

Adolescent Risk Research Unit

Rise, and shine.

Speeding by young novice drivers: What can personal characteristics and psychosocial theory add to our understanding?

Scott-Parker, B., Hyde, M.K., Watson, B. & King, M.J. (2013)

Accident Analysis & Prevention, 50, 242-250

The full article is accessible at - <http://bit.ly/29dhp25>



Why do this Research?

(In conjunction with other papers [Understanding the psychosocial factors influencing the risky behaviour of young drivers](#) and [“They’re lunatics on the road”: Exploring the normative influences of parent, friends, and police on young novices’ risky driving decisions](#)). Speeding is one of the most common and pervasive risky road use behaviours by drivers of all ages, but is particularly problematic for young and novice drivers given their driving inexperience. Travelling in excess of posted speed limits reduces the time available to detect hazards and to respond appropriately to those hazards. Given that young drivers are already a vulnerable road user group (due to these inexperience related factors), we need to understand what variables contribute to speeding behaviour so that we may effectively intervene.

What did we do?

378 young novice drivers from across the state of Queensland, Australia, completed the Behaviour of Young Novice Drivers Scale, in addition to reporting a range of attitudes and behaviours during the prelicence/learner licence and provisional licence phases. We also used Aker’s social learning theory and elements of Gerrard and Gibons’ prototype willingness model to guide our research questions.

What did we find?

Personal characteristics such as driver gender and their current level of depression predicted self reported speeding, such that if they were male and they reported experiencing depression they were more likely to report speeding whilst driving.

Car ownership and sensitivity to reward also predicted self reported speeding; young drivers who had their own car and who were more sensitive to external rewards (e.g., arriving at a destination more quickly, or having their friends think that they were cool for engaging in reported risky driving) reported more speeding and by larger margins.

Personal attitudes, a variable captured within Akers’ theory, also explained speeding, such that if they had risky attitudes towards speeding (i.e., ‘it’s okay to speed’) they were more likely to report speeding behaviour. Previous driving behaviour, however, remained the strongest predictor of current driving behaviour; if the learner reported speeding, they were much more likely to report speeding as a P-plater and by larger margins.

What does it mean?

A wealth of young driver research does not apply theoretical models. However, this research revealed that theoretical models can not only guide our understanding of risk factors, but also guide the direction of interventions. For example, prior behaviour is highly influential, with young drivers much more likely to currently report speeding by larger margins if they had sped previously. Therefore, interventions should target speeding by the learner. Interventions should also consider targetting the supervising driver, which is most commonly the parent.