

Selective Attention

Distraction. Definition: something that prevents someone from giving full attention to something else. Cell phone. Purpose: to make it convenient for people to communicate with each other telephonic technology outside of their homes. Car accident. Result: motor vehicle colliding into something, causing property damage, severe injuries, and in some cases, death. These three factors blended together create a catastrophe, but the use of one of these factors has become so ingrained into our society that it is abnormal to go without it. This problem can be fought by illegalizing texting and driving to people of all ages and applying extensions to cars that can block signals.

Psychologists have determined that notifications are like drugs to us. “You hear the ping of an incoming text or call, you respond... And each time you respond, you get a hit of dopamine. It’s a pleasurable feeling, a release from the reward center. Then it’s gone. There is no incoming text, no stimulation. You start to feel bored. You crave another hit.” (“A Deadly Wandering”). Teens are the most well-known participants of texting and driving. Shockingly, 95% of all teens acknowledge app usage is dangerous while behind the wheel, but “approximately 80 percent of teens fundamentally view app use while driving as ‘not distracting’” (“App And Drive”). Therefore, it is necessary that there is an option available to the general public to counteract this statistic. A bluetooth extension should be provided by automobile manufacturers in which they block all notifications on phones connected to the system. Even better, this extension can disable the screen light-up that occurs when notifications pop in. Think of it as you would think of wi-fi in a car; if you connect a phone to a car that has wifi, you get access. In this case, if you connect the phone to a car that has this extension, distractions are minimized. Of course, in the case that a person needs to use their phone as a GPS device, or as a way to make an emergency phone call, they can. The solution in solving the ever-increasing problem with texting and driving among teenagers lies in controlling the device and restricting it from giving signals that notifying, and distract, the driver.

An additional effort in eliminating texting and driving among teenagers is making it entirely illegal for everyone. Banning simply new drivers in 38 states (“Distracted Driving”) won’t achieve anything. Psychologically, being exposed to someone doing something so constantly that it becomes a habit only makes the person being exposed think that this habit is normal. Banning only teenagers from texting and driving doesn’t help the teenager understand why it’s wrong. It’s like a parent telling a child, for example, that they can’t play with a knife just because “I said so.” The child doesn’t understand that playing with a knife has harmful side-effects, they just know they shouldn’t do it. This doesn’t guarantee the child not playing with the knife. Similarly, banning texting and driving for the younger generation won’t make a difference if their parents are doing it.

In conclusion, both a censorship and a restriction will ensure a gradual yet thorough decrease in cell phone use while driving. We can eliminate a large part of the human error that causes vehicle collisions and distracted, unfocused driving. Additionally, making texting and driving completely illegal, and adding repercussions, will make it undesirable to even risk being caught. I also encourage teenagers to raise their own awareness of this issue, as it not only affects us now, but will continue to do so with the technological advances we are seeing.

Works Cited

- Richtel, Matt. *A Deadly Wandering: a Mystery, a Landmark Investigation, and the Astonishing Science of Attention in the Digital Age*. HarperCollins Publishers, 2015.
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- “Distracted Driving: State Laws.” *Distraction*, www.distraction.gov/stats-research-laws/state-laws.html. Accessed 21 Feb. 2017.