



Roadway justice – Making angry drivers, happy drivers



James E.W. Roseborough*, David L. Wiesenthal

York University, 4700 Keele Street, Toronto, Ontario M3J 1P3, Canada

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 26 October 2012

Received in revised form 22 January 2014

Accepted 12 February 2014

Keywords:

Justice

Injustice

Driving

Anger

Aggression

ABSTRACT

The enforcement of traffic laws by police punishes law violators and reduces the likelihood that other drivers will violate laws via vicariously perceived punishment. The purpose of the current study was to determine the effect of punishment of violators on the feelings of anger and happiness in witnesses and victims. A sample of 279 individuals was exposed to four animated simulations of unjust driving behavior. Participants indicated how angry and happy the behaviors made them feel. Participants then indicated feelings of happiness and anger a second time, after being informed that the violator had been punished. While inconsistent, analyses generally indicated that perceived punishment reduced feelings of anger and increased feelings of happiness. In addition to increasing roadway safety, the current study shows the importance of active police enforcement, which could positively impact the emotional states of victims and witnesses of unjust driving behavior.

© 2014 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Police enforcement of traffic laws may have several influences: (1) police enforcement attempts to punish law violators; (2) witnessing police enforcement may decrease the likelihood of other individuals violating the law; and (3) witnessing police enforcement may reduce negative feelings resulting from a perceived injustice (Laing, 2010; Preusser, Williams, Nichols, Tison, & Chaudhary, 2008). Witnesses or victims of unjust driving may experience stress and anger. Replacing angry moods with happy moods would make driving a more pleasurable experience, which may reduce the likelihood of driver aggression or risk-taking. The goal of the current study was to determine the influence of justice on feelings of anger and happiness in victims of unjust driving behaviors.

1.1. Emotion

Models of human behavior such as the General Aggression Model highlight the influence of emotion on a variety of behaviors (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Emotions can influence an individual's cognitions, state of arousal, and judgemental processes (Bower, 1981; Forgas, 1992; Schwarz & Clore, 2007). Of the various emotions that might apply to driving, this study examined anger and happiness. Research has shown that anger has a positive relationship with hostile cognition, cardiovascular effects, and aggressive behavior (Siegman, 1993; Tiedens, 2001). Research has also indicated that happiness has a positive relationship with increased pro-social behavior and physical health (Cunningham, 1988; Steptoe, Wardle, & Marmot, 2005; Veenhoven, 2008). Due to the negative consequences of anger and positive consequences of happiness, it is important that ways of reducing anger and increasing happiness in the driving environment be identified.

* Corresponding author. Address: York University, Behavioural Science Building, Room 297, 4700 Keele Street, Toronto, Ontario M3J 1P3, Canada. Tel.: +1 (416) 424 1339.

E-mail address: j_rosie@yorku.ca (J.E.W. Roseborough).

1.2. Justice

Justice is the act of being fair, with equity theory stating that an individual will consider a situation to be just or fair when their ratio of inputs to outcomes is equivalent to the ratio of those of other individuals (Adams, 1965). Justice is important because it allows us to enter psychological contracts with the rest of society. Individuals behave in positive ways because the existence of justice ensures positive outcomes. Individuals avoid injurious behavior because the existence of justice will produce negative outcomes.

The need for justice is so great that humans have developed a psychological barrier to reduce the effects of injustice. The belief in a just world is the belief that people get what they deserve (Lerner & Miller, 1978). The belief in a just world has an adaptive function because it allows individuals to negotiate their physical and social environment as though it were stable and orderly (Lerner & Miller, 1978). Individuals possessing high degrees of just world beliefs have been found to have reduced feelings of anger in anger-evoking situations (Dalbert, 2002). The evolution of such a psychological mechanism is indicative of how important the perception of justice is to humans.

1.3. Injustice

Injustice is said to occur when an event leads an individual to believe they have not received what they deserve (Mikula, 1993). The perception of injustice can cause uncomfortable and distressing emotional states (Adams, 1965; Markovsky, 1988). The most common events that individuals consider to be unjust are those that are perceived to be disrespectful (Lupfer, Weeks, Doan, & Houston, 2000; Mikula, 1986; Mikula, Petri, & Tanzer, 1990). In the context of driving, an individual who cuts into a queue of cars may be seen as disrespecting those who were waiting and lined up properly. An individual who believes he/she has been intentionally cut off may also feel disrespected (Wickens, Roseborough, Hall, & Wiesenenthal, 2013; Wickens, Wiesenenthal, Hall, & Roseborough, 2013). The most common emotional response to injustice is anger, accompanied by feelings of vengeance and possible retaliation (Clayton, 1992; Hennessy & Wiesenenthal, 2001; Mikula, 1986; Scher, 1997; Wiesenenthal, Hennessy, & Gibson, 2000). Retaliation may be engaged into inform the offender that he/she is worthy of injustice and not the victim, to inform the offender that his/her actions were unacceptable, or to teach the offender a lesson (Miller, 2001).

1.4. Injustice and driving

Unjust driving behaviors can have several negative consequences. Unjust driving behaviors are one cause of driving stress. Driving stress can have negative psychological, physiological, and behavioral consequences. Driver stress can result in lapses in concentration, and increased arousal, heart rate, blood pressure, and increased likelihood for automobile collisions (Matthews, Dorn, & Glendon, 1991; Novaco, Stokols, Campbell, & Stokols, 1979; Selzer & Vinokur, 1974; Stokols, Novaco, Stokols, & Campbell, 1978). Stressful driving may ultimately lead to a dispositional tendency to perceive all driving encounters in a more negative way (Gulian, Glendon, Debney, Davies, & Matthews, 1989). Another possible outcome of driver stress is aggressive driving (Gulian et al., 1989; Hartley & El Hassani, 1994; Hennessy & Wiesenenthal, 1999; Wiesenenthal, Lustman, & Roseborough, in press).

Unjust driving behaviors can also lead to feelings of anger, resulting in retaliatory acts of aggression. Driving anger may be expressed as driving too fast, tailgating, flashing high beams, verbal abuse, physical abuse, and using one's automobile as a weapon (Deffenbacher, Oetting, & Lynch, 1994). A large body of driving research has supported the link between driving anger and driving aggression (Ellison-Potter, Bell, & Deffenbacher, 2001; Nesbit, Conger, & Conger, 2007; Wickens, Wiesenenthal, Flora, & Flett, 2011). Research has found that anger stemming from perceptions of unjust driving behavior was related to retaliatory aggressive driving (Roseborough, Wiesenenthal, Flett, & Cribbie, 2011).

Due to the negative consequences of perceiving unjust driving behaviors, the current study was designed to determine the extent to which perceiving punishment/justice influences feelings of anger and happiness. The current study examined two forms of justice; one resulting from police apprehension of the offending motorist, the other resulting from poetic justice, in this case, an automobile collision. Poetic justice has been defined as “an outcome in which vice is punished and virtue rewarded usually in a manner peculiarly or ironically appropriate.” (Merriam-Webster's online dictionary, n.d.) Both, police and poetic justice represent a negative consequence for a negative behavior. The investigators were interested to determine the effect of both forms of justice on emotion and whether the effects of the two forms differed.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Participants

This study used a sample of 279 (141 females) Canadian undergraduate volunteers from York University (Toronto, Ontario). Participants ranged in age from 17 to 43 years ($M = 20.66$, $SD = 3.75$). The age distribution was positively skewed and 90% of the sample ranged in age from 17 to 24 years. The length of time participants had possessed a driver's license ranged from five months to 10 years ($M = 2.71$, $SD = 1.68$). Twenty-six participants possessed a level one graduated license (G1), 152 participants possessed a level two graduated license (G2), and 101 participants possessed a graduated license (G).

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/897763>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/897763>

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