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Social Norms and Identity Relevance: A Motivational Approach to Normative Behavior

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Two studies demonstrated that greater identification with a group was associated with more positive emotions for members who conformed with versus violated the group's norms. These effects were found with injunctive norms, which specify what members should do or what they ideally would do, but emerged less consistently with descriptive norms, which specify what members typically do. Descriptive norms affected emotional responses when they acquired identity-relevance by differentiating an important ingroup from a rival outgroup. For these descriptive norms, much like injunctive norms, greater identification yielded more positive emotions following conformity than violation. The authors suggest that positive emotions and self-evaluations underlie conformity with the norms of self-defining groups.

Keywords: norms; descriptive; injunctive; identity; self

Of the many norms that can influence a person's behavior, the norms of important reference groups should be especially powerful. One reason for the impact of such norms is that they have implications for self-related emotions. Deutsch and Gerard (1955) made early mention of this idea in their suggestion that normatively based agreement with the positive expectations of another, who could be oneself, another person, or a group, increases positive emotions and leads to the experience of solidarity rather than alienation. Although initial evidence suggests that positive self-evaluations and emotions can motivate normative behavior (Wood, Christensen, Hebl, & Rothgerber, 1997), it remains unclear whether such motivations apply equally to all

norms. Specifically, does conforming to a norm based on what people should do (injunctive norms) generate the same positive emotions as norms based on what people typically do (descriptive norms)? The present research uses an experimental design to assess the role of self-evaluations in normative behavior. Furthermore, the identity-relevance of the norm is proposed as a unifying explanation for the emotional consequences of conforming to descriptive versus injunctive norms.

Social Identities and Group Norms

Social identity theory (Tajfel, 1982) and self-categorization theory (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987) provide complementary explanations for why group norms are likely to serve as behavioral standards. In general, norms should only guide behavior to the extent that people have adopted the relevant group identity. From a social identity perspective, normative behavior represents a way of generating positive distinctiveness. People should be motivated to conform to norms that make the ingroup identity better than and

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different from an outgroup (Rubin & Hewstone, 1998). Taking a more cognitive approach, self-categorization theory emphasizes that beliefs about appropriate behavior follow directly from one's self-perception as a group member. These self-perceptions are a function of the social milieu and, in general, a social identity will be adopted that maximizes contextual similarities within a group and differences between groups. Based on these analyses, two factors should underlie the use of group norms as behavioral standards: individual differences in motivation to identify with a group and situational factors that increase self-categorization as a group member.

Considerable research has already documented the importance of situational factors in generating normative behavior. For example, group polarization effects—a case of social influence in which individual opinions shift toward the group norm following discussion—are contingent on the contextual salience of the given social identity (Haslam, McGarty, & Turner, 1996; Turner et al., 1987). Doise (1969) was among the first to document this phenomenon by demonstrating that the psychological presence of a rival group increased polarization. In a similar way, the salience of social identities has been crucial for explaining behavior under conditions of deindividuation (Spears, Postmes, Lea, & Watt, 2001). Reicher (1984) demonstrated that by elevating the salience of a science-student group, deindividuation increased normative responses concerning vivisection. Across the studies described above, the increased salience of an outgroup likely enhanced the “comparative fit” of the social identity for group members and therefore increased the likelihood of group-based behavior (Oakes, Haslam, & Turner, 1991).

In addition to situational constraints, individual differences in social identification should moderate the accessibility of a social identity and, in turn, whether group norms are used as a standard for appropriate behavior. High and low identifiers appear to respond differently to a variety of group-related outcomes, including threat (Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999), inclusion of others in the group (Castano, Yzerbyt, Bourguignon, & Seron, 2002), and leadership (Platow & van Knippenberg, 2001). Social identification also has been shown to moderate normative behavior. For example, student norms concerning exercise and sun-protective behaviors were found to influence college students' behavior only for those who strongly identified with their university (Terry & Hogg, 1996; see also Terry & Hogg, 2001).

The most direct evidence of social identification's role in the emotional outcomes of normative behavior is found in the Wood et al. (1997) research on sex-role norms. Participants in this research were classified into

groups based on whether they had personally adopted normative sex-typed social standards in the sense that they identified with the typical member of their sex. When high-identifying participants experienced social relationships congruent with sex-role norms (i.e., dominant relationships for men and communal relationships for women), their self-concepts became more favorable than when they experienced norm-noncongruent relationships (i.e., dominance for women and communion for men). In contrast, people who did not identify with their sex-role group were not systematically affected by the experienced social relationships. These findings, and those in studies described above, converge on the conclusion that people who identify with a reference group are more likely to conform to the group's norms and are more likely to feel good about themselves when they do so.

Situational factors likely work in concert with individual difference factors to determine self-categorization and, by extension, the identity-relevance of any given norm. We anticipate that of the many norms present in a given context, those that are relevant for the group identity will be used as a standard for evaluating behavior. For example, if the norms of individual workgroups are different from those of the larger organization (Moreland & Levine, 2001), conformity to workgroup norms is likely to the extent that doing so generates perceptions of positive distinctiveness from other groups (via motivated influences on self-categorization) and to the extent that the workgroup identity is particularly salient in a given context (via cognitive influences on self-categorization). In short, when people define themselves as group members they incorporate the group norms into their own identity. These norms then serve as standards against which they evaluate their own behavior.

Types of Norms

Several theories of normative behavior have suggested a distinction between injunctive and descriptive norms (Cialdini, Kallgren, & Reno, 1991; Cialdini, 1975; Marques, Paez, & Abrams, 1998; Shaffer, 1983). Injunctive norms have a moral tone and characterize what people should do, whereas descriptive norms represent typical behavior or what most people do regardless of its appropriateness. Distinguishing between these types of norms follows the long-standing philosophical difference between the ought and the is (e.g., Hume, 1777/1983). This distinction also is reflected in theories in which people are influenced by others to gain personal and social rewards versus to act effectively (e.g., Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; see also Chaiken, Giner-Sorolla, & Chen, 1996; Cialdini & Trost, 1998; Wood, 2000).

Norms develop injunctive characteristics based on the perceived sanctions associated with conformity or violation (Cialdini & Trost, 1998). Although injunctive norms are often enforced by social rewards and punishments, the regulation of normative behavior may become an internal process. From the perspective of self-theories, injunctive norms should serve as self-standards that specify whom people ideally would like to be or whom they ought to be (Higgins, 1987; Moretti & Higgins, 1999; Schwartz, 1977; Schwartz & Fleishman, 1978). In general, when people act in ways that are congruent with self-standards they feel pride or relief, whereas failures to match self-guides result in feelings of guilt or anxiety (Higgins, 1987; James, 1890/1948; Rogers, 1961; Schwartz, 1977). A number of theories of group behavior have made reference to the general idea that people experience positive emotions when affirming the injunctive norms of groups and negative emotions when violating them (e.g., Abrams & Hogg, 1988; Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Sherif & Sherif, 1956).

In contrast to the explicit sanctions of injunctive norms, descriptive norms provide insight into typical conduct. By invoking the heuristic, "What most people are doing is probably the correct thing to do," people are relying on descriptive norms to identify adaptive behavior (Cialdini et al., 1991). Social influence paradigms have, for example, found that the descriptive norm represented in others' behavior can lead people to congregate on a street corner and gaze skyward (Milgram, Bickman, & Berkowitz, 1969). Given that descriptive norms communicate appropriate group behavior in a specific setting, they may provide less information than injunctive norms about the appropriate conduct of group members across different settings (Reno, Cialdini, & Kallgren, 1993). Even more important, because descriptive norms do not reflect a favored identity, they may not be adopted as behavioral standards for what people should do. As a result, the processes guiding the impact of descriptive norms may not be the same as those for injunctive norms; that is, people may not consistently feel pride upon conformity to descriptive norms and they may experience surprise rather than guilt or anxiety upon violation of such norms. Indeed, some people may even value behaviors that are atypical and distinctive (e.g., Brewer, 1991; Snyder & Fromkin, 1977).

All models of social influence, however, do not distinguish between people's reasons for following injunctive and descriptive norms. In particular, self-categorization theory (Turner, 1991) anticipates that a single process underlies both types of norm conformity. In this view, descriptive norms should become intrinsically relevant for one's social identity when associated with a valued group. In turn, conformity with or violation of an identity-relevant descriptive norm should affect self-

evaluation much like injunctive norms. Thus, a focus of the present research was to examine whether descriptive norms of self-defining groups serve as self-standards for behavior in the same way as do injunctive norms of such groups.

STUDY 1

To explore our motivational approach to normative behavior, the study's design included four predictors. These predictors included a measurement of participants' identification with a reference group and manipulations of norm conformity versus violation, the descriptive versus injunctive nature of the norm, and the extent to which the norm was related to the reference group or no clear group. In each experimental session, a research participant and a confederate worked on a puzzle that the confederate was unable to solve. The experimenter informed participants that because they did not offer assistance to the confederate (the setting was structured so that it was unlikely they would do so), they had either conformed to or violated a norm. In this way, all participants engaged in identical behavior by working on and solving their own puzzle but received feedback from the experimenter that labeled their behavior as norm congruent or incongruent. Participants then reported their feelings about themselves and completed a scale that evaluated the discrepancy between their actual self and their self-standards, which was our measure of self-evaluation (see Higgins, 1987; Moretti & Higgins, 1999).

When participants' behavior was labeled as conforming to or violating a norm, the descriptive or injunctive nature of the norm was varied through direct feedback from the experimenter.¹ For descriptive norms, the experimenter explicitly labeled the participants' behavior as reflecting a work style that was typical or not in the experimental setting. For injunctive norms, the experimenter gave the behavior a positive label of not cheating or a negative label of not helping. The normative labels of cheating or helping were selected because these activities are commonly performed by students with respect to their peers. These behaviors also had similar moral significance for study participants because the code of honor at their university included avoiding cheating as well as offering assistance to others.

The reference group mentioned in the normative feedback was students at the local university. We also included a control condition in which participants received the normative feedback without mention of any particular social group. In this way, social identity was made more salient in the reference group conditions, whereas personal identity was more salient in the control condition. We anticipated that normative feedback would only have implications for social identity and,

therefore, would not be especially relevant for the emotional and self-evaluative responses of participants in the no-group control condition.

We expected that our three manipulations of the norm's characteristics would have different effects depending on the participant's identification with the student body. Thus, our hypotheses are based on the general premise that greater group identification increases use of identity-relevant norms as behavioral standards. This general effect would be evident in a two-way interaction between group identification and behavioral conformity versus violation of the norm. Specifically, participants who strongly identified with the student group should feel better about themselves when they conformed to identity-relevant norms than when they violated these norms. Conversely, those who did not identify with the group should not have different emotional responses for conformity versus violation. For these low identifiers, the student group should not be an important source of behavioral standards.

We did not, however, expect that the two-way interaction between identification and behavior would emerge in all settings. Instead, high identifiers should respond emotionally to normative behavior only when the norm reflects the behavior of their particular group. People are unlikely to categorize themselves as group members or use norms as behavioral standards when the norms reflect an unidentified group. Thus, we expected the significant two-way interaction between group identification and behavior to emerge only when the group identity was made salient.

Furthermore, it seemed that injunctive norms, which inherently provide evaluative standards for social identity, would be more likely than descriptive norms to be relevant for participants' social identity. Thus, we expected the differential reactions to norm conformity versus violation among students who identified with their college reference group to emerge not just when the norm was tied to a specific group identity but also when the norm was injunctive (i.e., involved helping or cheating). However, we were less certain how participants would respond to descriptive norms of an important reference group. If the typicality information represented by descriptive norms was not as identity-relevant as injunctive norms, then a positive relationship between group identification and positive emotions would only emerge in the injunctive norms condition. Such a finding would be consistent with previous research documenting the modest relationship between social identification and self-esteem (Christensen, 2004).

In summary, these hypotheses suggested a four-way interaction among our predictors. Within the overall interaction, we expected a simple three-way interaction when the reference group was salient but we expected

no clear effects for the no-group control conditions. Furthermore, this simple three-way interaction should be driven by a two-way interaction between identification and behavior for injunctive norms but no interaction for descriptive norms. Within the simple two-way interaction for injunctive norms, we expected that conformity would yield more positive emotions and smaller self-standard discrepancies for participants who identified with the group. Finally, conforming with or violating an injunctive norm should not systematically affect the emotional responses of those who did not identify with the group.

Method

PARTICIPANTS

Seventy-nine men and 63 women from Texas A&M University participated in partial fulfillment of a course requirement in their introductory psychology class. Several established techniques for outlier analysis² were employed to remove three cases, leaving a final sample of 139 for the analyses described below.

PROCEDURE

Experimental sessions were conducted with two participants, one of whom was actually a female confederate. A total of five female confederates were used in the experiment, and analyses examining the impact of confederate identity revealed no significant effects. The confederate was blind to the experimental hypotheses and did not know the experimental condition until she, along with the participant, heard the experimental manipulation from the experimenter. The experiment was presented as a study of why people perform better or worse on certain tasks. Before beginning the task, participants, along with the confederate, completed a measure of identification with the Texas A&M student body (see below).

After completing the measures, the experimenter introduced the task. The participant and the confederate each worked on a Rubik's Cube puzzle with the goal of obtaining six squares of the same color on any side. This set a relatively easy performance goal that was met by all participants yet plausibly was not met by the confederate. The confederate was trained to evidence trouble completing the task. She sighed and appeared frustrated while working on it. The participant and the confederate worked at separate desks to discourage discussion and to make it less likely the participant would actually offer assistance. The two participants who offered assistance were dropped from the study.

The experimenter left the room while the participants completed the task. When the experimenter returned, the confederate explained that she was unable to complete the task, and the participant indicated that

he or she had successfully completed it. These responses allowed the experimenter to respond with scripted feedback delivering the normative manipulations (see below). The confederate asked the experimenter to repeat his statement, and this allowed the experimenter to restate the manipulation.

Participants then completed a final questionnaire that supposedly assessed various factors that might contribute to their task performance. The experimenter carefully chose two questionnaires from a large stack, each of which repeated the normative feedback for the appropriate condition. This procedure was used to emphasize to the participant that we were interested in their responses based on their behavior in the previous portion of the experiment (e.g., responses from people who worked separately on the task). Following completion of the questionnaire, the participant was probed for suspicion and debriefed. None of the participants reported being aware of the purpose of the experiment.

NORMATIVE FEEDBACK: NO-GROUP CONTROL CONDITION

In the control condition, the experimenter's feedback did not mention a group and thus implicitly referred to the normative behavior of people in general.

Conform-descriptive norm. The feedback included, "You worked separately on the task. That is, like most people who have done this study, you worked separately on the task from your partner."

Violate-descriptive norm. The feedback included, "You worked separately on the task. That is, unlike most people who have done this study, you worked separately on the task from your partner."

Conform-injunctive norm. The feedback included, "You worked independently on the task from your partner and did not cheat. You upheld the idea of not cheating."

Violate-injunctive norm. The feedback included, "You did not help your partner. You did not uphold the idea of helping others."

NORMATIVE FEEDBACK: REFERENCE GROUP CONDITION

In the reference group condition, the feedback referred to the Texas A&M student body.

Conform-descriptive norm. The feedback included, "You are an A&M student who worked separately on the task. That is, like most Aggies who have done this study, you worked separately on the task from your partner."

Violate-descriptive norm. The feedback included, "You are an A&M student who worked separately on the task. That is, unlike most Aggies who have done this study, you worked separately on the task from your partner."

Conform-injunctive norm. The feedback included, "You are an A&M student who worked independently on the

task from your partner and did not cheat. You upheld the Aggie motto of not cheating."

Violate-injunctive norm. The feedback included, "You are an A&M student who did not help your partner. You did not uphold the Aggie motto of helping others."

MEASURES

Identification with Texas A&M students. A three-item measure assessed the extent to which participants identified with students at Texas A&M University (see Wood, Pool, Leck, & Purvis, 1996). On 9-point scales, the items assessed agreement with the attitudes and values of Texas A&M University students, the importance of personifying these values and attitudes, and the importance of being similar to Texas A&M students. Responses were aggregated across items ($\alpha = .82$).

Self-related emotion. Participants responded about "how they feel right now." On a scale anchored by 1 (*very weak positive feelings*) and 9 (*very strong positive feelings*), they indicated the extent to which they felt good. On a scale anchored by 1 (*very weak negative feelings*) and 9 (*very strong negative feelings*), they indicated the extent to which they felt bad. Finally, on a scale anchored by 1 (*not at all*) and 9 (*strongly*), they indicated the extent to which they felt energized. Ratings of good feelings and energy were correlated, $r(138) = .63$, and therefore were combined into an index of positive emotion. Bad feelings were less strongly correlated with energy level, $r(138) = -.38$, and were analyzed separately.

Self-standard discrepancies. In a modified version of the belief-elicitation procedure suggested by Higgins (1987), participants first listed up to 10 attributes they believed that they actually possessed (see Wood et al., 1997). On 5-point scales ranging from 0 (*slightly*) to 4 (*extremely*), they then rated the extent to which they possessed each attribute, the degree to which to which they ideally would possess each trait, and the degree to which they ought to possess each trait.³ Analyses were conducted on discrepancy scores formed by subtracting ratings of the attributes in participants' actual self-concepts from those represented in their self-standards (Higgins, 1987); that is, discrepancy scores were calculated to represent the mean divergence (in terms of the absolute values) between the attribute ratings in the actual-ideal pair and the actual-ought pair. The two discrepancy measures were highly correlated, $r(123) = .75$, and were averaged into a single index of self-standard discrepancy, which was considered a measure of self-evaluations.

Results

Multiple regression equations were calculated to evaluate the effects of group identification, group salience (reference group vs. no-group control), norm type

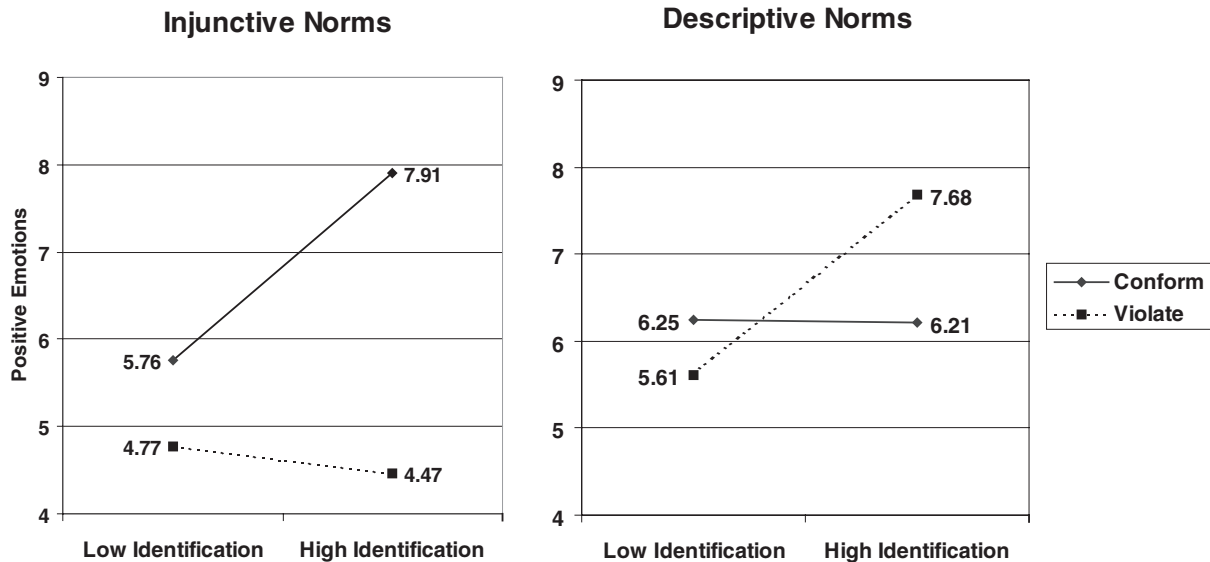


Figure 1 Study 1: Positive emotions across levels of group identification for injunctive and descriptive norms in the reference group condition.

(descriptive vs. injunctive), and behavior (conform vs. violate). Following Aiken and West (1991), group identification was analyzed as a centered, continuous variable, and the remaining three variables were dummy-coded. The analyses presented below focus on the predicted four-way interaction, and we only report the lower order interactions related to the decomposition of the overall effect. In addition to the analyses related to our hypotheses, main effects for each predictor are presented when statistically significant. No significant effects for sex emerged when it was included as a factor in the design, and the reported analyses do not include sex.

POSITIVE EMOTION

Multiple regression analyses yielded a significant effect for the overall model on ratings of positive emotions, $R^2 = 0.22$, $F(15, 122) = 2.29$, $p < .01$, and a significant four-way interaction, $b = -1.74$, $t(122) = -2.54$, $p < .05$. There was a main effect for behavior, which indicated that participants generally experienced more positive emotion following conformity than violation, $b = -0.78$, $t(133) = -2.91$, $p < .01$. Following our hypotheses, the four-way interaction was decomposed by examining the three-way interactions within both the reference group and no-group control conditions. When the reference group was salient, ratings of positive emotions yielded a significant three-way interaction, $b = 1.15$, $t(122) = 2.57$, $p < .05$ (see Figure 1). The figures that depict the hypothesized interactions were generated by recalculating the regression equations with group identification set at 1 standard deviation above the mean (high identification) or 1 standard deviation below the mean (low identification). As expected, the three-way interaction in the no-

group control condition was not significant, $b = 0.59$, $t(122) = 1.13$, *ns*. The reference group interaction was further decomposed into the simple two-way interactions by level of norm type. For injunctive norms, the interaction between behavior and group identification was marginally significant, $b = -0.55$, $t(122) = -1.77$, $p < .10$. Participants who strongly identified with the group felt better when they conformed to the injunctive norm than when they violated it, $b = -2.73$, $t(122) = -3.66$, $p < .01$. Those not identifying with the group, however, did not report more positive emotions when conforming to rather than violating an injunctive norm, $b = -0.99$, $t(122) = -1.49$, *ns*. Although not predicted, the simple two-way interaction for descriptive norms also was marginally significant, $b = 0.61$, $t(122) = 1.87$, $p < .10$. Further analyses suggested that high identifiers had increased positive affect when they violated a descriptive norm, $b = 1.48$, $t(122) = 1.95$, $p < .10$.

Analyses on bad feelings did not yield a significant four-way interaction, $b = 0.25$, $t(122) = -0.28$, *ns*. The only statistically significant effect was a main effect for behavior, $b = 0.68$, $t(133) = 2.12$, $p < .05$, such that people felt worse when they violated a norm than when they conformed.

SELF-STANDARD DISCREPANCIES

As with positive emotion, there was a significant effect for the overall model, $R^2 = 0.23$, $F(15, 105) = 2.10$, $p < .05$, as well as for the four-way interaction, $b = 0.37$, $t(105) = 2.07$, $p < .05$. Results indicated a marginally significant simple three-way interaction within the reference group condition, $b = -0.21$, $t(105) = -1.78$, $p < .10$, but not within the no-group control condition, $b = 0.16$, $t(105) = 1.19$,

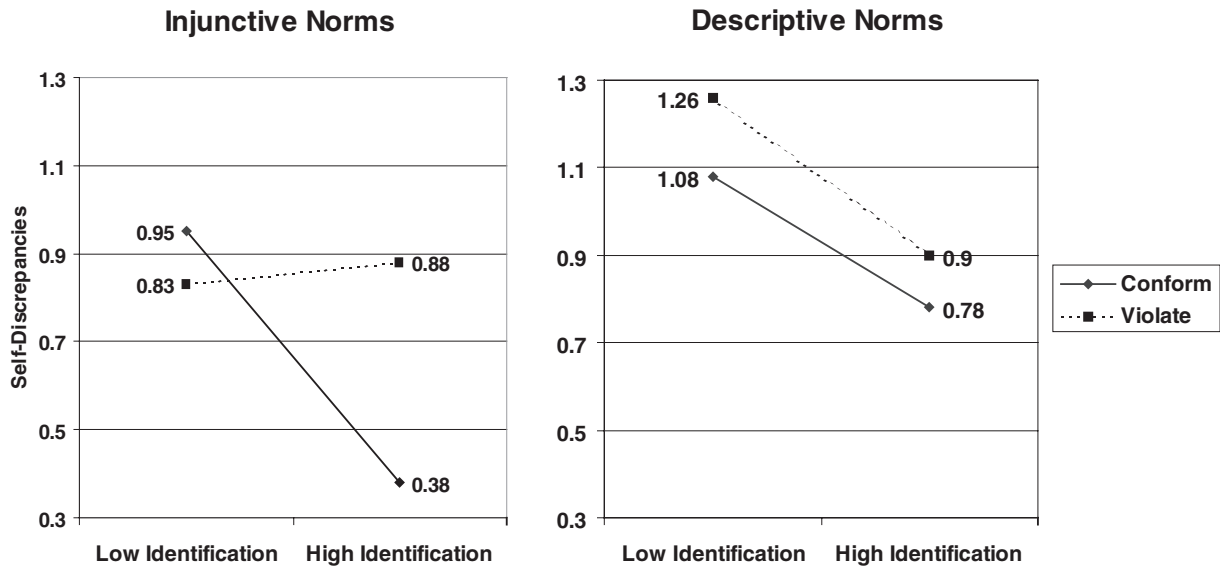


Figure 2 Study 1: Self-discrepancies across levels of group identification for injunctive and descriptive norms in the reference group condition.

ns. Within the reference group condition, injunctive norms generated the expected two-way interaction between identification and behavior, $b = 0.19$, $t(105) = 2.44$, $p < .05$, but descriptive norms did not, $b = -0.02$, $t(105) = -0.20$, *ns* (see Figure 2). Consistent with the results for positive emotion, high identifiers had smaller self-standard discrepancies when they conformed to an injunctive norm than when they violated it, $b = 0.49$, $t(105) = 2.60$, $p < .05$. For low identifiers, however, behavior related to an injunctive norm did not affect levels of self-standard discrepancies, $b = -0.12$, $t(105) = 0.70$, *ns*. For descriptive norms, there were only marginally significant simple main effects for identification, $b = -0.09$, $t(105) = -1.82$, $p < .10$, and behavior, $b = -0.26$, $t(105) = -1.98$, $p < .10$. In addition to these results, an unanticipated main effect for norm type, $b = 0.16$, $t(116) = 2.20$, $p < .05$, indicated that people generally had smaller self-standard discrepancies when behavior was labeled in terms of injunctive norms.

Discussion

Study 1 provided evidence that positive emotions and self-evaluations were affected by extent of conformity to identity-relevant injunctive norms. Specifically, those individuals who highly identified with the reference group of Texas A&M students reported more positive emotions and fewer discrepancies between their actual selves and their self-standards after conforming to rather than violating an injunctive norm of the student group. Demonstrating the importance of identity-relevance for predicting emotional and self-evaluative responses to normative behavior, the feedback had no significant

impact when it was not tied to a salient group identity and for participants who did not report that the group was self-relevant.

The results for negative emotions did not mirror the effects for positive emotions. The lack of correspondence between negative and positive emotions can be understood in the context of general debates about whether these are independent or bipolar responses (e.g., Cacioppo & Berntson, 1994; Russell & Carroll, 1999). Our use of separate measures for these constructs revealed that normative effects were limited to positive emotions, such that conformity to injunctive norms enhanced positive emotions but violation of these norms did not increase negative feelings. It is interesting to note that Wood et al.'s (1997) study of sex-role norms similarly observed minimal effects of norm conformity or violation on reports of negative emotions.

Another unexpected finding was that stronger identification was associated with increased positive emotions when violating descriptive norms tied to the group. It could be that learning about one's atypical behavior was interpreted as "uniqueness" rather than as "norm violation." This uniqueness might have been experienced by high identifiers as optimal distinctiveness (Brewer, 1991), whereby they reaped the concurrent benefits of being similar to yet different from other group members. Further research would be necessary to test such an explanation, especially given that the result was not replicated for the self-discrepancy measure.

Despite this unexpected finding for the violation of descriptive norms, conforming to injunctive norms consistently yielded greater positive emotions and smaller

self-discrepancies for those who identified more strongly with the group. We believe that the greater impact of injunctive norms emerged because they implicitly conveyed evaluative feedback about expected performance as a group member. Because injunctive norms are associated with expectations from the group, they are likely perceived as especially relevant for evaluating one's social identity. In contrast, the typicality information provided in descriptive norms is likely to be less pertinent for evaluating one's social identity. From this perspective, the identity-relevance of the norm is the factor that accounts for the differential impact of the two types of norms in this study, not the "injunctive" or "descriptive" nature of the norm per se. In situations in which descriptive norms become central for defining a social identity, we would expect that norm-congruent behavior would have implications for positive emotions and self-evaluations.

STUDY 2

To further examine the motivational effects of descriptive norms, we conducted a second study that increased the identity-relevance of a descriptive norm by placing participants in an explicitly intergroup context. Intergroup relations were not salient in Study 1. Rather, mentioning the student body in the reference group conditions presumably established an intragroup context and failure to mention a group in the control conditions presumably established an interpersonal context. According to self-categorization theory, the presence of an outgroup is important for an individual to categorize himself or herself as a group member and for that group identity to acquire psychological significance (Turner et al., 1987). Thus, it seemed plausible that contrasting ingroup and outgroup norms would provide an explicitly intergroup context that would increase the identity-relevance of descriptive norms. In these circumstances, descriptive norms may represent valued behavioral standards that solidify one's distinct group identity.

The design of the second study was similar to the first in that participants completed a problem-solving task, and the normative manipulation was presented as experimental feedback about their performance on that task. Specifically, participants were given feedback about their own performance strategies, the typical strategies of their ingroup (Texas A&M students), and the typical strategies of a rival outgroup (University of Texas students). This information indicated that participants' behavior either conformed to or violated a descriptive norm of their student group and that the norm either did or did not differentiate between their own and another group. Thus, manipulations of conformity/violation behavior and the level of differentiation between the groups produced a 2×2 between-subjects

design. As with Study 1, group identification also was included as a measured, continuous predictor. Following the manipulations, participants completed the same measures of positive emotions and self-standard discrepancies used in Study 1. In addition, students completed several items that were intended to measure their retrospective evaluation of their strategies. Effects for these items were expected to be similar to those for positive emotions: Behaviors that lead to positive emotions also should be evaluated more positively.

As with the first study, the general premise was that greater identification should yield more positive emotions when one conforms to, rather than violates, an identity-relevant norm; however, low-identifiers should not respond differentially to conformity versus violation. This two-way interaction between identification and behavior should emerge for descriptive norms that differentiate between the groups because the intergroup context should make typical behavior relevant for one's social identity. Similar to the results from Study 1, we did not expect this two-way interaction for the nondifferentiating descriptive norms. Rather, descriptive norms that do not differentiate between groups should not generate a consistent pattern of response because they are not especially relevant for one's social identity. Thus, our predictions involved a three-way interaction among participants' identification with the group, whether participants' behavior conformed to or violated the norm, and whether the norms differentiated the ingroup from an outgroup.

Method

PARTICIPANTS

Forty men and 107 women from Texas A&M University participated in partial fulfillment of a course requirement in their introductory psychology class. Using the same procedures as Study 1, six outliers were removed from further analysis to yield a final N of 141.

PROCEDURE

Prescreening. At the beginning of the semester, as part of a mass testing session, participants completed a measure of identification with Texas A&M students (see below).

Laboratory session. Experimental sessions were conducted individually. The experiment was described as an investigation of problem-solving strategies. Supposedly, previous research had identified three factors that comprise a person's task strategies and the present experiment was to investigate these with Texas A&M students and University of Texas–Austin students (a rival school).

Students completed a modified version of the winter survival task (see below) and marked their responses on a computerized scoring key. The experimenter then

purportedly scored these and gave participants a computer-generated printout that ostensibly indicated their task strategies on the three factors. In actuality, the computer printout was prearranged to convey the two experimental manipulations.

On the printout, the three strategy factors were labeled as R, C, and S. For each strategy, bar charts displayed scores (from one to five) for the participant, the typical Texas A&M student, and the typical University of Texas student. At the bottom of the page, the printout stated, "Note: Factor C." The experimenter explained that this study mainly concerned Factor C. Students were told that higher or lower scores on Factor C represented different types of task strategies but that one strategy was not better than the other.

In reality, only scores on Factor C were manipulated across conditions; scores on the other two factors were similar for the participant, Texas A&M students, and University of Texas students. To manipulate whether participants conformed with or violated a descriptive norm, they were told that their Factor C strategy was the same as or different than the typical Texas A&M student. The printout also manipulated whether the norm differentiated Texas A&M and University of Texas students. Half of the students were informed that the two groups differed on Factor C, whereas the other half were told that they usually used the same strategy. In this way, participants were informed that their behavior either conformed with or violated a descriptive norm for their group, and furthermore, that this norm did or did not differentiate between the two groups. Each participant was debriefed individually following completion of the dependent measures. None of the students reported suspicion about the experiment.

FEEDBACK ON THE COMPUTER PRINTOUT

Conform-differentiating norm. Texas A&M and University of Texas students supposedly used different task strategies on Factor C; the participant used the same strategy as Texas A&M students.

Violate-differentiating norm. Texas A&M and University of Texas students supposedly used different task strategies on Factor C; the participant used a different strategy than Texas A&M students, and thus, the same strategy as the rival group.

Conform-nondifferentiating norm. Texas A&M and University of Texas students supposedly used the same task strategies on Factor C; the participant also used the same strategy.

Violate-nondifferentiating norm. Texas A&M and University of Texas students supposedly used the same task strategies on Factor C; the participant used a different strategy than both groups.

MEASURES

Identification with Texas A&M students. Similar to the first study, a three-item scale was designed to assess the extent to which participants identified with Texas A&M. Due to an error, the anchors for one of the items, assessing extent of agreement with the attitudes and values of the Texas A&M University student body, were reversed. Unfortunately, it appeared that many participants did not respond to the actual scale anchors; the item-total correlation was only $r = .24$ for this question. Removing this item increased the reliability of the scale from $\alpha = 0.68$ to $\alpha = 0.90$. Therefore, we elected to use only two items for this scale, assessing how important it was to personalize the values and attitudes of the Texas A&M student body and to be similar to the Texas A&M student body.

Winter survival task. For the winter survival task, participants imagined that they were involved in a plane crash and then rated on a 1 (*not important*) to 5 (*very important*) scale the importance of a number of items for survival (adapted from Johnson & Johnson, 1975).

Self-related emotions. After receiving the feedback, participants were told that task performance is influenced by several factors and, as a result, they were asked to indicate how they feel right now. On scales identical to Study 1, students rated the extent to which they felt good, bad, and energized. Ratings of good feelings and energy were related, $r(140) = .70$, and combined into a measure of positive emotions. As with Study 1, ratings of bad feelings were not strongly correlated with the index of positive emotions, $r(140) = -.39$, and were not included in the construct. Consistent with the asymmetric responses to positive and negative emotions in Study 1, analyses on bad feelings did not yield any significant effects and thus will not be discussed further.

Self-standard discrepancies. Following the same procedure as Study 1, students completed a measure of discrepancies between their actual selves, their ideal selves, and the person they thought they ought to be. Although the patterns of means for the discrepancy scores were in the anticipated direction and thus were consistent with the injunctive norms in Study 1, no statistically significant effects emerged in the analyses on these measures and they will not be included in the results section.

Exploratory questions on retrospective evaluation of choices. At the end of the questionnaire we included three exploratory questions about participants' earlier answers to the winter survival task in light of the normative feedback. We reasoned that if a person feels better after conforming to a norm, then he or she also should be more satisfied with his or her behavior. On scales anchored by 1 (*not at all*) and 9 (*very much*), participants indicated whether they would make the same choices

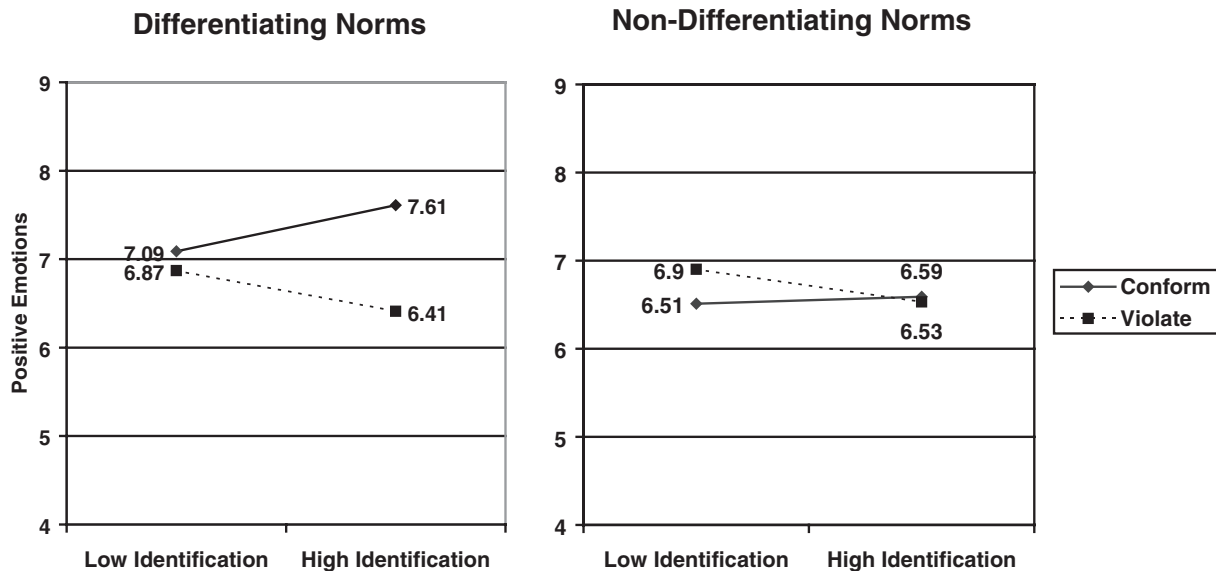


Figure 3 Study 2: Positive emotions across levels of group identification for group differentiating and nondifferentiating descriptive norms.

again on the task, how satisfied they were with their choices on the task, and whether they would be interested in learning more about correct task strategies. Reliability analyses revealed relatively low internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.33$); therefore, each item was analyzed separately. Only analyses on retrospective satisfaction yielded any significant effects, and therefore, the other two items will not be discussed further.

Results

As in Study 1, multiple regression equations were calculated with predictors of group differentiation (norm differentiates vs. does not differentiate groups), behavior (conform vs. violate), group identification (continuous), and their interactions. Only lower order effects related to the hypotheses and statistically significant main effects are presented. Because initial analyses that included participant sex revealed that this factor did not yield any significant effects, it was not included in the reported analyses.

POSITIVE EMOTION

Multiple regression analyses yielded a marginally significant effect for the overall model on ratings of positive emotion, $R^2 = 0.08$, $F(7, 133) = 1.85$, $p < .10$, and a marginally significant three-way interaction, $b = -0.42$, $t(133) = -1.67$, $p < .10$ (see Figure 3). Figures of the interactions were generated by recalculating regression equations with the intercept for group identification set at 1 standard deviation above the mean or 1 standard deviation below the mean for high and low identification, respectively. Consistent with our expectations, the sim-

ple two-way interaction approached significance for the group-differentiating descriptive norms, $b = 0.29$, $t(133) = 1.69$, $p < .10$, but not for descriptive norms that held across groups, $b = 0.13$, $t(133) = 0.71$, *ns*. Participants who strongly identified with the group felt better when they conformed to (vs. violated) a descriptive norm that differentiated between their group and another group, $b = 1.19$, $t(133) = 3.06$, $p < .01$. The normativeness of one's behavior did not influence positive emotions for those who did not identify with the group, $b = 0.22$, $t(133) = 0.50$, *ns*. Beyond the results related to our hypotheses, there was a main effect for behavior, $b = 0.47$, $t(137) = 2.25$, $p < .05$, suggesting that people generally felt better after conforming to, rather than violating, a norm.

EXPLORATORY ANALYSES ON RETROSPECTIVE SATISFACTION

We anticipated that participants who believed that they conformed to a norm that distinguished between a valued ingroup and a rival outgroup would be more satisfied with their task choices. Results were consistent with this hypothesis for the overall model, $R^2 = 0.14$, $F(7, 132) = 3.02$, $p < .01$, and for the three-way interaction, $b = -0.59$, $t(132) = -2.03$, $p < .05$ (see Figure 4). This interaction was decomposed by examining the simple two-way interactions within the group-differentiation conditions. When the descriptive norm differentiated between the two groups, a significant interaction emerged, $b = 0.40$, $t(132) = 2.04$, $p < .05$. This interaction suggests that high-identifying students were more satisfied when they conformed to the norm than when they violated it, $b = 0.88$, $t(132) = 1.95$, $p = .05$, whereas the satisfaction of low-identifying

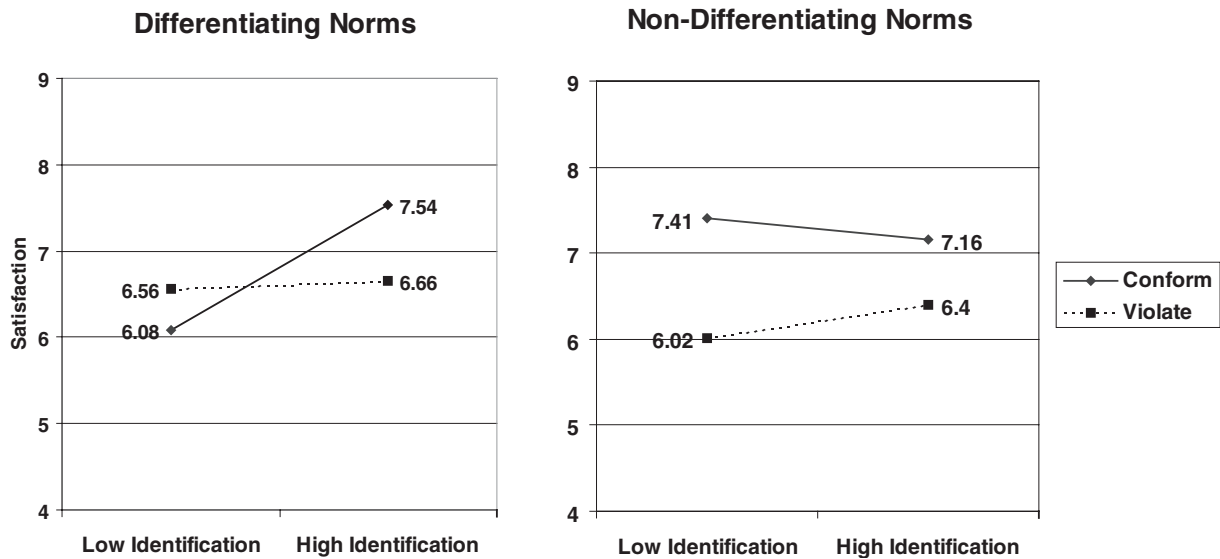


Figure 4 Study 2: Retrospective satisfaction across levels of group identification for group differentiating and nondifferentiating descriptive norms.

students did not depend on norm conformity or violation, $b = -0.48$, $t(132) = -0.95$, *ns*. As expected, when the norm did not differentiate between the groups, the interaction was not significant ($t < 1$). For these norms, conformity generated more satisfaction than violation when averaged across levels of group identification, $b = -1.07$, $t(132) = -3.05$, $p < .01$. As with positive emotions, these specific effects related to our hypotheses are in addition to a main effect for behavior, $b = 0.65$, $t(136) = 2.62$, $p < .01$, suggesting that people were generally more satisfied with their strategies following conformity than violation.

Discussion

The second study provides additional support for our analysis of the identity-related factors that regulate normative behavior. Although Study 1 suggested that descriptive norms have minimal impact on positive emotions, Study 2 paints a more complete and accurate picture of descriptive norms. These norms can have similar effects to injunctive norms when they become relevant for the social identity. For descriptive norms that differentiated between participants' reference group and a rival outgroup, participants who highly identified with the group felt better and were more satisfied with their task choices when they conformed with the norm than when they violated it. Similar to Study 1, no interaction emerged between normative behavior and group identification for descriptive norms that did not differentiate between the groups. The results from Study 2 extend and refine our theoretical analysis by documenting the

circumstances under which descriptive norms have implications for emotional responses.

Although the anticipated effects emerged for ratings of positive emotions and satisfaction, the expected pattern was not found for self-standard discrepancies. This contrasts with Study 1, in which conformity with the injunctive norms of self-defining groups yielded greater positive emotions as well as smaller discrepancies between one's actual self and self-standards. The lack of a relation between normative behavior and the self-discrepancy measures in Study 2 might have emerged because descriptive norms—even those that differentiate between groups—are not integrated as fully into participants' identities as are injunctive norms; that is, descriptive norms that differentiated between the groups may have been sufficiently powerful to influence positive emotions but not self-standard discrepancies, which likely represent more enduring evaluations of the self. In addition, the self-discrepancy measure may have been a less sensitive measure in the explicitly intergroup context of Study 2. Participants in intergroup contexts were likely to construe themselves in terms of their social rather than personal identity (Turner et al., 1987). Yet, changes in evaluating one's social identity may not have been captured by the self-discrepancy measure that tapped primarily personal aspects of the self. In this account, conformity versus violation affected evaluations of social identity for high identifiers, but our self-discrepancy measures were not tuned to capture these effects. Future research will be needed to examine these possibilities.

Norms that differentiate between groups likely represent only one case in which descriptive norms provide identity-relevant standards. For example, descriptive norms may be as impactful as injunctive norms when a group is in an early stage of development and members are engaged in defining themselves and establishing boundaries (see Worchel, Coutant-Sassic, & Grossman, 1991). In addition, new or aspiring members of a group who are motivated to assimilate may perceive descriptive norms as especially relevant for their social identity because typical behavior can be the best indicator of appropriate behavior (cf. Moreland & Levine, 1989).

Although we have argued that the increased positive emotions of participants who conformed with a group-differentiating norm were due to their alliance with the ingroup, it is also possible that it emerged from their separation from a rival outgroup. Because connections with the ingroup and separation from an outgroup have similarly positive implications for one's social identity, our analysis of the normative impact of identity-defining groups is compatible with either phenomenon. The nondifferentiating norm condition in the second study compared responses to conforming to both ingroup and outgroup norms versus violating the norms of both groups. Participants were generally more satisfied when conforming to both groups, which would implicate connections with the ingroup as the key factor. However, this result was not replicated for positive emotions. Thus, the present research does not reveal definitively whether alliance with the ingroup or separation from the outgroup is the primary cause underlying emotional responses to norm conformity. Rather, only the combination of similarity with the ingroup and separation from the outgroup (in the group-differentiating norm condition) yielded the anticipated increases in positive emotions for high identifiers. Such a complementary influence of ingroup and outgroup is consistent with theoretical conceptualizations of when and how people experience social identities (e.g., Tajfel, 1982; Turner et al., 1987).

GENERAL DISCUSSION

In this research, we adapted the general perspectives of social identity and self-categorization theories to develop a motivational approach to understanding when group norms will have an impact on self-related emotions. Three key factors emerged that determined the identity-relevance of a norm. Specifically, the impact of normative behavior on self-evaluations proved to depend on enduring motivations to identify with the group, the contextual relevance of the group, and the relevance of the norm for the group identity. Regarding

group identification, both studies demonstrated that the normativeness of one's behavior is not a universal evaluation tool. Rather, emotional responses to normative behavior are only likely for those who value the group identity. Our second key factor, the contextual relevance of the group, highlights that the norms for a given group are only relevant in some contexts. Study 1 demonstrated that norms must be tied directly to a group identity to affect emotional responses. The contextual relevance of the group augments the focus theory of normative behavior, which states that norms must be salient to guide actions (Cialdini et al., 1991; Kallgren, Reno, & Cialdini, 2000; Reno et al., 1993). Finally, the relevance of the norm for group identity proved to vary with whether the norms were descriptive or injunctive. Injunctive norms appear to be more universally relevant for social identities, whereas descriptive ones are only relevant for identity in specific situations, such as the intergroup context of Study 2.

Taken together, the characteristics of the person, the context, and the norm combine to influence the identity-relevance of one's behavior. When behavior was sufficiently identity-relevant, participants used normative information as an evaluative tool, which resulted in more positive emotions following conformity versus violation. In general, we speculate that these emotional outcomes are keys to the promulgation of normative behavior. Norms are likely to guide behavior to the extent that the normative act leads people to feel good about their social identity. This idea that normative behavior emerges from the emotional consequences of conforming with or violating normative standards builds on a basic premise of motivational theories of behavior (e.g., Higgins, 1987; Pittman, 1998) and mood regulation (e.g., Isen, 2000; Larsen, 2000).

Enduring motivations to identify with the group emerged as the most consistent factor directing normative impact. Specifically, when the group was more central for defining the participant's self-concept, the identity-relevance of the group norms was greater as well. Those participants who did not report high levels of identification with the group showed few systematic responses to the experimental manipulations. It seems unlikely, however, that these low-identifying participants never show consistent emotional responses to normative behavior. Rather, we would expect that the identities of these participants are defined by groups other than the student body. Conforming to the norms of such identity-relevant groups would generate comparable effects to those of the high-identifying students in the current research.

Finally, it is worth noting that our manipulations of norm conformity and violation affected positive but not

negative emotions (see also Wood et al., 1997). Although the null effects for negative emotions were unexpected, a large body of research has documented the independence of positive and negative emotions (e.g., Cacioppo, Gardner, & Berntson, 1999; Watson, Wiese, Vaidya, & Tellegen, 1999). For example, increased social activity is related to greater positive emotions but not to reduced negative emotions (Clark & Watson, 1988). The asymmetry between positive and negative emotions in the present studies might suggest that conformity with the norms of self-defining groups boosts self-worth, whereas violation poses little self-evaluative threat. However, it is also possible that participants were able to defend against the self-esteem threat posed by such one-time events in an experimental context. In real-world settings, norm conformity and violation may have more symmetrical effects on positive and negative emotions.

Conclusion

The perspective presented in this report builds on previous research that sought to answer historical criticisms about the use of norms as post hoc explanations for behavior (e.g., Darley & Latané, 1970). Our research suggests that identity-relevance—of both the group and the norm—is the key factor in determining whether norms are used as standards against which people evaluate their behavior. This perspective grows out of two strong theoretical traditions that previously emphasized the centrality of groups for one's identity (Tajfel, 1982; Turner et al., 1987) and contextual variations in the meaningfulness of different norms (Cialdini et al., 1991). Evidence for our perspective was generated by using a novel experimental paradigm that directly manipulated the apparent normativeness of a behavior.

Although the present findings provide initial support for our analysis of identity-relevant group norms, the research leaves open several important questions. The somewhat inconsistent effects across measures of self-evaluation, especially the failure to obtain the predicted results for the self-discrepancy measures in Study 2, suggest that the aspect of identity affected by norm conformity varies across settings. Future research would benefit from assessing participants' emotional responses for their personal identities separately from their group identities when addressing the impact of social norms. Indeed, the current research might have provided more robust support for the hypotheses if the dependent measures had been explicitly linked to social identity. In addition, the present studies did not evaluate whether the observed changes in self-emotions resulted in behavioral changes as well. We expect that people who conform to a norm and evaluate their identity positively will persist with these behaviors and increase their identifica-

tion with the group. However, because our participants who violated norms did not consistently report increases in negative emotions, it remains unclear whether norm violation will extinguish the associated behavior. Research addressing such behavioral outcomes would provide an important extension of the current findings.

In sum, our perspective expands on previous explanations of normative behavior by highlighting how identity-relevance of the group and the norm interact to generate self-related emotions associated with norm conformity or violation. This view is consistent with social identity and self-categorization theories by suggesting that normative impact emerges as norms are integrated into valued social identities. In addition, we demonstrated how the effects of social identification interact with the identity-relevance of a norm. Because injunctive norms represent the core values of social groups, this class of norms is linked consistently with social identity. Although descriptive norms are generally less indicative than injunctive norms of core values, descriptive norms can become identity-relevant when the norm assumes core status (e.g., differentiates members from a rival outgroup). In this way, both descriptive and injunctive norms may embody the ideals of a valued group. Ultimately, normative standards are likely to be personally rewarding and promote conformity in the future when the norm is relevant for one's group and the group is relevant for one's identity.

NOTES

1. The only prior research of which we are aware that has directly manipulated this aspect of norms is Cialdini and colleagues' research on littering (Cialdini, Kallgren, & Reno, 1991; Kallgren, Reno, & Cialdini, 2000; Reno, Cialdini, & Kallgren, 1993). These researchers distinguished between descriptive and injunctive norms primarily in terms of their social acceptability. For example, Cialdini et al. (1991) argued that the injunctive norm against littering was salient when participants observed a confederate either litter or pick up trash in a clean environment, whereas the descriptive norm that littering is common was salient when participants watched a confederate litter in a messy environment. Given that participants' littering was decreased by this salient injunctive norm and increased by the salient descriptive norm, it appears that the different types of norms are amenable to direct experimental manipulation.

2. Prior to conducting the analyses presented below, the data were screened for multivariate outliers in X space (via Mahalanobis distance), Y space (via deleted studentized residuals), and for influential cases (via Welsch-Kuh distance). Cases were only designated as outliers if their score on Mahalanobis distance exceeded $\chi^2(4, k = 141) = 6.74$, $p < .15$, the deleted studentized residual was greater than 1.0, and the Welsch-Kuh distance exceeded 0.30. All three removed cases were participants who reported low identification with Texas A&M (each identification value < 2.4).

3. Students also completed comparable scales regarding society's ideals and how society believes people ought to be. Given that we had no predictions regarding self-society discrepancies, and that no significant effects emerged on these ratings in the analysis, these measures will not be discussed further.

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