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There is a sort of pride in writing the "Edito" of this first Newsletter. I would not have bet on it some years ago, and the way to come there was not so easy, but here we are!

I really hope that it is the beginning of a long series of interesting contributions. I'm not involved in the cultural nor the sociological research activities but there is a point when conducting some research works in the area of child safety, where it is necessary to be strongly connected with people. Effectively, every technical improvement on child safety products is important but it will be beneficial to children only under some given conditions, and a lot of questions remain without any technical answer. It is necessary then to look in a different direction, or in fact with a different vision. When I met and discussed with a man that the others called a « sociologist », I was surprised. Together we worked to include this new approach in research projects. I'm happy that today he accepted to write the introductory article and I hope that a lot of engineers and technicians will take time to subscribe to his vision.

Many thanks to him and also to Pr Langwieder that has accepted last year that we hold "freely" our first workshop on "Child Safety Culture". This year again we are given the opportunity to meet and exchange prior to his International conference on child safety in cars. Thanks to all participants that have made this possible, hoping you will be even more and more numerous this year, and the following ones.

Philippe LESIRE,
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Why bother with a cultural approach on Child Safety?

Road safety, and the strategies to implement politics and actions for the most possible benefit ("saving lives") are strongly depending on the degree (and the way) in which a commonly acknowledged benefit of a "road safety culture" is established in a given cultural context.

The scientific occupation with a topic such as child safety, focussing on cultural differences, could lead to the idea that there would be cultures having a lesser appreciation of the lives and safeguard of their children, than in others. This would be a misconception - if there is one major federating dimension on Child Safety across all cultural borders there may be, than it is the following one: A badly injured or dead child is every thing that no one wants to live, nor to tolerate – it can be considered as totally unacceptable in every cultural context!

The issue is not that there would be cultures, which would be "better" caretakers of their children' safeguard, versus others who wouldn't care – it is about the degree of awareness and, a sort of level of technical knowledge that exists in a given societal framework. Consequently, research could focus on the analysis of differences and identify the degree of awareness. Inside this dimension of "understanding differences", some possible topics for analytical research could be, for example on Risk perception (salience of "child safety" in a specific cultural context) and the State of "road safety culture" (degree of sensitivity to the issue of RS, specifically concerning child safety). These topics may appear abstract on a first look, but they are a necessary to achieve a broader understanding of the reasons for behaviour. In addition, results will allow to frame very pragmatic issues of technical knowledge (know how to use correctly a CRS, know how to choose an adequate CRS for my child), together with socio-economic reasoning (what financial amount I consider will be sufficient to spend for my child's safety).

CASPER: Understanding the reality of the children’s environment in cars

CASPER (Child Advanced Safety for European Roads) is a European project which aims to reduce fatalities and injuries of children in traffic accidents. As it is known that misuse of child restraint is an important factor in the level of protection offered, one of the challenge of the project is to understand why if all parents want to protect their children, the reality of road situation still shows that they do not secure correctly their children in a car. A sociological and cultural program has been set up.



From a sociological approach, 232 surveys were distributed in France at the moment. Its objective is to give an overview on child safety reality by questioning on driving habits, perceptions, safety knowledge and on how driver make choices when confronted to child safety issues. This questionnaire is also existing in an electronic version. It will be used in the next period to extend the data collection. Furthermore, a series of focus groups gathering 27 parents were conducted in France to go deeper into the understanding of the driver’s behaviour. The article in this newsletter presents only findings from the French survey.

The analysis of the French surveys showed that the question of children safety in cars is a priority for the great majority of parents (77%), they use child restraint systems (CRS) for the security of children and a sizeable part of the sample (41%) bought a new car when a child was born. So, the presence of children changes what people expect from a car.

But if parents wish the best level of safety for their children, at the same time, they overestimate their own behaviour. When they were asked to indicate what type of CRS their children used, the responses showed that 30% of the children do not have the right CRS according to their weight. And the older they are, the less they are using an appropriate CRS.

The level of knowledge in child safety of parents seems globally satisfactory but over estimated when compare to reality. They still have troubles with points such as:

- when is it possible to install a child forward-facing,
- when is it necessary to deactivate the frontal airbag,
- how much a harness must be tighten .
- Isofix is still something very few of them know.

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Why bother with a cultural approach on Child Safety? (continuation)

By identifying socio-cultural and socio-economic issues on child safety, there positively will be an achievement on which “lever” should be activated to contribute to a change of perception and possibly influence behaviour. Which brings us back to the initial question - what do we want to achieve with the knowledge we want to gain... The findings (what we have to understand about differences) are not meant to be reserved to the scientific community - there clearly is a target on “how to improve our message” / “how to reach people” to be sure that those concerned in the first place do understand the message. Consequently, there must be an important effort on “translation” to be made, with a clear target : to succeed in an intelligent way to persuade parents and drivers transporting children that their children’s safety has to be taken care of - each time they will use the car, from the first minute on and on every trip, even if this one is only to last five minutes.

As a conclusion, I want to underline at least three main dimensions for further investigation:

- The sociology and social-psychology of child safety in a cultural context,
- The methodological dimension to investigate the link between social representations on Child safety and the resulting behaviour,
- The target to translate the knowledge on Child safety culture in concrete messages and easy-to-access knowledge for the parents / drivers

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CASPER (continuation)

First results of the CASPER project surveys showed a gap between the issues of children safety in cars (inappropriate use and misuse of CRS) and the fact drivers think restraining their children properly. Not surprisingly, parents want to secure their children in the best way but they misjudge mistakes they make or they simply do not know they can make mistakes. Lacks of knowledge and information, the fact a lot of them buy their CRSs in supermarkets without any demonstration possibilities are factors to consider.

Another important result of this survey is the necessity to make children aware of the safety in cars (older children are more likely to fasten themselves than younger children) and parents that they are always legally responsible of children safety (only 41% of parents reported they “always” check the installation when children fasten themselves). Indeed, children can condition the way they are restrained by fastening themselves correctly (for the older ones) or by claiming being restrained (for the younger ones): our messages have also to be adapted to them .

Furthermore, the presence of children in cars causes special events that the driver has to overcome. Three main issues were indicated by the respondents: Noise/shouts, Fights/quarrels, lack of concentration/distraction. Two third of the participants mentioned that the presence of children in a car could be a cause of accident. So, child behaviour has an impact on the way a CRS is used but also on the quality of the driving. An abstract to publish these results more in details has been submitted for the ESV2011 conference.

Annie Langlois,
Sociologist, CEESAR,
France
On the behalf of CASPER partn



Culture Counts: Reaching Newcomers with Lifesaving Road Safety Information

Nearly 250,000 immigrants arrive in Canada from all corners of the globe each year, giving Canada the highest per capita immigration rate in the world. In just the province of Ontario, the population is expected to grow by more than 4 million in the next 30 years.

Data has shown that minority populations, recent immigrants, non-English speakers, people with low income, and people with low literacy are at especially high risk of injury as motor vehicle occupants. It has also been found that health promotion initiatives created for the general population often do not work for ethno-cultural communities.

In late 2006, Safety Drives Us (SDU) was formed to address such concerns and make road safety education more accessible to newcomers. This committee is a unique partnership between ethnic media, settlement agencies, children’s safety advocates, public health officials, police and the provincial transportation ministry.

The committee members represent 3 regions in Southern Ontario (Peel, Halton and Hamilton). Based on community readiness, our initial efforts were focused primarily in Halton Region. Halton is located southwest of the Greater Toronto Area and is 1 of Canada’s fastest growing regions.

SDU’s initial focus was to address the barriers to child passenger safety identified through anecdotal feedback and secondary research. Although the following barriers also exist within the general population, they were found to a greater extent among Halton’s newcomers.

Low-income Barriers:
older vehicles with older seatbelt systems and/or no tether anchor bolts
second-hand child car seats with missing car seat instructions/parts
vehicles too small to accommodate family size
old/expired seats
seats not appropriate for child’s weight/height

Low Literacy/English Proficiency Barriers:
limited English proficiency (both oral and written)
difficult to understand vehicle and/or car seat manuals

Cultural Barriers:
low perceived need for car seat use; car seats may not be the norm ‘back home’ and their need not well-understood
fear/distrust of police (was found to be a barrier to attending car seat clinics)
majority of health education materials and programs only reflect the cultural values of the majority and these concepts are often not directly transferable to communities with different cultural backgrounds
The following initiatives were developed by SDU to address these barriers:

Funded by a provincial road safety grant, two current provincial child passenger safety pamphlets were translated into Punjabi, Arabic, Spanish, Korean, Urdu, Portuguese and Chinese. These resources were made available through settlement and community agencies, libraries and at special events. Based on their popularity, further printings of the materials were taken over by the provincial transportation ministry and are available through the provincial publications distribution centre.

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Culture Counts: Reaching Newcomers with Lifesaving Road Safety Information

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Recognizing that language is only one barrier faced by newcomers, SDU applied the concept of using peer partners to reach newcomers. As members of the focus population, settlement workers provide the insight necessary to eliminate barriers to interventions and ensure strategies are culturally sensitive. Settlement workers not only speak their client's language, they are also considered credible 'insiders' who are seen to understand the reality of the newcomer, having been in most cases newcomers themselves.

Initially a group of settlement workers were trained as certified car seat technicians through a 2-day training program. However, due to staff turnover, time limitations and liability issues, the settlement workers were found best to be used as supports at the car seat clinics as opposed to technicians. Subsequently, a car seat safety presentation was developed to target all settlement workers to provide them with basic car seat safety information to support and refer their clients.

Car seat clinics were offered specifically for newcomers in Halton Region. In order to ensure a welcoming and safe-space climate, settlement workers personally invited their clients and ensured that they were present at the clinic to provide translation services as necessary.

Certified car seat technicians inspected the car seats and ensured safe installation. In attempts to build relationship and debunk myths, technicians from police services were assigned to work with families who had expressed fear of police. Also an auto mechanic was present to install anchor bolts to older vehicles and funding was available to donate car seats to families in need.

Newcomers were also reached through a variety of media sources that included local TV and ethnic radio interviews, televised car seat installation demonstrations in Arabic and magazine articles.

Information displays were used to target newcomers at various cultural community events to raise awareness and normalize the use of car seats, including booster seats.

A road safety survey targeting newcomers is being conducted to measure their road safety attitudes, behaviours, barriers and incentives. It is anticipated that the survey results will assist SDU in further strategies, messaging and resource development.

Future initiatives include further development of the SDU website (www.safetydrivesus.org),

pedestrian and cycling safety information, translating car seat installation "how-to" videos and expanding road safety efforts in Peel and Hamilton Regions.

With over 200 ethnic groups, Canada is rich in diversity. Although translation is an effective strategy in increasing access to health promotion information, this strategy alone does not take into consideration the influence of cultural norms and differences. Using trusted and culturally aware front-line settlement staff has been a successful method to disseminate important road safety information to traditionally hard-to-reach groups.

Natalie Zeitoun,
Ministry of Transportation,
Ontario - Canada

SHORT NEWS

In a urban area, a pilot study has been conducted to have a better knowledge of what children think about safety in cars. Teachers have asked children of 7 to10 year old to fill-in a simplified form in the classroom. On the present sample (98), to the question « *do you think that a booster cushion is useful?* », 28 children answer no, 11 - it is useful but they do not know what for, 17 - it's only for « babies », 18 - useful to be seated higher (have a better view) *only 31 – it's for protection.* Similar studies in other areas will be conducted, and results will be published.

Info source: LAB, France

UPCOMING EVENT

The 2nd workshop on « child safety culture » will be held on December the 1st at TUV-Sud in Munich. As it was for its 1st edition, this event will give the opportunity to exchange points of view and continue together reflections that were started last year. It will be illustrated with experience from different parts of the planet. This workshop is free of charge for the participants to the International Conference « Protection of children in cars » that is planned the following days.

**Highlight it in
your agendas!**

