

**THE RELATIONSHIP OF JUVENILE TRAFFIC OFFENSES
TO OTHER JUVENILE DELINQUENT BEHAVIOR**

BY

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

It has been the writer's belief that a youngster does not simply turn delinquent overnight but rather that the process is often a slow and gradual one beginning at or even before birth. However, in most cases, the child is not recognized as a juvenile delinquent until he has actually committed a serious crime. In some instances, the youngster has given many indications of delinquency but these have been classified as normal behavior or considered too minor to include as a delinquent act. One such symptom was thought to be the traffic violation.

If one could predict that a certain percentage of juvenile traffic violators would later reappear on other charges, greater caution could be taken and assistance given at the time of the first referral. It was thought that the relationship between the traffic violation and other delinquent behavior did exist. This feeling was substantiated by the writer's observations while serving as chief probation officer for Gallatin County, Montana. It was further substantiated by research that indicated the automobile was related to the increase in delinquency.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to support the hypothesis that there was a positive relationship between:

- A. Receiving a traffic violation and later being referred for other delinquent behavior.
- B. Receiving certain deliberate type traffic offenses and later being referred for other delinquent behavior.

Procedure

The method used to determine the relationship between traffic offenses and other delinquent behavior was to examine the files of each juvenile traffic offense and for other delinquent behavior occurring after the traffic violation. The data for this study were obtained from the 1958, 1959, and 1960 files of the 18th Judicial District Juvenile Department, Bozeman, Montana.

Definition of Terms

Because delinquency is often confused with other deviant behavior, the writer has included that portion of Montana Law which defines the term. According to Montana Law the term delinquent child includes any person less than eighteen years of age who has violated any law of the state, is uncontrolled by his parents, habitually truant from home or school, or operates a motor vehicle in such a manner so as to endanger life or property. The definition as it appears in Montana Law is as follows:

- A. A child who has violated any law of the state, provided, however, a child over the age of sixteen (16) years who commits or attempts to commit murder, manslaughter, assault in the first degree, robbery, first or second degree burglary while having in his possession a deadly weapon or weapons with intent to assault, shall not be proceeded against as a juvenile delinquent but shall

be prosecuted in the criminal laws of the state governing the offenses listed above.

- B. A child who by reason of being wayward or habitually disobedient is uncontrolled by his parents, guardians, or custodian.
- C. A child who is habitually truant from school or home.
- D. A child who habitually so deports himself so as to injure or endanger the morals of himself or others.
- E. A child who unlawfully, negligently, dangerously, or wilfully operates a motor vehicle on the highways of the state or on the roads and streets of any county or city so as to endanger life or property, and a child who operates a motor vehicle on such highways, roads or streets while intoxicated or under the influence of intoxicating liquor.

Limitations

The amount of time available resulted in three major limitations of this study: (1) The data used for the study were restricted to those from the Juvenile Department, Bozeman, Montana. (2) The reported traffic offenses accounted for only a three year period, 1958-60. (3) Only those youngsters who were apprehended and referred to the Court for traffic violations and other delinquent behavior were included in the study. It was recognized that these three limitations would lessen the ability to make generalizations on the basis of this study alone.

In reviewing the literature related to this study, it was hoped that evidence could be found that would support the hypothesis that there was a relationship between traffic violations and other delinquent behavior.

¹ Revised Codes of Montana (1947), title 10, ch. 6.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A review of literature was made to determine the amount of research that had been reported and the thinking of some authorities in the field of "Corrections" concerning traffic violations.

It was found, however, that very little had been reported in this area. The librarian for the National Council on Crime and Delinquency², reported it had no material in the library related to the correlation of traffic offenses and other delinquent behavior. However, some material was found that was indirectly related to the problem: recidivism, jurisdiction of traffic violators, and means of controlling the traffic problem.

In the material reviewed two conflicting schools of thought were found regarding causes of traffic violations: traffic violations are not symptoms of other emotional maladjustment, and traffic violations may indicate other emotional maladjusted behavior.

Traffic Violations Considered as Not Being Symptoms of Other Emotional Maladjustment

Some authorities in the field of "Corrections" felt that the juvenile traffic problem, because it was normal behavior, did not belong in the Juvenile Court. They believed the traffic problem

²Personal letter written by Miss Dikjian to the writer on March 16, 1961.

could best be handled in the Adult or Justice Court because it was not related to any type of personality damage. Sheridan emphasized this more fully in his statement:

An even less palatable justification for advocating juvenile court jurisdiction is that the juvenile court, because of its broad powers and investigative procedures, may uncover other delinquent conduct or family problems which it may proceed to treat or take into consideration in disposition. To permit such an excursion into the privacy of children and families in traffic cases on the basis that, in rare instances, additional problems might be uncovered, is in the writer's opinion, not only an unwarranted invasion of the right of privacy but is also an unjustified use of staff in terms of already known needs.³

Sheridan went on to explain that traffic violations are not symptoms of other emotional maladjustment:

Traffic offenses are not symptoms of emotional disturbances or deeper problems needing study and treatment. Ordinary traffic violations committed by juveniles reflect lack of driver training, experience, or immature judgment, rather than basic personality difficulties.⁴

Grimstead also believed the traffic violation was not an individual emotional problem but rather it was related to group pressures as given in his statement:

A boy may drive recklessly, or steal, or even beat up someone on his own, but while he is doing it he is conforming to his group's pattern of thought and

³ Sheridan, William H., Youth and the Traffic Problem, U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Children's Bureau, Washington, D. C.

⁴ Ibid., p. 3.

he may even be doing such things for the praise of his group. He will be an individual being with a sort of mob thought. If his friends drive recklessly or speed, he will too, when he's alone, because he thinks it's 'smart'.⁵

Roser, in his comparison of delinquency in the United States and England, expressed the belief that the traffic problem was simply due to the fast pace of life. This was brought out in his statement:

People in a hurry are more likely to have accidents. Families in a hurry to do all the things they believe are necessary to be proper middle-class folk, are more likely to have social 'accidents'. These pressured parents overlook attention to significant needs of their children and thus contribute to a delinquency pattern. England has a vastly slower pace of life than America. The 30 horse-power automobile is much more common in England than Detroit's 300 horse-power product.⁶

Although the preceding cited authorities have appeared to agree that the traffic offense is not related to individual emotional problems, another group has held the opposing belief that there is a relationship.

Traffic Violations Considered as Indications of Other Emotional Maladjusted Behavior

Some authorities and some research have indicated there has been a relationship between traffic offenses and certain emotional factors. Larson brought this out when he said:

⁵Grimstead, David, "As Youth Sees the Problem," American Journal of Correction, January, 1958, Vol. 20, No. 1, p. 6.

⁶Roser, Mark C., "Some Impressions of Delinquency in England," Federal Probation, March, 1960, p. 23.

Safety research indicated that social and psychological factors are the primary causes of accidents and violations.⁷

Selling also brought this out in his statement and further emphasized the psychological factors involved:

Emotions, attitudes, and related personal factors are significant in the accident experience of these individuals.⁸

Hodge⁹ in his study of 207 juvenile traffic offenders of the County of Los Angeles provided some convincing data which indicated a relationship between traffic offenses and other delinquent behavior. The data suggested that the more traffic violations a juvenile has, the greater are the chances that the juvenile also will have a record of delinquent behavior. The sharp increase in other delinquent behavior for those juveniles having three or more citations indicated there may be basic emotional problems related to the juvenile traffic violation.

Other studies have shown that a resentment of authority has characterized most criminals and delinquents. Lach¹⁰ reported that

⁷Larson, John C., "On Rehabilitating Chronic Traffic Offenders," Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology and Police Science, Vol. 47, No. 1, May, 1956, p. 46.

⁸Selling, L., "The Psychiatric Findings in the Cases of 500 Traffic Offenders," American Journal of Psychiatry, July, 1940.

⁹Hodge, Harold, "A Study of 207 Juvenile Traffic Offenders," California Juvenile Traffic Study, Los Angeles, 1952, p. 34.

¹⁰Lach, Chester, "A Study of Severe Juvenile Traffic Offenders Known as 'Repeaters'," California Juvenile Traffic Study, Los Angeles, 1952, p. 35.

negative attitudes toward authority were common among the accident repeaters he studied, and noted further that adolescent repeaters evidenced behavior patterns which fitted the behavior patterns of delinquents. The Gluecks further substantiated this point of view in their statement:

It seems clear, therefore, that the delinquent boys grew up in an atmosphere not conducive to the development of emotionally well integrated, happy youngsters conditioned to obedience to legitimate authority.¹¹

The material reviewed has revealed two conflicting schools of thought concerning the relationship between traffic offenses and other delinquent behavior. One group has appeared to agree that there has been no relationship while the other has felt there has been a relationship between the traffic violation and certain emotional problems. A limited amount of research has substantiated the viewpoint that there has been a relationship between traffic violations and other delinquent behavior. It was the writer's purpose in this study to further confirm this belief that there was a relationship between traffic violations and other delinquent behavior.

¹¹Glueck, Sheldon and Eleanor, Unravelling Juvenile Delinquency, New York: Commonwealth Fund, 1950, p. 133.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS OF DATA COLLECTED AND EXAMINED FROM JUVENILE DEPARTMENT, BOZEMAN, MONTANA

The purpose of this study was to further confirm the belief that there was a relationship between juvenile traffic violations and other delinquent behavior. The method used to determine the relationship between traffic offenses and other delinquent behavior was to examine the juvenile records that were available in the Juvenile Department of the 18th Judicial District, Bozeman, Montana.

Each juvenile traffic violation reported during the years 1958 and 1959 was examined for other delinquent behavior in the year the violation was issued and in the following year.

The method used to classify the type of traffic violation was to list the many categories of violations as issued by the law enforcement officers. After examination of the files it was found that there were 19 separate categories of traffic violations as follows:

- A. Alteration of driver's license.
- B. Driving while driver's license suspended.
- C. Leaving the scene of an accident.
- D. Driving while intoxicated.
- E. Driving without a driver's license.
- F. Failure to report an accident.
- G. Driving without license plates.

- H. Drag-racing.
- I. Exceeding speed limit.
- J. Passing on a yellow line.
- K. Failure to drive in a safe and prudent manner.
- L. Not stopping for pedestrian.
- M. Improper turn.
- N. Following too closely.
- O. Failure to yield right of way.
- P. Excessive noise.
- Q. Not stopping for stop-sign.
- R. Miscellaneous.

Other delinquent behavior was grouped according to the Childrens' Bureau Juvenile Court Statistical Card.¹² This grouping resulted in having nine separate delinquent offenses:

- A. Auto theft.
- B. Burglary.
- C. Theft (other than auto theft).
- D. Running-away.
- E. Sex offense.
- F. Act of mischief.
- G. Possession of liquor.
- H. Destruction of property.
- I. Miscellaneous.

¹²Childrens' Bureau, Social Security Administration, Juvenile Court Statistical Card, Form CB-203-S, Washington, D. C.

The traffic offense was placed in one of the 19 categories as listed earlier. The other delinquent acts, if any, were placed in one of the eight groups as defined by the childrens' Bureau. After all files were examined and the data recorded, the number of referrals for each specific act, totals, and percentages were computed.

It can be seen in Table 1, that there does appear to be a relationship between receiving a traffic violation and later being referred for other delinquent behavior. The data showed that 67 or 31% of the 216 traffic violators were later referred for other delinquent behavior. Three traffic offenses accounted for 57% of the total referred: speeding (30%), reckless driving (14%), and driving without a driver's license (13%). The other 16 categories of traffic violations accounted for the remaining 43% of the total referred. Each violation in this group accounted for less than 10% of those referred.

Those referred for speeding, reckless driving, and driving without a driver's license also accounted for 67% of the 67 individuals later referred for other delinquent behavior. Five traffic violations did not appear to be related to other delinquency, in that none of this group were later referred for other delinquent behavior: not stopping for pedestrian, improper turn, following too closely, failure to yield right of way, and excessive noise.

TABLE 1. JUVENILE TRAFFIC OFFENDERS REPORTED FOR OTHER DELINQUENT BEHAVIOR

Juvenile Traffic Offenses	Referred for Traffic Violations		Referred for Other Delinquent Acts	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Alteration of driver license	1	.5	1	.5
Driving while driver license suspended	1	.5	1	.5
Leaving scene of accident	3	1.3	3	1.3
No license plates	3	1.3	1	.5
No driver license	29	13.3	14	6.5
Drag-racing	6	2.8	1	.5
Driving while intoxicated	3	1.3	3	1.3
Fail to report an accident	1	.5	1	.5
Reckless driving	30	14.0	10	4.6
Speeding	64	30.0	21	9.7
Passing on a yellow line	4	1.8	1	.5
Fail to drive in safe manner	20	9.2	4	1.8
Not stopping for pedestrian	1	.5	0	0
Improper turn	3	1.3	0	0
Following too closely	5	2.3	0	0
Fail to yield right of way	2	.9	0	0
Excessive noise	6	2.8	0	0
Not stopping for stop-sign	19	8.8	2	.9
Miscellaneous	15	6.9	4	1.8
Total	216	100.0	67	30.9

Due to the small sample used in this study no effort was made to correlate the specific delinquent offense with the specific traffic violation. It can be seen, however, in Table 2 that some delinquent acts appeared more frequently than others. Possession of liquor and theft accounted for 68% of the 67 individuals who were referred for other delinquent behavior. The remaining five violations accounted for 32% of the group referred for other delinquent behavior. Each violation in this group accounted for less than 4% of those referred.

TABLE 2. JUVENILE REFERRALS FOR OTHER DELINQUENT BEHAVIOR

Other Delinquent Behavior	Referrals	
	Number	Percent
Auto theft	1	.5
Burglary	8	3.7
Theft (other than auto theft)	11	5.0
Running-away	3	1.3
Sex offense	1	.5
Act of mischief	5	2.3
Possession of liquor	35	16.2
Destruction of property	2	.9
Miscellaneous	1	.5
Total	67	30.9

As stated in Chapter 1, there were two main purposes of this study. The first, which was to determine if there was a relationship between traffic violations and other delinquent behavior has been discussed in the preceding paragraphs. The second purpose was to determine if there was a higher relationship between certain deliberate type traffic violations and other delinquent behavior than between all traffic violations and other delinquent behavior.

Relationship of Deliberate Traffic Violations to Other Delinquent Behavior

Deliberate. Eight traffic offenses were defined by the writer prior to the computation of totals as being deliberate violations. It was felt that these eight offenses could not have been accidental, in that each would require one to knowingly and willfully commit the act. The following violations were included in this group:

- A. Alteration of driver's license.
- B. Driving while driver's license suspended.
- C. Leaving the scene of an accident.
- D. No license plates.
- E. Drag-racing.
- F. Driving while intoxicated.
- G. Failure to report an accident.
- H. No driver's license.

According to the results obtained when these violations were grouped and defined as deliberate, it was found that approximately 54% of those referred for deliberate traffic violations later reappeared

on other charges of delinquent behavior. In Table 3, it can be seen that 30% of this group were from those who were driving without a driver's license.

TABLE 3. JUVENILE REFERRALS FOR DELIBERATE TYPE TRAFFIC VIOLATIONS AND OTHER DELINQUENT BEHAVIOR

Juvenile Traffic Offenses	Traffic Referrals	Referred for Other Delinquent Acts	
	Number	Number	Percent
Alteration of driver license	1	1	2.2
Driving while driver license suspended	1	1	2.2
Leaving the scene of an accident	3	3	6.5
No license plates	3	1	2.2
Drag-racing	6	1	2.2
Driving while intoxicated	3	3	6.5
Fail to report an accident	1	1	2.2
No driver license	29	14	30.4
Total	46	25	54.4

There does appear to have been a closer relationship between receiving a deliberate type traffic violation and other delinquent behavior when comparing the results obtained from the total number of traffic referrals and their relationship to other delinquency. Approximately 31% of all traffic violators later reappeared for other delinquent behavior as compared to 54% of the deliberate group who were later referred for other delinquent acts.

**Non-Deliberate Traffic Violations as they Relate
to Other Delinquent Behavior**

Non-Deliberate. Eleven traffic offenses were defined as non-deliberate traffic offenses in that they may have been accidental. However, many of these violations may have been deliberate acts but there was no means of determining this from the records. Included in this group were the following offenses:

- A. Reckless driving.
- B. Exceeding speed limit.
- C. Passing on yellow line.
- D. Failure to drive in a safe manner.
- E. Not stopping for pedestrian.
- F. Improper turn.
- G. Following too closely.
- H. Failure to yield right of way.
- I. Excessive noise.
- J. Not stopping for stop-sign.
- K. Miscellaneous.

Twenty-four percent of the non-deliberate group were later referred for other delinquent behavior as shown in Table 4. Two offenses accounted for 73% of the 42 individuals referred later for other delinquent acts: reckless driving and speeding. The other 11 traffic offenses accounted for the remaining 27% of the total referred. Each violation in this group accounted for less than 3% of the number referred.

TABLE 4. JUVENILE REFERRALS FOR NON-DELIBERATE TYPE TRAFFIC VIOLATIONS AND OTHER DELINQUENT BEHAVIOR

Juvenile Traffic Offenses	Traffic Referrals	Referred for Other Delinquent Acts	
	Number	Number	Percent
Reckless driving	30	10	5.8
Speeding	64	21	12.3
Passing on yellow line	4	1	.5
Fail to drive in safe manner	20	4	2.3
Not stopping for pedestrian	1	0	0
Improper turn	3	0	00
Following too closely	5	0	0
Fail to yield right of way	2	0	0
Excessive noise	6	0	0
Not stopping for stop-sign	19	2	1.1
Miscellaneous	15	4	2.3
Total	170	42	24.6

The data in this study has supported the hypothesis that the non-deliberate traffic violation was not as closely related to other delinquent behavior as the deliberate group.

Comparison of Results Obtained in Three Groupings of Traffic Offenses

A comparison was made between the percentages of referrals for

traffic violations and other delinquent behavior according to three groups of traffic violations: all traffic violations, deliberate violations, and non-deliberate violations. As shown in Table 5, the deliberate group has a higher percentage of individuals being later referred for other delinquent behavior than the other two groups. Approximately one-third of all traffic violators and one-fourth of the non-deliberate traffic violators later reappeared for other delinquent behavior as compared to one-half of the deliberate offenders who later reappeared on other charges of delinquent behavior.

TABLE 5. JUVENILE REFERRALS FOR ALL TRAFFIC VIOLATIONS, DELIBERATE AND NON-DELIBERATE TRAFFIC VIOLATIONS

Groups	Number Referred for Traffic	Referred for Other Delinquent Behavior	
		Number	Percent
All Traffic Violations	216	67	30.9
Deliberate Traffic Violations	46	25	54.4
Non-Deliberate Traffic Violations	170	42	24.6

The results of this study have supported the belief that there has been a relationship between receiving a traffic violation and later being referred for other delinquent behavior. It has also supported the hypothesis that there has been a closer relationship between certain deliberate type traffic violations and being referred later for other delinquent behavior when comparing the total number of traffic violations and those

who were referred for other charges of delinquency.

The relationship between all three groups of traffic violations and other delinquent behavior appeared to have also substantiated the opinions of some authorities and other research that the traffic violations has been related to basic emotional problems and that it indicates a resentment toward all authority. This lack of respect for all authority became even more evident when it was shown that the deliberate traffic violators had a higher percentage of referrals for other delinquent behavior than the other two groups.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It was the writer's belief that if one were able to predict that a certain percentage of juveniles referred to the Court for traffic violations would later reappear for other delinquent behavior more assistance could be given at the time of the first referral.

The purpose of this study was to support the hypothesis that there was a positive relationship between:

- A. Receiving a traffic violation and later being referred for other delinquent behavior.
- B. Receiving certain deliberate type traffic offenses and later being referred for other delinquent behavior.

Summary

In the material related to the correlation of traffic offenses and other delinquent behavior it was found that there were two opposing beliefs: (1) Traffic violations are not symptoms of other emotional maladjusted behavior. (2) Traffic violations may indicate other emotional behavior.

Examination of the 1958, 1959, and 1960, juvenile records of the Bozeman, Montana, Juvenile Department, revealed that 31% of the 216 traffic violators later reappeared on other charges of delinquency. When grouping the traffic offenses as either deliberate or non-deliberate, it was found that approximately 24% of the non-deliberate traffic offenders were later referred for other delinquent behavior as compared to 54% of the deliberate group later reappearing on other charges of delinquent behavior.

Conclusions

From a study of 216 juvenile traffic violators from the 18th Judicial District Juvenile Department, Bozeman, Montana, during the years 1958, and 1959, the following conclusions concerning the relationship between traffic violations and other delinquent behavior have been drawn:

A. There is a relationship between receiving a traffic violation and later being referred for other delinquent behavior.

B. There is a closer relationship between certain deliberate traffic violations and other delinquent behavior when comparing this group to the total number of all traffic violators who were later referred for other delinquent behavior.

C. There is an even closer relationship between certain deliberate type traffic violations and other delinquent behavior when comparing this group to the number of non-deliberate type traffic violators who were referred later for other delinquent behavior.

Recommendations

On the basis of this study, the opinions of some authorities and other research in this area, the following recommendations for controlling the delinquency problem were made:

A. That the juvenile traffic problem be continued under the jurisdiction of the 18th Judicial District Juvenile Department rather than under the jurisdiction of an Adult Court.

B. That the 18th Judicial District Juvenile Department give special attention and examine more closely those being referred for deliberate traffic violations.

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Legal References

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APPENDIX

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Library
March 16, 1961.

Mr. Donald P. Robel,
Chief Probation Officer,
18th Judicial District,
Box 86
Bozeman, Montana.

Dear Mr. Robel,

In reply to your letter of March 3, which was delayed by our having to settle the library in its new quarters, I am sorry to say that I did not find any articles on the relationship of juvenile traffic offenses to other forms of delinquent behavior. I also checked our index to periodicals, 1955-1959 (in card form) and the 1960 periodicals to date, to look for material.

There are several discussions of juvenile traffic offenders, but they relate to matters of jurisdiction, recidivism, etc. There is no correlation attempted such as you describe. That is why I personally think your paper will be a contribution to the field, and I hope you will somehow send us a copy of it.

Just to illustrate what I said in the above paragraph, I am sending you a typical article. You need not return it.

Please let us know if we can be of further assistance. I might add that I just finished reading 262 annual and biennial reports of juvenile courts, probation depts., prisons, parole agencies, etc., etc., for an article in the April issue of our quarterly journal, Crime and Delinquency. Even among the voluminous reports issued, for example, by the California Bureau of Criminal Statistics and others, I did not find any reference to a possible relationship between juvenile traffic offenses and other juvenile offenses. Perhaps you might write to the California Youth Authority for a statement of what their opinion is. Address Mr. Heman Stark, Director, State Office Bldg. No. 1, Sacramento 14, Calif.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,

Armine Dikjian

(Miss) Armine Dikjian,
Librarian.

NUMBER OF JUVENILE REFERRALS FOR TRAFFIC VIOLATIONS AND OTHER DELINQUENT BEHAVIOR

Juvenile Traffic Offenses	Other Delinquent Behavior									
	Total	Auto theft	Burglary	Other theft	Run-away	Sex offense	Act of mischief	Possession of liquor	Destruction of property	Other
Alteration of D/L	1									1
Driving while D/L suspended	1		1							
Leaving scene of accident	3		1	2						
No plates	3							1		
No D/L	29	1	2	4	2			4	1	
Drag-racing	6							1		
Driving while intoxicated	3		1					2		
Failure to report accident	1					1				
Reckless driving	30		1		1		2	5	1	
Speeding	64			1			2	18		
Passing on yellow line	4			1						
Failure to drive in safe manner	20		1	3						
Not stopping for pedestrian	1									
Improper turn	3									
Following too closely	5									
Failure to yield right of way	2									
Excessive noise	6									
Stop sign	19		1					1		
Other	15						1	3		
Total	216	1	8	11	3	1	5	35	2	1