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

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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.

**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**


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