

Social Influence, Past Experience and Transportation Mode Choice:



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*A case study of participants and non-participants
in a commute alternative program*

This research study suggests...

- The behavior and attitude of close social ties and a sense of participating with others help to explain commute mode choice.
- These social conditions and past transportation experience are reflected in perceptions, attitudes and behavior-specific competence that impact how much one considers alternative modes.

Commute Alternatives



Alternatives to single occupancy *personal* vehicle (SOV)

Transportation behavior research gap

- ‘Built environment’ and ‘rational choice’ variables (time, money, convenience) important but insufficient

(Bamberg et al., 2011; Morris & Guerra, 2014; Sherwin, Chatterjee, & Jain, 2014)

- **Social and subjective factors less studied**

(Di Ciommo, et al, 2014, St-Louis, et al 2014, Sherwin, et al, 2014)

➤ *“Participation” research* : **social mechanisms of influence**

(Brady, Verba, & Schlozman, 1995; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995; Putnam, 2001; Healy, 2010; Klandermans, 1984; Klandermans & Oegema, 1987; McAdam & Paulsen, 1993; Schussman & Soule, 2005; Snow & McAdam, 2010; Snow & Soule, 2010; Dixon & Roscigno, 2003; J. Wilson, 2000; J. Wilson & Musick, 1997)

Research setting: university commute alternative program

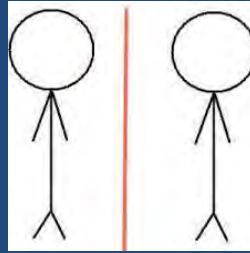


Participants =
Commute Club



Non-Participants =
Parking Permit
Holders

Study: matched pairs



Sample

- Participants and non-participants in commute alternative program
- 5 matched pairs (n=10): location, options, cost, age, family situation, gender

Methods

- Two in-depth interviews of each individual, initial and 3 months later
- Commute documentation activity

Social conditions – behavior of social ties

Primary Commute Mode	Commute Alternatives	Driving
Bike commuter, 30+ years	Son and husband (recreationally); friends/book club; colleagues; women of similar age in bike course	Husband (commutes)

“My boss drives. I think Bob mostly drives. The person across the hallway drives. Luisa used to carpool, and now drives on her own. Yeah, pretty much everybody else drives in [this department].”

- car commuter



Social conditions and past experience

Attitudes of close social ties

- “Then, of course, at a young age, you go to college. You come back. The last thing you’re doing is riding bikes. That’s ... ‘kiddie stuff’. I’ve got bars to go to after work with adult people. You start establishing your own adulthood in a working environment.”
- car commuter, 28 years

Social conditions

Participating with others

- “I kind of like the atmosphere of being with commuters—I feel it’s like the cliché. It’s like New York City when you see everyone pile into the subway and pile out. That’s what I feel. I kind of enjoy it. I see the same people. I sometimes see my friends on the train so it’s relaxing to me.”
- train/bus commuter, 5 years

Past Experience

- Non-participants
 - Negative commute alternative experience
 - Commute alternative experience NOT relevant
- Participants
 - Years of positive experience with chosen mode
 - Bikers- 'Copenhagen Effect'
 - Developed behavior-specific competence and knowledge

Positive experience

A photograph of a grove with many trees and a ground covered in fallen red leaves. The trees have green foliage, and the ground is a thick carpet of red and orange leaves. The scene is peaceful and scenic.

“One of my favorite parts of the morning walk is the grove in front of the student art gallery, which is next to Hoover Tower.”

- train/walk commuter, 10 years

Negative past experience



- S2- I've ridden BART to San Francisco many times. Your personal space is heavily cramped... If I have a choice, so long as the gap between the benefits and non-benefits between the two aren't too large, then I'm going to take the personal one, which is driving myself. -
car commuter, most of 15-20 years

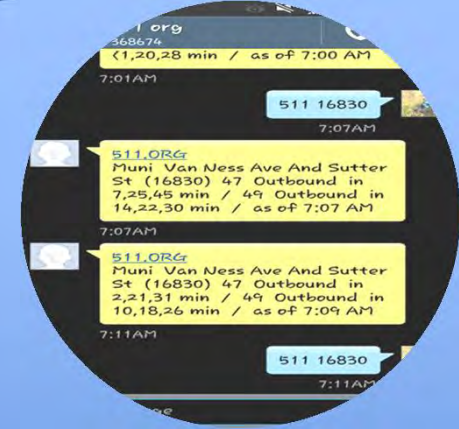
Past experience and competence/knowledge



Knowledge of
options



Preparational
competence



Navigational
competence

Train/bus commuter, 5 years

Reflected in Perceptions, Attitudes and Behavior

Influence	Perceptions and Attitudes (example- Louis)
Social ties	talked about public transit as crowded, uncomfortable and unpleasant.
Past transportation experience	“your personal space is heavily cramped”
Transportation mode choice (behavior)	Car commute; interested in trying bus but wrestled with his attitude towards mass transit being uncomfortable and remained reluctant to try it

More than built environment

Behavior
and attitude
of social ties

Participating
with others

Positive
experience

Positive attitudes and
perceptions towards
commute alternatives

Specific competence
and knowledge

Alternative
transportation
behavior

