
Editorial Special Issue

Dr. Don M. DeVol

In our modern world, mobility is one of the most important cornerstones. Working and leisure time often are closely connected to getting from A to B, e.g. to get to work, to transport goods, to go on vacation, to visit different places all over the world.

Traffic is essential, important and useful, but it can be dangerous too. Each year, many thousand people die or get injured in traffic accidents. When it comes to drivers, several different laws and norms exist to make traffic as safe as possible, e.g. one has to stop at a red light and is not allowed to drive with a certain amount of alcohol in one's blood. Although everyone wants to get to their destination as quickly and safely as possible, traffic offenses such as speeding or drunk driving are still widespread traffic safety issues. In this special issue of the ToTS Journal, seven papers will be presented, that deal with different traffic safety aspects.

Many statistics identify especially young, inexperienced drivers as producing outstanding safety risks. The first paper deals with the development of our traffic competences as children. The next four papers, then, focus on young drivers' attitudes and behaviors, with the second paper centering novice drivers with autism spectrum disorder. The sixth paper describes how speeding offenders need to change their attitudes in order to pass the Medical-Psychological Assessment and to regain their driver's license. Finally, the seventh paper deals with the influence of greenery on traffic behaviour.

Infrastructure planning also plays an important role to increase traffic safety in children. Schützhöfer and colleagues performed a literature analysis to find out how traffic competences, e.g. visual competences, are developed in children. They found that children need more time to perceive and interpret different traffic situations and conclude that existing infrastructures often do not meet children's safety needs. Therefore, the authors give advice what should be done to support children's safe traffic participation such as education, active school way planning or rebuilding infrastructures. Schützhöfer et al. conclude that child-adapted infrastruc-

ture also increases traffic safety for other road users, e.g. wheelchair users.

Žardeckaitė-Matulaitienė and colleagues took a closer look at the learning history of novice drivers. They compared driving test performances and subsequent police records. The results show that bad theoretical tests correlate with entries in the police record, while young drivers passing their tests on their first attempt are less likely to be fined. The authors conclude that knowing the traffic rules (better) prevents from traffic violations. Interestingly, the results also show a correlation between time of driving experience and entries in the police records. According to the authors, this is reasonable for the more time one drives (and breaks traffic rules) the higher the chance to get caught by the police. Žardeckaitė-Matulaitienė et al. (as all traffic psychologists) conclude that it is problematic that novice drivers are not caught by police frequently enough when infringing traffic rules: Bad behaviors can become habits if not being sanctioned, e.g. by fines.

Ross and colleagues considered novice drivers with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Therefore they questioned the novice drivers themselves, their parents and their driving instructors. Their results show that novice drivers have more difficulties in learning how to drive, e.g. due to their perfectionism or higher need for structure. In spite of these problems, basically it is possible for those people to gain a driver's license as well. According to the estimations of the driving instructors the authors advice to adapt the process of learning to drive for people with ASD so they have more but shorter lessons to better meet their needs.

As already mentioned above, drunk driving seems to be quite a common traffic offense all over the world although differences between countries can be found. Assailly and Cestac examined young drivers from three countries in order to find reasons for these differences. They asked the drivers to report their drunk driving intentions as well as the social norms of their families and friends regarding drunk driving. The results show that social norms have influence on drunk

driving intentions but their influence vary across countries as the norms themselves vary, as well. The results also show that gender differences can be explained with cultural factors, such as sex stereotypes. The authors conclude with several possible countermeasures to avoid drunk driving.

Pereira da Silva et al. also targeted substance use in young people but focusing on drug consumption. In line with other European studies drug use was reported by many youngsters, with cannabis being the most frequent drug. The results show that nearly half of the subjects admitted driving under the influence of drugs, the majority of them several times, although most of the young people knew that drug consumption was illegal and impairing their driving abilities.

When a driver's license is withdrawn due to several or severe traffic offenses in some countries a driver needs to pass a Medical-Psychological Assessment (MPA) before regaining their license. Wagner et al. examined assessments of speeding offenders. Their results show that not the traffic offenses themselves but rather the offender's change of attitudes influenced the outcome of the MPA. To question false habits and achieve new attitudes such as problem awareness and self-criticism it was helpful for the offenders to participate a professional psychological driver improvement program. As a result, the fitness to drive could be increased leading to a positive assessment, restoring the driver's license and better avoiding future offenses. The authors conclude that the MPA and driver improvement programs are useful tools to improving traffic safety.

In the last paper, Ausserer and Risser analyzed how greenery can change traffic behavior. They interviewed residents and observed their behavior. As previous studies show that greenery can increase the rate of walking and cycling, the current results show that more greenery should be implemented in cities. People enjoy greenery when they walk but most people are not willing to make detours to see more greenery. In addition, greenery increases the attraction of places, yet not the feeling of safety. Thus, the authors advise to achieve a better cooperation between traffic planning and greenery planning in order to create routes that are both safe *and* attractive.

The results of the papers in this issue stress that especially young and novice drivers are a high-risk group because they are inexperienced and, maybe due to cultural or peer influence, more likely to show risky behavior such as drunk driving, speeding or

breaking other traffic rules. Thus, young drivers should be addressed more intensely to avoid these traffic offenses so that undesired behaviour will be reduced or avoided right from the beginning. Therefore, it is important to further understand why young/novice drivers do what they do so that concrete countermeasures could be developed and implemented in order to increase traffic safety. The same is true for pedestrians and cyclists who have the same right of traffic safety. Therefore, future city and road planning should consider these growing groups of road users more. A stronger focus should be put on children's special needs in traffic. One way to achieve that is the strategic use of safety measures combined with greenery in order to increase the attractiveness of the public space. In the end, it cannot be excluded that making traffic generally more lenient and less dynamic will also have a possible influence on children's traffic safety and on which behavior young drivers will develop.