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Norm-following behavior and its sensitivity to cues: The workings of graduated intensity effects

Normatief gedrag en zijn gevoeligheid voor signalen uit de omgeving: De effecten van verschillen in de intensiteit van cues

Siegwart Lindenberg

Mijnheer de Rector Magnificus, zeer gewaardeerde toehoorders,

Let me begin with an experiment we have done a number of years ago that will set the stage for the questions I will ask and try to answer. Thou 'shalt not steal' is one of the Ten Commandments and a fairly well internalized norm for most people. Yet, whether people follow this norm may depend on seemingly trivial circumstances. Here is a field experiment we did to test this (Keizer, Lindenberg, and Steg 2008). We let a stamped and addressed letter hang out of a mailbox such that passersby could see through the address window of the letter that it contained a five Euro note (see Figure 1). The question was, whether the passersby would steal it (i.e. taking it along). There were two conditions. In one,



Figure 1. Letter with 5 Euro showing. Are passersby more likely to steal it when mailbox is covered with graffiti (as sign of disrespect for a social norm)? (Keizer et al. 2008)

condition, the mailbox was nice and clean. In the other, the mailbox was covered (by us) with graffiti. What we found was that, when the mailbox was clean, a sizable minority (13%) of the passersby succumbed to the temptation of a visible € 5 note protruding in a letter from a mailbox. They stole the letter. But when the mailbox was covered with graffiti, the percentage of passersby who stole the letter more than doubled (to 27%). How can adherence even to such a fundamental social norm as 'thou shalt not steal' depend on such a trivial thing as graffiti? Where does the power of such seemingly trivial cues in the environment come from? How can such cues affect our moral behavior? How general is

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this power? Could it seriously affect the way we have to look at moral behavior? There is always the healthy skepticism that aims to take the drama out such questions. Couldn't it be that there is a rational explanation? Maybe people thought, "if there is graffiti, there is no police enforcing things around here and I can steal with impunity." Well, let me tell you that we have thoroughly considered this possibility, we have conducted extra experiments, and we had to conclude that this rational account couldn't be the right explanation (see also Diekmann et al. 2011). Where then do we have to look for an answer?

The answer I am to present to you is based on the lucky meeting of three research lines. First, there is a research line in economics and evolutionary theory that has made big strides in recent times by discovering that many human beings have social preferences (Fehr and Fischbacher 2002, Bowles and Gintis 2011). People care for what happens to others; they care for fairness and for collective goods. This is by no means trivial because before, the prosocial side of human beings was seen as a matter of belief or even taste. Some philosophers were convinced of the social side of human beings, others were convinced of the opposite. It now seems that we cannot escape the evidence that human beings are not the egotistical bastards they have long been taken to be by cynics and many economists.

The second research line concerns a completely different question: how do mental constructs manage to influence behavior? The answer that was found and that is by now widely accepted is, that mental constructs don't influence behavior just because a person has them. Rather, they influence behavior to the degree that they are activated (or "accessible"). Thus, having a particular preference or having internalized a particular norm does not yet mean that the preference or norm influence behavior. They must be activated first, at least to some degree. This also holds for a special kind of mental construct in which preferences are shaped into action tendencies: goals. They combine cognitive and motivational aspects. When they are focal (i.e., when they are activated at the moment), such goals "frame" a situation by steering important cognitive processes in the service of the focal goal, a process in which motivation expresses itself through cognitions. More concretely, goals (and especially overarching goals) govern what we attend to, what concepts and chunks of knowledge are being activated, what alternatives we consider, what information we are most sensitive about, and how we process information (Förster et al., 2005; Gollwitzer and Bargh, 1996;

Kruglanski and Köpetz, 2009). In turn, these cognitive processes have an impact on motivation by inhibiting other goals (Shah et al., 2002), by influencing what we like and dislike (Ferguson and Bargh, 2004), what we expect others to do (Van Lange 1992), and by governing the criteria we use to judge goal realization or failure (Carver and Scheier, 2002). In short, goals, and especially overarching goals, "set" the mind in a certain direction and mobilize concomitant energies.

The third research line can be found in evolutionary anthropology. It deals with the evolution of capabilities directed at the social context. In the case of humans, the most sophisticated brainpower seems to have evolved for the ability to draw adaptive advantages from living in groups (Dunbar 2003). Thus, for example, our abilities to read facial expressions, to put ourselves in the shoes of others, to identify with groups and group goals, they all are very sophisticated achievements by our brain (Tomasello et al 2005). However, from an evolutionary perspective, it is clear that individuals are not there for the group, but the group is there for individuals who draw adaptive advantages from the collective goods being produced by the group. From this one can draw the conclusion that, in general, selfish motives will have priority over social motives. Yet, in order for the group to be useful to individuals, there must be ways for the group to temporarily reverse this priority. Otherwise, there would be no collective goods.

The intersection of these three lines opened a fascinating new possibility to understand human behavior. Now, let the insight that human beings have social preferences meet the insight that whatever is in the brain, it needs to be activated in order to influence behavior. This results in the new insight: that preferences, social and non-social, may be quite stable in a storage place in the brain, but they will be selectively activated and thus can differ in their active form from one situation to the next. This holds even more for the mental constructs that transform preferences into action tendencies, namely goals. Thus, a person may be very different in one situation compared to another, depending on which goals are activated at the moment.

The insight from evolutionary anthropology now adds a crucial new element, altogether leading to what we call "goal-framing theory" (Lindenberg 2006, Lindenberg and Steg 2007). Human beings have overarching goals that regulate this division of selfish and social motivations. One overarching goal (it has been called *hedonic goal*) focuses on the satisfaction of fundamental needs. For example,

people get hungry, and when they are very hungry, they will devote most of their brain power to finding things to eat, ignoring other things, such as the their child's wish to play. Another overarching goal (it has been called *gain goal*) focuses on acquiring and maintaining the resources that are necessary to satisfy needs. For example, one may focus one's attention on gathering wood for the fireplace, or on making money, or on acquiring fame. Finally, a third overarching goal (it has been called *normative goal*) focuses on social bonds, groups and group goals. For example, people can identify with a group, such as a sports team, and act so as to realize the team's goals. Group goals may also be represented in rules and norms of the group, and to follow them is to help realize group goals. In short, we have three overarching goals, each of which can capture the mind and make a person act as if he or she had different selves.

Yet this does not lead simply to human beings having "mixed motives", some social some not. Rather, as argued before, for evolutionary reasons the group is there for the individual and not the other way around. There is an apriori hierarchy in these overarching goals with regard to being in the foreground. Fundamental needs come first; then comes focusing on resources for satisfying these needs; and only then comes a focus on group concerns. This gets us the following hierarchy:

Hedonic goal: to maintain or improve the way one feels right now (subgoals are for example stilling one's hunger, economizing on effort, having fun, dealing with fear).

Gain goal: to maintain or improve one's resources (subgoals are for example making money, gaining status, saving for later).

Normative goal: to behave appropriately, conform to social norms and rules (subgoals are for example helping others, keeping the environment clean).

Now, everybody knows situations in which this hierarchy looks different, even inverted. There are, of course, personality differences. Some people are as a person more normative than others, or more materialistic, or more hedonic. Thus, character traits can shift the relative weight of these three goals to some degree. But the important point gleaned from evolutionary anthropology is this: no matter what the personality is, there are social forces that can change the relative weight of these overarching goals. To see just how strong these inver-

sions can be, let me present an example from a recent study (Lindenberg and Steg, forthcoming). We measured people's normative trait (with a "moral identity" measure, Aquino and Reed 2002) and we measured their hedonic trait (with a "reward sensitivity" measure, Carver and White 1994), both at different times from the experiment itself. In the experiment, we exerted situational influences ("primes") on the relative weight of the normative and the hedonic goals. Which would be the stronger influence on the helping behavior: the trait or the situational goal manipulation? Based on goal-framing theory, we put our bets on the situational goal manipulation. There were two such manipulations: one hedonic, one normative. In the hedonic manipulation, we asked male subjects to judge eight rather fancy bra's and we asked female subjects to judge eight fancy kinds of chocolate with regard to how attractive, good-looking, and good to the touch they are. In the normative manipulation, we asked male and female subjects to judge eight bibles with regard to how stately, dignified and impressive they are. Then there were filler tasks and finally the subjects were asked whether they are willing to help another student by volunteering (without credits) to participate in a study in which they have to put their hands in ice water for as long as they can. This was clearly no a pleasant task, and we expected the hedonic manipulation to greatly increase the relative weight of the hedonic goal, thereby making subjects in this condition focus mainly on the way this ice water would feel, and making them neglect the normative aspect of the request for help from a fellow student. Conversely, we expected the normative manipulation to greatly increase the relative weight of the normative goal, thereby making subjects focus mainly on the normative aspect of the request for help and making them ignore how the task would actually feel, thus being willing to help. The results were even stronger than we had expected. The situational manipulation completely dominated the possible influence from traits: 95% of the normatively manipulated subjects offered to help, compared to only 10 % of the hedonically manipulated subjects. The traits had virtually no influence on the choice.

Graduated cue intensity

Happily this trumping of situation over trait is not always that extreme. Remember the example in the beginning. Graffiti doubled the incident of stealing, but it raised it from 13% of passersby to 27%. Sociologically, this is a huge effect, but still, even with graffiti, 73% of the passersby did not steal the envelope. If the situation would have unmitigated influence on our goals and behavior, we would be jerked around by changing situations that make us now an obedient

citizen, the next moment an irresponsible playboy, and then again a money grabbing scrooge. We would be hard to stomach for our fellow human beings. Luckily, we change but not quite as much as Jekyll and Hyde. For example, we guard our means in the face of scarcity, and yet, in some situations, we might loosen the purse a little bit and give something to needy others. On another occasion, we might give a whole lot more. It is adaptive to be able to be more or less selfish and more or less social depending on the situation. Where would an attenuation of these Jekyll and Hyde effects come from? And how could this attenuation be functional in the sense that it changes in magnitude in a more or less adaptive way? There are different answers to this question of flexibility and the attenuation of Jekyll and Hyde effects. One is that each person develops a core identity that acts like a buffer against the very extreme swings. Another answer is that we tend to be selective in the situations we expose ourselves to. The people we know, the places we go, the things we read and listen to, they all are selections from a possible spectrum of cues. Exposing ourselves selectively to influences on our overarching goals is maybe the most important part of our ability to regulate ourselves (Lindenberg 2008, Dohmen and Falk 2011). Yet, even in these selected environments, the intensity of cues is likely to differ, and reacting in a graduated manner is adaptive. Do we do it? Are we attuned to the intensity of cues in the situation with regard to our overarching goals? Attention to these questions is relatively new and it is what I want to share with you today: studying the possibility that we have evolved to be highly sensitive to the intensity of cues that potentially change the weight of our overarching goals. We have indeed found that cues work in a graduated manner. Their intensity matters. I will thus talk about “graduated cue intensity effects”.

The presence of people

My first point is that there are cues that nudge us in the social direction. They don't fully push us, but gently turn us in the social direction. They warm us up, as it were, for being prepared for social intercourse. Let us take an example (Joly et al. 2008). Take the four pictures in Figure 2. Which of them would activate the situational norm “keep to table manners” the most? Well, it makes a difference whether or not you actually expect to be in a restaurant in the near future. Just looking at the set table of a restaurant without this expectation will not raise the activation of the norm concerning table manners. Looking at the picture of a train or of the set table will then make no difference: on a scale from 1 to 7 for the measure of norm activation, there is no significant difference (see Figure 3):



Figure 2. Scenarios that differentially activate “table manners”: train, set table, table with dinner served, table with dinner served and people (based on Joly et al. 2008).

3.78 for the train and 3.41 for the table. But once you have the expectation to go to a restaurant, the picture of a set restaurant table will significantly raise the activation of the relevant norm: 3.41 to 4.49. The goal to go to the restaurant makes cues concerning a restaurant relevant for me (see also Aarts et al 2003).

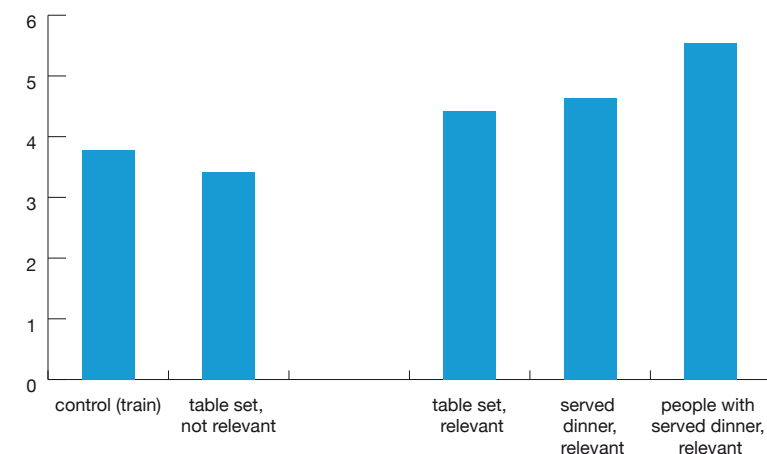


Figure 3. Activation of the norm “to keep to table manners” (scale 1-7) as a function of relevance of the situation to the individual and of the presumed or actual presence of people (based on Joly et al. 2008).

Thus, the first lesson is that exposure to a cue affects the relative weight of my overarching goals more if the cue connects to something that is relevant to me. Next, compare the picture of the set table with the picture in which dinner is served. Although one does not see any people, it is clear from the served dinner that people are around, ready to eat. Seeing things that indicate the presence of people makes norms that apply to this setting more accessible. Thus, compared to the empty restaurant, a table with dinner waiting will increase the activation of table manners (here from 4.49 to 4.63). Once you see the people actually sitting at the table, the activation shoots up to 5.54. Thus, the second lesson is that the activation of social norms is raised to the degree the situation is relevant to us and to the degree that people like ourselves are part of the situation. After all, social norms are there mainly for regulating the interaction among such people.

What people do

The sheer actual or symbolized presence of people is the first step of people-related norm activation. Yet, we are not just sensitive to people's presence, but also to what people do. We saw this in the mailbox experiment at the beginning. Here too we find clear evidence for the workings of graduated cue intensity. Cues in the situation can signal that others deviated a lot or just a little bit, or even not at all from the social norm. Take the following situation. You walk down the street and close to a mailbox you see a stamped letter lying on the ground. Looks like it should have gone into the mailbox but somehow was dropped. Would you get your prosocial side out by picking up the letter and putting it in the mailbox? Probably. But consider the situations depicted in Figure 4 (Keizer, Lindenberg,



Figure 4. Vandalized bicycles. Will they influence whether people pick up and post the stamped letter on the sidewalk? (Keizer et al. forthcoming)

and Steg, forthcoming). In this situation, there are two considerably vandalized bicycles right close to the mailbox. Would that influence your action? Imagine the same situation, but replace the vandalized bikes with garbage bags. Now, in Groningen it is not allowed to place garbage bags on the street. However, as violations go, it is not as bad as vandalizing bicycles. In the third situation, imagine there are neither vandalized bikes nor garbage bags. The vicinity of the mailbox looks orderly. Our question was whether these three situations would indeed show the graduated cue intensity effects. The answer was yes; there are clear cue intensity effects. You can see from Figure 5 that in our first condition with the vandalized bicycles, merely 5% of the participants posted the letter.

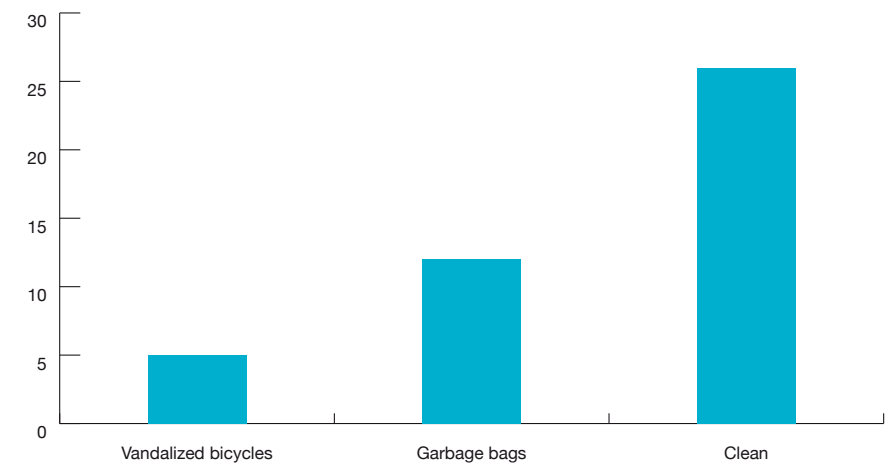


Figure 5. Percentage of people who posted the letter as a function of the cue intensity (based on Keizer Lindenberg, and Steg, forthcoming)

When we used garbage bags as a less intense cue of normative disrespect, the percentage of pedestrians that stopped to pick up and post the letter increased to 12%. However, when we removed all signs of norm deviations, 26% of the passersby posted the letter. There is clearly a graduated effect. Seeing other people's lighter deviations from the norm does not weaken one's own normative goal as much as seeing heavier deviations.

The number of people

It is quite logical that people would not just be sensitive to what others do, but also sensitive to how many others do something. When there is a group of people present or imagined, then the number of others who are seen or thought to do

something represents a graduated intensity cue. Take for example the phenomenon that has been called the “bystander paradox” (Latané and Darley 1970). Imagine that in the public realm peopled with strangers, somebody obviously needs help. Will she get help? Research shows that the more potential helpers are looking at the scene, the less likely anybody will help. For example Latané and Dabbs (1975) dropped coins (or pencils) in elevators and recorded whether anybody would help picking them up. It turned out that the willingness to help was an inverse function of the number of people in the elevator (Figure 6).

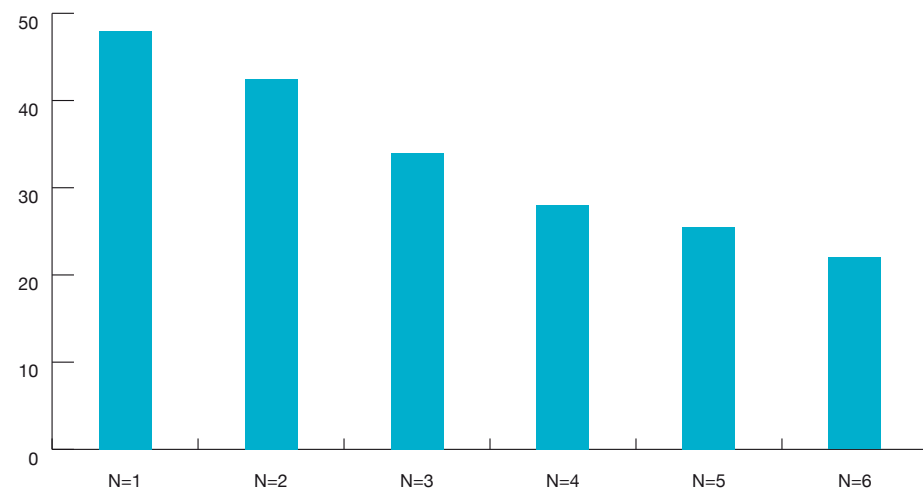


Figure 6. Percentage of male subjects who help (individually) as a function of group size (based on Latane and Dabbs 1975)

Why did helping decrease as the group size increased? The graduated intensity cue explanation is this. When strangers look at somebody who obviously needs help and there are others present, the question is: should I help? The answer is influenced by cues from others. Since everybody hesitates to act right away, people see others do nothing. The cue thus is that they don’t help. Seeing other people not following the situational norm lowers the strength of one’s own normative goal-frame the more, the larger the group of bystanders. This cue intensity interpretation is actually strengthened by a study of Rutkowski et al. (1983). They could show that the “bystander paradox” vanishes if the onlookers are not strangers to each other but had become familiar during a previous stage in the experiment. Becoming more befriended with each other also increased the activation of the helping norm, even regarding help to somebody outside the group. More

others now meant more people who support the norm. As a result (see Figure 7), the percentage of people who helped the outsider in the larger group

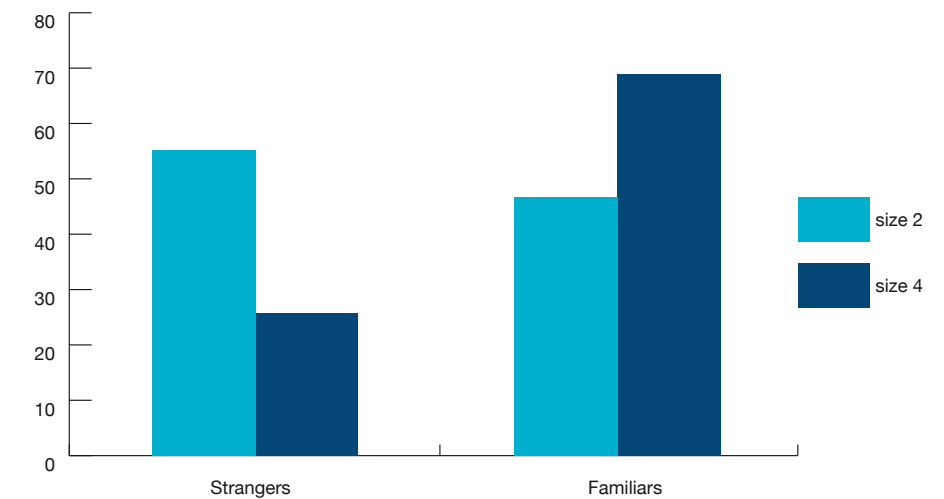


Figure 7. Percentage of people helping as a function of degree of familiarity among potential helpers (after Rutkowski et al. 1983)

was much higher among the familiars than among the strangers (almost three times as high). Within the “familiar” condition, helping was also higher in the larger group than in the smaller one, as we would expect from a positively graduated cue effect. In addition, Rutkowski et al. could show that the lack of willingness to help in the group of strangers was not the result of “free-rider” behavior. In fact, people in the strangers group did not expect the others to help and thus did also not expect to free-ride on their norm conforming behavior.

In the literature on collective goods, we find many examples of what has been called “conditional cooperation” (Fischbacher, Gächter, and Fehr 2001). In the light of what has been said above, this too is a case of graduated intensity cues. The more others are thought to be oriented towards group goals, the stronger one’s own normative goal becomes. This does not just hold for the number of people but also to the degree to which they show their commitment to group goals, for example by the amount of contribution towards the group goal. One can also observe such effects on the macro level. For example Frey and Torgler (2007) found that the lower people estimate tax evasion to be in their country, the more likely that they pay their taxes without evasion.

Special people

Not all people are equally important to us. Some are special to us and they even seem to be richer and better represented in our mind and more quickly retrieved than people who are less special (Andersen and Cole, 1990; Güro lu et al 2008). This means that we should expect there to be another source of graduated influence of cues: how special others are.

There are mainly two ways in which people can be special. One is by close social distance, such as close relatives, friends, and in-group members. The other way to become special is by social status, such as leaders and celebrities. Let us first look at social distance. There is a graduated impact of social distance on the relative weight of relational norms, and under certain conditions of norms in general. People close to oneself (such as one's mother, one's father, one's friend) trigger a greater sense of obligation to realize goals that are important to them than people at a social distance (see Shah 2003). This also implies that when a significant other stands for the general goal "to act appropriately" (as for example can be expected of parents) this has a particularly strong supporting effect on the normative goal-frame in general (see Lindenberg and Steg 2007; Veenstra et al., 2010). There is also a special graduated effect of social distance with regard to the relative weight of the gain goal. For example, in a scenario experiment in which subjects bought a book cheaply that they could sell to somebody who is willing to pay a high price, we asked subjects to indicate for different kinds of relationships with the potential buyer what is more important: gain or relational norms (Ligthart and Lindenberg 1996). The scale ran from 1=norm importance maximal, gain importance minimal, all the way to 9=gain importance maximal, norm importance minimal. Figure 8 shows that for friends, the norm importance is almost maximal (average score=1.3), and for strangers the importance of gain trumps the importance of norms (average score=6.3). For acquaintances, it is in-between. It is interesting though that in the stranger condition, norms still played a role, while in the friend condition, gain played virtually no role.

The status effect is another way in which cues by other people can be graduated in their effect on the overarching goals. Let me illustrate this with a scenario experiment we did concerning organizations (Keizer, Lindenberg, and Steg, in preparation). Participants were confronted with a somewhat cumbersome new work rule. To rule out a possible fear of sanctions effect, we indicated in the scenario that the company was not able to check whether an employee did or did not

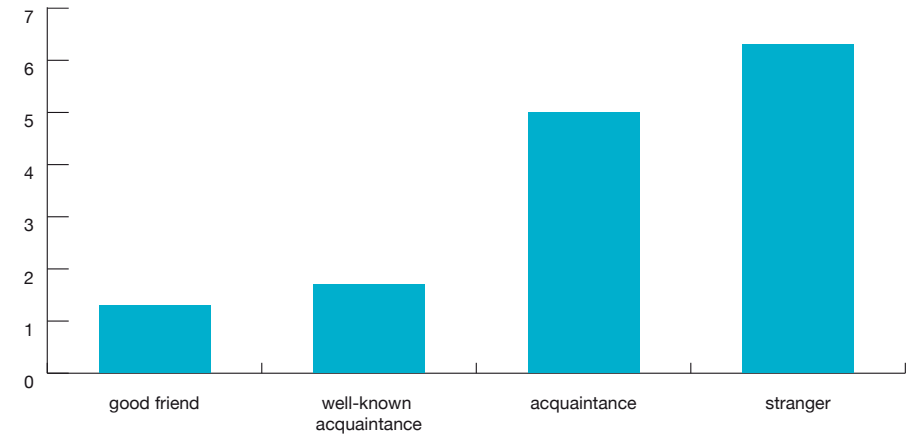


Figure 8. Impact of social distance on relative importance of gain versus relational norms (scale: 1=norms all important; 9=gain all important). Based on Ligthart and Lindenberg (1996).

conform to this new rule. One group learned that some high-level managers of the company had misused company money for a private dinner party. Another group learned that some of the low-level employees had misused company money for a private dinner party. Do we see the status effect? Are lower-level employees indeed more affected by higher-ups deviating than by their colleagues deviating? They reported their answer on a 7-point scale that indicates likelihood of deviating from the cumbersome work rule (1 - not likely to 7 - likely). The results support the conjecture that transgressions by higher-ups have indeed a stronger weakening effect on normative goals than transgressions by colleagues (see Figure 9). In fact, participants who heard that higher managers violated a

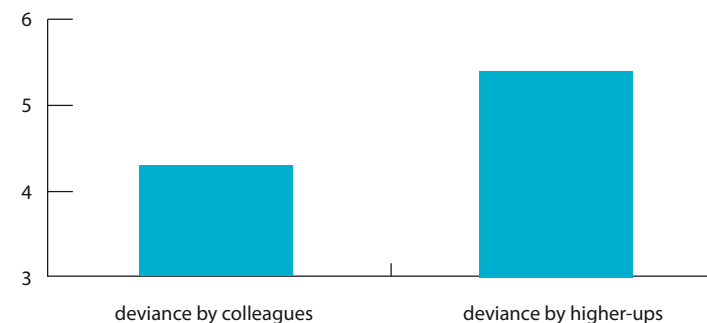


Figure 9. Subjective likelihood of deviating from working rule as a function of paying for private dinner party with company money by colleagues or by higher-ups (based on Keizer, Lindenberg, and Steg, in preparation)

norm, were significantly more likely to violate the new rule than the participants in who heard that colleagues violated the norm. This again is graduated cue intensity.

Do we also see graduated cue intensity in the direction of becoming less special? Yes, we do. If special people become less special, if they are on the decline in some way, their magic power to influence norm activation declines as well, or even turns into its opposite. In the literature, we find an important place for reputation effects as explanations of norm conformity (Panchanathan and Boyd 2004). The theorizing then focuses mostly on how people want to avoid losing reputation. However, up until now there has been little attention to the other side: a good reputation is one form of specialness and other people react to that in a graduated way. Losing specialness to some degree means losing normative influence to some degree. Take the following example. Celebrities are special people. They can have normative influence. When they endorse a norm, they manage to raise the activation of that norm and of related norms quite effectively. We conducted an experiment (see Figure 10) with celebrities endorsing the ‘norm not to litter’ and we measured the degree of norm activation (Lindenberg et al. 2011). Without celebrity endorsement, the norm activation was already

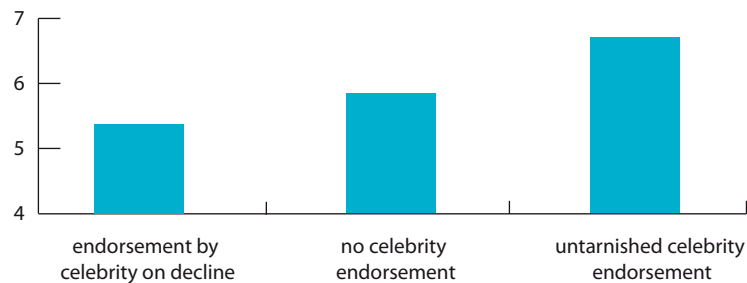


Figure 10. Activation of norm as a function of specialness of endorser (untarnished celebrity versus celebrity on the decline). Based on Lindenberg et al. 2011.

quite high among the subjects: 5.85 on a 7-point scale. However, with norm endorsement, the activation was significantly increased to 6.67. The situation was quite different when we presented the celebrities as being on their way out (through a fictitious newspaper clipping): endorsement by a celebrity in decline is associated with the lowest activation of the norm (5.37). Thus, in terms of norm activation, it would have been better not to have had any celebrity endorse-

ment at all than the endorsement by a declining greatness. Mind you, in our example, the celebrities had not done anything wrong; they just became less special, were on their way out, losing the image of winners. Normative influence can be lost in degrees.

Hedonic shifts.

As we have seen, the relative strength of the normative goal can be influenced directly by other people in a graduated way. However, goal-framing theory would predict that such effects should also occur for indirect effects. For example, cues that increase the relative strength of the hedonic goal should thereby indirectly weaken the normative goal and there should be graduated cue effects as well. Strengthening the hedonic goal makes one more focused on the way one feels and on the goal to maintain or improve the way one feels. In short, one would also become more negatively inclined towards exerting effort, since effort negatively affects the way one feels. Normative behavior that takes some effort should thus be in conflict with the hedonic goal, the more so, the higher the effort required. Does this prediction bear out? We set out to test the conjecture experimentally (Lindenberg and Steg forthcoming). We used students who volunteered for the experiment because they wanted to get the credit points for their study. We had subjects come into a small room and we manipulated the relative strength of the hedonic goal by smells. In one condition, the room was neutral with regard to smell. In another condition, there was an ambient pleasant cake smell. We achieved this with a commercially available paste and a small ventilator. This pleasant smell was expected to induce a slight strengthening of the hedonic goal, meaning that it would make people somewhat more focused on the way they feel and on avoiding things that make them feel worse, like effort. In a third condition, the room was filled with an ambient foul odor achieved with a ‘fart spray’ sold at a party store in Groningen. The foul odor was expected to induce a higher strengthening of the hedonic goal and thus also a higher sensitivity to the exertion of effort. Then subjects were given a number of filler tasks. In between, they were asked whether, after the experiment was over, they would volunteer to help out another student who was in need of subjects to fill in a questionnaire. However, there would not be any extra credit points for doing this and they would have to go to a different place.

We had a light and a heavy help condition. In the light condition, subjects were told that it takes 2 minutes to fill out the questionnaire. In the heavy condition

they were told that it takes 15 minutes. The prediction was that the stronger the relative weight of the hedonic goal, the less likely subjects would follow the norm to help somebody in need. The prediction was also that subjects would be much more sensitive to effort in the heavy hedonic condition than in the light hedonic condition. Figure 11 shows the results. We see that the willingness to help in

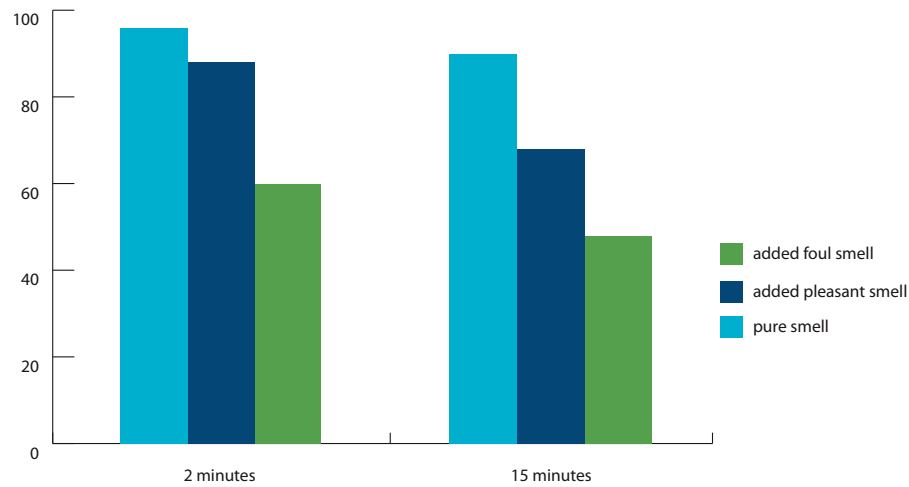


Figure 11. Percentage of subjects willing to help as a function of effort (2 minutes help or 15 help) and odor condition (based on Lindenberg and Steg, forthcoming)

the neutral “pure” smell condition is high, irrespective of the effort asked. For the foul odor, there is a clear reduction in the willingness to help, and for the pleasant smell, the effect is somewhere in between. And we also see that in the pleasant smell condition (the light hedonic condition), subjects were less sensitive to effort than in the foul smell condition (i.e. the heavy hedonic condition). In the light condition, only the 15 minutes of effort have a sizable effect on helping, while in the heavy condition, even two minutes of helping seemed already too much for many subjects. In sum, we see that the normative goal-frame can indeed be weakened indirectly by a relative increase in the weight of the hedonic goal. And, same as for the direct influence, these cue effects are of graduated intensity.

Graduated positive cues

With a last empirical example, I would like to focus on a more optimistic note. As we have seen in a number of examples, the normative goal-frame is pre-

carious and can easily be weakened to various degrees by signs that there are no people around or that people deviate from situational norms. However, can it also work the other way around? Can cues of people’s respect for norms increase the weight of the normative goal-frame? And if so, is the working of these positive cues also subject to graduated intensity? We have seen already some positive cue effects. However, there had not been a systematic test yet of their graduated nature. In order to provide such a test, we ran a number of field experiments, one of which I would like to present here (see Keizer, Lindenberg and Steg, forthcoming). Imagine a sidewalk and a person, let’s call her Esther, standing between a building and her bicycle. She has a bag of oranges dangling from the steering wheel. As a person walks by, Esther “accidentally” drops the oranges which then roll all over the sidewalk. It is awkward for her to pick them up because she would have to put the bike on a stand, walk around it and then chase the oranges. It is much easier for the person walking by to pick them up. Would the passerby do it? Esther, of course works for us and we created three conditions. The first condition was simply an orderly sidewalk. No signs of norm violation anywhere. In the second condition, we added a confederate. The confederate had an empty soda can in his hand, dropped it accidentally but then also picked it up again. This is a sign that he does not want to litter the street with this empty can. It is a sign of respect for the norm ‘not to litter’. In the third condition, we used another confederate, one quipped with a broom, who sweeps visibly and audibly an empty soda can from the sidewalk (see Figure 12). Cleaning up somebody else’s litter is even a stronger cue of respect for the no



Figure 12. Are passersby more likely to help pick up fallen oranges when somebody shows concern for norms (like sweeper in the background)? (Keizer et al. forthcoming)

litter norm than picking up one's own litter. The passerby has to pass the man with the broom before she comes to the place where the oranges fall on the sidewalk. Our prediction was, that cues of respect for norms would increase the relative strength of the normative goal-frame in the passerby and make her more likely to help out; and the stronger the cue, the stronger the effect on helping. Figure 13 shows the results. We see a considerable effect of positive normative respect cues, and we also see that the effect is graduated.

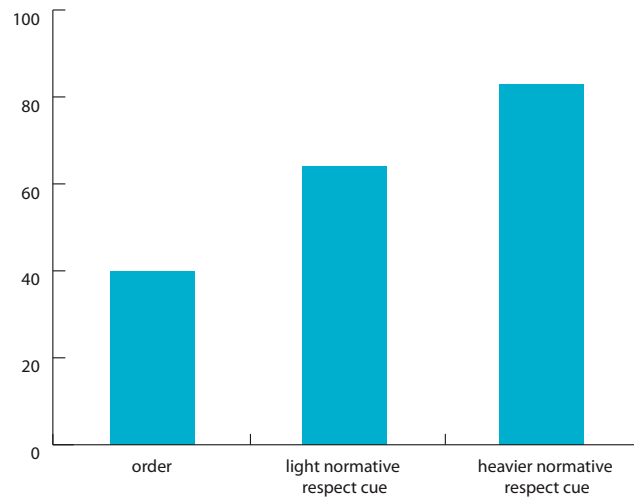


Figure 13. Percentage of passersby who help as a function of intensity of normative respect cue (based on Keizer, Lindenberg, Steg forthcoming)

With an orderly sidewalk, 40% of the people who walk by singly is willing to help. With the lighter norm respect cue, this percentage goes up to 64%. Then with the heavier norm respect cue (the man with the broom), the percentage is more than double of what it was in the order condition (83%). By anybody's standard, these are large effects.

Summary and Conclusion.

Let me now summarize the main points and draw some conclusions. People live in a space of overarching goals in which they can be pushed in three directions: in the direction of a hedonic goal that is focused on need fulfillment and the way one feels; in the direction of a gain goal that is focused on one's resources that are needed for need fulfillment; and in the direction of a normative goal that is focused on the social bonds and group and on acting appropriately. Cues in the

internal and especially the external environment push people gently or more forcefully in the direction of one of these goals. Movement in the direction of the normative goal are more difficult than movement in the direction of the gain and hedonic goals. Yet, for social behavior, the normative goal is paramount. And that is why I focused on this goal in my research. What cues nudge and push people towards or away from the normative goal? We saw that the very presence of people in a situation that is relevant to us nudges us in the direction of the normative goal, away from the hedonic and gain goals. By that nudge, norms that belong to the situation are somewhat more activated than in socially empty spaces (think of parking garages, hotel corridors, the business district at night). An even stronger activation or deactivation of the normative goal comes from cues that signal how other people relate to norms. Cues signal respect or disrespect for norms in a graduated manner. Signs of much disrespect push the onlooker far away from the normative goal in the direction of the gain or hedonic goals. Signs of little or moderate disrespect for norms push people only a little bit away from the normative goal. Conversely, as we have seen at the end, strong signs of normative respect push people strongly in the direction of the normative goal, whereas weak signs of normative respect just nudge them in the normative direction with a considerable impact of gain or hedonic goals left intact. The number of people who are thought to have respect or disrespect for norms also create such graduated effects. Very importantly, it is not just quantity but also quality. People can be special and the more special they are, the more we are open to their normative influence on us. This specialness can be in terms of social distance (say, friends, acquaintance, stranger). By and large, we can say that the closer the social distance, the stronger the normative goal becomes; and the greater the social distance, the stronger the gain goal becomes. Specialness can also be in terms of status. Higher-ups have generally a stronger normative influence than ordinary people. Finally, there is good evidence that hedonic cues can push us away from the normative goal; the stronger they are, the more they can push the normative goal out of sight. Not a good prospect for those who cannot escape hedonic cues in their environment.

There are clear policy implications that derive from these results. First of all, the physical environment matters for normative behavior. People who have to live in physical disorder have a more difficult time to keep a strong normative goal. But then, it is not just order but the act of demonstratively showing concern for order that has the largest effect. Secondly, it is vital for people to have close significant

others who stand for important social norms. It is mainly through their influence that we can move around in the goal space in a balanced manner, without drifting too much in the direction of gain or hedonic orientations. Third, because the status effect on normative influence is so strong, higher-ups in politics, in organizations and in popular culture should realize how much effect they have on people's movement through their goal space (see also Stout 2010). For example, freedom of speech is important, but that should not be an excuse to disregard graduated cue effects. Strong cues of normative disrespect from higher-ups can be expected to push entire crowds away from the normative goal. Thus decency matters. If higher-ups care for people's adherence to important social norms, they should avoid giving off stronger cues of disrespect of norms. In addition, it should be clear that reputational effects are changes in being special. One can gain but also lose it in degrees. The graduated cue intensity effect could be a basic lesson for all, but especially for people in high places.

A word of thanks

Let me begin my thanking the Rector Magnificus, the board of Tilburg University, and Marcel Zeelenberg for having me here as a professor of cognitive sociology. A warmer welcome I could not imagine. And before I say more about this congenial place, I should acknowledge huge debts to the people in Groningen and elsewhere with whom I had the privilege to work and whom I owe much of what I am today. Without their firm belief in joint production, I would have never been invited to join TIBER and Tilburg University. There are many such significant others, but I can mention only a few. First of all, there are the pillars of the ICS in the past, Reinhard Wippler (from Utrecht), Frans Stokman, and Tom Snijders. A better team could not be found anywhere in the world. Then there is Rafael Wittek, the present boss of the ICS, who has been a long-term friend and an untiring fighter for the institutional structures for joint production. With him and Nicolai Foss of Copenhagen, I also have the privilege of studying interdependencies in organizations. Then there are the social psychologists Linda Steg and Kees Keizer with whom I had, still have, and hope keep a unique working relationship and a productive program that may last. It is research that is especially close to my heart. Then I have the TRAILS group with Rene Veenstra, Jan Kornelis Dijkstra, Jelle Sijtsema, Miranda Sentse, and Hans Ormel. I have been lucky to have such people to work with on the development of pro- and antisocial behavior. I hope it will continue for a long time. Then there is Nardi Steverink with whom I have been working for along time on the intricacies of self-regulation and well-being and how to maintain both. May this line of research never end. And may many of these lines link up in some joint projects with people from Tilburg.

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Ik heb gezegd

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