

TITLE: IIHS Study on Driver Education: Fact or Fiction?

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PROTECT OBTECTIVE:

To point out some critical limitations of the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety's study on driver training.

SUMMARY:

This paper is a summary and critical analysis of an evaluation on driver training performed by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS). The IIHS study (Robertson & Zador, 1978) consisted of a correlational analysis of the relationship between percentage of teenagers receiving behind-the-wheel driver training, proportion of teenaged population licensed prior to age 18, and teenage fatal accident rate in 27 states. The study found no evidence of accident reduction due to driver training but found that states who trained more students had much higher teenage licensing rates. IIHS concluded that driver training was causing 2,000 fatal accidents per year by increasing the number of teenaged drivers. This paper identifies some critical defects in the Institute's reasoning and methodology. It is pointed out that the existence of correlation does not prove causality and that nonrecursive relationships could account for much of the relationship. That is, states with historically higher teenage licensing rates might be more apt to develop larger driver training programs and train more teenagers. The type of statistical analysis employed by the Institute is not able to cope with situations where the direction of causality can go either way (non-recursive). As a result of this and other defects, the IIHS conclusions are vulnerable to serious challenge.

IMPLEMENTATION STATUS OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Not applicable.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

This paper was presented at the *26th Annual Conference of the California Association for Safety Education*, Long Beach, California, April 30, 1978. It was subsequently published in the *Journal of Traffic Safety Education*, 24(4), 14-16, July, 1978.