



When grandparents drive their grandchildren [☆]



Orit Taubman – Ben-Ari ^{*}, Liora Findler, Adi Noy, Ginna Porat-Zyman

The Louis and Gabi Weisfeld School of Social Work, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 11 January 2015

Received in revised form 15 February 2016

Accepted 17 March 2016

Available online 5 April 2016

Keywords:

Grandparents
Driving styles
Child restraints

ABSTRACT

Driving their grandchildren has become one of the common tasks grandparents perform as part of the support they provide for working parents. The current research made use of qualitative and quantitative methodologies in two complementary studies conducted on grandparents who drive their grandchildren, the first using personal interviews and the second self-report questionnaires. The goal of the qualitative study was to capture grandparents' subjective experience ($n = 27$), whereas the quantitative study sought to provide more specific data on the factors affecting grandparents' experience behind the wheel and attitudes to child restraints by examining the contribution of driving styles and parental influence ($n = 330$). The findings of the qualitative study indicate that having grandchildren in the car is a unique situation which affects grandparents' emotions and driving behavior. Less careful drivers were found to adapt a more careful driving style when driving their grandchildren than when driving without them. In the quantitative study, risky and anxious drivers felt more tension when driving their grandchildren. Furthermore, parental intervention was found to heighten tension among grandparents. Finally, heightened tension and less angry and more careful grandparents' driving styles were associated with more positive attitudes to child restraints. Possible explanations of the findings are discussed.

© 2016 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Traffic crashes are the number one cause of childhood fatalities, both in the United States (CDC, 2011) and in Israel (Beterem & Health, 2014). According to the National Highway Traffic Administration (NHTSA, 2007, chap. 2), approximately 21% of child transporters in the U.S. are grandparents. Grandparents also account for nearly 10% of drivers in motor vehicle crashes involving child occupants. In addition, despite the fact that they tend to use child restraints in a less than optimal mode, their child occupants are 50% less likely to be injured than when they are driven by parents (Henretig, Durbin, Kallan, & Winston, 2011). Parallel data is unavailable in Israel, but it is reasonable to assume that grandparents take an active part in the transportation of their grandchildren due to the family-oriented nature of the society. Family members usually live in close proximity to one another, and many grandparents are highly involved in helping to raise their grandchildren (Lavee & Katz, 2003).

Increased longevity has enabled more people to become grandparents (Silverstein & Marengo, 2001), and they have become important sources of support for parents trying to juggle multiple demands (Wheelock & Jones, 2002). Grandparents

[☆] The study was partly supported by the People in Red Association.

^{*} Corresponding author at: The Louis and Gabi Weisfeld School of Social Work, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan 52900, Israel. Fax: +972 3 7384042.
E-mail address: taubman@biu.ac.il (O. Taubman – Ben-Ari).

have been found to help with tasks such as babysitting, household chores (Findler, 2000), and driving their grandchildren (Findler, 2000; O'Neil, Bull, Slaven, & Talty, 2012). Recently, the issue of grandparents as drivers has begun to capture the attention of researchers in the field of traffic safety.

In an attempt to broaden our knowledge of this subject, the current research made use of qualitative and quantitative methodologies in two complementary studies. The first study investigated the subjective experience of grandparents when driving their grandchildren, while the second study aimed to expand the insights gained in Study 1 by examining the contribution of driving styles and parental influence to grandparents' driving experience, and particularly to the tension aroused by driving with grandchildren in the car. The latter study also investigated how these variables contributed to grandparents' attitudes to child restraints.

A similar pair of studies was recently performed to examine the influence of the transition to parenthood on parents' driving (Taubman – Ben-Ari & Noy, 2011). The qualitative investigation indicated that parents felt more responsible, more aware of dangers, and more apprehensive of traffic crashes, and consequently reported being more alert and cautious when their children were in the car. On the other hand, they described being distracted by the need to cope with their children's needs and demands while driving. The quantitative findings showed that although parents became more safety conscious and took fewer risks behind the wheel, on the whole, most of them did not change their driving styles and behaviors as a result of becoming parents. To the best of our knowledge, no similar study of grandparent drivers has previously been conducted.

The relationship between grandparents and grandchildren is typically characterized by unconditional giving, warmth, fuzzy borders, and positive interactions (Findler, Taubman – Ben-Ari, Nuttman-Shwartz, & Lazar, 2013). However, driving grandchildren may be perceived as different from the other functions typically performed by grandparents, and may therefore become a source of tension. Driving together may entail a breach of the amiable relationship since it requires maintaining clear boundaries and not instantly responding to the children's demands. Grandparents who do attempt to respond to the children's needs even on the road may be endangering their safety (Taubman – Ben-Ari, 2008a). In addition, a relatively recent study found children to be a major source of distraction to the driver (Koppel, Charlton, Kopinathen, & Taranto, 2011). This finding gives rise to the question of how grandparents deal with these distractions, particularly as they may be less skilled than parents in multitasking between children's needs and the demands of driving, and given findings that older adults are susceptible to driving safety errors while distracted (Aksan et al., 2013; Thompson et al., 2012).

As grandparents drive their grandchildren at the parents' behest, parental attitudes may also influence their driving, even though the parents are not physically present in the car. To the best of our knowledge, this research is the first to consider how parents' perceptions, opinions, and reactions may contribute to the tension grandparents experience when driving their grandchildren, and to their attitudes to child restraints. This is valuable information, because child-passenger safety requirements have changed dramatically over the years. Findings from focus groups have shown that most grandparents learn how to use child restraints from their children (O'Neil et al., 2012), implying that parents are involved in the transportation of their children even when they themselves are not the drivers. The current study therefore sought to broaden understanding of the combined roles of parents and grandparents in child transportation.

One of the major concerns when driving children is the proper use of restraints. This pivotal issue has only recently begun to receive attention in the context of grandparents. Two recent studies found that grandparents used less optimal restraints and seated their child occupants in the front seat more than parents (Henretig et al., 2011; O'Neil et al., 2012). Moreover, while most grandparents voiced a positive attitude to car safety seats and acknowledged the need for them, they also referred to the difficulty of using them properly (O'Neil et al., 2012).

In addition to factors associated with grandparents and grandchildren, it is important to examine grandparents' own driving style in order to better understand their experience and the issues they face in regard to the safe transport of their grandchildren. To this end, the current study employed the Multidimensional Driving Style Inventory (MDSI; Taubman – Ben-Ari, Mikulincer, & Gillath, 2004). "Driving style" refers to the manner in which the driver chooses to drive or to their customary driving mode, including features such as assertiveness, speed, headway distance, and attentiveness (Elander, West, & French, 1993). Four fundamental styles have been identified. *Reckless and careless* drivers ignore the rules of safe driving and look for sensations. They drive at excessive speed, tailgate, and overtake on a solid white line. Increasing age usually moderates the risks this type of driver takes. *Anxious* drivers are threatened by the very act of driving, are characterized by high levels of stress, and find it difficult to remain calm. They are fearful, unsure of themselves, and hesitant on the road. Driving experience may help them feel more confident over the years. However, increasing age may lead to impaired vision, concentration problems, and greater fatigue. *Angry and hostile* drivers tend to display aggressive and antagonistic attitudes and behaviors, such as cursing, flashing high beams, or using the horn. Advanced age generally brings with it a drop in the intensity of the anger and greater calm, whether as a natural result of the aging process or in response to the acquired understanding that it is pointless to confront and attempt to "educate" other drivers. Finally, *patient and careful drivers* adapt their driving to road conditions. They use caution, exercise judgment, and are aware of the implications of their driving. Patient and careful drivers tend to maintain this mode of driving throughout the life span (Taubman – Ben-Ari et al., 2004).

1.1. The current research

Although grandparents are becoming more and more involved in helping parents juggle work and family life, it is only recently that grandparent drivers have begun to enter researchers' scope. The pair of studies undertaken here joins this effort, aiming to provide a deeper understanding of the grandparent–parent–child dynamics in the car. The goal of the qual-

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/897629>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/897629>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)