“If they say go faster or something I’ll probably go faster” – Peer influence upon the risky behaviour of young novices

Dr Bridie Scott-Parker, Research Fellow
Young drivers

- Australia, 2012
  - 17-25 year olds 13% of population but 22% of all driver fatalities
  - Three quarters of fatalities were male
- Earliest stage of independent driving most risky
Number of casualty crashes by licence type

- Learner licence phase
- Provisional licence phase
- Open licence phase

No. of drivers in casualty crashes

Years after licensing

Your learner is here
Young drivers cont.

• Peers influential in risky behaviour of adolescents
  • Normative to be risky during adolescence
    • Developing identity, testing boundaries
  • Normative social influence
    • Breadth of risky behaviours (e.g., alcohol, cigarettes)
  • Engage in risky behaviour to ‘fit in’
  • Reluctance to resist negative influence due to potential social sanctions
Young drivers cont.

• Graduated driver licensing (GDL) is principal intervention in Australia
  • GDL programs differ by jurisdiction
  • In Queensland
    • **Learner**: 16 years minimum age, 12 month minimum duration, logbook recording minimum 100 hours supervised practice, *mobile phone restrictions*, zero BAC
    • **Provisional 1 (P1)**: 17 years minimum age, 12 month minimum duration, *mobile phone restrictions*, *nighttime passenger limits*, zero BAC, high powered vehicle restrictions
Methodology

• Study 1
  • **Study 1A**: Statewide online survey of 761 tertiary students aged 17-25 years with a Provisional licence
  • **Study 1B**: Small group/individual interviews with 21 young drivers with Learner or Provisional licence

• Study 2
  • Statewide online survey of 1170 young drivers when passed practical driving assessment

• Study 3
  • Statewide online survey of 390 young drivers from Study 2, six months later
Results
Results: Learner licence phase

• Pre-Licence driving (PLD) reported by 13% of Learners
  • 15.7% of Learners in a relationship reported PLD
  • 11.6% of Learners not in a relationship reported PLD

• Unsupervised driving (UD) reported by 13% of Learners
  • 16.2% of Learners in a relationship reported UD
  • 11.2% of Learners not in a relationship reported UD
Results: Provisional 1 (P1) licence

- Peers were models to imitate or ignore
  - 20.6% reported friends thought bending road rules was okay
    - 27.5% of males, 16.8% of females
  - 44.4% reported friends did not always follow the road rules
  - 62.0% reported they knew risky young drivers
  - 10.5% reported they base their driving on their friends’ driving
Results: P1 licence phase cont.

- 38.7% reported friends had been caught for driving-related offence
  - 64.5% of young drivers detected offending during first six months of P1 licence reported friends had also been detected for an offence
- 39.7% reported friends had been involved in a car crash
- P1 drivers who reported their friends had crashed or been detected offending reported significantly more risky driving behaviour (BYNDS)
Results: P1 licence phase cont.

- 10.1% reported pressure from *friends to bend* road rules
  - 15.9% of males, 7.6% of females
- 8.8% reported pressure from *passengers to bend* road rules
  - 15.0% of males, 6.0% of females

- 53.5% reported pressure from *friends to follow* road rules
  - 47.8% of males, 56.1% of females
- 60.1% reported pressure from *passengers to follow* rules
  - 53.0%, of males, 62.0% of females
Results: P1 licence phase cont.

• Peers as source of punishment and rewards
  • P1 drivers believed reaction of friends depended on outcome: ‘bad’ versus ‘not bad’
    • Called you stupid: no bad outcome: 36.5%, bad outcome 61.6%
    • Said nothing: no bad outcome 21.4%, bad outcome 6.4%
  • More risky driving behaviour predicted if P1 drivers had seen their friends bend road rules, and if they “made the trip more exciting” by bending road rules
  • Less risky driving predicted if P1 drivers believed “my friends would have thought I was really stupid”
Discussion

• Peers influential during all three licence phases (pre-Licence/ Learner/ P1)
  • Recognised by adolescents?
  • Recognised by parents?
    • Intervention?
• Models to imitate and ignore
  • Risky friends’ behaviour imitated by novices
    • Broad enforcement initiatives
    • Early and continued intervention?
Discussion cont.

- Peers influential cont.
  - Sources of driving-related attitudes
    - Most friends believed to hold safe attitudes,
      - BUT engaged in risky driving
    - Intervention?
  - Source of punishments and rewards
    - Dependent on outcome
      - Intervention?
  - Pressure to follow rules
    - Capitalise on this in an intervention
Strengths and Limitations

• Self-report data (surveys, interviews), but difficult to investigate any other way
• Low response rate in online surveys, despite incentives
• Greater participation of females (moderation analyses)
• Generalisability of findings
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Questions?

Dr Bridie Scott-Parker, bscottpa@usc.edu.au