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TITLE: The Young Driver Follow-up Study: An Evaluation of the Role of Human Factors in the First Four Years of Driving

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PROTECT OBJECTIVE:

To collect biographical and driving-record data in order to provide evidence for evaluating three approaches to reducing the high accident rate among teenagers: (1) raising the licensing age to 18; (2) identifying the "accident prone" driver; and (3) improving driving via formal driving education and training.

SUMMARY:

The sample consisted of 13,915 persons who were 16 or 17 years of age when licensed in five California counties in 1962-63. This study monitored the driving record of the sample during their first four years of driving, and correlated their driving records with other biographical data.

The average number of accidents showed little change in the first four years of driving. This result was not felt to provide support for increasing the licensing age to 18. The accident rate adjusted for mileage decreased with increasing experience. Conviction rates (adjusted for mileage) either increased or showed no change across years. Considerable changes were found in accident characteristics with increasing experience. Suspension and revocation of licenses were not very effective in keeping negligent young drivers off the road.

Citizenship grade in high school was the best predictor of accidents and convictions.

Generally, more socially desirable personal attributes were associated with better driving records. The overall relationship between accident frequency and biographical data was too low to permit accurate identification of "accident prone" drivers prior to licensing, but convictions were predictable to a moderately high degree from biographical data. For those with fatal or injury accidents, the characteristics of the accidents were not predictive of the number of accidents and convictions. An optimal point system based on type of violation was slightly better than number of convictions (undifferentiated by type) for predicting future accidents.

Those taking behind-the-wheel driver training had better driving records and more socially desirable personal characteristics than those not taking the course, indicating volunteer bias. Taking these personal differences into account, driver training and classroom driver education appeared to reduce fatal and injury accidents for females, but there was no evidence of any effect on accidents of males. These findings were not considered to be totally conclusive due to the retrospective nature of the study.

Multiple-accident subjects were characterized by social deviancy, greater involvement with cars, and more reckless, emotionally-motivated driving as teenagers.

IMPLEMENTATION STATUS OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

There has been no known direct influence on California policy or operations. However, the study has been frequently cited by others as evidence against the efficacy of driver training. Following the study, more insurance companies give teenagers with good school grades a discount instead of using driver training status as a discount factor.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Published in *Journal of Traffic Safety Education*, 19(4), 6, 1972 and *Accident Analysis and Prevention*, 4,

191-240 1972. Received the National Safety Council Metropolitan Life Award for research in accident prevention, 1973.