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## **A Study of Women's Compliance-Gaining Behaviors in Violent and Non-Violent Relationships**

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The compliance-gaining research has produced numerous studies to explore the unique nature of the types of compliance-gaining strategies individuals use in interpersonal relationships (Cody, McLaughlin, & Jordan, 1980; Falbo, 1977; Johnson, 1976). Specifically, Miller and Steinberg (1975) found that individuals will rely on psychological information about the other person when deciding what type of compliance-gaining to employ in the interpersonal context. As a result, those involved in intimate interpersonal relationships will rely on their level of intimacy to guide their decisions of compliance-gaining strategy choice. Furthermore, they will rely on this knowledge about their partner to determine what means of compliance-gaining will produce the most beneficial method for resolving conflict situations (Miller, Boster, Roloff, & Siebold, 1977).

Upon investigating the communication patterns of abusive couples, Infante, Chandler-Sabourin, Rudd, and Shannon (1990) found that individuals involved in violent relationships communicate differently than nonviolent couples when in a dispute. In another investigation initially advanced by Infante, Chandler, and Rudd (1989), an Argumentative Skills Deficiency Model of Interspousal Violence (ASD) was developed in which they found that spouses involved in violent relationships are less argumentative and tend to resort to using verbal aggression more often than nonviolent couples. Other researchers have posited an extension of the ASD model which included addressing the relationship between verbal aggression and argumentativeness to compliance-gaining strategy choice by battered women (Rudd, Burant, & Beatty, 1994). Also, the results of this study revealed that battered women report employing certain types of compliance-gaining strategies (i.e. ingratiation, promise, explanation, and deceit) during disputes with their partners. Thus, advancing our understanding of how one's choice of compliance-gaining strategies reflects not only a relationship to argumentativeness and verbal aggression, but also reflects the complexity of the ASD model in studies regarding family violence.

This study builds upon Rudd, Burant, and Beatty's (1994) research of compliance-gaining behavior in abusive relationships. Rudd, et al. found that battered women reported using specific types of indirect power based compliance-gaining strategies (e.g. ingratiation, aversive stimulation, explanation, and promise) when in a dispute with their spouse. By expanding the research to include non-battered as well as battered women, this study furthers our understanding of how compliance-gaining strategies may differ in violent and nonviolent relationships. Specifically, this study compares battered women's reported use of compliance-gaining strategies with non-battered women's reported use during disputes with their relational partners. Understanding the differences between non-battered and battered women's compliance-gaining strategy use will hopefully advance the family violence research by exploring what strategies may lead to counterproductive and ineffective outcomes. As a result the following research question is advanced:

RQ1: Do battered women report using different compliance-gaining strategies than non-battered women in a dispute with their spouse?

## METHOD

### *Participants*

The participants in this study were 245 married women from a major metropolitan and industrial section of the midwest.

The abused women in this study were 115 women who were seeking refuge from an abusive spouse in temporary shelters for battered women. Data were collected by the researchers over a period of four months. Researchers visited the shelters on a monthly basis. Participation was voluntary and confidentiality was guaranteed. All women in shelters were asked to participate and all agreed to do so. The participants in this study included 45 Caucasians, 58 African-Americans, 8 Hispanics and 2 "other". The level of education for the participants was 9.8% grade school; 47.3% high school; 6.3% technical school; 30.4% some college; 4.5% college graduate; and 1.8% post graduate work. The majority of respondent's (92.2) total family income was \$29,999 or less, with 56.3% earning \$9,999 or less. The sample included 33 employed and 77 unemployed women.

The non-abused sub-sample in this study was collected from/by college students at an urban university. Students enrolled in an upper division interpersonal communication course were asked to complete the questionnaire if they were married or to have someone they know complete the questionnaire anonymously and return it to the department of communication. The participants in this sample included 107 Caucasians, 21 African-Americans, 3 Hispanics, and 4 "other". The level of education for the participants was 23.7% high school; 5.2% technical school; 42.2% some college; and 15.6% college graduates; 7.4% post graduate work and 5.2% graduate degree. Approximately 30% of the respondents reported family income as \$29,999 or less; 40.7% reported income between 30,000 and 49,999, and 30% reported a family income of \$50,000 or more. The sample included 106 employed and 28 unemployed women. To assure the collection of a nonviolent group, participants from this population were asked "has a disagreement between you and your husband ever resulted in physical aggression (for example hitting)". If the respondents answered "yes" to this question their questionnaire was omitted from the data analysis.

There was a concern that the possible groups were not only different in terms of violence, but also in terms of demographic variables which could affect the results of compliance-gaining use. Past research has suggested that education, income and employment may be related to familial violence, therefore, we controlled statistically for these variables to determine whether they affected the results.

## *Instrument*

*Compliance-Gaining Strategies Checklist.* The compliance-gaining checklist was compiled from previous research. Participants were asked to report the frequency of strategy use by using the following scale of 1 = never; 2 = rarely, 3 = occasionally; 4 = sometimes; 5 = often and; 6 = a great deal. Specifically, the questionnaire was phrased, "When you and your partner disagree on an issue, how often do you use each of the following types of messages?" Cronbach's coefficient alpha was .79 for this checklist.

The specific compliance-gaining typology used in this study was drawn from existing compliance-gaining research that focused on strategies used in interpersonal relationships. This study asks participants to recall actual incidents in their relationships and report their use of compliance-gaining strategies. This approach differs from past compliance-gaining studies which focused on hypothetical situations. Ericsson and Simon (1980) have reported that adults provide relatively accurate reports of their recent behaviors.

Intimacy between individuals is a key factor in the selection of compliance-gaining strategies. Many scholars have reported that people in interpersonal relationships use distinctive types of strategies to resolve conflict (Cody, McLaughlin, & Jordan, 1980; Falbo, 1977; Miller, Boster, Roloff, & Seibold, 1977). Therefore, this study included strategies that are specifically related to the interpersonal domain since it is investigating the compliance-gaining strategies battered and non-battered women reported using when engaged in conflict with their husbands. The strategies and a brief definition of each are listed in Appendix A. Below is the strategy checklist that was used as part of the questionnaire. Sources for the strategies included research by: Cody, McLaughlin, & Jordan, 1980; Cody, McLaughlin, & Jordan, 1981; Falbo, 1977; Fitzpatrick & Winke, 1979; Johnson, 1976; Marwell & Schmitt, 1967; Wiseman & Schenck-Hamlin, 1981)

*Ingratiation:* I said or did something nice.

*Promise:* I promised to do something.

*Debt:* I reminded him of all the things I had done for him.

*Esteem:* I told him how good he would feel if he would agree with me or I suggested it was the right thing to do.

*Allurement:* I explained how agreeing would make other people respect him or what he is doing.

*Aversive Stimulation:* I did or said something that let him know how angry or hurt I was.

*Threat:* I threatened that I might do something that he would not want me to do.

*Guilt:* I made him feel guilty.

*Warning:* I warned him that other people would criticize him.

*Altruism:* I told him how helpful and generous it would be of him to agree.

*Direct Request:* I asked him simply to agree with my suggestion or solution.

*Explanation:* I tried to give him an explanation or reason for accepting my ideas.

*Hint:* I hinted at what I wanted without really asking him.

*Deceit:* I lied or tried to conceal the truth from him.

*Empathetic:* I discussed where we both agreed and where we disagreed in order to better understand how each of our ideas would work.

*Bargaining:* I offered to make a trade or strike a deal with him.

*Other:* I used some other way to get him to agree with me.

## RESULTS

Fifteen ANOVA's were performed to answer the research question "When in a dispute with their spouse do battered women differ from non-battered women in their reported use of compliance-gaining strategies?" Initial analysis determined that demographic variables were found in some instances to be significant factors in determining different strategy use between groups. When the demographics were controlled in the equation, the results indicated that all of the covariates contributed to the use of promise, especially income. For the strategy use of allurements, the respondents's race contributed to this strategy choice. All of the covariates contributed to the use of threats and empathy. Finally, race, education, income and employment contributed to the use of deceit by the respondents, with income as a primary contributor to the use of this strategy. The covariates did not contribute to the use of ingratiation, aversive stimulation, warning, and hinting.

Individual ANOVA's were performed for each compliance-gaining strategy partialling out race, education, income, and employment (see Table 1 for means and standard deviations). Nine compliance-gaining strategies were significant and could be classified into three basic types: indirect or submissive strategies; aggressive strategies; and shared power-oriented based strategies. Battered women reported using significantly more *submissive or indirect power strategies* such as ingratiation (Table 2), promise (Table 3), allurements (Table 4), deceit (Table 10); and *aggressive strategies* such as threats (Table 6) and warning (Table 7) than non-battered women. Whereas, non-battered women reported using significantly more *shared power-oriented based strategies* such as, aversive stimulation (Table 5), hinting (Table 8), and empathy (Table 9) strategies than battered women. Variance accounted for by each strategy ranged from 2% to 11%. Although independently each strategy does not account for very much of the variance when viewed collectively from type of strategy (submissive, aggressive, shared power-oriented), it appears to offer an understanding of the group differences.

**TABLE 1**  
Battered/Non-Battered Women Compliance-Gaining Strategies—Means, Standard Deviations

Compliance-Gaining Strategies	Battered Women		Non-Battered Women	
	Means	(Standard Deviation)	Means	(Standard Deviation)
Ingratiation	4.10**	(1.42)	3.57	(1.36)
Promise	3.79**	(1.44)	3.02	(1.30)
Debt	3.21	(1.61)	2.86	(1.52)
Esteem	3.01	(1.49)	2.64	(1.51)
Threat	3.01*	(1.88)	2.10	(1.37)
Explanation	3.92	(1.44)	4.53	(1.33)
Direct Request	2.85	(1.52)	2.97	(1.41)
Altruism	2.66	(1.46)	2.45	(1.34)
Warning	2.40**	(1.53)	1.76	(1.00)
Hinting	3.32	(1.62)	3.61**	(1.35)
Deceit	3.50*	(1.77)	1.95	(1.10)
Empathy	3.35	(1.65)	4.11*	(1.31)
Allurement	2.77**	(1.48)	1.95	(1.35)
Bargaining	3.03	(1.71)	2.78	(1.24)
Aversive Stimulation	4.00	(1.45)	4.39**	(1.21)

Note: \* denotes probability of <.05 \*\* denotes probability of <.01 when controlling for race, education, income, and employment. See following tables.

**TABLE 2**  
Ingratiation

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Significance Level
Covariates	10.15	4	2.54	1.35	.25
Race	.18	1	.18	.09	.76
Education	.77	1	.77	.41	.52
Income	7.00	1	7.00	3.73	.06
Employment	2.62	1	2.62	1.40	.24
Main Effects					
Ingratiation	22.20	1	22.20	11.82	.001
Residual	420.70	224	1.88		

**TABLE 3**  
Promise

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Significance Level
Covariates	26.48	4	6.62	3.49	.01
Race	5.10	1	5.10	2.69	.10
Education	.11	1	.11	.06	.81
Income	14.99	1	14.99	7.90	.01
Employment	1.02	1	1.02	.54	.47
Main Effects					
Promise	14.04	1	14.04	7.40	.001
Residual	425.06	224	1.10		

**TABLE 4**  
Allurement

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Significance Level
Covariates	16.69	4	3.92	2.11	.08
Race	8.25	1	8.25	4.44	.04
Education	3.34	1	3.34	1.80	.18
Income	.48	1	.48	.26	.61
Employment	1.15	1	1.15	.62	.43
Main Effects					
Allurement	34.77	1	34.77	18.70	.001
Residual	416.60	224	1.86		

**TABLE 5**  
Aversive Stimulation

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Significance Level
Covariates	4.63	4	1.16	.70	.60
Race	.01	1	.01	.01	.93
Education	3.60	1	3.60	2.15	.14
Income	.02	1	.02	.01	.91
Employment	.01	1	.01	.01	.94
Main Effects					
Aversive Stimulation	16.59	1	16.59	9.93	.002
Residual	374.36	224	1.67		

**TABLE 6**  
Threats

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Significance Level
Covariates	34.70	4	8.67	3.37	.01
Race	8.72	1	8.72	3.39	.07
Education	2.21	1	2.21	.86	.37
Income	6.99	1	6.99	2.71	.10
Employment	.03	1	.03	.01	.92
Main Effects					
Threats	50.11	1	10.02	3.89	.002
Residual	577.32	224	2.58		

**TABLE 7**  
Warning

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Significance Level
Covariates	8.18	4	2.05	1.33	.29
Race	.17	1	.17	.11	.74
Education	4.55	1	4.55	3.00	.09
Income	1.07	1	1.07	.70	.40
Employment	1.86	1	1.86	1.22	.27
Main Effects					
Warning	28.01	1	28.01	18.27	.001
Residual	343.53	224	1.53		

**TABLE 8**  
Hinting

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Significance Level
Covariates	7.70	4	1.92	.94	.44
Race	.00	1	.00	.00	.99
Education	.51	1	.51	.25	.62
Income	3.71	1	3.71	1.81	.18
Employment	5.32	1	5.32	2.59	.11
Main Effects					
Hinting	37.30	1	37.30	13.30	.001
Residual	457.77	224	2.05		

**TABLE 9**  
Empathy

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Significance Level
Covariates	38.81	4	9.70	4.63	.001
Race	.56	1	.56	.27	.61
Education	7.71	1	7.71	3.68	.06
Income	19.13	1	19.13	9.12	.003
Employment	7.23	1	7.23	3.45	.07
Main Effects					
Empathy	10.88	1	10.88	5.20	.02
Residual	467.58	224	2.10		

**TABLE 10**  
Deceit

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Significance Level
Covariates	62.63	4	15.66	7.42	.001
Race	.14	1	.14	.07	.80
Education	6.00	1	6.00	2.84	.09
Income	23.67	1	23.67	11.21	.001
Employment	.11	1	.11	.05	.82
Main Effects					
Deceit	67.50	1	67.50	31.89	.001
Residual	470.70	224	2.11		



## DISCUSSION

This study investigated the types of compliance-gaining strategies that battered and non-battered women reported using in disputes with their husbands. The findings presented suggest that battered and non-battered women report using different strategies to gain compliance when in a dispute with their partners.

This investigation expanded upon the initial findings of Rudd, Burant, and Beatty's (1994) study. By comparing battered and nonbattered women's reported use of compliance-gaining strategy, clear discrepancies between groups are evident. In this study it was found that battered women rely significantly more on two types of strategies: submissive or indirect power strategies, such as ingratiation, promise, allurements, deceit, and aggressive strategies, such as threats and warning than non-battered women. The literature on battered women suggests that often abused women first try to smooth conflict over in a dispute (Walker, 1984) and if these strategies do not work they resort (often out of fear) to more aggressive strategies to escalate the conflict in order to accelerate the violent act. The findings of this study support the "violence cycle" phenomena (Walker, 1984). For example, a husband and wife begin to argue, the wife tries to de-escalate the conflict by promising to try harder or do something better next time. She may even try to deny the acclaimed problem in hopes of ending the argument. If these strategies fail to smooth the conflict she may resort to more aggressive strategies. Perhaps battered women's use of aggressive strategies are a means for them to escalate the inevitable violence so that the conflict will end. Abused women have often reported that the fear of not knowing when the violence is going to occur is as frightening as the violent act itself.

On the other hand, non-battered women reported using significantly more empathic, aversive stimulation, and hinting strategies than battered women when disputing with their husbands. These strategies could be characterized as strategies that rely on shared power-oriented base. Aversive stimulation ("I did or said something that let him know how angry I was") and empathetic strategy ("I discuss where we both agreed and where we disagreed in order to better understand how each of our ideas would work") are clearly strategies that assert one's equality in the relationship. Hinting strategy is less clearly explained. Perhaps non-battered women reported use of this strategy reflect their assumption of their partners' ability to share their perspective. That is, we often assume that those who are of equal status will understand us more readily than those of differing status. The result of this assumed shared perspective maybe the use of hinting ("I hint at what I want without really asking") when interacting with one's spouse. Further investigation is needed.

In conclusion, this study found that battered and non-battered women report the use of different compliance-gaining strategies when in a dispute with their partner. It further suggests strategy choice is reflective of their power position in their relationship. It is not surprising then that battered women's reported compliance-gaining strategy choice is constructed around the abusive situation. This study hopefully adds to the ASD model of familial violence, in that it offers further explanation to what types of communication messages are used in violent and nonviolent relationships. Specifically, this study extends the ASD model by suggesting that individuals in violent situations are more likely to employ strategies from indirect power bases. Furthermore, it supports that individuals who are in violent relationships rely on strategies that reflect an individual's limited power (perceived or actual) and control in the relationship.

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#### APPENDIX A

##### Definition of Compliance-Gaining Strategies

1. **Ingratiation:** Source's proffered goods, sentiments, or services precede the request for compliance. They range from subtle verbal or nonverbal positive reinforcement to more blatant formulas of "apple polishing" or "brown-nosing." Manipulations in behavior include gift giving, supportive listening, love and affection, or favor-doing. (Johnson, 1976; Wiseman & Schenck-Hamlin, 1981)
2. **Promise:** Source's proffered goods, sentiments, or services are promised the receiver in exchange for compliance. This may include a bribe or trade. A variant is compromise, in

which gains and losses are perceived in relative terms, so that both source and receiver give in order to receive. Sometimes compromise is called trade-off, log-rolling, or finding a "middle-of-the-road" solution. (Cody, McLaughlin, & Jordan, 1980; Marwell & Schmitt, 1967; Wiseman & Schenck-Hamlin, 1981)

3. **Debt:** Source recalls obligations owed him/her as a way of inducing the receiver to comply. Past debts may be as tangible as favors or loans, or as general as the catch-all, "After all I've done for you . . ." (Fitzpatrick & Winke, 1979; Marwell & Schmitt, 1967; Wiseman & Schenck-Hamlin, 1981)
4. **Esteem:** Receiver's compliance will result in automatic increase of self-worth. Source's appeal promises this increase in areas of receiver's power, success, status, moral/ethical standing, attention and affection of others, competence, ability to handle failure and uncertainty well, and/or attempts to aspire. "Everyone loves a winner" is the fundamental basis for appeal. "Just think how good you will feel if you would do this." (Fitzpatrick & Winke, 1979; Marwell & Schmitt, 1967; Wiseman & Schenck-Hamlin, 1981)
5. **Allurement:** Receiver's reward arises from persons other than the source or receiver. The receiver's compliance could result in a circumstance in which other people become satisfied, pleased, or happy. These positive attitudes will be beneficial to the receiver. "You'll always have their respect" is an example. (Wiseman & Schenck-Hamlin, 1981)
6. **Aversive Stimulation:** Source continuously punishes receiver, making cessation contingent on compliance. Pouting, sulking, crying, acting angry, whining, "the silent treatment," and ridicule would all be examples of aversive stimulation. (Fitzpatrick & Winke, 1979; Marwell & Schmitt, 1967)
7. **Threat:** Source's proposed actions will have negative consequences for the receiver if he or she does not comply. Black-mailing or the suggestion of firing, violence, or breaking off a friendship would all be examples of threats. (Cody, McLaughlin, & Jordan, 1981; Falbo, 1977; Marwell & Schmitt, 1967; Wiseman & Schenck-Hamlin, 1981)
8. **Guilt:** Receiver's failure to comply will result in automatic decreases of self-worth. Areas of inadequacy might include professional ineptness, social irresponsibility, or ethical/moral transgressions. (Wiseman & Schenck-Hamlin, 1981)
9. **Warning:** Receiver's punishment arises from persons other than the source or receiver. The receiver's noncompliance could lead to a circumstance in which other people become embarrassed, offended, or hurt. Resulting negative attitudes from those people will have harmful consequences for the receiver. "You'll make the boss unhappy" and "What will the neighbors say?" are examples. (Wiseman & Schenck-Hamlin, 1981)
10. **Altruism:** Source requests the receiver to engage in behavior designed to benefit the source rather than the receiver. Presentation of some personal need and asking for help is typical. Intensity of the appeal may be manipulated by making the receiver feel unselfish, generous, self-sacrificing, heroic, or helpful. "It would help me if you would do this" and "Do a favor for me" exemplify the direct approach of the altruistic strategy. Two variants are sympathy ("I am in big trouble, so help me") and empathy ("You would ask for help if you were me."). (Cody & McLaughlin, 1980; Marwell & Schmitt, 1967; Wiseman & Schenck-Hamlin, 1981)
11. **Direct Request:** The source simply asks the receiver to comply. The motivation or inducement for complying is not provided by the source, but must be inferred by the receiver. The source's message appears to offer as little influence as possible, so that the receiver is given the maximum latitude of choice. "If I were you, I would . . ." and "Why don't you think about . . ." are instances of direct request. (Falbo, 1977; Wiseman & Schenck-Hamlin, 1981)

12. Explanation: One of several reasons are advanced for believing or doing something. A reason may include the following: (a) credibility, "I know from experience." The reason for my complying is my trustworthiness, integrity, exemplary action, or expertise; (b) inference from empirical evidence, "Everything points to the logic of this step." The reason for complying is based on the following evidence. (Cody, McLaughlin, & Jordan, 1980; Falbo, 1977; Johnson, 1976; Wiseman & Schenck-Hamlin, 1981)
13. Hint: Source represents the situational context in such a way that the receiver is led to conclude the desired action or response. Rather than directly requesting the desired response, the source might say, "It sure is hot in here," rather than directly asking the receiver to turn down the heat. (Falbo, 1977; Wiseman & Schenck-Hamlin, 1981)
14. Deceit: Source gains receiver's compliance by intentionally misrepresenting the characteristics or consequences of the desired response. "It's easy," when in fact it is neither simple nor easy. "By doing this, you'll be handsomely rewarded," but the source does not have the ability to give that reward. (Cody, McLaughlin, & Jordan, 1980; Falbo, 1977; Johnson, 1976; Wiseman & Schenck-Hamlin, 1981)
15. Empathetic: Source engages receiver in talk that allow them to disagree without arguing. The source suggests that they discuss the possibilities of accepting each other's point of view. (Fitzpatrick & Winke, 1979)
16. Bargaining: Source explicitly offers to trade favors in exchange for other desired goals. (Falbo, 1977)
17. Other: Strategies that respondents were unable to categorized.

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