoing relationship, thereby linking questions about message processing (effects) and production (choices). Much has been learned so far, but much important work also remains to be done.

Notes

1. A search of the Social Science Citation Index (December 31, 2007) revealed that the Marwell and Schmitt (1967) article has been cited by 132 subsequent articles; however, only 3 of the 132 citations predate the G. R. Miller et al. (1977) study.

2. Scholars in other disciplines also developed typologies of compliance-seeking strategies and investigated predictors of strategy choice. Management scholars tend to use a typology developed by Kipnis et al. (1980), while social psychologists typically use Falbo and Peplau's (1980) typology. Although these programs of research were not influenced directly by the MBRS study, they share many of the same limitations, including a lack of theoretical conceptualization and problems with the validity of the strategy selection procedure.

3. The label *primary* refers to which goal helps participants understand what is going on rather than to goal importance. Even when people frame a situation as being about "giving advice" or "asking a favor," they often rate "secondary" goals such as conversation management or relational resources as more important than the primary goal (Schrader & Dillard, 1998; Wilson et al., 1998).

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