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Reciprocity and Dating

Explaining the Effects of Favor and Status on Compliance With a Date Request

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A robust finding in compliance-seeking message effects research is that providing an unsolicited favor to a target before making a direct request for compliance is more effective than a direct request alone. Explaining this effect, however, has proven a more elusive goal. Most existing studies either do not examine potential mediators of the favor-compliance relationship or restrict their focus to one or two potential mediators. In this study, the authors extend compliance research by testing five potential explanations for the favor-compliance relationship and examine the relationship in an untested context, a cross-sex date request. We also examine the impact of another important predictor of compliance, socioeconomic status (SES). Findings suggest that favor and SES interact to affect compliance with a date request and that the positive affective mechanisms of gratitude, liking, and physical attraction best explain these effects. Implications for understanding human reciprocal behavior and its explanatory mechanisms are discussed.

Keywords: *favor; pregiving; reciprocity; compliance; socioeconomic status; date requests; indebtedness; gratitude; liking*

Decades of research in areas as diverse as psychology, anthropology, economics, sociology, and communication has demonstrated an overwhelmingly consistent pattern of reciprocity in human societies. In the study of compliance-seeking message effects, this reciprocity bent is manifested in several studies that show, among strangers, a target is more likely to comply with a direct request that is preceded by a favor than a direct request alone, even when the favor is unsolicited (e.g., Boster, Rodriguez, Cruz, & Marshall, 1995; Greenberg & Bar-Tal, 1976; Regan, 1971; Whatley, Webster, Smith, & Rhodes, 1999). Marwell and Schmitt (1967) called this compliance-seeking message tactic a pregiving message as it involves giving the target of the request a favor before making a direct request for compliance. That pregiving messages are effective is not a matter of much debate. How pregiving messages produce their effect, on the other hand, is less clear.

This lack of clarity is due in part to the fact that existing studies typically do not test the potential explanatory mechanisms for a pregiving message (Goei & Boster, 2005). What is more, even when potential theoretical explanations for the effect are examined, the focus is often limited to one or two possible explanations despite the fact that several other possibilities exist (e.g., Greenberg & Shapiro, 1971; Whatley et al., 1999; Wilke & Lanzetta, 1970). The primary goal of the current study is to further research in this area by examining five potential pregiving explanatory mechanisms, indebtedness, liking, physical attraction, gratitude, and perceived ulterior motives, in a previously untested context.

Understanding how pregiving messages operate is important because it augments our knowledge of one of the most ubiquitous and long-standing human patterns, reciprocity. Detailed understanding of how pregiving works would assist communication researchers in the design of compliance-seeking messages. If it were clear, for example, that reciprocal behavior following a favor was motivated by felt gratitude in the beneficiary, but not indebtedness, then one might optimize compliance rates by constructing messages designed to prime or otherwise increase the saliency of gratitude while minimizing the importance of any perceived debt or obligation.

Pregiving research has long neglected empirical examination of status despite the fact that, as Cohen (2006) noted, status has long been linked to reciprocity/favor issues. That status and favors might be entwined is understandable given status could affect how favors are perceived or received by a benefactor (Becker & Smenner, 1986). Status, in particular socio-economic status (SES), is an indicator of resource potential. In a relational context, resource potential is perceived as attractive (Pérusse, 1994). Like SES, doing a favor for another is a demonstration of resource potential. It signifies the ability and willingness to provide resources to the potential partner (Schmitt & Buss, 1996). Given this logical connection to favors and its key role in predicting potential relational partner attractiveness, SES should be of interest to compliance researchers focused on reciprocity, especially in a relational context. Thus, a secondary goal of this study is to examine the independent and conjoint effects of favor and SES on compliance.

Date Requests

The present study examines pregiving messages in the context of date requests. The rationale for examining date requests is that existing pregiving studies exhibit many methodological and contextual similarities. Modeled after Regan's (1971) classic design, most pregiving studies take place in a laboratory and use a prosocial compliance request for money or assistance between same-sex interactants. Although these studies are informative and successfully control for many threats to internal validity, they do not test pregiving messages in a context in which unsolicited favors are more commonly received. In the lab, strangers are not likely to do unsolicited

favors for their partner whereas such favors between strangers occur regularly in other contexts. Pregiving research could benefit from examination of cross-sex scenarios in which favors occur naturally.

One common and well-known instantiation of the pregiving message strategy is when a man buys a drink for a potential dating partner before requesting a date.² This type of request falls squarely within the purview of researchers interested in reciprocity as it involves providing the target with a favor (i.e., a drink) before making a request for compliance (e.g., phone number, date, or sexual request). Date requests are well situated for message effects examination as they are common but complex, consequential, difficult to craft, and are often strategically planned (Berger & Bell, 1988; Knobloch, 2006; Kunkel, Wilson, Olufowote, & Robson, 2003). As such, communication researchers should benefit from knowing more about what requests work and why.

We expect generally that pregiving messages in this date request context will work as they do with general prosocial requests. In other words, we expect favors to increase compliance with date requests. Nevertheless, date requests are unique in a few ways. For example, a date request is a manifest request for future interaction (Knobloch, 2006) that implicitly communicates attraction to the target. Furthermore, much is at stake for the requestor and the recipient of a date request because of the many relational influence goals a date request scenario presents, goals that are not as salient when asking for money or donations to charity (Kunkel et al., 2003). These characteristics might change the extent to which making the request (from the requestor's perspective) or refusing the request (from the target's perspective) is face threatening. These and other differences might alter the saliency of various explanatory mechanisms. We address these differences below as the relevant mechanisms are introduced.

Explaining the Effect of Pregiving Messages

Several potential explanations exist to explain why favor increases compliance, but most researchers argue that a socially constructed norm of reciprocity mandates repayment to benefactors. In his immensely influential essay, Gouldner (1960) proposed that because of the critical role of reciprocity in stabilizing human societies, most societies had either selected or socialized for a norm to mandate that beneficiaries help and not hurt their benefactors. Greenberg (1980) argued that internalization of this norm of reciprocity and its requisite social sanctions causes beneficiaries to experience a psychological state of indebtedness. Indebtedness restricts behavioral autonomy in that indebted beneficiaries are limited to behave in the interests of their benefactors. Greenberg and Shapiro (1971) argued that because indebtedness is a constraining, negative state most beneficiaries try to reduce or eliminate it. One way to reduce or eliminate indebtedness is to fulfill the norms' mandate by complying

with subsequent requests from a benefactor. Thus, the indebtedness explanation poses an aversive arousal reduction model for human reciprocity in which receiving a favor induces the aversive state of indebtedness that can be eliminated or reduced by subsequently complying with a direct request from a benefactor.

The indebtedness explanation derived from the norm of reciprocity is by far the most broadly accepted explanation for human reciprocal behavior in general and pre-giving messages in specific. In fact, perhaps because the indebtedness hypothesis is so intuitive and popular, the indebtedness explanation is rarely submitted to empirical scrutiny that could result in falsification. Most experiments that claim support for the indebtedness explanation do not even measure indebtedness (e.g., Boster et al., 1995; Bowling, Beehr, & Swader, 2005; El-Alayli & Messé, 2004; Jobber, Saunders, & Mitchell, 2004; Whatley et al., 1999). These researchers infer the active role of indebtedness from the presence of reciprocal patterns. Given no other potential explanations for the tendency to reciprocate favors, this logic might suffice. Nevertheless, alternatives exist. So a stronger test of the indebtedness explanation would both include a direct measure of indebtedness and account for multiple competing explanations.

A few recent pre-giving studies include a direct measure of felt indebtedness. These studies support the claim that favor increases indebtedness but, unlike studies without a measure of indebtedness, yield no support for the claim that indebtedness increases compliance (Abrahams & Bell, 1994; Goei & Boster, 2005; Tsang, 2006b). Given the consistent findings in regard to the effect of favor on compliance and on indebtedness and the inconsistent findings regarding the effect of indebtedness on compliance, we pose the following hypotheses and research question:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Participants will report that a woman who receives a drink from a man will be more likely to comply with the man's subsequent date request than a woman who does not receive a drink.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Participants will report that a woman who receives a drink from a man will feel more indebted to the man than a woman who does not receive a drink.

Research Question 1 (RQ1): What effect will participant reports of a woman's indebtedness have on their predictions of the woman's compliance with a man's date request?

Alternatives to the aversive arousal reduction model of indebtedness include positive affective models driven by discrete emotions such as liking, physical attraction, or gratitude. We believe these three explanations are distinct and address each in turn.

The liking explanation suggests first that the receipt of a favor increases beneficiary liking for the benefactor and second that beneficiaries comply more with people they like. In general, providing resources (e.g., favors) to another is an indicator of future reward potential that is attractive (Schmitt & Buss, 1996). As such, the receipt of a favor should cause beneficiaries to see their benefactor as a more kind and likeable person. Evidence for this claim is ample (e.g., Clark, Shaver, & Abrahams, 1999;

Leone, 2003; Regan, 1971). A similarly intuitive argument can be made for the effect of liking on compliance. Specifically, individuals comply more with those they like because they desire future interactions with liked others, and refusing small requests induces negative feelings jeopardizing the future of the relationship (Williamson, Clark, Pegalis, & Behan, 1996). Nevertheless, evidence for this claim is not consistent. Some studies show that liking has a positive effect on compliance (Goei, Lindsey, Boster, Skalski, & Bowman, 2003), whereas other studies show liking has no effect on compliance (Boster et al., 1995; Regan, 1971).

Even so, date requests differ from general prosocial requests for money or assistance in two ways that should strengthen the liking-compliance effect. First of all, date requests emanate directly from some form of attraction to the target and are manifest requests for future interaction (Knobloch, 2006). Thus, the choice to accept or reject a date request affects directly the escalation of mutual attraction and the likelihood of future interaction. So, the decision to accept or reject a date request communicates much about the target's attraction to the requestor. Assuming benefactors wish to maintain consistency between their messages and their internal states (i.e., attraction) then refusing a date request when they like someone should be very difficult. Another difference between date requests and general prosocial requests is that refusing a date request represents a greater threat to the positive face (the desire to be held in high esteem) of the requestor. Also, Johnson, Roloff, and Riffe (2004) argued that refusals that focus attention on the requestor are perceived as greater threats. Refusing a date request is likely interpreted as being about the requestor (i.e., the refuser is not attracted to me); refusing a general prosocial request is not likely to engender a similar attribution. This increased threat should make refusing date requests from liked others more difficult than refusing general prosocial requests. As such, despite the mixed findings with general prosocial requests, we expect the liking-compliance relationship in a date request context to be substantial. We pose the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Participants will report that a woman who receives a drink from a man will experience greater liking for the man than a woman who does not receive a drink.

Hypothesis 4 (H4): Participants will report that increases in a woman's liking for a man will increase the likelihood that she will comply with the man's date request.

An argument parallel to that made for liking can be made for physical attraction. At first glance, this parallel might seem unwarranted as liking can easily be understood as a fluid, endogenous variable but physical attraction might seem like a more stable, individual difference variable less prone to the effects of communication. Recent theoretical advancements in communication study, however, demonstrate that physical attractiveness is not a static individual difference variable, but that it can vary based on communication. Albada, Knapp, and Theune (2002) proposed interaction appearance theory (IAT) to explain the role of interaction in predicting

physical attraction. IAT submits that an individual of average physical attractiveness can increase their perceived physical attractiveness by engaging in positive communication events (e.g., favor). They argue that a beneficiary might increase perceptions of benefactor physical attractiveness as a way of reducing the discrepancy created by the benefactor's initial average physical attractiveness and their higher levels of behavioral attractiveness created by providing the favor. Thus, we treat physical attractiveness as an endogenous variable that is increased by favor.

More physically attractive requestors tend to be more persuasive than less attractive requestors (Snyder & Rothbart, 1971). As with liking, humans generally desire future interactions with physically attractive others and rejecting small requests can induce negative responses and reduce the likelihood of future contact. To be sure, efforts have revealed important moderators of the physical attraction-compliance effect (DeBono & Harnish, 1988), but given the significant role of physical attractiveness in choosing dating partners (Lundy, Tan, & Cunningham, 1998; Riggio & Woll, 1984) it seems reasonable to expect that physical attractiveness will emerge as a substantial predictor of compliance with a date request. Thus we pose the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 5 (H5): Participants will report that a woman who receives a drink from a man will feel more physically attracted to the man than a woman who does not receive a drink.

Hypothesis 6 (H6): Participants will report that increases in a woman's perception of a man's physical attractiveness will increase the likelihood that the woman will comply with the man's date request.

Gratitude has been proposed as another positive affective explanation to account for the effect of favor on compliance (Gouldner, 1960; Smith, 1790/1976). According to the gratitude explanation, a favor produces feelings of thankfulness or appreciation arising from the realization that one has benefited by the actions of another. Gratitude is a positive emotion associated with contentment, pride, and happiness that, once induced, serves as a motivator increasing moral behavior toward a benefactor (McCullough, Kilpatrick, Emmons, & Larson, 2001). Gratitude is different from indebtedness and liking. Unlike indebtedness, gratitude is a positive state that one might wish to perpetuate, not an aversive state that one wishes to reduce (Watkins, Scheer, Ovnicek, & Kolts, 2006). An indebted beneficiary complies to relieve the negative state of obligation and views their behavior as some kind of exchange, but a grateful beneficiary complies out of a simple desire to benefit the benefactor (Tsang, 2006b; Watkins et al., 2006). Gratitude is also different from liking. Liking is the positive evaluation of, or attraction to, an other whereas gratitude is the positive emotion of thankfulness resulting from recognition that an other has benefited you (Goei, Roberto, Meyer, & Carlyle, 2007).

The empirical tests of the gratitude explanation are sparse. As with indebtedness, most preexisting investigations do not employ a direct measure of gratitude even when the concept is discussed. Nevertheless, the few tests that exist are consistent. Results

show that gratitude, indebtedness, and liking are independent (Goei & Boster, 2005; Tsang, 2006a, Watkins et al., 2006), that favor induces gratitude (Bartlett & DeSteno, 2006; Okamoto & Robinson, 1997; Tsang, 2006a), and that gratitude increases compliance (Goei & Boster, 2005). Thus, we pose the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 7 (H7): Participants will report that a woman who receives a drink from a man will feel more grateful to the man than a woman who does not receive a drink.

Hypothesis 8 (H8): Participants will report that increases in a woman's felt gratitude to a man will increase the likelihood that the woman will comply with the man's date request.

The unsolicited favors employed in a pregiving message differ from solicited favors as unsolicited favors are more likely to be perceived as a tool to manipulate the beneficiary for some ulterior motive (Worchel, Andreoli, & Archer, 1976). To the extent a beneficiary perceives ulterior motives for the favor (i.e., something other than being nice out of a desire to benefit the other) subsequent compliance tends to decrease (El-Alayli & Messé, 2004).

Given the widespread familiarity of pick-up behaviors in bars, like buying drinks for potential partners, one might expect women to experience heightened perceptions that their male benefactor holds ulterior motives. If true, beneficiaries should perceive benefactors as insincere, with ulterior motives, and be less likely to comply with their requests for fear of being manipulated. Unlike the previous four arguments, the logic of this argument predicts a negative effect for favor on compliance. An overall negative relationship between favor and compliance is not expected. Instead, the overall positive effects of favor on compliance predicted by the aforementioned four explanations should outweigh the negative effects of favor predicted by the effect of perceived ulterior motives.

Hypothesis 9 (H9): Participants will report that a woman who receives a drink from a man will perceive the man to have greater ulterior motives than a woman who does not receive a drink.

Hypothesis 10 (H10): Participants will report that increases in a woman's perceptions of a man's ulterior motives will decrease the likelihood that the woman will comply with the man's date request.

Explaining the Effect of SES

We argued earlier for a link between SES and favor issues (Cohen, 2006) such that SES might affect the nature of the favor-compliance relationship. In addition, SES should be a key variable in the dating context as it is an important predictor of dating and marriage partner attractiveness. Women, in particular, tend to be both interpersonally and physically attracted to higher SES men. It is argued that this preference

developed because high SES men offer increased financial security and resource potential with which to raise children. Women, compared to men, tend to be more sensitive to resource limitations in their mates given their relatively greater investment in the resource-dependent process of bearing and raising children (Regan, Levin, Sprecher, Christopher, & Cate, 2000; Trivers, 1972). Empirical supporting evidence is abundant. Several researchers have found that women are more attracted to and more likely to enter relationships with men of higher SES (Schmitt & Buss, 1996; Townsend & Levy, 1990). As such, we pose the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 11 (H11): Participants will report that a woman who receives a date request from a high SES man will be more likely to comply than a woman who receives a date request from a low SES man.

Hypothesis 12 (H12): Participants will report that a woman who receives a date request from a high SES man, compared to a woman who receives a date request from a low SES man, will like the man more.

Hypothesis 13 (H13): Participants will report that a woman who receives a date request from a high SES man, compared to a woman who receives a date request from a low SES man, will find the man more physically attractive.

We designed a method to test the notion that doing a favor for a woman before making a direct request for a date is more effective than making a direct request without a favor. We varied SES to be able to test the independent and conjoint effects of favor and SES on compliance. We measured indebtedness, liking, physical attraction, gratitude, and perceived ulterior motives to explain these potential effects.

Method

It did not seem ethically defensible to enter bars, induce favor and SES, and ask participants for a date only to later inform them that it was all a deception. Thus, we opted to use video vignettes to induce the independent variables. This method permits induction of the independent variables and alleviates the ethical concerns. Participants viewed these vignettes and responded to a questionnaire designed to measure how they felt the target would react in the scenarios.

The chosen method poses a possible limitation due to the use of third person predictions. Third party projections tend to be based on sociocultural, normative beliefs (Lamb & Mansur, 1992). In the present study, the most widely accepted and clearly normative explanation in the lot is the indebtedness explanation based on the norm of reciprocity. Thus, the chosen method could bias our results in favor of the indebtedness argument. We employed the scenario method despite this potential weakness because we desired to induce the independent variables to establish temporal ordering but could not ethically defend first person inductions. Also, although support for the indebtedness explanation under these circumstances might be explained

by the third person method, failure to support the indebtedness explanation would provide strong evidence against this very popular explanation for human reciprocity. Given that a few recent studies have failed to support the indebtedness explanation, we employ the third person method in part because it provides a conservative test of this emerging, counterintuitive pattern.

Design

To optimize the perceived realism of the scenarios, we paid actors from the Theater Department at a Midwestern University to vary the experimental factors and hired a professional video production company to record and edit the video vignettes.³ The vignettes completely crossed favor (no favor/favor) and SES (janitor/doctor) in a 2×2 between subjects design. Three primary actors were used in this study. One actor played Matt, the male bar patron who made the date request. A second actor played Tanya, the female bar patron who received the request from Matt. A third actor played the bartender. The bartender played an integral role in varying both favor and SES. The actors were all between 20 to 22 years of age. The actors were trained extensively to ensure that their behavior varied only in regard to the favor and SES inductions.

Participants

A total of 120 participants (60 men) participated in this study. At the end of the survey, participants were asked to report whether or not Matt bought Tanya a drink (favor induction check) and to report Matt's profession (SES induction check). Four participants reported some occupation other than janitor (in the low SES conditions) and doctor (in the high SES conditions). One other participant failed to respond to large parts of the survey. These five participants were removed leaving a total sample of 115 (57 men). The sample consisted of both university undergraduates and participants from the surrounding community. The average age was 22.04 years ($SD = 3.16$) and ranged between 18 and 47 years. Of the total sample, 79% of participants were White, 11% Asian, 3.5% African American, and 3.5% American Indian or Alaskan Native. The remaining 3% were split between Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander and Other. Participants averaged several years of college education ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 1.59$).

Video Vignettes

There were four different videos, one for each of the experimental conditions. In all conditions, contact between Matt and Tanya was minimized to limit potential confounds that might arise from superfluous interaction. As such, each scene was relatively short (less than 90 seconds). Scenes were filmed on location at an actual

bar. The bar was rented out and filled with extras to control potentially distracting bar behavior and sounds.

Each scene opened with a view of the whole bar. Five patrons sat at the bar with several others in the background. At the near end of the bar sat Matt and at the far end sat Tanya. All scenes opened with a wide view of the bar and then moved in behind Matt, showing him looking down the bar and noticing Tanya (Tanya did not notice Matt). Subsequently, Matt was shown paying the bartender and placing a drink order. This action was followed by the favor manipulation. In the favor conditions, Tanya received a drink from the bartender who said, "The gentleman at the end of the bar wanted you to have this." He then pointed to Matt who smiled, nodded, and lifted his glass slightly to acknowledge that he had sent her the drink. In the no favor conditions, the bartender brought Tanya a drink for which she paid and Matt received a drink for which he paid.

In all conditions, Matt then approached Tanya and initiated a short conversation saying, "Hi. I'm Matt. I saw you from the other end of the bar." Matt then extended his hand to shake. Tanya took his hand, shook it, and said, "I'm Tanya. It's nice to meet you." Matt said, "So, do you come here a lot on the weekends?" Tanya answered, "Every now and then, how about you?" Matt replied, "About the same." At this point Matt's cell phone rang. Before answering it he looked at Tanya and said, "Excuse me for a second, I need to take this." He then turned and answered the call. After a short conversation, Matt turned back to Tanya. Before he could speak, however, the bartender interrupted him. During this interruption the bartender varied perceptions of SES.

In the high SES conditions the bartender said, "Hey doc. Thanks for helping out my buddy at the emergency room last night. Being a doctor . . . must be rough." In the low SES conditions he said, "Hey man, thanks for cleaning up after my buddy last night. Being a janitor . . . must be rough." We used the bartender, not Matt, to vary SES so that the SES induction would not be perceived as a blatant, transparent attempt to flaunt SES in the doctor conditions. After the SES induction, Matt said, "No problem."

Matt then turned to Tanya and said, "I'm sorry about that. That was my sister. Apparently my mom is not feeling too well and I've got to get going, but I would really like to get to know you better, would it be all right if I got your number and gave you a call sometime?" The scene ended immediately following this compliance-seeking request so that Tanya's response could not be used as a cue by participants as to how she might feel about Matt. After viewing one of the video vignettes, participants responded to a survey containing all of the dependent measures.

Instrumentation

Indebtedness. Tanya's indebtedness to Matt was measured with four, 7-point Likert-type items from Goei and Boster (2005). Response options were anchored by *not at all* and *very much*. Participants reported how much Tanya felt, "A sense of

obligation to Matt/indebted to Matt/pressure to be nice to Matt/she owes something to Matt?" Responses were coded so that higher scores represented higher indebtedness (all subsequent items are coded and anchored similarly).

Liking. Tanya's liking for Matt was measured with four items. Items included, "Does Tanya like Matt?" "Is Tanya interested in Matt as a person?" "Does Tanya think interacting with Matt is pleasant?" "Is Tanya interpersonally attracted to Matt?"

Physical attraction. Tanya's physical attraction to Matt was measured with four items. Items included, "Is Tanya physically attracted to Matt?" and "Does Tanya think Matt is hot/handsome/good-looking?"

Gratitude. Tanya's gratitude to Matt was measured with four items from Goei and Boster (2005). Participants reported to what extent Tanya felt, "thankful to Matt/grateful to Matt/appreciation toward Matt/a sense of gratitude to Matt?"

Perceived ulterior motives. Tanya's perception that Matt held ulterior motives was measured with three items. Items included, "Does Tanya feel like Matt is trying to manipulate her?" "Does Tanya think Matt is just trying to have sex with her and doesn't care about her as a person?" and "Does Tanya think Matt is looking for a one-night stand?"

Compliance. Tanya's willingness to comply with Matt's date request was measured with three items. Participants rated how likely they felt that Tanya would "give her phone number to Matt/go on a date with Matt in the future if he asks/have sexual intercourse with Matt in the future if he asks?"

Confound checks. A few potential confounds were measured with three items. Participants rated how much "Matt was physically attracted to Tanya" and "Matt liked Tanya" (using the same items employed for Tanya worded in reverse). Also, they responded to a question of Tanya's drunkenness, "How drunk was Tanya?"

Results

Confirmatory factor analyses were conducted to test the six-factor measurement model (Hunter & Gerbing, 1982). Data were consistent with this model. In tests of internal consistency, no error exceeded what was expected from sampling error. Moreover, errors were small ($M_{error} = .02$, $SD_{error} = .02$). In tests of parallelism, less than 2% of the observed errors exceeded what was expected from sampling error. Again, errors were small ($M_{error} = .05$, $SD_{error} = .06$) and not systematic to any single factor leading us to conclude that errors were random and not due to invalid factor structure.

Table 1
Means (and Standard Deviations) of Indebtedness,
Liking, Physical Attraction, Gratitude, Perceived Ulterior
Motives, and Compliance by Condition

| | No Favor | | Favor | |
|----------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Low SES | High SES | Low SES | High SES |
| Indebtedness | 3.04 (1.15) | 2.94 (1.24) | 3.73 (1.20) | 3.53 (1.57) |
| Liking | 2.91 (1.27) | 3.62 (1.22) | 3.40 (1.22) | 3.27 (1.15) |
| Physical attractiveness | 3.15 (1.05) | 3.75 (1.06) | 3.80 (1.06) | 3.73 (0.83) |
| Gratitude | 2.22 (1.15) | 2.43 (1.24) | 3.29 (1.44) | 3.15 (1.60) |
| Perceived ulterior motives | 3.62 (1.40) | 3.67 (1.42) | 3.62 (1.33) | 3.74 (1.52) |
| Compliance | 2.87 (1.07) | 3.96 (1.16) | 3.73 (1.14) | 3.70 (0.91) |

Note: SES = socioeconomic status.

Two-way ANOVAs were used to determine the independent and combined effects of favor and SES on compliance, indebtedness, liking, physical attraction, gratitude, and perceived ulterior motives. Simultaneous regression analyses were used to determine the effects of indebtedness, liking, physical attraction, gratitude, and perceived ulterior motives on compliance. For all tests involving directional predictions made a priori, we used one-tailed significance tests; for all nondirectional research questions and unpredicted findings, we used two-tailed significance tests. See Table 1 for all means and standard deviations.

Confound Checks

Great care was taken to be sure that Matt and Tanya maintained consistent nonverbal behaviors across conditions. Nevertheless, it was possible that differences in Matt's nonverbal behavior (behavior other than that varied to induce favor and SES) could have led participants to perceive that he was more or less attracted to Tanya in different conditions thereby altering Tanya's liking, physical attraction, or compliance with Matt. Results suggest neither Matt's liking nor his physical attraction for Tanya varied by condition, ($F_s < 1.13$, $ps > .34$).

It was possible that in the no favor conditions because she was buying drinks for herself Tanya might be perceived as being more drunk than in the other conditions. To the extent that she was perceived as being drunk she might also be perceived as being more willing to comply with Matt's date request. Tests of this potential effect revealed no significant differences by condition $F(1, 111) = .51$, $p = .67$.

Another potential confound was rater sex. Male and female participants might differ in their assessment of these scenarios. Separate one-way ANOVAs were conducted with sex as the independent variable and all measured variables as dependent measures. These results revealed no statistically significant effects for sex ($F_s < .35$, $ps > .55$). Thus, data from men and women were collapsed and analyzed together.

Table 2
Analysis of Variance for Indebtedness, Liking, Physical Attraction,
Gratitude, Perceived Ulterior Motives, and Compliance

| | Favor | | SES | | Favor × SES | |
|---------------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------|
| | <i>F</i> (1, 111) | <i>p</i> | <i>F</i> (1, 111) | <i>p</i> | <i>F</i> (1, 111) | <i>p</i> |
| Indebtedness | 6.71 | .01 | 0.37 | .55 | 0.04 | .85 |
| Liking | 1.00 | .38 | 1.56 | .10 | 3.39 | .07 |
| Physical attraction | 2.81 | .04 | 2.02 | .08 | 3.11 | .08 |
| Gratitude | 11.96 | <.01 | 0.02 | .89 | 0.44 | .51 |
| Ulterior motives | 0.02 | .45 | 0.10 | .75 | 0.02 | .88 |
| Compliance | 2.25 | .07 | 6.83 | <.01 | 7.70 | <.01 |

Note: SES = socioeconomic status. The Favor × SES term is the generalized interaction term not the magic cell interaction effect tested in the path model.

Hypotheses Tests

Table 2 summarizes the ANOVA results for the effects of favor and SES. Results showed that favor increased indebtedness, gratitude, physical attraction, and neared significance with compliance ($p = .07$). Favor did not significantly increase liking or perceived ulterior motives. SES had a significant effect only on compliance. Nevertheless, several of these main effects were qualified by significant interactions. Examination of the cell means suggested that favor and SES interacted in a unique way such that one cell in the matrix exhibited values lower than all three other cells. The low magic cell in this analysis was the no favor/low SES condition. Tests of this magic cell interaction (1: favor/high SES, 1: no favor/high SES, 1: favor/low SES, -3: no favor/low SES) were significant for compliance, $t(111) = 3.70$, $p < .01$, $r = .33$; physical attractiveness, $t(111) = 2.61$, $p = .01$, $r = .24$; gratitude, $t(111) = 2.29$, $p = .02$, $r = .21$; and nearly significant for liking, $t(111) = 1.83$, $p = .07$, $r = .17$. These magic cell tests suggest that favor had a positive effect on compliance, gratitude, physical attractiveness, and liking but only among low SES compliance seekers. Favor had no effect on compliance among high SES compliance seekers.

We conducted correlation and regression analyses to examine the question of what effect indebtedness had on compliance as well as the hypotheses stating liking, physical attraction, and gratitude had positive effects on compliance and perceived ulterior motives had a negative effect (see Table 3). Results showed that indebtedness had a small effect on compliance that neared significance, $r(115) = .16$, $p = .08$. But, this effect disappeared when controlling for the effects of the other potential predictors of compliance, $\beta = -.04$, $p = .69$. Liking had a significant effect on compliance, $r(115) = .64$, $p < .01$, even when controlling for the influence of all other potential predictors, $\beta = .23$, $p = .02$. Tanya's physical attraction to Matt had a significant effect on compliance, $r(115) = .69$, $p < .01$, even when controlling for the

Table 3
Correlations Between Favor, SES, Favor \times SES (Magic Cell Interaction), Indebtedness, Liking, Physical Attraction, Gratitude, Perceived Ulterior Motives, and Compliance ($N = 115$)

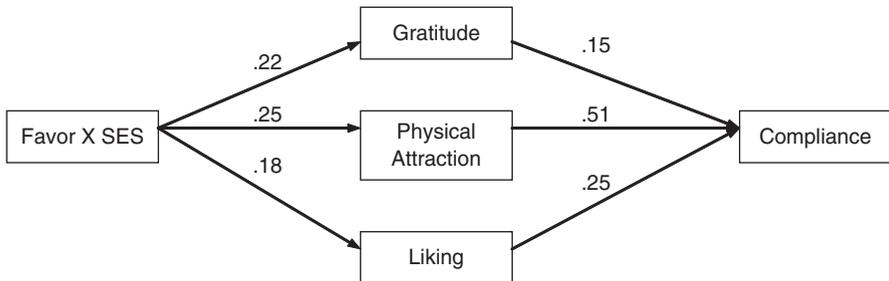
| Variable | α | M | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|------------------------|----------|------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| 1. Favor | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. SES | | | | -.07 | | | | | | | |
| 3. Favor \times SES | | | | .54** | .53** | | | | | | |
| 4. Indebted | .87 | 3.33 | 1.34 | .24** | -.07 | .11 | | | | | |
| 5. Liking | .90 | 3.30 | 1.15 | .01 | .10 | .17 | .16 | | | | |
| 6. Physical attraction | .93 | 3.64 | 1.02 | .14 | .11 | .24** | .14 | .72** | | | |
| 7. Gratitude | .95 | 2.81 | 1.44 | .31** | -.01 | .21* | .59** | .50** | .49** | | |
| 8. Ulterior motives | .83 | 3.67 | 1.40 | .01 | .03 | .02 | .23* | -.21* | -.14 | -.07 | |
| 9. Compliance | .83 | 3.61 | 1.13 | .10 | .21* | .33* | .16 | .64** | .69** | .49** | -.16 |

Note: SES = socioeconomic status. All correlations remain uncorrected for attenuation due to measurement error. The Favor \times SES term is the magic cell interaction effect tested in the path model coded as follows: 1 (favor/high SES), 1 (no favor/high SES), 1 (no favor/low SES), and -3 (no favor/low SES). Given $N = 115$, power to observe a small ($r = .10$), medium ($r = .30$), and large ($r = .50$) effect size at $\alpha = .05$, two-tailed, is .18, .89, and $>.99$, respectively.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$, two-tailed.

Figure 1
Initial Path Model

$$\chi^2(11, N = 115) = 78.35, p < .01$$



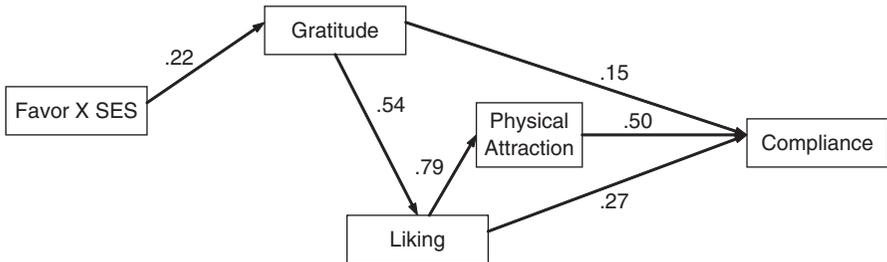
effects of the other predictors, $\beta = .44, p < .01$. Gratitude had a significant effect on compliance, $r(115) = .49, p < .01$, even when controlling for the effects of the other predictors, $\beta = .18, p = .03$. Perceived ulterior motives had a negative effect on compliance, $r(115) = -.16, p = .04$, but that effect disappeared when controlling for the effects of the other predictors, $\beta = -.03, p = .34$.

Test of the Model

This experiment was designed to test five potential explanations for the effect of favor and SES on compliance. Initial results were consistent with the positive affective explanations of gratitude, liking, and physical attraction but inconsistent with the aversive arousal explanation of indebtedness and perceived ulterior motives. As such, indebtedness and perceived ulterior motives were removed from these analyses and further tests were conducted to determine if any of the positive affective mechanisms merit mediator status. Path modeling allows one to test these predicted mediated relationships (Hunter & Gerbing, 1982).

Given the discovered interaction effects of favor and SES with all the remaining endogenous variables (i.e., compliance, physical attraction, liking, and gratitude), we replaced the exogenous independent variables of favor and SES with the magic cell interaction term created with the coefficients employed earlier. Initially, we examined a path model to test the explanatory power of gratitude, liking, and physical attraction each as independent, direct mediators of the effect of the favor and SES interaction term on compliance (see Figure 1). The data were not consistent with

Figure 2
Revised Path Model



$$\chi^2(4, N = 115) = 5.29, p = .26$$

this model. A test of the overall error in this model was significant, $\chi^2(11, N = 115) = 50.57$, $p < .001$. The individual errors in the model suggested a revised model.

The largest errors in the model were found between the potential mediators (i.e., gratitude, liking, and physical attraction). These errors suggested that gratitude, liking, and physical attraction were correlated more strongly than what would be expected spuriously. As such, we concluded that these three variables shared some more complicated causal relationship than originally hypothesized. We posited several different causal combinations of these three variables before finding one that both could be logically defended and was consistent with the data. Before examining this revised model, it is worth reiterating that, despite the fact that it can be logically defended, this is clearly a post hoc, inductive model that is not intended to provide confirmatory support for the hypotheses. The revised portion of the model posits that favor and SES interact to increase gratitude, which in turn increases liking, which subsequently increases physical attraction (see Figure 2). The first change to the model is that gratitude mediates the favor-liking relationship, rather than favor having a direct effect on both. It has been found that gratitude, a positive emotion itself, prompts other positive emotions like happiness, positive mood, pride, and contentment (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; McCullough et al., 2001). Given liking is a positive affective state, it is possible that gratitude also increases liking. The second change is that liking increases physical attraction. This change can be defended via interaction appearance theory. To repeat the earlier argument, IAT posits that likeable interpersonal behaviors might cause one to experience increased physical attraction toward an other as a way of resolving the discrepancy between the initial, relatively lower, levels of physical attraction and the higher levels of liking (Albada et al., 2002). Thus, it is reasonable to assert that liking from gratitude induced by the favor causes increased perceptions of physical attractiveness.

The data were consistent with the revised model. All path coefficients are corrected for attenuation due to error of measurement. Favor and SES interacted to significantly increase gratitude, $r(115) = .22, p = .03$. Gratitude had a positive effect on liking, $r(115) = .54, p < .01$. Liking increased physical attraction, $r(115) = .79, p < .01$. Gratitude, liking, and physical attraction together had a substantial overall effect on compliance, $F(3, 111) = 42.97, p < .01, R = .73$. Moreover, each contributed independently. The gratitude-compliance coefficient was significant, $\beta = .15, p = .04$. The liking-compliance coefficient was significant, $\beta = .27, p = .01$, and the physical attraction-compliance effect was significant, $\beta = .50, p < .01$. A test of the overall error in the model was not significant, $\chi^2(4, N = 115) = 5.29, p = .26$, suggesting the data were consistent with the revised model.

Discussion

This study was designed to test the effect of favor and SES on compliance with a date request and to examine the roles of indebtedness, liking, physical attraction, gratitude, and perceived ulterior motives in explaining any effect. The study makes several important contributions to the study of pregiving messages. First, results show that pregiving messages might be explained by positive affective mechanisms. Perhaps, even more interestingly, however, findings challenge the most widely accepted explanation for reciprocity, indebtedness from the norm of reciprocity. Second, results offer an important moderator of the favor-compliance relationship, suggesting that SES qualifies pregiving message effectiveness.

This discussion is broken into three parts. In the first section, we discuss findings regarding the effects of favor and SES on the dependent variables. In the second, we discuss findings regarding the roles of indebtedness, liking, physical attraction, gratitude, and perceived ulterior motives in explaining compliance after a favor. In the last section, we present some limitations.

Favor and SES

One of the goals of the study was to examine the independent and conjoint effects of favor and SES. These data provide important information regarding the roles of these two variables in date request interactions. Independently, results show that favor increases indebtedness, physical attraction, gratitude, and compliance and that SES increases physical attraction and compliance. These findings replicate several earlier tests of the role of favor and SES in stranger interactions and are consistent with the arguments presented regarding how favor and SES operate in initial interactions. Many of these independent effects, however, are qualified by an important interaction. This interaction and two other findings merit discussion.

First, results suggest that favor does not operate similarly with high and low SES requestors. Among low SES requestors, favor increases gratitude, physical attraction, and compliance. But among high SES requestors, favor has no effect on these variables. This pattern emerged in liking scores too, even though the test of this effect did not reach statistical significance. These findings present a significant limiting condition on human reciprocal behavior.

Speculatively, differential resource availability might cause the favor to be viewed as something that costs relatively more for a lower than for a higher SES man (Gergen, Ellsworth, Maslach, & Seipel, 1975). Gouldner (1960) posited that giving a favor when one can ill afford to do so should cause the favor to be perceived more positively. A lower SES benefactor has incurred more cost proportionally than has a higher SES benefactor. Favor cost tends to increase compliance (Goei & Boster, 2005), so one might expect favor to have a stronger effect among lower SES benefactors. Given the specific nature of the favor and SES interaction was not predicted, this explanation is tentative and requires additional testing. Nevertheless, the consistency with which this interaction operates on all attraction-related variables, gratitude, and compliance in the present study suggests further research to understand this pattern would prove fruitful.

A second surprising outcome is that favor does not affect perceptions of ulterior motives and that these perceptions do not affect compliance. These findings suggest that providing a favor immediately before making a date request is not generally perceived as a technique more laden with ulterior motives than is just asking for a date without providing a favor. In support of this claim, it has been shown that explicit ingratiation attempts in date initiation are not perceived unfavorably (Stretch & Figley, 1980) and that displaying resources is an effective method of attracting potential partners (Schmitt & Buss, 1996). Taken together with the aforementioned interaction, these findings suggest that lower SES requestors who give favors before requesting compliance not only benefit from increased liking, physical attraction, gratitude, and compliance but also suffer no pernicious effects from increased perceived ulterior motives. This finding, however, should be considered cautiously. One possibility is that this effect is context dependent. Specifically, the man in the current study was seen doing several other prosocial behaviors (e.g., helping bartender's buddy, leaving bar for sick mother) that may have led participants to conclude that, despite the favor, he did not retain extensive ulterior motives.

A third unexpected finding was the complexity of the relationship between the potential mediators. Previous pregiving studies have posed these variables as independent, direct mediators of the favor-compliance relationship. These studies, however, generally do not examine more than one or two potential mediators simultaneously. Results from this study with five potential mediators suggest a more complicated path by which favor and SES affect compliance. These findings suggest that variance in compliance induced by the interaction of favor and SES funnel initially through gratitude. Put differently, only to the extent that beneficiaries feel grateful might they

be more interpersonally and physically attracted to their benefactor (i.e., potential dating partner). These findings are consistent with recent reports heralding the primacy of gratitude in maintaining positive relationships and prosocial reciprocal exchanges (McCullough et al., 2001; Schimmel, 1997; Tsang, 2006b) and suggest the role of gratitude in maintaining human reciprocal patterns not be underestimated. These findings, however, were not predicted and require confirmatory support to increase the confidence one can have in the mediator's exact causal roles.

The Roles of Indebtedness, Liking, Physical Attraction, and Gratitude

Results from this study show that neither indebtedness nor perceived ulterior motives have an effect on compliance, but that gratitude, liking, and physical attraction have substantial positive effects on compliance. These findings reflect the importance of discrete positive emotions in the compliance-seeking process. More importantly, these findings replicate previous findings that positive emotions like attraction and gratitude, not aversive forces like indebtedness, explain the effectiveness of pregiving messages (Burger, Soroka, Gonzago, Murphy, & Somervell, 2001; Goei et al., 2003; Goei & Boster, 2005). In fact, of 10 experiments that measure felt indebtedness including the current one, 9 fail to support the aversive arousal reduction model of the indebtedness explanation (Abrahams & Bell, 1994; Bartlett & DeSteno, 2006; Goei & Boster, 2005; Goei et al., 2003; Goei et al., 2007, Tsang, 2006b).

The consistency of these findings raises some questions about the broadly accepted conceptualization of the norm of reciprocity and suggests that normative constraints do not create an aversive state that drives us to reciprocate favors. Moreover, the method used (i.e., third party ratings) should have made the indebtedness argument more plausible; that the indebtedness explanation was not supported under these circumstances strengthens the confidence one can have in the conclusion that indebtedness does not explain the effectiveness of pregiving messages. These findings could mean that social norms do not activate our tendency to reciprocate, but drawing such a conclusion might not yet be warranted. Normative explanations for reciprocity might not be limited to indebtedness.

Hochschild (1979) proposed the idea of an emotion norm containing both feeling norms and expression rules. Feeling rules mandate what, how much, and how long one should feel in a given circumstance. Expression rules indicate appropriate displays for these emotions. In the context of pregiving messages, the active normative pressure might not mandate reciprocation directly. Instead, it might require one to feel grateful or attracted to a benefactor, feelings for which there are display rules. One way to display the emotions of gratitude and liking is to reciprocate a favor. But other ways exist, including verbally or nonverbally expressing thanks, affiliation, or liking. So reciprocation might occur because the receipt of a favor makes salient a norm of positive emotion that can be displayed via behavioral reciprocation.

The difference between Gouldner's (1960) original thesis and this emotion-based amendment is subtle but important. The emotion-based amendment shifts the normative focus from behavioral reciprocity alone to the emotional responses to a favor and suggests that ingratitude is the bone of contention, not simple reciprocity. Evidence for this position can be found in several existing social mechanisms that help shape a positive affective response to favors. For example, humans commonly respond angrily to or avoid someone who does not express thanks or feel positively toward a benefactor (Stein, 1989). Ingrates are described by clinical psychoanalysts as suffering from a narcissistic pathology that is disdained in interpersonal relationships (McWilliams & Lependorf, 1990). Parents can often be heard socializing their children to feel and express gratitude (e.g., "Wasn't that nice of Suzie?" "Say thank you, Johnny"). The vast majority of the world's population ascribes to religious tenets that strongly encourage gratitude and positive affect toward a benefactor (Schimmel, 1997).

Although emotion norms have received some attention (Thoits, 2004), an emotion norm to explain pre-giving messages has not been empirically tested. So this idea is speculative. Nevertheless, given the effectiveness of positive emotion in explaining pre-giving messages in recent studies, and the concomitant ineffectiveness of the norm of reciprocity, further research on the existence of a reciprocal norm of positive emotion should prove worthwhile.

The finding that positive affective mechanisms, and not indebtedness, motivate reciprocal behavior might hold implications for other areas of compliance-seeking message effects research. The door-in-the-face (DITF) technique is one in which the requestor precedes the true compliance-seeking request with a larger request that is likely to be rejected. It has been found that the DITF technique increases compliance with the true request compared to direct requests that do not include the rejection of an initial larger request (O'Keefe & Hale, 1998). The DITF technique is largely attributed to aversive states like indebtedness (reciprocal concessions) or guilt. Absent from most of these studies is attention to positive discrete emotions like gratitude or liking. When a requestor makes a concession from the large request to the true, smaller request, the target might feel thankful or they might feel heightened attraction to the requestor, thereby increasing compliance with the subsequent, true request. Other compliance seeking techniques might also operate via positive effect, including the fear-then-relief technique (Dolinski & Nawrat, 1998), the that's-not-all technique (Burger, 1986), or ingratiation (Gordon, 1996), some of which address attraction as an explanatory variable but none of which investigate gratitude or physical attraction.

Limitations

One potential weakness is our use of third person, not first person ratings of the target's reactions to the favor. Despite the ethical limitations noted earlier, it would

probably be most accurate to measures target's actual responses to a favor. Even so, as noted earlier, this method provides a unique (and conservative) test of the indebtedness explanation emanating from the norm of reciprocity and, given results from the current study parallel those from previous examinations employing first person methods, one might conclude that the use of third person ratings strengthens the confidence one can have in the results. At a minimum, the consistency of these third party predictions with first person predictions employed in other studies suggests that third party ratings do not pose a substantial methodological threat.

These findings only apply to unsolicited, forced favors. Pregiving message research is typically focused on unsolicited, forced favors because such favors can be employed randomly and proactively to induce some effect. Nevertheless, a benefactor might provide a favor following a request or stated need by a beneficiary. Alternatively, the benefactor might ask to provide the favor and only do so after the beneficiary has agreed. In these cases, one might expect different explanations for any subsequent reciprocation. For example, the beneficiary who asks for a favor might feel a stronger sense of indebtedness that has a substantial effect on compliance because they know that they are more directly responsible for the costs incurred by the benefactor who provided the favor.

Also, these findings only apply to date requests made by men to women. Differences might be expected when women request dates from men. For example, one would not expect men to respond to SES cues in the same way as women given their lower investment in offspring, and their requisite apathy toward resource potential. Also, research shows that men are more likely to use physical attractiveness cues and are more likely to assume a woman has sexual motives when she initiates a date request (Mongeau & Carey, 1996). So, the effects of physical attraction, liking, gratitude, indebtedness, or perceived ulterior motives on compliance with a date request might vary when the sex roles are reversed.

Notes

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2. To be sure, both men and women might make a date request—such requests are not restricted to men. Nevertheless, this research was externally funded and funds did not allow the increased cost of doubling our professional videography and editing time to reverse the sex roles. In the end, we chose male date requests because male requests are more frequent, socially acceptable, realistic, and direct (Berger & Bell, 1988; Clark, Shaver, & Abrahams, 1999; Green & Sandos, 1983; McNamara & Grossman, 1991; Morr & Mongeau, 2004).

3. Data from a supplemental sample of students ($n = 83$) suggested that participants believed the scenario was moderately realistic ($M = 3.55$, $SD = .65$, 5-point scale). Also, we measured the perceived realism of a text version of our scenario just to see how our method compared to the typical

method employed in these kinds of scenario studies ($n = 70$). These data demonstrated that the video method did not exceed the text method in realism in this scenario. Nevertheless, the scores were not significantly different from one another, $F(1, 151) = .85, p = .36$, suggesting that the video method is at least as good as the typical text scenario method.

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