Social Influence, Past Experience and Transportation Mode Choice:  
A case study of participants and non-participants in a commute alternative program

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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)


“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, family situation, gender, age

Methods
• Two in-depth interviews of each individual, initial and 3 months later
• Commute documentation activity
### Social conditions – behavior of social ties

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

“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

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
“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

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

Questions?