

Novice drivers and parents: Exploring the feasibility of third party policing in reducing young driver offending

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ABSTRACT

Third Party Policing involves police partnering with other individuals or organizations in order to prevent or control crime and disorder. Given the high level of young driver crash rates and offences, an intervention based on Third Party Policing may reduce both. This study explored the feasibility of using this approach with parents, who would be the third party, and young drivers in the Australian Capital Territory. Semi-structured interviews with 16 parents and 11 of their children were conducted. The results suggest that, given parents are supportive of the formal policing of young drivers and their willingness to impose additional restrictions on their children, that the introduction of an intervention based on a Third Party Policing framework is feasible. However, the lack of knowledge of GDL restrictions that apply to their child may make it difficult for parents to act as an enforcement authority in partnership with police. There is also the need to introduce a legal lever to support parents in their interactions with children and enable police to coerce parents into taking action.

Keywords: provisional drivers; intermediate drivers; graduated driver licensing; road policing, third party policing

Acknowledgements: This research was supported by an NRMA-ACT Road Safety Trust grant. The research was conducted exclusively by the authors and has not been endorsed and is not guaranteed by the Trustees.

INTRODUCTION

Road trauma is the leading cause of death and disability for young Australians (Walker, Thompson, & Stevenson, 2017). Graduated driver licensing (GDL) is internationally recognised as a best practice

countermeasure, with different systems in place in the United States of America (USA) (Williams, McCart, & Sims, 2016; Steadman, Bush, Thygerson, & Barnes, 2014), Canada (Mayhew, Simpson, Ferguson, & Williams, 1998), New Zealand (Begg, Langley, Brookland, Ameratunga, & Gulliver, 2014; Langley, Wagenaar, & Begg, 1996), and Australia (Scott-Parker & Rune, 2016; Senserrick, 2009). Within countries, jurisdictional variation also occurs, making the need for policing strategies capable of transcending, but being informed by, specific regional restrictions. A framework that has explored the possibility of enhancing compliance using resources available to police in all jurisdictions, parents, is third party policing (TPP).

Third party policing

TPP is a form of joint policing or support provided to police to maintain law and order (Smith & Alpert, 2011). It can be used to prevent or control crime (Mazerolle & Ransley, 2005). In this framework, police agencies create partnerships and either voluntarily, or involuntarily, convince non-offending agencies to use their resources to reduce crime (Buerger & Green Mazerolle, 1996; Ransley & Mazerolle, 2009). A key element of the TPP partnership approach is the presence of a 'legal lever' that police can use to coerce partners if necessary. These legal levers define processes and outcomes and are not directly available to the police (Mazerolle, 2014). For instance, the requirement to report suspected child abuse is a legal lever. In many partnerships, the police do not use or remind their partners of these levers (Mazerolle, 2014). For TPP partnerships to be effective, Webster et al., (2017) argue that adequate regulatory frameworks are required to facilitate administration and operational performance of the crime control and/or prevention role by the third parties. They also argue that TPP requires ongoing commitment and communication between the parties to be effective. It is also necessary for frontline officers to be aware of partnerships for them to remain a priority for police (Webster, 2015). TPP has been successfully applied in liquor enforcement (Manning, Mazerolle, Mazerolle & Collingwood, 2016), limiting methamphetamine production (Webster, Mazerolle, Ransley & Mazerolle, 2017), reducing thefts at construction sites (Clarke & Goldstein, 2002), truancy (Mazerolle, 2014; Bennett, Mazerolle, Antrobus, Eggins & Piquero, 2018) and gang violence (Grogger, 2002).

An example of when TPP has been used as the framework for a youth population is the ABILITY trial. Mazerolle and colleagues (Bennett, et. al., 2018; Mazerolle, Antrobus, Bennett & Eggins, 2017; Mazerolle, Bennett, Antrobus & Eggins, 2017; Mazerolle, 2014) used a randomised control trial to explore if a TPP approach would reduce school truancy. Participants in the control group followed the traditional approach used in Queensland, Australia to reduce truancy which involved formal meetings with parents, issuing warning letters and, in rare cases, indicating that prosecution of the parents was impending. In the experimental group, participants engaged in a family conference with a trained facilitator from the Department of Communities. A child focussed Action Plan was developed during the conference and then monitored by a police officer for six months. A short exit meeting was then held. The results of the randomised control trial indicated that it reduced truancy and improved the students' willingness to attend school (Mazerolle, Antrobus, et al., 2017). The trial also raised parental awareness that prosecution was possible when their child was truant from school (Mazerolle, Bennett, et al., 2017). Additionally, offending behaviour for those in the experimental group decreased when compared with those in the control group in the one year follow up period (Bennett, et. al., 2018).

Young driver licensing

This study is examining the feasibility of using a TPP framework to reduce novice driver crash rates. When compared with other age groups of drivers, those who are young and newly licensed have higher crash rates (Bates, Davey, Watson, King & Armstrong, 2014). For instance, in the United States of America crashes are the leading cause of death for 13 to 19 year olds (as passengers as well as drivers), with crash rates for 16 to 19 year olds three times the rates for drivers who are older than 20 years (McCartt & Teoh, 2015). Indeed, young driver crashes are recognised as a worldwide issue (Elvik, 2010) affecting countries that are rapidly motorising, such as Oman (Al Reesi, Al Maniria, Al Adawi, Davey, Armstrong & Edwards, 2015), as well as those that are already highly motorised such as the United States of America (Williams, 2003). New drivers are at particular risk of crashing when they transition to independent driving (Curry, Pfeiffer, Durbin & Elliott, 2015). Males are more likely to crash than females (Bates, Davey et al., 2014). These high crash rates are affected by a number of factors including social and situational factors such as the presence of passengers or whether the young driver has consumed alcohol or drugs as well as situational factors such as the time of day and the week that the young person is driving (Bates, Davey et al, 2014).

Personality factors, age, skills and experience and hazard perceptions skills also affect crash rates (Bates, Davey et al, 2014). Additionally, developmental factors that is, those that result from the physical growth and development of young people affect novice driver crash risk (Shope, 2006).

To date, the most successful countermeasure that has been evaluated as reducing the crash rates of young drivers is GDL which involves new drivers progressing through learner and provisional or intermediate stages before obtaining a full licence (Scott-Parker & Rune, 2016; Bates, Filtness & Watson, 2018). Evaluations suggest that they reduce crash risk by between 20 and 40 per cent (Shope, 2007). Those systems that include strong night time and passenger restrictions as well as license at an older age tend to have lower fatal crash rates (McCartt, Teoh, Fields, Braitman & Hellinga, 2010). There is an implicit assumption within GDL systems that parents should be involved and influence their children's driving at both the learner (Ehsani, Li, Grant, Gershon, Klauer, Dingus & Simons-Morton, 2017) and provisional stages (Simons-Morton & Hartos, 2003; Brookland, Begg, Langley & Ameratunga, 2014; Bates, Allen, Armstrong, Watson, King & Davey, 2014).

Novice driver offending

New drivers do not always comply with traffic laws. For instance, young drivers may drive under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol (Cook, Shank, Bruno, Turner & Mann, 2017; Armstrong, Watling & Davey, 2018), while using a mobile phone (Gauld, Lewis & White, 2014) and engage in speeding behaviours (Harbeck & Glendon, 2013). It appears that during the first few years of driving, young people are particularly likely to be caught offending on the roads with over 50% of 16 and 17 year old drivers receiving a traffic violation within the first three years of driving (Chapman, Masten & Browning, 2014). This is supported by research conducted in the United Kingdom, which indicates that those young drivers who commit ordinary violations such as speeding and close following in the first few months of their solo driving career were more likely to continue to commit these types of offences in higher numbers as they continued to drive for the first three years (Roman, Poulter, Barker, McKenna & Rowe, 2015). In New Jersey, USA, approximately 8 per cent of intermediate drivers were not compliant with passenger restrictions (Curry, 2017) and approximately three per cent were not compliant with night driving restriction (Curry, Pfeiffer & Elliott, 2017).

Parental influence

Parents have a strong influence on the early driving experiences of novice drivers. There is an implicit assumption that they will be involved in the GDL process (Glendon, 2013; Mayhew, 2003) and young drivers tend to operate a vehicle in a similar way to their parents (Schmidt, Morrongiello & Colwell, 2014; Strukcinsiene et al., 2014). Parents themselves believe that parental rules have a significant impact on the risk that a young driver will be involved in crash (Jewett, Shults & Bhat, 2016). Parental involvement appears to be influenced by the parenting style and practices that they used prior to the licensing processes (Laird, 2014). However, there are differences between mothers and fathers. Mothers provide more supervised driving practice to learner drivers when compared with fathers (Bates, Watson & King, 2013; Scott-Parker, Bates, Watson, King & Hyde, 2011; Goodwin, Foss, Margolis & Waller, 2010). Mothers are also more likely to indicate that limits should be imposed on new drivers (Williams, Leaf, Simons-Morton & Hartos, 2006). The imposition of parental restrictions is important as research suggests that they are associated with lower levels of risky driving (Zeringue & Laird, 2018). Additionally, there is a link between the provision of maternal care to new drivers and their ability to resist peer influences (Smorti, Guarnieri & Ingoglia, 2014) suggesting that the influence of mothers may be particularly important when looking at interventions for young drivers.

Road policing and young drivers

The introduction of legislation designed to reduce crashes is not always effective (e.g. Prati, 2018). However, traffic law enforcement is one method used to change driver behaviour (Bates, Soole & Watson, 2012; Stanojevic, Javanovic & Lajunen, 2013) as programs that increase compliance with traffic laws may reduce crashes and injuries (Factor, 2014; Prenzler, Manning & Bates, 2015). It is possible that there may also be other benefits given that there is emerging evidence suggesting that drivers who offend may be engaging in routine deviant and criminogenic behaviour (Nunn, 2018).

Increasingly, road policing is informed by theoretical approaches and frameworks (Bates, 2014) with deterrence theory the dominant approach (Bates, Soole & Watson, 2012; Tudor-Owen, 2019). However, other frameworks such as procedural justice are increasingly being used to understand driver behaviour and police enforcement (e.g. Mazerolle, Bennett, Antrobus & Eggins, 2012; Barkworth & Murphy, 2015;

Maguire, Lowrey & Johnson, 2017; Bates, Antrobus, Bennett & Martin, 2015). Procedural justice is the concept that people make assessments about institutions based on how they interact with citizens (Bates, 2014). It incorporates four elements: neutrality, trust, voice and respect (Sargeant, Murphy, Davis & Mazerolle, 2012). Research within a road safety context indicates that there are nuances to the inclusion of procedural justice within certain types of interactions, such as speed cameras. For instance, speed cameras are seen to deny drivers a voice when being punished for speeding (Wells, 2008) but are positively associated with the element of neutrality (Bates, Allen & Watson, 2016).

Recently, the results of two Australian studies that used different samples drawn from the state of Queensland indicated that formal deterrence approaches do not appear to be an effective policing strategy for young drivers (Allen, Murphy & Bates, 2017; Bates, Darvell & Watson, 2017). In fact, it appears that an emboldening effect may be present for younger drivers, with those who have been caught by police previously for offending behaviour being more likely to report higher levels of non-compliance (Bates, Darvell & Watson, 2017). Although, Canadian research that utilised a deterrence framework suggests that the restrictions present during the intermediate licence do help young drivers to resist peer pressure to break the road rules (Poirier, Blais & Faubert, 2018).

As formal deterrence does not appear to be an effective framework for this group in the context of road policing, other theoretical approaches need exploring. Bates, Rodwell & Matthews (2019) reviewed 21 studies looking at the policing of young driver offending and concluded there was a need for more theoretically informed research in this area. Their review identified that in the area of young provisional (intermediate) driver enforcement only three theoretical perspectives had been considered: deterrence theory, procedural justice and third party policing. Procedural justice and third party policing had only been considered once each.

In a young driver context, police could partner with a number of groups in an attempt to improve compliance. These groups could include parents, transport agencies and insurance companies. The exact model could vary and may depend on the introduction of legislative changes. However, examples include

parents also receiving a fine when their young driver commits a traffic offence or transport agencies providing a discount on vehicle registration to young people who maintain traffic offence free driving records during their first years of driving. The feasibility of this type of approach needs exploration. Parents are supportive of GDL licensing systems. Research using a nationally representative sample of households within the USA found that parents were supportive of strong GDL systems incorporating higher licensing ages, longer learner periods and night and passenger restrictions. Additionally, over three-quarters of the sample supported increased penalties for those young drivers that committed violations (Williams, Braitman & McCartt, 2011). Another study conducted in New Zealand identified that the factors associated with low compliance with GDL requirements were low parental knowledge of the conditions, parents implementing few driving rules, the young person owning a vehicle and parents' crash involvement (Brookland, Begg, Langley & Ameratunga, 2017). Given the influence of parents, and the possibility that this influence could be both beneficial and negative for young driver safety, this research will explore the feasibility of implementing and using a TPP framework with parents as the third party to guide interventions for this group.

METHOD

Participants

Participants in this study were drawn from the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) within Australia. The ACT is a small jurisdiction (2,358 km²) bounded on all sides by the state of New South Wales (NSW). The GDL system within the ACT is unique in Australia. Individuals can obtain a learner licence from the age of 15 years and 9 months by attending a compulsory Road Ready course and passing a knowledge test (Scott-Parker & Rune, 2016). Once they have a learner licence, they must be supervised by someone who has held a full licence for a minimum of four years and has a zero Blood Alcohol Content (BAC). The learner driver must also have a zero BAC and display 'L' plates on their vehicle to indicate their status. Once the new driver is 17 they are able to obtain their provisional (intermediate) licence. They can do this by either passing a practical driving test or completing a competency based training and assessment process. This licence is held for a minimum period of 3 years. Provisional drivers indicate their licence status by displaying 'P' plates on their vehicle. However, if they complete the optional Road Ready Plus course, they

are able to remove the plates after the first 6 months of driving. An additional benefit of attending the Road Ready Plus course is the ability to accumulate an additional four demerit points for committing traffic offences before losing their licence (Scott-Parker & Rune, 2016).

The sample consisted of 16 parents (14 mothers and 2 fathers) who participated in telephone interviews. Parents described their experiences with 26 provisional drivers in total (12 females, 14 males; age range 17 to 24 years old). When their children were contacted for interviews, 11 agreed to participate in the study (6 males, 5 females), aged 17 ($n = 8$) and 18 ($n = 3$). This represented 15 family groups.

Participant recruitment involved promoting the study through email via the provider of a compulsory pre-licence driver education course, *Road Ready* in the ACT, as well as by social media, local radio stations and television. In the promotional materials, the purpose and methodology of the study were described. The study involved a 15 to 30 minute telephone interview with parents of young drivers currently holding a provisional licence. Parental participants were offered a gift voucher with a value of AU\$30 in recognition of their time. Participants were also informed that their children (who held a provisional licence) could participate in the study. The interviews with the provisional drivers were shorter in duration (approximately 15 minutes) and the provisional drivers were compensated with gift vouchers of AU\$20.

Procedure

Each participant gave verbal consent for this process at the start of the interviews. The interview questions for the parents focused on their experiences regarding their children's provisional licence phase. Specifically, they were asked about their awareness or knowledge of the restrictions on provisional licences, beliefs about the purpose of these restrictions, their main concerns in relation to their children's licensing process, their views about the ease or difficulty their children's experiences in complying with these restrictions (or otherwise), and their approaches and strategies in encouraging or enforcing compliance with these restrictions. Parents were also questioned about strategies used. After the interview, each parent was asked to invite their child/children to participate in the study. Similar interview questions were used with the young drivers. However, questions were also asked regarding which restrictions were the easiest or hardest to comply with, strategies that their parents used to help them comply with the restrictions and their

opinions on the effectiveness (or otherwise) of these strategies. NVivo 11 was used to analyse the interviews.

RESULTS

A key aspect of third party policing is the partnership approach between police and a third 'agency' and the support of this relationship with a legal mechanism. However, there are a number of factors that influence whether this type of approach is feasible in the context of young novice drivers and their parents. The themes that the analysis of the interview data suggested were important were knowledge of the existing rules, parental beliefs about their child driving, factors that affect parental influence on their child's driving including ownership of a vehicle, parental involvement with a child, siblings and peer influences on the novice, whether parents implement complimentary driving restrictions on their child and how the parents, police and novice interact in offending situations.

Knowledge and Compliance with Restrictions

As noted earlier, the ACT has a GDL system that is unique within Australia. When considering the requirements in place, almost all parents had knowledge of the zero-blood alcohol concentration (BAC) restriction ($n = 15$), followed by demerit points ($n = 6$), displaying p-plates ($n = 3$) and towing restrictions ($n = 2$). Many parents were aware of the restrictions when prompted, however, they expressed that they did not think of these as licence requirements. For example, all parents were aware that the child had to display their P-plates to indicate their licence status. Similarly, P-plate holders most frequently recalled BAC ($n = 5$), followed by demerit points ($n = 2$). After this, many P-plate holders appeared confused citing interstate restrictions and admission of being unaware despite recent licensure;

“Wear your P plates, obviously. Like, lose points. I am not sure that like...in the ACT now, about like, after curfew, after 11 ... I think that is just NSW... don't know what else there is actually?”

There are several possible reasons for the finding of poor knowledge of restrictions by both parents and their children. This may be because (a) restrictions in the ACT are limited in number compared with interstate jurisdictions, (b) some restrictions do not apply to individuals given their driving habits (such as

towing restrictions), or (c) some restrictions are not thought of as additional rules (such as displaying plates).

P-platers confirmed that alcohol restrictions were easy to comply with, and additionally commented support for the rule though this was not always the case in their peer networks;

“I just don’t drink anything, really. Some people in my friend’s group would say, “Oh yeah, I’ll just take a taste of that,” I wouldn’t...”

P-platers suggested that forward planning and organising a designated driver (who maintains a ‘strictly no alcohol’ policy) prevented rule breaches. If necessary, they call on friends and parents for lifts.

Parents also identified modelling behaviours as being influential. This included efforts to correct their own driving habits;

“I had a bad habit in the beginning you know, to have it [mobile phone] with me. But then eventually I started putting it in the boot of my car...so that’s what I try to get [my son] to do...at least to the glovebox to ensure that it’s in a safe place and not reachable.”

Mobile phone use was the most frequently cited restriction that their children have difficulty complying with, and several ($n = 5$) parents choose to highlight this issue. They cited lack of knowledge regarding the legislation, with varying functionality causing confusion for some;

“I’m not 100% clear on the rules...if she’s stopped at traffic lights she’ll look at it but she won’t text while she’s driving. She will text if she is sitting at traffic lights- a real quick message and keep going. If it rings she will let it ring out...”

In making this comment, this parent demonstrated a knowledge of her child’s activity, who said;

“Look, admittedly I’ll maybe check my phone or reply to a text if I’m stopped at a traffic light or something but other than that, if I’m actually moving I just don’t touch my phone. Or even look at it. I make a point of putting it face down. [If I do respond to a text] then if I don’t finish it, I again, put the phone down and say [to myself] “I’ll finish it at the next lights”.”

Parental beliefs about their young novice driving

Parents in the interviews did indicate that they had different beliefs about their child driving and whether this was appropriate. This ranged from concerns about their child's safety, the impact on the parent's emotional state, the 'trust' they had in their child as well as the effect of mobility on the opportunities available to the child.

Parents did indicate some concerns about their children driving at 16 or 17 years of age. One parent stated "*...16-17 is very young. They are so irresponsible, not accountable and this is what I was worried about.*" While another indicated that this was a time of a change in relationship between the parent and child and said "*It is a very anxious time I think as parents.*" A different parent stated "*I mean obviously a parent is concerned when their child goes off on their own in a car*". One child indicated that he did not talk to his father about obtaining a licence and that his mother took all responsibility for teaching him to drive. This was because:

"He [Dad] was really against me driving because he said 'you're too young to drive' and lots of accidents happen with people your age and I don't want ... I don't want you driving at such a young age."

Some parents indicated that they could 'trust' their child to drive in a safe manner or they facilitated their attendance at further driver education and training in the belief this would make them 'safe'. For example, one parent said "*I know I can trust him*" which appeared to indicate that their child knew the right thing to do and therefore they did not need to engage in any follow up interactions regarding their driving. Alternatively, parents facilitated their children's attendance at further driver education and training designed to keep them safe. One parent outlined the steps she took:

"I simply assisted him by doing the online booking and of course paying for it and he managed to get himself there for the three hours....that was [all that was] required."

Other parents recognised that driving was necessary for their child in order for them to meet education or work commitments.

“She doesn’t like driving. She drives because she has to get to work. Public transport doesn’t work for her because she has numerous places, she has three part time jobs. So to get from one to the other is not practical with the bus system that we have and it’s usually quite late at night.”

“It was important for their [child’s] independence, it was important as a skill that they had to learn.”

Factors affecting parental influence on the child

Parents were aware of a number of factors that affected the level of influence they had on their child. This included ownership or control of the car, the level of involvement they had with their child’s driving, the presence of siblings and peer influences.

Ownership of a vehicle

Ownership of a vehicle had a direct impact on parental perceptions of whether they were able to encourage or enforce their child to drive in a safe manner. Parents whose children drove a family vehicle or still lived in the family home felt that their children were more likely to engage with them when discussing safe driving. *“Ben sort of still lives at home and he’s still at school...he’s got his own car but he uses our car quite often because with his part time job he does deliveries so he needs the satnav in the car rather than using a mobile which is safer for him. And also our car is a lease so he doesn’t have to pay for the petrol for that.”*

In some cases, parents indicated that they would remove the child’s ability to access the car if they drove in a manner that they believed was inappropriate. For instance one parent indicated to her child that, if she misbehaved:

“the car [will be] banned yes, it will be taken away, you will be back on the bus until you can afford to run your own car”

In contrast, parents felt they had less influence with children who owned their own vehicle or no longer lived at home.

“Well with her being that bit older and basically not living at home now because she’s off at Uni, yeah I suppose she feels more responsibility that it’s not our place to say anything anymore.”

So now he's out of home, so it's a little bit harder to [influence].

Involvement with young novice driving

Some children perceived that their parents did not enforce driving rules or introduce additional informal driving restrictions because of either the personality of the parents or the child.

"He's never been the kind of person who says 'don't ever do this ever'. He's the kind of person who says 'you shouldn't do this because it dangerous and you make a decision' I think that's a good thing because it really makes you think about it a lot more.

"Well, there isn't any actual active thing they've tried to stop me from doing really. I think they think I am reasonably sensible and I am."

In contrast, other parents were heavily involved in encouraging safer driver behaviours while their child was on a provisional licence. In one example, a mother rang the parents of all the other children that would be in the car with her son when they were planning a road trip after finishing school.

"So when my eldest son got his license they went down the coast after Year 12 and I made a point of ringing all the kids he was driving down just to...the parents just to say that he's a P Plater. And that he won't be bullied into going faster you know from peer pressure. And I told all the parents that and said you know he's under instructions from us that if he gets peer pressure we've told him to stop the car and get the kid out of the car."

Siblings

Parents also recognised that there were differences between their children. For this reason, they may have supported them differently while they were driving on a provisional licence.

"He does [engages in those conversations with you]. His brother may not, but yes, no he does"

"Every child is different"

"It was probably easier with [name] because he's more sensible"

Some of the children within the sample also indicated that the way that their sibling drove affected them and encouraged safer driving patterns for themselves. One girl commented:

“...seeing my brother do not very safe things I think definitely changed my [perspective] ... like, kind of kept my mind that I should be doing the right thing”

Peer influences

Some parents indicated that they were concerned regarding the peer influences on their child. This may reflect that they are aware that their influence on their child, in comparison to their peers, is decreasing.

The quotes from parents below reflects this view:

I think where the concern is the peer pressure and that’s my concern as well

I think coming from peers and people that they respect still holds more weight than the parents

I said I don’t mind if you have got one in the car and it is a reasonable and responsible person but I don’t want five kids being driven somewhere with your radio up and being silly. I can’t really police that...

Existing complimentary informal restrictions

The complimentary rules implemented by parents, when formal rules were not known or answers could not be found, were focused on safety and were often reflective of restrictions imposed in other states, such as peer passenger restrictions. For example;

“The only other restriction I did give him was that he wasn’t [allowed] to drive a whole heap of his friends around...[because] of distractions...I have said “I don’t mind you having one [passenger] in the car and it is a reasonable and responsible person, but I don’t want five kids being driven somewhere.”

Parents were clearly concerned with distraction, be it from peers or mobile phones, and the safety implications, rather than rule adherence to avoid external punishment. To this end, they applied additional penalties imposed reflecting formal enforcement techniques. For example;

“If I caught my daughter on her mobile phone she would lose her car privileges! Period!”

Parents, police and offending

Third party policing requires the third party to have access to resources that the police do not. One child indicated that existing formal driving laws do not discourage provisional drivers suggesting that they would find a way to avoid being caught for breaking the law.

“I mean if you’re going to put all those restrictions on teenagers they’re going to find a way to get around it anyway. And in my opinion if you put all kinds of [legal] restrictions, I’m sure teenagers just start to take off the P plates entirely so nobody can notice they’re a P plate driver and do that”

This suggests there is a need to consider alternative forms of policing these requirements.

Parents also indicated that they had conversations with their child when they had broken the law and then provided some strategies for how they could comply with the law and reasons for doing so. For instance:

“...[we] have had a couple of situations where he [went] through the speed cameras....when he was 1 or 2 k over the limit and we talked to him about it. We decided it was betterto [be] 1 or 2 k under than above because it puts you in more safe conditions”.

A mother, reflecting on her son’s apprehension by police for speeding, stated;

“I think it cemented for him that there are rules, there are police, they will take action.”

This parent was not only endorsing the police action, but suggests that their function is to enforce the rules.

This can be seen in the short sentence construction; “there are rules, there are police, they will take action”.

However, the parent also suggested an emotional response;

“devastated, embarrassed...it has really bought home to him...the importance of driving a car and the importance of driving it safely”.

There were parents and young people who indicated that they felt that the police were doing a lot more road enforcement than in the past. They were supportive of this approach.

“These days they seem to get caught a lot more which is quite good.there seems to be a bit more vigilance and they come down hard on them with consequences” (parent)

“Honestly I think with most people the main reason why they don’t do it [drink driving] is because of the police and fear of getting caught.” (child)

“They’re there to do a job.... he was seen to break it, so yeah, no I was fine. I’m appreciative of them

actually”.

In contrast, other parents felt that provisional drivers were targeted by police. This was one reason why parents encouraged their children to participate in a voluntary driver education course six months after obtaining their provisional licence as they would then be able to legally drive without displaying P plates on the vehicle to indicate their licence status.

“Looking at young drivers, less experienced I ‘ve seen [cars] in a row when they’ve flagged cars over for breathalysing [to test for drink driving] that they always pull in the P driver and waved on others.”

“Because [both children] have this negative view that the police might target P drivers ... that’s why they were encouraged to do to Ps off”

When children were caught speeding, parents reflected on which aspect of the punishment – the financial penalty or the accumulation of demerit points that might lead to eventual licence loss – was worse. There was consensus within the sample that it was accumulation of demerit points that was the bigger issue although when the financial cost affected other plans it was devastating.

“For me it’s all about the points, not the money...It doesn’t matter how much you charge me if I get a fine, it’s how many points I’m going to lose.”

“When my other son has been picked up for anything, I’m like how many points did you lose because it doesn’t matter about the money because we’ll get the money. It’s how many points have you got left.”

Everyone makes mistakes and you know...but yeah, it was a mistake, he fessed up, he you know, paid for the fines himself... He was due to go to America about 3 months later...that really impacted his savings. So I think all around it was actually a really good outcome.

One parent, without prompting, recognised that legislation would be beneficial in trying to keep her child safe.

“I would prefer there is legislation around that or at least options to parents to do something in agreement with their new driver to you know just keep [your child] safe”

This is a key element of third party policing – using legal levers to enable police to access resources to enhance community safety and decrease offending.

DISCUSSION

Many of the existing parental interventions involve voluntarily committing to programs designed to support new drivers. One example is the Checkpoints program where parents and their children sign a Parent-Teen driving agreement (Simons-Morton, 2007). Research regarding the Checkpoints program indicates that it results in parents implementing more strict driving limits (Simons-Morton, Hartos & Beck, 2003; Simons-Morton, Hartos, Leaf & Preusser, 2005). While Checkpoints is targeted at provisional drivers, other programs are targeted at parents of young people who are learning to drive for instance by improving communication between parents and their children (Peek-Asa, Cavanaugh, Yang, Chande, Young & Ramirez, 2014). A key difference between these voluntary programs and a program based on a TPP framework is the existence of the legal lever (Mazerolle & Ransley, 2005). The legal lever would enable the police to coerce parents to ensure their child complied with traffic laws.

However, it would be difficult to expect parents to enforce GDL restrictions and other traffic laws when they do not have a clear knowledge of these requirements. The results of this study suggest there is poor knowledge of many restrictions by both young drivers and their parents which New Zealand research has suggested is associated with higher offending behaviour by young drivers (Brookland, Begg, Langley & Ameratunga, 2017). Part of this confusion may have resulted from participants' awareness that there are different licensing restrictions in different Australian states and territories. Within this study, there was a high awareness of certain restrictions such as the requirement that individuals on a provisional licence in the ACT are unable to drive with any blood alcohol in their system. The knowledge of this restriction by both the novice drivers and their parents mean that the participants reported high compliance with this requirement as well as a range of strategies that supported observance of this rule.

Consistent with the benefits of parental limit setting identified in previous research (Williams, Leaf, Simons-Morton & Hartos, 2006; Zeringue & Laird, 2018), interviewed parents from this study were willing

to impose additional restrictions on their children that were designed to increase their levels of safety. In some cases, parents set additional limits based on GDL requirements that were present in other Australian jurisdictions but not the ACT such as limiting the number of peer passengers in the vehicle. Parents' willingness to do this is supportive of the introduction of interventions based on a TPP framework as it appears that they are already prepared to take responsibility for enforcement activities.

There was less clarity regarding whether or not parents were supportive of their child driving. Some parents accepted that this was an important aspect of their child becoming independent and being able to access a range of other activities. However, some parents recognised the safety implications of driving to the point where one child did not even tell his father that he was obtaining a driver's licence. This reflects a wider tension between maintaining safety and mobility for this age group (Bates, Watson & King, 2010). It is also congruent with the work of Guttman (2013) who suggests a typology for parental involvement. He suggests that most parents are in the first category which is that parents should be involved and monitor their child's driving. The second category is a low parental responsibility and involvement category. It is likely that only parents in the first category will effectively engage in TPP activities.

The parents in this study stated that they were supportive of enforcement activities undertaken by formal police agencies. However, research suggests that parents (Raymond et al, 2007) and young drivers (McCartt, Oesch, Williams & Powell, 2013) believe that the enforcement activities of police are undertaken inconsistently indicating a need to change the perception that young people will be caught when they offend. TPP may be one way of doing this.

While there is currently no legal lever within the ACT, this study suggests that a TPP approach does appear feasible given that there is a focus from parents on ensuring that their child is safe. Many parents appear supportive of formal policing efforts and are aware of some of the dangers inherent in being new drivers. The introduction of a legal lever, which would lay the foundation for a formal TPP approach, could be one way of supporting parents to keep their children safe. As noted by Mazerolle and Ransley (2005), while it is necessary to have a legal lever, it is not necessary to enact the use of it within a TPP context. TPP would also enable police agencies to access resources that they do not currently have such as a more thorough

knowledge of individuals. It may also improve perceptions of the consistency of enforcement of offences committed by novice drivers.

Parents worry more about their new drivers when they are learning to drive and are under supervision compared to when they are newly licensed drivers and are more likely to crash (Jewett, Shults & Bhat, 2016). Another benefit of the introduction of a formal TPP framework is that it may clearly alert parents to the dangers present for their child when they first start to drive by themselves. This kind of alerting is an important function of traffic legislation and allows capitalising on parental positive intentions. For instance, this type of legislative alerting has proved effective in Australia in relation to encouraging the use of child safety seats for children aged 5-8 years. There was already very high levels of use for children up to age 5 years. Legislation was used to highlight the need for child-specific restraint use up to the age where an adult belt offers appropriate protection (more typically 8-10 years old; Lennon, 2012).

A limitation of this study is that many of the parents were engaged and motivated and thus may not accurately reflect the wider range of parents of young drivers. Such parents may be more likely to encourage their children to comply with laws generally, including road laws. Therefore, a study that investigates parents from a wider cross-section of society is needed in order to identify if TPP would work more broadly. This study was conducted within Australia where there are generally high levels of trust in police from citizens (Bean, 2005). Other countries, such as the United States, have levels of trust in police that are lower (Gallup, 2018). Thus, further research is required in other jurisdictions to see if interventions based on a TPP framework would work effectively elsewhere. There is also a need to consider a range of other influences on driving behaviour apart from the law (Wells & Savigar, 2017). Further research is required to introduce an intervention based on TPP and then evaluate its effect on young driver intentions, behaviours and offence rates.

Additionally, there is a need for more theoretically informed research regarding parents and their influence during the GDL process. Parental modelling appears to influence the driving of children (e.g. Brookland, et. al., 2014; Miller & Taubman – Ben-Ari, 2010; Taubman – Ben-Ari, Musicant, Lotan & Farah, 2014). There is limited research suggesting that, for learner drivers (those who still must drive under supervision), social learning theory can assist in predicting which supervisors are more likely to ensure compliance with

driving laws. Australian research which examined supervisors of learner drivers in both Queensland and New South Wales identified that those supervisors who are older, have higher incomes, have partners, live in New South Wales, are not the primary supervisor, do not receive guidance from friends, government websites or driving instructors and perceive the start of the learner licence as riskier are more likely to ensure that their learner complies with the road laws. Additionally, supervisors with more positive personal attitudes towards driving instructors, interacted with significant groups that ensured learner driver compliance and anticipated more rewards were also more likely to ensure that their learner complied with the laws (Bates, Watson & King, 2016).

CONCLUSION

This study used semi-structured interviews with parents and their children to explore the feasibility of developing interventions based on a TPP framework. TPP involves police working with other individuals and organisations in order to reduce crime and improve compliance. This study indicates that there is potential to use this framework as a basis for an intervention. This is because (a) parents are willing to impose additional restrictions on their children to improve their safety and (b) parents are supportive of formal policing activities that encourage their children to adhere to both GDL restrictions and road rules. However, a lack of a legal lever and knowledge of specific GDL restrictions that apply to their child make it difficult for parents to act as the enforcement authority. Thus, in order for an intervention based on TPP to be effective, both parents and their children will need a much higher level of knowledge of the restrictions and road rules that are in place for new drivers and a legal lever needs to be introduced which supports parents or can be used by police to coerce parents to ensure that their child complies with traffic laws.

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