

## **Cradle attitudes - grave consequences?**

### **The Development of Gender Differences in Attitudes and Behaviour in Risky Road Use**

**Andrea Waylen and Frank McKenna** Psychology Department, University of Reading

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There is a wealth of literature indicating that male drivers are over-involved in road accidents. Much of this research highlights associations between individual characteristics, such as sensation-seeking behaviour and anti-social tendencies, and risky driver behaviour (fast, inappropriate speeds and violational behaviour, eg drink-driving). However, there seem to have been fewer attempts to determine whether such associations are restricted to drivers, or whether these individual characteristics can be observed in younger road users who don't drive. The aim of this project was to examine individual characteristics such as sensation-seeking, anti-social behaviour and also competitiveness in order to try and determine whether a developmental path could be traced from child to adult, showing associations between general risk-taking behaviours and risky road user behaviour specifically.

In this report, risky road use across a wide age range is examined in order to see whether, for instance, males are more prone to risk-taking than females overall, and also to determine age trends in risky road use. Questionnaire and observational data were collected from road users aged 5 to 50. The common element in each of the studies reported here was the risk-taking nature of the behaviours and attitudes examined. Results show that males across all ages are observed to take more risks than females in a variety of road situations. Individual characteristics such as sensation seeking, anti-social behaviour and competitiveness also display similar sex differences in both drivers and people who are too young to drive. Such characteristics are shown to be associated with risky road use across a wide age range.

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