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Ignoring the Dangers Behind the Wheel: Distracted Driving Among College-Aged Students

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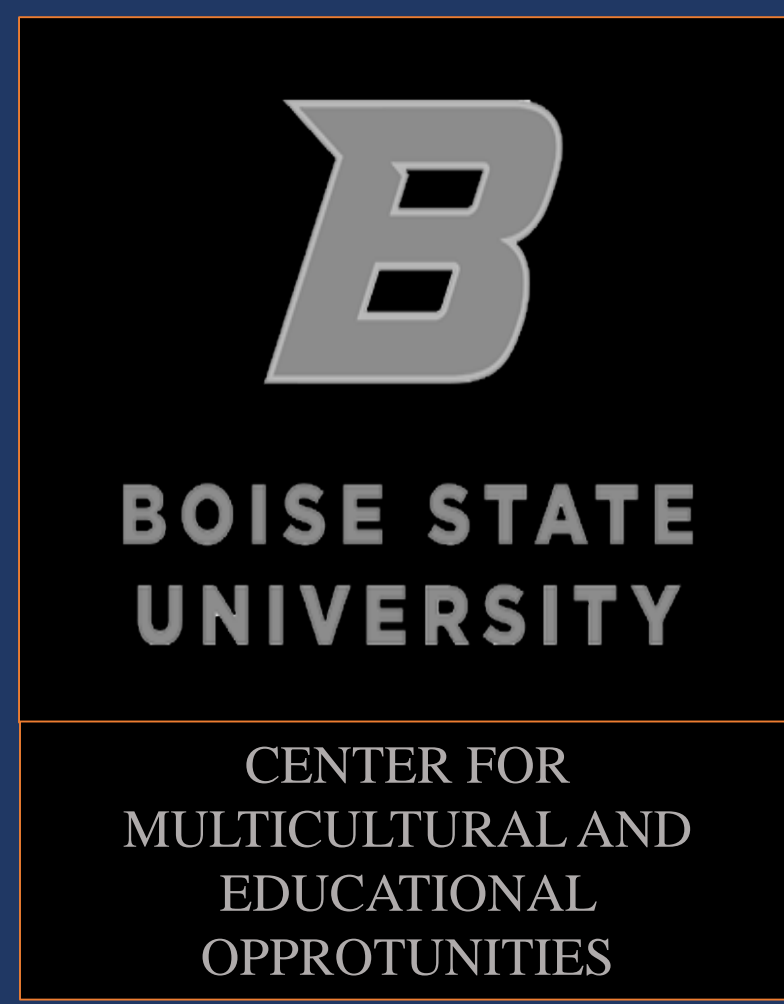
Ignoring the Dangers Behind the Wheel: Distracted Driving Among College-Aged Students

Abstract

Despite the dangers of and legalities concerning distracted driving (e.g., texting, calling or talking with handheld device, eating or drinking, viewing social media), many U.S. adults continue to drive while distracted. Undergraduate Psychology 101 students were surveyed regarding their distracted driving behaviors. In relation to this, students were asked whether they believed themselves to be responsible individuals. I hypothesized that college-aged drivers ignore the dangers and legal repercussions of distracted driving and feel that they are responsible individuals. Approximately 86% of students admitted to texting and driving; however, 98.7% of those students believed themselves to be responsible individuals. Even though undergraduate psychology students believe they are responsible individuals, they will put themselves as well as others at risk while distracted behind the wheel of a motor vehicle. Implications for drivers and plans for future research will be discussed.

Keywords

distracted driving, responsibility, risky behaviors, texting, college students



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Introduction

Despite the dangers of and legalities concerning distracted driving (e.g., texting, calling or talking with handheld device, eating or drinking, viewing social media), many U.S. adults continue to drive while distracted. College students are no different. Even though texting and driving among college-aged students can be dangerous and possibly fatal, college-aged students often feel invincible while behind the wheel. Current rates of accidents and fatalities are on the rise each year. In one study, 29% of college-aged drivers said they were involved in a motor vehicle accident, with 39% of them reporting that they were distracted by cellphone use. From 2014 to 2015, there was an increase of 8.8% in fatal crashes due to distracted driving (Trivedi & Beck, 2018).

❖ I hypothesized that college-aged drivers ignore the dangers and repercussions of distracted driving and feel that they are responsible individuals.

Methods

- ❖ A total of 156 undergraduate students at a University in the Rocky Mountain region participated in this study.
- ❖ They self-selected from an introductory level psychology course. Students had a mean age of 18.95 ($SD = 1.97$); 66.3% were female and 29.4% were male.
- ❖ The participants were given 60 minutes to complete the survey, and the average amount of time taken to complete the omnibus survey was 29.50 min ($SD = 16.47$).
- ❖ The participants were not debriefed.

CELL PHONES & DRIVING

Did You Know?

- 1 Number 1 killer of American teens is distracted driving.
- 2 2,000 teens are sent to jail every month for being caught texting and driving in the State of Utah.
- 3 3 months in jail and a \$750 fine is the penalty for being caught texting and driving in the State of Utah.
- 4 4 times more likely to get in an accident if you use a cell phone while you drive.
- 5 out of 10 teens say their parents would follow through on punishment if they are caught texting and driving.
- 6 collisions are caused every 10 minutes because of cell phone use in the U.S.
- 7 people die every day from accidents involving cell phone use.
- 8 percent of drivers admit to downloading apps and watching TV or videos on their phones while driving.
- 9 out of 10 teens say they've seen others distracted by cell phones and other things.
- 0 People die every day from accidents involving cell phone use.
- #

18% of all fatal accidents are caused by cell phone use.

Degrees Of Distraction

- Audio: Reases that distract you
- Visual: Taking your eyes off the road
- Manual: Taking your hands off the wheel
- Cognitive: Taking your mind off the road

Texting is the most dangerous distraction because it requires 3 of the primary degrees of attention required to drive safely, visual, manual, and cognitive.

DEATHS

5,474 people in the U.S. were killed in distracted related accidents in 2009. An Additional 448,000 were injured in motor vehicle crashes that were reported to have involved distracted driving.

State Texting Laws

- Universal texting ban
- No texting ban
- Texting ban on new drivers only
- Texting ban on both new and school bus drivers only

Created By The Christensen Law Firm
Sources:
<http://www.distraction.gov/states-and-facts/>
<http://www.nationwide.com/newsroom/dwd-survey-jsp>
http://www.andrewritter.com/archives/the_most_used_iphone_apps.php
http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/38042731/rc/technology_and_science-wireless/t/new-problem-apping-while-driving



Results

Out of 156 students surveyed, 86% of students admitted using handheld devices while driving and out of those students, 98.7% believed themselves to be responsible individuals.

Discussion

Even with the laws of most states and the obvious dangers of distracted driving, college-aged students believe that they are responsible individuals while admitting to using handheld devices and being behind the wheel. Implications for drivers and plans for future research will be discussed.

References

Trivedi, N., & Beck K.H. (2018). Do significant others influence college-aged students texting and driving behaviors? Examination of the mediational influence of proximal and distal social influence on distracted driving. *Transportation Research Part F: Traffic Psychology and Behavior*, 56, 14-21. doi:10.1016/j.trt.2018.04.002

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