

Threats, Suggestions, Hints, and Promises: Gaining Compliance Efficiently and Politely

Kathy Kellermann and B. Christine Shea

Threats, suggestions, hints, and promises are examined for their politeness and expediency in gaining others' compliance. The compliance gaining and politeness literatures rank-order these verbal acts along a unidimensional scale where politeness and efficiency are treated as bipolar opposites (i.e., what is polite is inefficient and what is efficient is impolite). This research tested the predicted rank-orderings of the politeness and expediency of threats, suggestions, hints, and promises stemming from these literatures and found that: (a) hints, while inefficient, are not among the most polite strategies for gaining compliance; (b) threats, while impolite, are not among the most efficient strategies for gaining compliance; (c) direct requests, while among the most efficient ways to get others to do things, are not impolite; (d) suggestions are neither as inefficient nor as polite as expected; and (e) promises are only moderately polite while equally efficient as threats. The value of politeness theory for accounting for instrumentally-oriented behavior and the need for compliance gaining research to uncouple intuitions about strategy effectiveness from claims about strategy efficiency are discussed.

KEY CONCEPTS: Compliance gaining, politeness, threats, suggestions, hints, promises

KATHY KELLERMANN (Ph.D., Northwestern University, 1984) is an Associate Professor in the Communication Department, University of California at Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara, CA 93106. B. CHRISTINE SHEA (Ph.D., University of California at Santa Barbara, 1995) is a Lecturer in the Speech Communication Department, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, CA 93407. The authors appreciate Tim Cole's assistance in helping collect part of the data for this project. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the November, 1993 Speech Communication Association convention in Miami.

Threats, suggestions, hints, and promises are strategies people commonly use to gain others' compliance, as is demonstrated by their consistent emergence in taxonomies designed to classify compliance gaining messages. Threats are catalogued as a strategy for gaining compliance in at least 22 different taxonomies, suggestions in 5, hints in 13, and promises in 19 (Kellermann & Cole, 1991). Threats and promises are of particular interest as compliance gaining strategies to scholars of bargaining and negotiation (e.g., Pruitt, 1981), while hints and suggestions draw attention as compliance gaining strategies from scholars interested in status and politeness in interpersonal interactions (e.g., Baxter, 1984; Kemper & Thissen, 1981; McCormick, 1979; Tracy, Craig, Smith, & Spisak, 1984). A host of situational, relational, and individual factors governs the use of these four strategies to gain compliance in different contexts (see Miller, Boster, Roloff, & Seibold, 1987; Seibold, Cantril, & Meyers, 1985).

Not only are threats, suggestions, hints, and promises significant compliance gaining strategies, but they are important in their own right as speech acts, being catalogued in speech act dictionaries

(e.g., Wierzbicka, 1987), studied for their felicity conditions (e.g., Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969), and examined for their face-threatening potential (e.g., Brown & Levinson, 1987). These four speech acts are of interest to scholars studying such diverse domains as international negotiations (e.g., Milburn, 1977), courtroom discourse (e.g., Harris, 1984), and children's requests (e.g., Ervin-Tripp, Guo, & Lampert, 1990) and have been found to differ in their precipitating conditions and their acceptability in these different arenas.

Whether regarded as compliance gaining strategies or as speech acts, however, threats, suggestions, hints, and promises are often characterized as possessing particular levels of politeness and efficiency.¹ For example, threats are often treated as rude though expedient ways to gain compliance. Threats are conceptualized as "heavy" (Pruitt, 1981), "fierce" (Harris, 1984), "face-threatening" (Brown & Levinson, 1987); "strong" (Kipnis, Schmidt, & Braxton-Brown, 1990; Howard, Blumstein, & Schwartz, 1986), "punishment-oriented" (Miller & Parks, 1982; Wiseman & Schenck-Hamlin, 1981), "powerful" (Harris, 1984), "bullying" (Howard et al., 1986), "mobilizing" (Milburn, 1977), "pressuring" (Falbe & Yukl, 1992), "forcing" (Kipnis et al., 1990), and "inexpensive" (Milburn, 1977). By contrast, suggestions are thought of as "softeners" of otherwise impolite though efficient bald-on-record requests (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Suggestions are "control acts" that "direct and propose" while "implying autonomy for others" (Bales, 1950); they are "indirect" (Sagrestano, 1992; Steil & Welman, 1992), "encouraging" (May, 1989), and judged as moderately good (Sagrestano, 1992). Hints are generally conceptualized as inefficient though polite verbal acts. Hints are claimed to be "polite" (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Ervin-Tripp, O'Connor, & Rosenberg, 1984; Kemper & Thissen, 1981), "positive" (Berger, 1985), "off-record" (Brown & Levinson, 1987), "non-explicit"/"implicit" (Blum-Kulka, Danet, & Gershon, 1985; Newcombe & Zaslów, 1981; Wheelless, Barraclough, & Stewart, 1983), "weak" (Howard et al., 1986), and "indirect" (Blum-Kulka, 1990; Kemper & Thissen, 1981). Finally, promises are viewed as moderately expedient and polite verbal acts, being conceptualized as "positive" (Pruitt, 1981; Wiseman & Schenck-Hamlin, 1981), "reward-oriented" (Miller & Parks, 1982), "light" (Pruitt, 1981), "favorable" (Heilman, 1974) and "friendly" (Rubin & Lewicki, 1973).

Theoretical frameworks concerned with compliance gaining strategy use and politeness behavior offer insight as to why these presumptions of politeness and efficiency are made about threats, suggestions, hints, and promises. From the compliance gaining perspective, two different though related hypotheses about sequential compliance gaining strategy use assume that strategy politeness is incompatible with strategy efficiency. A resistance hypothesis suggests that (a) people initiate compliance gaining attempts with positive and less direct strategies, and (b) they replace these strategies with less polite though more direct ones when faced with resistance and possible goal failure (Berger, 1985; Burgoon & Burgoon, 1990; de Turck, 1985; Goodstadt & Kipnis, 1970; Hunter & Boster, 1987; Kipnis & Consentino, 1969; Lim, 1990; Rubin & Lewicki, 1973; Rule & Bisanz, 1987; Rule, Bisanz, & Kohn, 1985). Similarly, an urgency hypothesis suggests that when time is of the essence, people shift from their default of using positive and less direct compliance gaining strategies to using more negative, direct, and explicit strategies (Berger, 1985; Blum-Kulka, Danet, & Gershon, 1985; Sutton, 1991; Sutton & Rafaeli, 1988). These sequential use hypotheses rely on a shared assumption that polite compliance gaining strategies are inefficient while efficient compliance gaining strategies are impolite. In other words, people use nicer strategies when they have the time and energy to do so, but shift to nastier strategies when expediency is needed (i.e., when they are frustrated or pressured). These hypotheses suggest that strategies such as hints and suggestions are polite though inefficient, while threats are efficient though impolite; and, because they are more explicit, promises are less polite though more efficient than are hints and suggestions.

Like compliance gaining research, politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987) also assumes inconsistency between polite speech acts and efficient speech acts. Brown and Levinson ground politeness theory on three interrelated assumptions: (1) that efficiency is a central organizing principle underlying all talk exchanges; (2) that communicators should be efficient unless they have

good reason not to be; and (3) that politeness provides one such "good reason" to deviate from the expectation of efficiency. In politeness theory, Grice's maxims (i.e., say only that which is relevant, say no more nor less than is needed, be clear, and only speak the truth) are taken to be "the basic set of assumptions underlying every talk exchange" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 95),² assumptions that offer "an intuitive characterization of conversational principles that constitute guidelines for achieving maximally efficient communication" (Brown & Levinson, pp. 94-95). In other words, in Brown and Levinson's eyes, Grice's maxims are prescriptions for maximally efficient talk.³ This characterization of Grice's maxims as describing maximally efficient talk is crucial to politeness theory. Brown and Levinson write that "the only essential presumption [of politeness theory] is what is at the heart of Grice's proposals, namely that there is a working assumption by conversationalists of the rational and efficient nature of talk" (p. 4). As a result, the "model person" in politeness theory is invested with a desire for efficiency, that is, a "perennial desire not to waste effort to no avail" (p. 65). They note, however, that these maxims of efficient talk are often violated in practice, and that conversationalists rarely are as curt and abrupt as would be expected by the efficiency demanded by the maxims. Politeness theory posits that these violations of the maxims are *purposeful*; that these "deviation[s] from rational efficiency" do not occur "without a reason" (p. 5), and that reason is *politeness*.⁴ According to Brown and Levinson, the "whole thrust" of politeness theory is that politeness is "one powerful and pervasive motive for *not* talking Maxim-wise" (p. 95). Their position that politeness is a rational deviation from the efficiency of Maxim-wise talk rests on the assumption that politeness and efficiency are inconsistent with each other; that is, being Gricean efficient is impolite and being Brown-and-Levinsonian polite is inefficient. In their words, efficient talk is impolite and "brusque" (p. 95) while polite talk is inefficient and "effortful" (p. 143). Thus, from Brown and Levinson's perspective:

[T]he use of politeness strategies incurs certain costs: namely, the speaker's (transactional) message is transmitted less efficiently. In general, the greater the use of politeness strategies, the less Gricean talk becomes; and the greater the concern with transactional efficiency, the less polite talk becomes. (Turnbull, 1992, p. 109)

People must balance the tension between the desire to be efficient (by following Grice's maxims) and the recognition that such efficiency then "supersedes face wants" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 249) and results in the use of impolite (i.e., "bald-on-record") strategies (p. 94). According to politeness theory, efficiency and politeness are in tension, and thus inconsistent and incompatible with each other.

In politeness theory, efficient speech acts are "bald-on-record" and are said to be impolite because they threaten the face of cointeractants, either by disapproving of them or restricting their autonomy (Brown & Levinson, 1987). For example, explicit threats are said to be inherently face-threatening, taking no account of the face concerns of others and, as such, are highly efficient but completely impolite. By contrast, hints are considered "off-record requests," the single most polite strategy people can use to attend to the face concerns of others. Though promises attend to certain face-wants of others, according to politeness theory they are less polite though more efficient than hints because they are still "on-record." While suggestions "soften" on-record requests, they nonetheless remain "on-record"; consequently, they are not as polite (though also not as inefficient) as hints. In other words, politeness theory rank-orders speech acts according to the extent to which their face redress (i.e., politeness) results in deviations from Grice's maxims (i.e., principles of efficiency).

The rank-ordering of the politeness and efficiency of speech acts posited by politeness theory is the same as that posited by the sequential compliance gaining strategy use hypotheses. Both politeness theory and sequential compliance gaining strategy use hypotheses conceptualize threats as efficient but impolite acts, hints as polite but inefficient acts, with suggestions and promises

taking a middle ground. Moreover, both politeness theory and sequential compliance gaining strategy use hypotheses conceptualize these rank-orderings as reflecting features of the *acts themselves* (i.e., they are *message* features) rather than of the situations or the interpersonal relationships in which the acts are contextualized (though such factors can and do influence the degree to which people may want to be polite or efficient). For example, politeness theory "suggests that face concerns are universal, and hence the politeness ordering of remarks should be the same in different cultures" (Holtgraves & Yang, 1990, p. 725). The assumption of universal rank-orderings of the politeness and efficiency of verbal acts has some support. Variations in the politeness of verbal acts have been reported on a number of occasions (see, e.g., Clark & Schunk, 1980; Cole, 1993; Fraser & Nolan, 1981; Holtgraves & Yang, 1990; Kellermann, 1992; Kellermann & Kim, 1991; Kemper & Thissen, 1981), yielding a politeness continuum *independent* of (and *similar* within and across) situational (Price & Bouffard, 1974) and cultural contexts (Carrell & Konneker, 1981; Hill, Ide, Ikuta, Kawasaki, & Ogino, 1986; Holtgraves & Yang, 1990; Walters, 1980). However, the *specific* rank-orderings *predicted* by politeness theory and sequential compliance gaining strategy use hypotheses are largely just that: untested assertions that are often taken as truths rather than the suppositions that they are.

Direct tests of the politeness and efficiency of these speech acts have not been made, though should be undertaken. First, these predictions are fundamental to two important and prevailing perspectives on interpersonal behavior (e.g., sequential compliance gaining strategy use and politeness). These perspectives provide the motivating force accounting for the occurrence of polite behavior on the one hand, and the enactment of nasty behavior (e.g., nasty compliance methods) on the other, but take for granted the rank-ordering of the politeness and efficiency of verbal acts.

A second reason these theories and their predicted rank-orderings should be tested is that what evidence exists that speaks to the politeness and efficiency of the speech acts of threats, suggestions, hints, and promises is either contrary to or inconsistent with their predicted rank-orderings. For example, in 1988, Burlison, Wilson, Waltman, Gearing, Ely, and Whaley published an article on a social desirability bias in the checklist rating method frequently employed to assess the likelihood of use of compliance gaining strategies. In the course of evaluating their social desirability bias hypotheses, these researchers provide data (in Tables 1, 3, and 6 in their article) that promises are only moderately polite and (in Table 2) that direct requests are quite polite, being more polite than even hinting (which is only the 6th most polite of 14 compliance gaining strategies). Additionally, Rule and colleagues (Bisanz & Rule, 1990; Rule & Bisanz, 1987; Rule, Bisanz & Kohn, 1985) consistently report that "ask" (i.e., direct request) is the most approved compliance gaining strategy while promise (called "bargain favor" and "bargain object") is only moderately approved. These findings are inconsistent with the predicted rank-orderings supposed by politeness theory and sequential compliance gaining strategy use hypotheses. However, because these data were offered to test hypotheses other than those directly concerned with the predicted rank-orderings of the politeness and efficiency of threats, suggestions, hints, and promises, their implications for politeness theory and sequential compliance gaining strategy use hypotheses have largely gone unnoticed.

When findings conflicting with the predictions of politeness theory and sequential compliance gaining strategy use hypotheses have been noticed, the tendency has been to devalue and/or simply disregard them. For example, Brown and Levinson (1987) note that Blum-Kulka (1985) found that hints were not perceived to be the most polite strategy as expected by politeness theory. Nonetheless, Brown and Levinson conclude:

In general, despite the various deviations from our expected hierarchy that have emerged from some of these experimental tests, no one (to our knowledge) has come up with clear evidence of a counter-ranking At present, in the absence of definitive

evidence that we got the ranking wrong, there are good arguments for insisting that off-record strategies are generally more polite than on-record. (p. 20)

In a somewhat circular fashion, Brown and Levinson then offer their theoretical account as the "good reasons" why their theory should not be rejected. Of course, a fully developed set of counter-rankings is not required to prove that hints aren't the most polite strategy available to handle face-threatening acts. Moreover, other evidence exists suggesting that, counter-rankings or not, hints may not be especially polite (Blum-Kulka, 1987, 1990; Burleson et al., 1988; Holtgraves, 1992; Holtgraves & Yang, 1990). Rather than devaluing and disregarding these research findings, direct and more definitive tests of the predictions about the politeness of threats, suggestions, hints, and promises should be made.

These more direct and definitive tests of the politeness and efficiency of threats, suggestions, hints, and promises need to be more complete than those conducted in the past. Typically, only partial tests are made of the rank-ordering hypotheses suggested by theories of politeness and sequential strategy use. Research typically assesses the politeness of various compliance gaining strategies or speech acts and then infers that differences in their use are due to differences in their efficiency. In other words, the assumption of inconsistency between what is polite and what is expedient has generated research that assesses only one of these dimensions and then infers the other as an explanation for the results. For example, in the compliance gaining literature, a shift from more polite to less polite strategies is commonly reported as people become frustrated or pressured (Berger, 1985; Burgoon & Burgoon, 1990; de Turck, 1985; Goodstadt & Kipnis, 1970; Hunter & Boster, 1987; Kipnis & Consentino, 1969; Lim, 1990; Rubin & Lewicki, 1973; Rule & Bisanz, 1987; Rule et al., 1985). This shift in politeness is attributed, however, without further testing, to the substituted nastier strategies being more efficient than the nicer ones they replaced. Similarly, in politeness theory, the rational efficiency of Grice's maxims has been taken as a given (without assessment or test) as have the use of hints as deviations from these maxims of efficiency. Even if the findings from research, as conducted, fully supported the predictions of politeness theory and hypotheses about compliance gaining strategy use, the tests themselves are incomplete, examining only one aspect of the predictions (typically politeness) while assuming the other (typically efficiency). The rationale in its totality -- that is, that polite acts (i.e., hints, suggestions, promises) are inefficient while impolite acts (i.e., threats) are efficient -- remains untested. Our goal is to provide this undivided test of the validity of the predictions of politeness theory and the hypotheses concerning sequential compliance gaining strategy use in terms of the politeness and efficiency of threats, suggestions, hints, and promises.

Method

This research is part of a larger project on compliance gaining strategy use concerned with the nature, understanding, and employment of 64 different compliance gaining strategies. To put the results of this investigation into perspective, comparisons of the politeness and efficiency *among* these four verbal acts will be augmented by comparisons *between* these strategies and the politeness and efficiency of the other 60 compliance gaining strategies in the larger database.⁵

Participants

In exchange for extra credit, 159 undergraduate students rated either the politeness or efficiency of particular examples of each of 64 distinct compliance gaining strategies, including threats, suggestions, hints, and promises.

Strategy Examples Rated By Participants

Participants rated either the politeness or the efficiency of specific representative examples of threats, suggestions, hints, and promises (as well as representative examples of 60 other compliance gaining strategies). These examples were taken from three tactical sets that were each constructed in previous work to provide one complete and valid set of operationalizations of each of the 64 different compliance gaining strategies (see, for a listing of these tactical sets, Cole, 1993). These tactical sets were obtained by having people evaluate the degree to which specific examples illustrated or exemplified particular strategies for gaining others' compliance. For each strategy, evaluated examples consisted of: (1) examples found in the literature that have been claimed to represent that strategy; (2) examples found in the literature that have been claimed to represent a different strategy but were thought to represent the strategy being evaluated; and (3) examples generated as possible representatives of the strategy. Tactics that clearly did not represent a strategy were also evaluated for that strategy in order to add diversity (and variation) to the representativeness of examples tested for each strategy. Across the larger set of 64 compliance gaining strategies, 1,480 examples were evaluated for their representativeness; 130 examples were tested for the degree to which they validly represented threats, suggestions, hints, or promises. On average, 19 people evaluated the validity of each example. The three examples that were among the most highly rated for each strategy were used to form the three complete operationalizations of the 64 compliance gaining strategies. The three tactical sets are equally able to represent validly the 64 different compliance gaining strategies: they each contain highly representative operationalizations of the 64 different compliance gaining strategies and the 64 examples in each set have equivalent (and very high) mean ratings of representativeness (on a 7-point scale with 1=low and 7=high representativeness, the mean rating of representativeness of set #1 is 6.44, set #2 is 6.42, and set #3 is 6.42) (see, for further details on the tactical sets, Cole, 1993).

Tactics proven to be highly representative of each of the strategies of interest to this research (i.e., threats, suggestions, hints, promises) were selected from these tactical sets. Like the tactical sets from which they were selected, the examples of threats, suggestions, hints, and promises were perceived as highly representative of their compliance gaining strategies. All three threats were rated above 6.63 on the 7-point representativeness scale; all three examples of suggestions and hints were rated above 6.16; and all three examples of promises were rated above 6.68. The three examples used to represent threats, suggestions, hints, and promises are listed in the second column of Table 1.⁶

In addition to selecting examples of threats, suggestions, hints, and promises to compare in terms of their efficiency and politeness, examples of direct requests were selected for evaluation in this research.⁷ Examples of direct requests were selected because direct requests serve as a theoretical baseline in both politeness theory and sequential compliance gaining strategy use hypotheses. Direct requests are one of the most commonly used compliance gaining strategies (Bisanz & Rule, 1990; Rule & Bisanz, 1987; Rule et al., 1985) and are critically important direct, "on-record" speech acts in terms of politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Direct requests are believed to be highly efficient and relatively impolite compliance gaining strategies (Berger & Kellermann, 1983) and speech acts (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The three examples of direct requests extracted from the three tactical sets are highly representative of their strategy (lowest rating=6.44 on a scale of 1 to 7, with 7 indicating high representativeness). These three examples of direct requests are listed in the second column of Table 1 along with the examples of threats, suggestions, hints, and promises. In general, the examples of threats, suggestions, hints, promises, and direct requests in Table 1 can be said to represent (i.e., illustrate, exemplify) highly their respective strategies.

Efficiency and Politeness Questionnaires

Six questionnaires were constructed, three soliciting ratings of efficiency and three soliciting ratings of politeness. Each questionnaire contained the examples of one of the three tactical sets. Participants were instructed to read each example on their questionnaire, focus on the method being used in it to gain compliance, and then assess either how efficient or how polite it was for gaining compliance. Questionnaires asking for ratings of efficiency instructed participants that examples gained compliance efficiently if the method they used was direct, immediate, and to the point; that what was done to gain compliance did not waste time, energy, effort, or steps. Participants making these efficiency ratings were cautioned against making their choices based on whether they thought the method was polite; they were told to focus only on the efficiency of the compliance gaining method being used. Participants used a seven point scale to mark their responses, where "1" indicated an inefficient method for gaining compliance and "7" indicated an efficient method for gaining compliance.

Questionnaires asking for ratings of politeness told participants that examples were polite if the method they used to gain compliance was polite (i.e., pleasant, courteous, proper, and nice); that what was done to gain compliance was not rude, uncivil, nasty, or ill-mannered. Participants making politeness ratings were cautioned against making their choices based on whether they thought the method was effective. Participants used a seven point scale to mark their responses, where "1" indicated an impolite method for gaining compliance and "7" indicated a polite method for gaining compliance.⁸

Participants rated one of the three sets of examples in terms of either their efficiency or politeness. On average, 26 participants rated the efficiency or politeness of each set of examples.

Procedures

Participants were given the questionnaires in groups of varying sizes and asked to read the instructions. All participants in each group received the same questionnaire (in terms of whether it asked for efficiency or politeness ratings and whether it contained examples from tactical set #1, #2, or #3). After reading written instructions for the questionnaire, participants were provided with either oral or further written instructions reminding them to avoid focusing on aspects of the examples not related to their efficiency or politeness (as the case may be). In these additional instructions, all participants were told to focus on the method being used to gain compliance rather than on the specific compliance goal that was being sought. Participants making efficiency ratings were also told to avoid focusing on what was being requested (i.e., a large or small request), how politely the request was made, or what the long term consequences of asking in such a way might have been. Participants making politeness (i.e., politeness) ratings were also told to avoid focusing on what people asked for (i.e., something acceptable or unacceptable), who did the asking, and whether requests made in such a way would be successful. Prepared examples were used to highlight each of these points and encourage participants to focus only on their respective rating task (either politeness or efficiency). Participants took about one-half hour to complete their evaluations of either the politeness or efficiency of one of the three sets of examples of the 64 compliance gaining strategies. In this process, each participant rated either the efficiency or politeness of one example of a threat, suggestion, hint, promise, and direct request.

Results

Both politeness theory and sequential compliance gaining strategy use hypotheses predict that threats are highly efficient but highly impolite ways to gain compliance while hints are highly polite but highly inefficient strategies; additionally, both of these perspectives predict that suggestions are somewhat inefficient (thus somewhat polite) while promises are somewhat efficient but not completely impolite. To test these predictions, two sets of analyses were conducted. First, the three

different examples of each strategy were compared on their ratings of politeness and efficiency to determine if these ratings were dependent on the examples employed or whether generalizations to the abstract strategies and speech acts of threats, suggestions, hints, promises, and direct requests could be made. Second, comparisons were made among the five compliance gaining strategies of threats, suggestions, hints, promises, and direct requests to test the politeness and efficiency rank-orderings predicted by politeness theory and sequential strategy use hypotheses. In this process, comparisons were made to other known compliance gaining strategies in order to provide a context for interpreting the efficiency and politeness of the rated examples of threats, suggestions, hints, and promises. For the most part, the power of statistical tests was above .80 to detect small (but significant) effects if they were present; for the relatively few findings of nonsignificance, the power was still greater than .67 for detecting moderate size effects.

Table 1. Politeness and Efficiency of Verbal Compliance Gaining Acts

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Examples</i>	<i>Politeness</i>			<i>Efficiency</i>		
		<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
<i>Threat</i>	I said: "John if you don't do what I want, I will punish you."	1.47	.82	30	5.28	1.67	25
	Paul threatens to reveal some deep dark embarrassing secret about Tim to someone special if he does not comply.	1.55	1.06	31	4.00	2.02	32
	Unless you stop being late for work, your future with this company will be inserious jeaopardy.	4.05	1.25	22	5.72	1.13	18
<i>Suggest</i>	She said: "You know, one alternative is to take the Airbus to L.A."	5.20	1.49	30	4.92	1.15	25
	She said: "Why don't you think about joining a softball team?"	5.13	1.22	30	3.97	1.62	32
	If I were you, I'd probably call accounting before I got started on the project.	4.77	.87	22	3.94	1.11	18
<i>Hint</i>	Rather than directly asking Alicia to open the window, I off-handedly mentioned that it was hot in the room.	5.23	.94	30	2.48	1.48	25
	To keep Mark from letting his friend move in I would drop subtle hints about how little space we have.	4.32	1.60	31	1.44	.62	32
	Instead of asking her directly is she wanted to have sex, I would turn the lights down, put some music on, offer a drind and see how things went.	4.50	1.77	22	2.11	1.02	18
<i>Promise</i>	I said: "I will give you a reward if you do what I want."	4.43	1.52	30	5.60	1.08	25
	I told my friends I would buy pizza and beer if they helped me move.	5.71	1.07	31	4.56	1.54	32
	I'll buy you a car if you get all A's this year.	4.14	1.42	22	5.06	1.59	18
<i>Direct Request</i>	Pete asked Bob: 'Could I borrow your notes?'	5.40	1.48	30	6.60	.58	25
	I would just ask the Smiths not to cut down the tree.	4.58	1.34	31	5.50	1.65	32
	I simply tell Bob what I want.	3.57	1.20	23	6.56	.70	18

Equivalence of Efficiency and Politeness of Examples for Each Strategy

Statistical differences emerged in the rated efficiency and politeness of the three different examples of each compliance gaining strategy. However, the actual mean differences between the ratings of the three examples for each strategy tended to span a limited range of the rating scale (1 to 1.5 scale points on a 7 point scale). The largest difference reported among the three examples for any particular strategy was for ratings of politeness for the three examples of the threat strategy. Table 1 lists the politeness and efficiency ratings for each of the three examples of threats, suggestions, hints, and promises (as well as for direct requests).

Threats. The three examples of threats differed in both their judged politeness, ($F(2,80)=48.53$, $p<.001$, $\omega^2=.53$), and their judged efficiency ($F(2,72)=6.92$, $p<.002$, $\omega^2=.14$). Newman-Keuls tests reveal that the third threat example was considerably more polite than the other two while the second threat example was somewhat less efficient than the other two (see Table 1). While a great deal of variance in politeness ratings was accounted for by the different examples of a threat (53%), only a small proportion of the variance in efficiency ratings was due to the different threat examples (14%). The politeness ratings vary by 2.6 scale points across the three threat examples. The efficiency ratings, though varying across the three examples, were within one-and-a-half scale points of each other. The examples varied from impolite to moderately polite and from moderately to fairly efficient compliance gaining strategies (see Table 1 for means).

Suggestions. The three examples of suggestions did not differ in their rated politeness ($F(2,79)<1$, n.s.), though they did differ somewhat in their efficiency ($F(2,72)=4.13$, $p<.020$, $\omega^2=.08$). Newman-Keuls tests reveal that the first example is a more efficient suggestion for gaining compliance than the other two examples (see Table 1). However, only a small proportion of the variance in these efficiency ratings is accounted for by the use of different examples of suggestion (8%) and the ratings of all three examples of suggestion fall within one scale point of each other. Suggestions are fairly polite and moderately to fairly efficient strategies for gaining compliance (see Table 1 for means).

Hints. The three examples of hints differed in both their judged politeness ($F(2,80)=3.28$, $p<.0429$, $\omega^2=.05$) and their judged efficiency ($F(2,72)=6.92$, $p<.002$, $\omega^2=.14$). Newman-Keuls tests reveal that the first hint example is more polite than either of the other two while the second hint example is less efficient than the other two (see Table 1). Both of these effects, however, are weak, accounting for only 5% and 14% of the variance in ratings of politeness and efficiency of the three examples, respectively. Moreover, the politeness ratings of the three hint examples are within .9 of a scale point of each other while the efficiency ratings are within one scale point. As can be determined from the means in Table 1, hints are rated as moderately to fairly polite though largely inefficient strategies for gaining compliance.

Promises. The three examples of promises differ in both their judged politeness ($F(2,80)=10.93$, $p<.001$, $\omega^2=.19$) and their judged efficiency ($F(2,72)=3.79$, $p<.027$, $\omega^2=.07$). However, like the other compliance gaining strategies, both of these effects are weak, accounting for only 19% and 7% of the variance in ratings of politeness and efficiency of the three examples, respectively. Newman-Keuls tests reveal that the second example of a promise is more polite than the other two while the first promise example is more efficient than the other two (see Table 1). The politeness ratings for the three examples span 1.6 scale points while the efficiency examples were rated within one scale point of each other. Promises varied from being moderately to fairly polite and moderately to fairly efficient (see Table 1 for means).

Direct requests. Direct requests differ in both their judged politeness ($F(2,81)=11.85$, $p<.001$, $\omega^2=.21$) and their judged efficiency ($F(2,72)=7.69$, $p<.001$, $\omega^2=.15$). Newman-Keuls tests reveal that the third direct request was significantly less polite than the second example, which was less polite than the first example. The second example of a direct request was found to be less

efficient than the other two (see Table 1). Differences between the examples accounted for 21% of the variance in politeness ratings and 15% of the variance in efficiency ratings. The politeness ratings for the three examples span 1.85 scale points; the efficiency ratings span 1.1 scale points. Direct requests range from being moderately to fairly polite and fairly to highly efficient (see Table 1).

Summary. The three examples of each strategy tend to vary somewhat in their judged politeness and efficiency, though other than for the perceived politeness of threats and direct requests, the differences in the ratings do not span a very large range of the rating scale.⁹ Moreover, the variation in politeness and efficiency accounted for by the use of different examples tends to be relatively small. In general, threats are mostly impolite and fairly efficient strategies for gaining compliance; hints are mostly inefficient and moderately polite strategies; suggestions are fairly polite and moderately efficient strategies; and promises are fairly polite and fairly efficient.

Comparison Between Strategies on Politeness and Efficiency

Because differences in politeness and efficiency were uncovered between the three *examples* of particular strategies (taken from different tactical sets), differences between *strategies within* each set will be undertaken. Because different groups of people rated the examples of the three different tactical sets, the variation between examples in different sets may be due to differences between these three groups of people. However, because each set of examples was rated for its politeness and efficiency by the same people, differences in the ratings of strategies within the same set cannot be attributed to differences between groups of participants making the ratings. Consequently, each set of examples (set #1, set #2, set #3) will be treated as independent replications to test the hypotheses stemming from politeness theory and compliance gaining strategy use.

Differences in politeness. Threats, suggestions, hints, and promises were judged to be differentially polite by participants rating the first ($F(3,116)=62.51, p<.001, \omega^2=.61$) and second ($F(3,119)=66.38, p<.001, \omega^2=.61$) set of examples, though not by participants rating the third set of examples ($F(3,84)=1.30, n.s.$). Neuman-Keuls tests reveal that participants rated threats in both the first and second set of examples as the least polite of the four speech acts for gaining compliance. In the first set of examples, hints and suggestions were also found to be equally polite to each other and more polite than promises for gaining compliance. In the second set of examples, promises and suggestions were also found to be equally polite to each other and more polite than hints for gaining compliance. It is important to note that across these three sets of examples, hints *never* were judged the *most* polite strategy.

These results appear to support the predictions of politeness theory and compliance gaining strategy use hypotheses for threats but not for hints. Before more definitive statements can be made about the predicted rank-orderings of these speech acts, however, special consideration must be given to how threats and hints relate to the greater range of possible verbal acts that can be used to gain compliance. Two approaches were taken to provide a contextual understanding of the relative rank-ordering of threats, suggestions, hints, and promises with the larger set of strategies available to gain compliance. First, comparisons of these verbal acts to direct requests were conducted in order to provide a theoretical baseline comparison to direct, expedient on-record requests. Second, cluster analyses were conducted on the politeness ratings of the full set of 64 strategies to determine where threats, suggestions, hints, and promises "fall" in terms of their politeness relative to a comprehensive set of other compliance gaining acts.

In oneway comparisons of threats, suggestions, hints, promises and direct requests (using Neuman-Keuls follow-up tests), it was found that in the first set of examples the direct request was as polite as the hint and the suggestion ($F(4,145)=49.39, p<.001, \omega^2=.56$) and in the second set of examples the direct request was as polite as the hint ($F(4,149)=49.10, p<.001, \omega^2=.56$). In the third set of examples, the direct request was somewhat less polite than the suggestion though no different

in politeness than the hint, promise, or threat ($F(4,106)=2.65, p<.037, \omega^2=.06$). As in the previous findings, threats were rated the least polite way to gain compliance from others in both the first and second set of examples.

Table 2. Verbal Acts' Politeness and Efficiency Cluster Centroids and Membership

POLITENESS		EFFICIENCY	
Centroids	Cluster Membership (partial listing)	Centroids	Cluster Membership (partial listing)
		Set #1	
		1.6	Hint
1.5	Threat	2.6	
2.6		3.6	
3.8	Promise	4.1	Suggestion, Threat
5.1	Direct Request, Hint, Suggestion	4.7	Promise
6.2		5.7	Direct Request
		6.0	
1.6	Threat	Set #2	Hint
2.3		2.4	
3.0		3.2	
3.8		4.0	
4.7	Direct Request, Hint	4.8	Suggestion, Threat
5.5	Promise, Suggestion	6.0	Promise
6.4		6.7	Direct Request
		Set #3	Hint
1.6		2.1	
2.8		2.7	
3.7	Direct Request, Threat	3.2	
4.6	Hint, Promise, Suggestion	3.9	Suggestion
5.5		4.3	
6.3		4.9	Promise
		5.6	Threat
		6.4	Direct Request

Cluster analyses were conducted to determine where threats, suggestions, promises, and hints stand in politeness relative to 60 other types of compliance gaining acts.¹⁰ Cluster analyses using the method of average linkage between groups for clustering the acts together were conducted on the politeness ratings for each complete set of examples of the 64 compliance gaining strategies. Examination of the plot of agglomeration coefficients revealed that the 64 examples in the first set grouped into 5 clusters on the basis of their politeness; examples in the second set grouped into 7 clusters, while those in the third set grouped into 6 clusters. Table 2 provides the group centroids for each of these clusters along with membership information for threats, suggestions, hints, promises, and direct requests. As can be seen in Table 2, threats are in the cluster of strategies that are least polite for gaining others' compliance, though hints are never among those strategies considered most polite for gaining compliance. The most polite strategies for gaining compliance across the three sets of examples were compliments and cooperation.¹¹ The cluster analyses also reveal that direct requests are *not impolite* ways to get others to do things and, like suggestions, tend to be moderately polite. Moreover, direct requests are generally as polite as hints for gaining compliance. The results of the cluster analyses suggest that while threats are the least polite strategy for gaining compliance (among a set of 64 strategies, see note 10), neither hints, direct requests, promises, nor suggestions are among those that are most polite.

Differences in efficiency. Threats, suggestions, hints, and promises were judged to be differentially efficient by participants rating the first ($F(3,96)=27.03, p<.001, \omega^2=.47$), second ($F(3,124)=26.33, p<.001, \omega^2=.37$), and third ($F(3,68)=29.56, p<.001, \omega^2=.54$) set of examples. Neuman-Keuls tests reveal that participants rated the hint as being least efficient in all three sets of examples and the suggestion as second least efficient. In both the first and second set of examples, the suggestion, threat, and promise were found to be equally (and moderately) efficient. In the third set of examples, the promise and the threat were rated as more efficient than the suggestion. It is important to note that across the three sets of examples, threats were only once rated to be the most efficient means of gaining others' compliance when compared to suggestions, hints, and promises. In oneway comparisons of the four verbal acts with direct requests (using Neuman-Keuls follow-up tests), it was found that direct requests were always judged more efficient than threats, suggestions, hints, or promises (Set #1: $F(4,120)=37.45, p<.001, \omega^2=.54$; Set #2: $F(4,155)=29.75, p<.001, \omega^2=.42$; Set #3: $F(4,85)=40.81, p<.001, \omega^2=.64$).

The cluster analyses also suggest that direct requests are the most efficient and hints the least efficient strategies for gaining compliance (among the larger group of 64 compliance gaining strategies, see note 10). Again using the method of average linkage between groups, cluster analyses were conducted on the efficiency ratings for each complete set of examples of the 64 compliance gaining strategies (see note 10) to determine where threats, suggestions, hints, and promises stand in efficiency relative to other compliance gaining acts. Examination of the plot of agglomeration coefficients revealed that the 64 examples in the first set grouped into 7 clusters on the basis of their efficiency; examples in the second set grouped into 6 clusters, while those in the third set grouped into 8 clusters. Table 2 provides the group centroids for each of these clusters along with membership information for threats, suggestions, hints, promises, and direct requests. As can be seen in Table 2, hints are always in the cluster of strategies considered least efficient for gaining compliance while threats are never among the strategies considered most efficient. Suggestions and promises are always among those strategies considered at least moderately efficient for gaining compliance. Interestingly, promises and threats are always "near" each other in terms of their efficiency as strategies for gaining others' compliance. A direct test of the efficiency of threats and promises reveals that they are equally efficient ways to get others to do things (Set #1: $F(1,48)=.65, n.s.$; Set #2: $F(1,62)=1.55, n.s.$; $F(1,34)=2.07, n.s.$). The results of the cluster analyses suggest that while hints are the least efficient strategy for gaining compliance (across a range of 64 different strategies, see note 10), threats are neither as efficient nor suggestions as inefficient as predicted by politeness theory and compliance gaining strategy use hypotheses.

Summary. The comparisons of the efficiency and the politeness of threats, suggestions, hints, and promises reveal that the rank-orderings of these speech acts are not as predicted by politeness theory and compliance gaining strategy use hypotheses. Hints, while inefficient, are not among the most polite strategies for gaining compliance. Threats, while impolite, are not among the most efficient strategies for gaining compliance. Direct requests, while among the most efficient ways to get others to do things, are not impolite (being moderately polite). Suggestions are neither as inefficient nor as polite as expected: suggestions are as polite as hints, promises, and direct requests and as efficient as threats. Promises are only moderately polite while equally efficient as threats.

Discussion

As compliance gaining strategies and as speech acts, threats are often theoretically conceptualized as being rude but expedient means of getting what a person wants in interactions with others. By contrast, hints are conceptualized as being polite but inefficient ways of influencing others. Both of these conceptualizations are partly right and partly wrong. The findings of this research reveal that threats are indeed rude and hints are indeed inefficient; however, hints are only moderately polite and threats are only moderately efficient. In addition, bald on-record direct requests are as polite as hints, suggestions, and promises, and are more efficient than threats. The findings of this research thus fail to support the politeness and efficiency rank-orderings proposed by politeness theory and compliance gaining strategy use hypotheses.

The explanation for the inability to support these predictions perhaps is straightforward: the theories on which the predictions are based might simply be wrong. Politeness theory makes assertions that the rules of talk (i.e., Grice's maxims) are rules for efficient talk, that efficient talk is impolite ("brusque" so to speak), and that politeness is a motivation to deviate from being efficient. It may be the case that Grice's maxims are not prescriptions for efficient conversation, or that efficient talk is not impolite talk (see Kellermann, 1988, 1992), or that politeness is not a reason to deviate from being efficient (see Ervin-Tripp, 1976a, 1976b). Cole (1993) offers evidence that efficiency and politeness are only somewhat inconsistent with each other for compliance gaining goals ($r = -.21$) while Ervin-Tripp (1976a, 1976b) offers evidence that conversational rules, rather than rank-ordered strategies for mitigating face-threat, determine what is polite or impolite in a given situation. Put simply, politeness theory may simply make incorrect predictions.

Similarly, sequential resistance and urgency hypotheses concerning compliance gaining strategy use may also be wrong. These hypotheses were initially formed from observations that certain compliance gaining strategies are, in general, more likely to be used than other strategies. Inferences have been made about why people don't use the "typical" default strategies when they face resistance or time pressure. No reason exists why these inferences must be correct. Indeed, when put to the test, these inferences have failed, not only in this research but in other research as well. For example, Hunter and Boster (1987) claim that compliance gaining strategies differ in their verbal aggressiveness such that people initiate an influence attempt with the less verbally aggressive (i.e., nicer) strategies and shift, when facing failure, to more aggressive (i.e., nastier) strategies. The Guttman scale required to substantiate this version of the sequential use hypothesis was not replicated in an independent test using the same measurement instrument (Burgoon, Pfau, Parrott, Birk, Coker, & Burgoon, 1987). Again, the presumption of inconsistency between efficiency and politeness may lie at the root of the problem. Implicitly, compliance gaining researchers treat nice strategies as inefficient and nasty strategies as expedient and hinge their theoretical thinking on such supposition. The available evidence suggests that this supposition is simply incorrect.

A second explanation for the findings of this research concerns problems encountered when importing one type of theory (e.g., politeness theory) into another domain (e.g., compliance gaining strategy use). While theoretically useful to import an intact theory to account for why people choose one compliance gaining strategy versus another, the domain of politeness theory may simply not

fully include instrumental goals such as gaining compliance. Particular speech acts may not have the same level of politeness when used for instrumental outcomes like gaining compliance than when used for relational outcomes such as saving face. Ervin-Tripp, et al. (1990) argue that social tactics (i.e., tactics to mitigate face threat) must be distinguished from instrumental (i.e., persuasive) tactics; their objectives are quite different and so, as a result, might be their politeness. This distinction of tactics servicing instrumental versus interpersonal objectives has been noted, at least in part, in one taxonomy of compliance gaining strategies. According to Clark (1979), threats can serve instrumental or social (interpersonal) objectives; and, threats that serve one purpose should be distinguished taxonomically from those that serve the other.

The argument being forwarded here is that the politeness of speech acts may depend on the objective that they service. Consider the use of hints. Hints are said to be the most polite way of mitigating face-threat. However, in this research, as elsewhere (Blum-Kulka, 1985, 1987, 1990; Bureson et al., 1988; Holtgraves, 1992; Holtgraves & Yang, 1990; House, 1986), hints were *never* among those strategies judged most polite for gaining compliance. When assessed in their instrumental context, hints have variously been seen as "bad" (Falbo & Peplau, 1980), "Machiavellian" (Falbo, 1977), and "manipulative" (Howard et al., 1986; Lakoff, 1977). Blum-Kulka (1990) argues that when "underlying assumptions of cooperation transform formally indirect strategies into perfectly transparent instrumental acts, . . . the politeness status of the hints is seriously diminished" (p. 272). Hints may be polite only when their objective is to mitigate face threat.

Just as what is polite for mitigating face-threats may have little relation to what is polite for gaining compliance, what is efficient for interacting with others may have little relation to what is efficient for gaining compliance. The objective being pursued may alter both the politeness and efficiency of the acts being used to achieve it. Available evidence lends support to this reasoning. Across 49 different goals -- some of which were compliance gaining goals and some of which sought social (interpersonal) outcomes -- the efficiency and politeness of each of 56 different speech acts varied tremendously (Kellermann & Kim, 1991). The fact that politeness theory focuses on relational outcomes may explain why its rank-ordered predictions of strategy efficiency and politeness are not supported in a compliance gaining context. Politeness theory may primarily apply to relational rather than instrumental objectives.

The distinction between instrumental and relational objectives accounts mainly for observed differences between expected and obtained politeness rank-orderings of threats, suggestions, hints, and promises. The efficiency rank-orderings of these speech acts are largely presumed by both politeness theory and sequential compliance gaining strategy use hypotheses. Contrary to the presumptions of both of these perspectives, threats are not efficient ways to gain compliance and suggestions aren't inefficient. Threats *never* were among strategies considered most efficient for gaining compliance while suggestions *always* were at least moderately expedient. Threats were equally expedient as promises and, for the most part, were indistinguishable from suggestions in their efficiency. Threats were less efficient than direct requests, which were consistently among the most efficient ways of gaining compliance. Politeness theory and sequential strategy use hypotheses expect threats to be the most efficient, suggestions to be inefficient, and promises to be less efficient than threats. Why the difference?

We posit that these predictions of *efficiency* fail to distinguish between a strategy's *effectiveness* and its *expediency*. Effectiveness is an "output" consideration; it focuses on the results of strategy use and not on what effort or other resources it takes to employ a strategy. Efficiency, by contrast, focuses on both inputs and outputs; it considers the effort and resources that are used to achieve the outputted result of compliance (or lack thereof). Effectiveness looks only at outputs (i.e., was compliance gained?) while efficiency focuses on the *ratio* of inputs to outputs (i.e. how much effort is made for how much compliance?). Kasher (1982) argues that communicative behavior is grounded in a rationality principle based on *efficiency*, rather than just *effectiveness*, that being

"Given a desired end, one is to choose that action which most effectively, and at least cost, attains that end, *ceteris paribus*" (p. 32). In other words, both inputs and outputs must be considered in understanding strategy use.

If this analysis is correct, then direct requests are more efficient than threats, suggestions, hints, and promises because direct requests require fewer inputs and provide more certain outputs (i.e., compliance). The literature is supportive of such a claim. Direct requests are *efficient*: they require nothing on the part of the asker -- no facework, no overcoming of obstacles, no adjustment of the message for the target -- and they offer a high rate of return (i.e., obligated compliance). Targets commonly are obligated relationally to comply to a direct request, reducing the need for other, more elaborate strategies (Roloff, Janiszewski, McGrath, Burns, & Manrai, 1988). By contrast, threats, promises, suggestions, and hints all require a certain amount of input (specification of rewards or punishments, rephrasing to "soften" request) and offer a more uncertain output. First, consider threats and promises which were found in this research to be equally efficient to each other, but less efficient than direct requests. On the output side, threats are less *effective* than promises in gaining compliance (Falbe & Yukl, 1992), though on the input side, successful threats require no further resource expenditures while successful promises require the payment of the promised reward (Milburn, 1977; Kipnis, 1976; Pruitt, 1981). The differential effectiveness of promises over threats (an output consideration) is offset by the differential cost of successful promises (an input consideration); consequently, threats and promises are likely to be equally efficient because they have roughly equal input-output *ratios*. However, these input and output considerations are likely to make promises and threats less *efficient* than direct requests. The repayment of promises (Cody, McLaughlin, & Schneider, 1981; Kipnis, 1976) and the ineffectiveness of threats (Falbe & Yukl, 1992) make them less efficient than direct requests for gaining compliance.

The joint consideration of inputs and outputs is also able to account for the rated efficiency of suggestions and hints. Suggestions were found not only to be a moderately expedient means of gaining compliance, but also to be significantly more expedient than hints. Suggestions are likely more efficient than hints because they require fewer inputs and offer more certain outputs. Hints have a more uncertain output (i.e. they are less effective) than suggestions. Hints are ineffective because they are "inherently opaque" (Weizman, 1989, p. 71). Hints take time to understand, their influence purpose is often *not* understood and, even when their purpose is understood, they make available to targets through their opacity a means of ignoring their influence goal (Gibbs, 1981; Weizman, 1989). Because suggestions are more direct and explicit than hints, they require the making of far fewer inferences to identify them as compliance gaining utterances which thereby deprives targets the means to act as if no influence goal exists (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989). While suggestions are significantly less likely to gain compliance than more direct strategies (Steil & Weltman, 1992), hints are strategies that are *least* effective for gaining compliance (Weizman, 1989). Consequently, hints offer a much less certain output than suggestions. On the input side, hints are also more costly than suggestions. While suggestions have some cost in that they must "soften" more explicit requests, hints are less direct, more opaque, highly costly and effortful (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989; Weizman, 1989). By this analysis, hints *should* be significantly less efficient than suggestions because they are both more costly (higher inputs) and less likely to gain compliance (less certain outputs). Compared to direct requests, however, suggestions should be less efficient given their less certain output. Unlike direct requests, suggestions offer autonomy to targets, removing any relational obligation to comply. Consequently, direct requests should be (as we found) more efficient than either suggestions or hints. We believe that *effectiveness* concerns should be differentiated from *efficiency* concerns in our thinking about politeness and compliance gaining strategy use. Effective strategies (those with highly certain outputs) may be efficient *or* inefficient (requiring little or large inputs) just as ineffective strategies might be effortful *or* effortless. We believe the problems in the rank-orderings of politeness theory

and compliance gaining strategy use hypotheses are in part due to confounding output-based issues of effectiveness with the input-output ratio issues of efficiency.

Problems in the rank-orderings predicted by politeness theory and compliance gaining strategy use hypotheses can also be traced to the assumed coupling of inefficiency with politeness. Our findings suggest that the assumption made by both politeness theory and compliance gaining strategy use hypotheses that efficiency and politeness are incompatible should be questioned. Direct requests are both polite and efficient; suggestions and promises are moderately polite and moderately efficient; threats, while impolite, are only moderately efficient; and hints while inefficient, are only moderately polite. In fact, Cole (1993) reports a variety of compliance gaining strategies that are both (a) inefficient and impolite (e.g., aversive stimulation, persistence), (b) inefficient but polite (e.g., compromise, positive affect, cooperation), (c) efficient but impolite (e.g., assertion, authority appeal), and (d) efficient and polite (e.g., direct request, promote task) for gaining compliance. Our findings suggest that not only must efficiency and effectiveness considerations be uncoupled, but the incompatibility assumed between efficiency and politeness must be discarded.

In this research, judgments of the politeness and efficiency of threats, suggestions, hints, and promises were made only with respect to the goal of compliance gaining without specifying the setting, interpersonal relationship, or context. Of course, the nature of a situation (its formality, privacy, etc.) and participants' relationship (its intimacy, power, etc.) influence which speech acts or strategies are deemed acceptable for gaining compliance in any given instance though this judgment of acceptability is distinct from the assessment of the inherent politeness or efficiency of the strategies. For example, from the perspective of politeness theory, individuals exhibited level of politeness fits the needs of the circumstances they face; individuals may choose not to enact maximally polite behavior (e.g., a hint) because it would be unnecessary to do so based on the nature of the relationship, the size of the request, and so forth. Similarly, a less polite compliance gaining strategy may be preferred because of the nature of the situation (e.g., urgent) or the relationship (e.g., intimate). The point is that while the context of the interaction influences how polite and efficient individuals' need or want to be, the acts themselves carry a particular level of politeness and efficiency that may or may not be suitable to the particular context. As noted previously, evidence exists that messages, independent of situational, relational, and cultural variations, can be assessed meaningfully for their inherent politeness and/or efficiency (see, e.g., Carrell & Konneker, 1981; Clark & Schunk, 1980; Cole, 1993; Fraser & Nolan, 1981; Hill, Ide, Ikuta, Kawasaki, & Ogino, 1986; Holtgraves & Yang, 1990; Kellerman, 1992; Kellermann & Kim, 1991; Kemper & Thissen, 1981; Price & Bouffard, 1974; Walters, 1980). In other words, politeness and efficiency can be approached (as they often are in compliance gaining research and politeness theory) as *message features* rather than contextual features.

Regardless of the exact reason(s) why the predictions of politeness theory and compliance gaining strategy use hypotheses do not receive support in this research, the findings suggest that our prevailing perspectives make inaccurate predictions. These perspectives must either change or they must reject the evidence presented. While no research is perfect, the findings presented here are in accord with other indications in the literature that all may not be as it seems in terms of the rank-order predictions of politeness and efficiency of threats, suggestions, hints, and promises by politeness theory and sequential compliance gaining strategy use hypotheses. The findings from this research accord with those from other investigations about the moderate politeness of hints (e.g., Blum-Kulka, 1985, 1987, 1990; Holtgraves, 1992; Burlison et al., 1988) and the relative politeness and high efficiency of direct requests (Bisanz & Rule, 1990; Burlison et al., 1988; Rule & Bisanz, 1987; Rule et al., 1985). This research offers evidence of the efficiency and politeness of threats, suggestions, and promises as well. If nothing else, the findings from this research suggest it is best not to make presumptions about the relative politeness and efficiency of verbal acts and to instead undertake direct and undivided tests of the theoretical suppositions. Further tests are, of course, recommended to replicate and extend these findings so that fact can replace theoretical supposition.

NOTES

¹When characterized as polite, the verbal acts are said to be nice, civil, pleasant, proper, and courteous; that is, they are said to be socially appropriate. When characterized as impolite, the verbal acts are said to be rude, uncivil, nasty, improper, and ill-mannered; that is, they are considered socially inappropriate. Verbal acts characterized as being efficient are thought of as direct, immediate and to the point, wasting neither time, energy, steps, or effort; that is, they are considered expedient. Verbal acts characterized as being inefficient are thought of as roundabout, indirect, and wasteful, consuming time, energy, and/or effort.

²In politeness theory, Grice's maxims are said to be the "over-arching assumptions guiding the conduct of conversation" (Levinson, 1983, p.101), providing a "presumptive framework for communication" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 5).

³In Brown and Levinson's (1987) eyes, Grice's maxims describe a "highly rational maximally efficient mode of communication" (p. 55) and specify "what participants have to do in order to converse in a maximally efficient, rational, co-operative way" (Levinson, 1983, p. 102).

⁴According to Brown and Levinson (1987), politeness is a major and sufficient reason to deviate from the rational efficiency imposed by Grice's maxims: "It is against that assumption [of rational efficiency] that polite ways of talking show up as deviations, requiring rational explanation on the part of the recipient, who finds in considerations of politeness reasons for the speaker's apparent irrationality or inefficiency"(p.4).

⁵As part of the larger project, a comprehensive integration of strategies across compliance gaining message taxonomies in a variety of different literatures was undertaken. This integration consisted of evaluating and categorizing strategies across 74 different compliance gaining taxonomies, and resulted in the identification of 64 distinct strategies that the literature has identified as methods for gaining compliance from others (see, Kellermann & Cole, 1991, 1994). This integration of compliance gaining strategy taxonomies provides the most complete and comprehensive enumeration of strategies currently available.

⁶For this research (and for the larger project from which these data were drawn), threats are described as attempts "to get others to comply by threatening them. That is, trying to gain their compliance by saying you will punish them if they don't do what you want." Suggestions are described as attempts "to get others to comply by offering suggestions about what it is you want them to do. That is, trying to gain their compliance by subtly proposing an idea that indirectly points out and describes what it is you want them to do." Hints are described as attempts "to get others to comply by hinting around at what you want them to do. That is, trying to gain their compliance by indicating indirectly what you want, hoping they will figure it out and comply even though you never come out and really say it." Promises consist of attempts "to get others to comply by making a promise. That is, trying to gain their compliance by offering to give them a reward or something they'd like if they do what is wanted."

⁷Direct requests are described as attempts "to get others to comply by just making a direct request. That is, trying to gain their compliance by simply asking or stating what you want without giving any reasons for them to comply." Forty-one examples of direct requests were rated for their representativeness, of which the top three were selected for the tactical sets.

⁸Rating the politeness of particular examples as an intrinsic message feature is a common method in politeness research and, therefore, we employed a measure similar to those that have been used in the past (see, e.g., Holtgraves & Yang, 1990).

⁹While other representative examples of threats, suggestions, hints, promises, and direct requests might be rated significantly differently than the examples used here, we believe the politeness and efficiency ratings of these examples provide useful information about the likely range of politeness and efficiency of the strategies and speech acts each represents (particularly since these examples are known to be highly representative of their respective speech acts and strategies and the range and variance accounted for by differences in politeness and efficiency is theoretically small even though statistically significant).

¹⁰The complete list of 64 strategies (along with their definitions) can be found in Kellermann & Cole (1994).

¹¹Compliments are defined as attempts "to get others to comply by complimenting them on their abilities or accomplishments. That is, trying to gain their compliance by praising them to get them to do what you want." The examples of compliments that were evaluated are: (1) I said: 'I would like your advice on making up with Tanya because I think you handle these situations well.' (2) I compliment him so he'll do it. (3) I would like your help because you are so capable. Cooperation is defined as attempts "to get others to comply by being cooperative and collaborating with them. That is, trying to gain their compliance not by telling the other person what to do but by offering to discuss things and work them out together. The examples of

cooperation that were evaluated are: (1) What Alice did really bothered me and I wanted her to stop doing it. So we discussed it and worked it out. (2) We talk about it. We discuss our differences and needs. (3) I'm having trouble with your coming home late. Why don't we get together and work something out?

REFERENCES

- Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to do things with words*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Bales, R. (1950). *Interaction process analysis: A method for the study of small groups*. Cambridge, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Baxter, L. A. (1984). An investigation of compliance-gaining as politeness. *Human Communication Research, 10*, 427-456.
- Berger, C. R. (1985). Social power and interpersonal communication. In M. L. Knapp & G. R. Miller (Eds.), *Handbook of interpersonal communication* (pp. 439-499). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Berger, C. R., & Kellermann, K. (1983). To ask or not to ask: Is that a question? In R. Bostrom (Ed.), *Communication yearbook 7* (pp. 342-368). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Bisanz, G. L., & Rule, B. G. (1990). Children's and adults' comprehension of narratives about persuasion. In M. J. Cody & M. L. McLaughlin (Eds.), *The psychology of tactical communication* (pp. 48-69). Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.
- Blum-Kulka, S. (1985, September). *Indirectness and politeness in requests: Same or different?* Paper presented at the International Pragmatics Conference, Viareggio, Italy.
- Blum-Kulka, S. (1987). Indirectness and politeness in requests: Same or different? *Journal of Pragmatics, 11*, 31-146.
- Blum-Kulka, S. (1990). You don't touch lettuce with your fingers: Parental politeness in family discourse. *Journal of Pragmatics, 14*, 259-288.
- Blum-Kulka, S., Danet, B., & Gershon, R. (1985). The language of requesting in Israeli society. In J. P. Forgas (Ed.), *Language and social situations* (pp. 113-139). New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Blum-Kulka, S., House, J., & Kasper, G. (1989). Investigating cross-cultural pragmatics: An introductory overview. In S. Blum-Kulka, J. House, & G. Kasper (Eds.), *Cross-cultural pragmatics: Requests and apologies* (pp. 1-36). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Brown, P., & Levinson, S. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language use*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Burgoon, M. H., & Burgoon, J. K. (1990). Compliance-gaining and health care. In J. P. Dillard (Ed.), *Seeking compliance: The production of interpersonal influence messages* (pp. 161-188). Scottsdale, AZ: Gorsuch Scarisbrick.
- Burgoon, J. K., Pfau, M., Parrott, R., Birk, T., Coker, R., & Burgoon, M. (1987). Relational communication, satisfaction, compliance-gaining strategies, and compliance in communication between physicians and patients. *Communication Monographs, 54*, 307-324.
- Burleson, B. R., Wilson, S. R., Waltman, M. S., Goering, E. M., Ely, T. K., & Whaley, B. B. (1988). Item desirability effects in compliance-gaining research: Seven studies documenting artifacts in the strategy selection procedure. *Human Communication Research, 14*, 429-486.
- Carrell, P. L., & Konneker, B. H. (1981). Politeness: Comparing native and non-native judgments. *Language Learning, 31*, 17-30.
- Clark, R. A. (1979). The impact of self interest and desire for liking on the selection of communicative strategies. *Communication Monographs, 46*, 257-273.
- Clark, H. H., & Schunk, D. (1980). Polite responses to polite requests. *Cognition, 8*, 111-143.

- Cody, M. J., McLaughlin, M. L., & Schneider, M. J. (1981). The impact of relational consequences and intimacy on the selection of interpersonal persuasion tactics: A reanalysis. *Communication Quarterly*, 29, 91-106.
- Cole, T. (1993). *Strategic dimensions of compliance gaining strategies*. Unpublished master's thesis, Department of Communication, University of California at Santa Barbara.
- de Turck, M. A. (1985). A transactional analysis of compliance-gaining behavior: Effects of noncompliance, relational context, and actor's gender. *Human Communication Research*, 12, 54-78.
- Ervin-Tripp, S. (1976a). Is Sybil there? The structure of some American English directives. *Language in Society*, 5, 25-66.
- Ervin-Tripp, S. (1976b). Speech acts and social learning. In K. Basso & H. Selby (Eds.), *Meaning in anthropology*. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press.
- Ervin-Tripp, S., Guo, J., & Lampert, M. (1990). Politeness and persuasion in children's control acts. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 14, 307-331.
- Ervin-Tripp, S., O'Connor, M.C., & Rosenberg, J. (1984). Language and power in the family. In C. Kramer and M. Schulz (Eds.), *Language and power* (pp. 116-135). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Falbe, C. M., & Yukl, G. (1992). Consequences for managers of using single influence tactics and combinations of tactics. *Academy of Management Journal*, 35, 638-652.
- Falbo, T. (1977). Multidimensional scaling of power strategies. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 35, 537-547.
- Falbo, T., & Peplau, L. A. (1980). Power strategies in intimate relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 38, 618-628.
- Fraser, B., & Nolan, N. (1981). The association of deference with linguistic form. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 27, 93-109.
- Gibbs, R. (1981). Your wish is my command: Convention and context in interpreting indirect requests. *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior*, 20, 431-444.
- Goodstadt, B. E., & Kipnis, D. (1970). Situational influences in the use of power. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 54, 201-207.
- Harris, S. (1984). The form and function of threats in court. *Language & Communication*, 4, 247-271.
- Heilman, M. E. (1974). Threats and promises: Reputational consequences and transfer of credibility. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 10, 310-324.
- Hill, B., Ide, S., Ikuta, S., Kawasaki, A., & Ogino, T. (1986). Universals of linguistic politeness: Quantitative evidence for Japanese and American English. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 10, 347-371.
- Holtgraves, T. (1992). The linguistic realization of face management: Implications for language production and comprehension, person perception, and cross-cultural communication. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 55, 141-159.
- Holtgraves, T., & Yang, J-N. (1990). Politeness as universal: Cross-cultural perceptions of request strategies and inferences based on their use. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 59, 719-729.
- House, J. (1986). Cross-cultural pragmatics and foreign language teaching. In Seminar für Sprachlehrforschung der Ruhr-Universität Bochum (Ed.), *Probleme und Perspektiven der Sprachlehrforschung* (pp. 281-295). Frankfurt, Germany: Scriptor.
- Howard, J. A., Blumstein, P., & Schwartz, S. (1986). Sex, power, and influence tactics in intimate relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 51, 102-109.
- Hunter, J. E., & Boster, F. J. (1987). A model of compliance gaining message selection. *Communication Monographs*, 54, 63-84.
- Kasher, A. (1982). Gricean inference revisited. *Philosophia*, 29(1), 25-44.

- Kellermann, K. (1988, March). *Understanding tactical choice: Metagoals in conversation*. Paper presented at the Temple Discourse Conference, Philadelphia, PA.
- Kellermann, K. (1992, November). *A goal-directed approach to gaining compliance: Differences in behavioral acceptability for different compliance gaining goals*. Paper presented at the Speech Communication Association, Chicago.
- Kellermann, K., & Cole, T. (1991). *Compliance gaining strategies in the research literature: A cross-taxonomy integration*. Unpublished manuscript, Department of Communication, University of California at Santa Barbara.
- Kellermann, K., & Cole, T. D. (1994). Classifying compliance gaining messages: Taxonomic disorder and strategic confusion. *Communication Theory*, 4, 3-60.
- Kellermann, K., & Kim, M-S. (1991, May). *Working within constraints: Tactical choices in the pursuit of social goals*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association, Miami.
- Kemper, S., & Thissen, D. (1981). Memory for the dimensions of requests. *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior*, 20, 552-563.
- Kipnis, D. (1976). *The powerholders*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Kipnis, D., & Consentino, J. (1969). Use of leadership powers in industry. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 53, 460-466.
- Kipnis, D., Schmidt, S. M., & Braxton-Brown, G. (1990). The hidden costs of persistence. In M. J. Cody & M. L. McLaughlin (Ed.), *The psychology of tactical communication* (pp. 160-172). Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.
- Lakoff, R. T. (1977). Politeness, pragmatics, and performatives. In A. Rogers, B. Wall, & J. Murphy (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Texas conference on performatives, presupposition, and implicatures* (pp. 79-106). Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics.
- Levinson, S. C. (1983). *Pragmatics*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Lim, T-S. (1990). Politeness behavior in social influence situations. In J. P. Dillard (Ed.), *Seeking compliance: The production of interpersonal influence messages* (pp. 75-86). Scottsdale, AZ: Gorsuch Scarisbrick.
- May, J. D. (1989). Questions as suggestions: The pragmatics of interrogative speech. *Language & Communication*, 9, 227-243.
- McCormick, N. B. (1979). Come-ons and put-offs: Unmarried students' strategies for having and avoiding sexual intercourse. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 4, 194-211.
- Milburn, T.W. (1977). The nature of threat. *Journal of Social Issues*, 33, 126-139.
- Miller, G. R., Boster, F. J., Roloff, M. E., & Seibold, D. R. (1987). MBRS Rekindled: Some thoughts on compliance gaining in interpersonal settings. In M. E. Roloff & G. R. Miller (Eds.), *Interpersonal processes: New directions in communication research* (pp. 89-116). Newbury Park: Sage.
- Miller, G. R., & Parks, M. R. (1982). Communication in dissolving relationships. In S. Duck (Ed.), *Personal relationships: Dissolving personal relationships 4* (pp. 127-154). New York: Academic Press.
- Newcombe, N., & Zaslow, M. (1981). Do 2 1/2-year-olds hint? A study of directive forms in the speech of 2 1/2-year-old children to adults. *Discourse Processes*, 4, 239-252.
- Price, R. H., & Bouffard, D. L. (1974). Behavioral appropriateness and situational constraint as dimensions of social behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 30, 579-586.
- Pruitt, D. (1981). *Negotiation behavior*. New York, NY: Academic.
- Roloff, M. E., Janiszewski, C. A., McGrath, M. A., Burns, C. S., & Manrai, L. A. (1988). Acquiring resources from intimates: When obligation substitutes for persuasion. *Human Communication Research*, 14, 364-396.
- Rubin, J. Z., & Lewicki, R. J. (1973). A three-factor experimental analysis of promises and threats. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 3, 240-257.

- Rule, B. G., & Bisanz, G. L. (1987). Goals and strategies of persuasion: A cognitive schema for understanding social events. In M. P. Zanna, J. M. Olson, & C. Peter Herman (Eds.), *Social influence: The Ontario symposium, vol. 5* (pp. 185-206). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Rule, B. G., Bisanz, G. L., & Kohn, M. (1985). Anatomy of a persuasion schema: Targets, goals, and strategies. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 48*, 1127-1140.
- Sagrestano, L. M., (1992). Power strategies in interpersonal relationships: The effects of expertise and gender. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 16*, 481-495.
- Searle, J. R. (1969). *Speech acts*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Seibold, D. R., Cantrill, J. G., & Meyers, R. A. (1985). Communication and interpersonal influence. In M. L. Knapp & G. R. Miller (Eds.), *Handbook of interpersonal communication* (pp. 551-611). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- Steil, J. M., & Welman, K. (1992). Influence strategies at home and at work: A study of sixty dual career couples. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 9*, 65-88.
- Sutton, R. I. (1991). Maintaining norms about expressed emotions: The case of bill collectors. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 36*, 245-268.
- Sutton, R. I., & Rafaeli, A. (1988). Untangling the relationship between displayed emotions and organizational sales: The case of convenience stores. *Academy of Management Journal, 31*, 461-487.
- Tracy, K., Craig, R. T., Smith, M., & Spisak, F. (1984). The discourse of requests: Assessment of a compliance-gaining approach. *Human Communication Research, 10*, 513-538.
- Turnbull, W. (1992). A conversation approach to explanation, with emphasis on politeness and accounting. In M. L. McLaughlin, M. J. Cody, & S. J. Read (Eds.), *Explaining one's self to others: Reason-giving in a social context* (pp. 105-130). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Walters, J. (1980). The perception of politeness in English and Spanish. In C. Yorio, K. Perkins, & J. Schachter (Eds.), *On TESOL '79: The learner in focus* (pp. 288-296). Washington, D.C.: TESOL.
- Weizman, E. (1989). Requestive hints. S. Blum-Kulka, J. House, & G. Kasper (Eds.), *Cross-cultural pragmatics: Requests and apologies* (pp. 71-95). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Wheless, L. R., Barraclough, R., & Stewart, R. (1983). Compliance-gaining and power in persuasion. In R. N. Bostrom (Ed.), *Communication yearbook 7* (pp. 105-145). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Wierzbicka, A. (1987). *English speech act verbs: A semantic dictionary*. Sydney, Australia: Academic Press.
- Wiseman, R. L., & Schenck-Hamlin, W. (1981). A multidimensional scaling validation of an inductively-derived set of compliance-gaining strategies. *Communication Monographs, 48*, 251-270.