

T 111

Voluntary and enforced cooperation in social dilemmas: Transferring the “slippery slope framework” to the public transport system

Wahl, Ingrid; Endres, Miriam; Kirchler, Erich; Böck, Barbara

University of Vienna, Austria

ingrid.wahl@univie.ac.at

In social dilemmas (e. g., paying taxes vs. evading taxes, buying tickets for public transport vs. dodging fares) cooperation is crucial. Cooperation can either result from a spontaneous-cooperative behavior (i.e., voluntary cooperation) or from a rational-calculative decision (i.e., enforced cooperation). Even though both forms of cooperation have the same financial outcome, their quality and underlying mechanisms differ.

The three-dimensional “slippery slope framework” of tax psychology suggests that voluntary cooperation results from trust in authorities, whereas enforced cooperation originates from authorities’ power to monitor and punish non-cooperation. Thus, the intentions differ when cooperating voluntarily versus cooperating through enforcement. Furthermore, trusting people are motivated to cooperate even when detection of non-cooperation is unlikely. However, people who perceive too much power of authorities engage in non-cooperation when detection is unlikely (i.e., strategic behavior). Thus, trust in authorities counteracts strategic behavior, whereas power of authorities increases strategic behavior.

In the present study, we used the “slippery slope framework” established in tax psychology and applied it to another social dilemma situation: the dilemma of buying a ticket for public transport or of dodging fares. By means of snowball sampling an online-questionnaire was sent out to passengers of the public transport system in Vienna. Participants indicated their perceived trust in the transport company, their perceived power of the company, their voluntary cooperation, their enforced cooperation, and their intention to act strategically.

Results obtained from 110 participants indicated that trusting passengers cooperate voluntarily, while passengers who perceive the transport company as powerful cooperate because they are forced to do so. It has been shown that passengers who trust and cooperate voluntarily buy tickets even when they believe that they could dodge fares without punishment. However, passengers who perceive the transport company as powerful behave strategically in such situations and dodge fares.

Results are in line with the assumptions of the “slippery slope framework” and suggest that the framework’s assumptions can be transferred from tax psychology to other social dilemmas. We conclude that authorities should act service-oriented to promote people’s trust and to increase voluntary cooperation and to eventually decrease strategic behavior.

Trust, power, voluntary cooperation, enforced cooperation, taxes

Detlef Fetchenhauer, Julia Pradel, Erik Hoelzl (Eds.)

A boat trip through economic change

Proceedings of the
IAREP/SABE/ICABEEP 2010 Conference
Cologne



PABST SCIENCE PUBLISHERS

Lengerich, Berlin, Bremen, Miami, Riga, Viernheim, Wien, Zagreb

Bibliographic information published by Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data is available in the internet at <<http://dnb.ddb.de>>.

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are reserved, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in other ways, and storage in data banks. The use of registered names, trademarks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.

The authors and the publisher of this volume have taken care that the information and recommendations contained herein are accurate and compatible with the standards generally accepted by the time of publication. Nevertheless, it is difficult to ensure that all the information given is entirely accurate for all circumstances. The publisher disclaims any liability, loss, or damage incurred as a consequence, directly or indirectly, of the use and application of any of the content of this volume.

*Prof. Dr. Detlef Fetchenhauer
University of Cologne
Department of Economic and Social Psychology
Herbert-Lewin-Straße 2, D-50931 Köln, Germany
detlef.fetchenhauer@uni-koeln.de*

© 2010 Pabst Science Publishers, 49525 Lengerich, Germany
www.pabst-publishers.com, www.psychologie-aktuell.com
Typesetting: Armin Vahrenhorst

Printed in the EU by booksfactory.de

ISBN 978-3-89967-651-8