



When do drivers conform? When do they deviate?

Sıla Demir^{a,*}, Başar Demir^b, Türker Özkan^c

^a Department of Psychology, Fırat International University, Girne, Northern Cyprus

^b Department of Psychology, Akdeniz University, Antalya, Turkey

^c Department of Psychology, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 3 June 2016

Received in revised form 5 February 2018

Accepted 15 February 2018

Available online 2 March 2018

Keywords:

Deviance regulation theory

Conformity

Uniqueness

Group benefit

Message framing

ABSTRACT

Traditional and dominant social influence strategies based on group research aim to motivate people towards compliance with the group norm for behaviours in general and in traffic in particular. Yet, deviance and dissent have the potential to motivate people towards action against group norm, as well. The deviance regulation theory (DRT) proposes that an individual might choose to deviate from the group norm to express his/her uniqueness. In addition, according to the normative conflict model, an individual might deviate because the target behaviour may serve for the group benefit. However, up to date no study has compared behaviours of different nature in terms of conformity and deviance motivations in traffic. The current study explores these motivations in the context of persuasive messages that aim to facilitate picking up hitchhikers, obeying speed limits on campus, and seat belt use, in three different samples. In the first study, we investigated the effectiveness of positive and negative message frames. These messages emphasized the attributes of people on uniqueness or group benefit who pick up or do not pick up hitchhikers with regard to the perceived group norms in a 2 (norm: picking up or not picking up a hitchhiker) by 4 (message frame: positive uniqueness, negative uniqueness, positive group benefit, negative group benefit) design among 249 participants. The results revealed that positive uniqueness frame is effective when the norm is picking up a hitchhiker, but not when the norm is not picking up a hitchhiker. In the second and third studies, we applied a 2 (norm) $\times$ 2 (uniqueness message frame: positive and negative) design for speeding on campus and seat belt use with 79 and 144 participants, respectively. The speeding study supports the DRT, as the negative frame in obeying the speed limit norm condition had a stronger effect on reducing speeding than the other conditions. Using seat belt emerged as impervious to norms and evaluation of group members, since none of the conditions differed from each other.

© 2018 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Social norms are the regulatory powers on society. Up to date, most of the studies focused on the power of social norms, and difficulty of deviating from these norms (for a review see Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). Lately, researchers developed theories explaining individuals' strong motive towards acting in a deviant manner (e.g., Blanton & Christie, 2003; Blanton, Stuart, & Van den Eijnden, 2001; Packer, 2008). Among those, the deviance regulation theory (DRT; Blanton & Christie,

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: siladdemir@gmail.com (S. Demir).

2003; Blanton et al., 2001) suggested that individuals' need for standing out from others in a meaningful way might be the driving force for performing less frequent behaviours. Indeed, when people need to decide between normative or counter-normative behaviours, the counter-normative one would come out if it is appraised by the group (Blanton & Christie, 2003). However, this motivation might depend on the nature of the behaviour, and conforming to the social norms might emerge as more desirable for some behaviours. To investigate this issue, the present study aims to understand the regulation of deviance in three traffic behaviours: hitchhiking, speeding, and seat belt use.

1.1. Deviance and basic motivations

Group is composed of at least two people interacting with each other, and perceiving themselves as a coherent unit and different from other groups (Dasgupta, Banaji, & Abelson, 1999; Shaw, 1981). Individuals belong to many groups at the same time (e.g., family, peers, neighbourhood, university, sport groups); but one individual's identification level for different groups can vary. Deviance can be described as the violation of the norms of a group (Jetten & Hornsey, 2014). A recent review proposes five motivations behind deviance: desire of disengagement, group loyalty, moral rebellion, desire to express uniqueness, and tangible gains (Jetten & Hornsey, 2014). Among these, group loyalty explains that, contrary to common sense, people might deviate from the group norms when they believe that their actions will lead some gain for the group, namely a *constructive deviance* (Galperin, 2012). For instance, highly identified group members might deviate from group norm as their deviance is based on their concern for the group (Packer, 2008).

Conversely, the DRT places the individual's desire to express uniqueness to its core and argue that individuals deviate from the group norms in line with their meaningful identities. If people believe that they will be presenting themselves as desirably different from others when they deviate, they will be motivated towards it. We are not aware of any study that investigated neither DRT nor concept of deviation from the norm in driver behaviours.

1.2. To conform or not to conform?

Conformity is aligning behaviours to the people around and the social norms (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). Conforming is fundamental since deviation from group is likely to be punished or made fun of, or likely to lead to exclusion from the group (Janes & Olson, 2000; Kruglanski & Webster, 1991; Levine, 1989). However, nonconformity has also some advantages in different cases (Blanton & Christie, 2003; Jetten & Hornsey, 2014). What is important here is to be able to determine when is conformity and when is deviance more likely, and what are the main determinants: the individuals, the context, the behaviour itself? Griskevicius and colleagues suggest that the active goals of the individual may determine which one is more likely (Griskevicius, Goldstein, Mortensen, Cialdini, & Kenrick, 2006). For that reason, a need for an investigation on whether the active goals can be influenced by the behaviour in consideration rises. While filling this gap in the literature, we expected that different types of behaviours would activate different goals. To our knowledge, no study has tested conformity and deviance motivations together in different behaviours to investigate which behaviours trigger conformity and which trigger deviation.

Nevertheless, for both conformity and deviance, group benefit motivation requires a good level of social identification with the referent group (Packer & Chasteen, 2010). If the individual feels no connection with the referent group, then the norm would not motivate the individuals towards the relevant behaviour. On the other hand, sometimes a highly-identified member may ignore all the possible advantages of deviation and decide to conform as in *loyal conformity* (Packer, 2008) if they do not experience a normative conflict. Therefore, the level of identification should not be ignored.

1.3. Normative influence: message framing

Blanton and Christie (2003) proposes that “people try to maintain positive public and private self-images by choosing desirable ways of deviating from social norms and by avoiding undesirable ways of deviating from social norms” (p. 115). Thus, when evaluating the possible social consequences of the behaviours, individuals focus on the latitude of acceptance for deviance, but not for conformity. Therefore, the persuasive message that departs from the deviant behaviour should be more powerful in influencing the future intentions. For example, in a study (Blanton et al., 2001), intentions to get a flu shot is higher when the norm is not to get a flu shot on campus and getting a flu shot is associated with positive images (e.g., being responsible). This is called *positive framing* – focusing on the positive attributes in messages. On the other hand, when the norm is to get a flu shot, emphasizing the negative attributes of individuals who do not get a flu shot increases individuals' intentions to get a flu shot. This is called *negative framing* – focusing on the negative attributes while delivering messages. However, in each norm condition basing the message frame onto the group norm (i.e., praising the majority for getting flu shots, or belittling the majority for not getting flu shots) was not as influential as focusing on the deviation.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7257939>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7257939>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)