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### Fun time, finite time

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## **FUN TIME, FINITE TIME:**

### **Temporal and emotional dimensions of grandtravel experiences**

#### *Abstract*

*Grandtravel, a growing but under-researched aspect of family tourism, appears to be a rich site for exploring temporal and emotional dimensions of tourism. This interpretive study draws on interviews with grandparents and grandchildren in Denmark and New Zealand to explore the meanings, emotions and experiences associated with grandtravel. In both contexts, we suggest that this particular form of family holiday contributed to individual and intergenerational wellbeing. Specifically, we characterise grandtravel as offering fun time, finite time and also legacy time. Each time was associated with particular affective flows including joy; loss and acceptance; and hope and confidence. These affective flows fostered playmate, poignant and continuing bonds between grandparents and grandchildren, contributing to their wellbeing in multiple ways.*

Keywords: grandtravel; family holidays; family time; family emotions; affective flows; intergenerational family bonds.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Families holidaying together do not leave their everyday relationships, emotions and practices behind at home, although they may find fresh, more intense ways of interacting (Mikkelsen & Blichfeldt, 2018; Morgan 2013). Thus, as a subject of study, family holidays open a window on what it means to be a family (McCabe, 2015), ‘the relation between tourism, thick sociality and domesticity’ (Obrador-Pons, 2012) and connections between tourism, interpersonal relationships and wellbeing (Lehto, Choi, Lin, & MacDermid, 2009; McCabe, 2009; Morgan, Pritchard, & Sedgley, 2015; Smith & Diekmann, 2017). Although the tourism literature has explored intergenerational relationships on family holidays, it has generally focused on parents with children, neglecting other family members and configurations (Heimtun, 2019; McCabe, 2015).

Critical tourism scholars have called for greater attention to subjectivities and to silent voices (Pritchard & Morgan, 2007), not least in studies of intergenerational holidays (Heimtun, 2019). Although children are increasingly seen and heard in tourism research (Small, 2008; Rhoden, Hunter-Jones, & Miller, 2016), little is known about their tourist experiences *as grandchildren*. Similarly, while senior tourists are receiving increasing scholarly attention (Huber, Milne, & Hyde, 2018), the focus tends to be on their travels as individuals or couples rather than *as grandparents*.

This research gap is significant. Grandparents are often intimately involved in family life and leisure time (Marhánková, 2015; Hebblethwaite, 2017) and extended family and multi-generational holidays and outings are increasing (Mikkelsen & Blichfeldt, 2018; Hebblethwaite, 2017). In particular, ‘grandtravel’ - family holidays including grandparents, sometimes without parents present – are a growing phenomenon (eDreams, 2017). Thus, tourism research’s privileging of nuclear families with young children limits the discipline’s contribution to knowledge regarding joint travel experiences, family relationships and social identities over the lifecourse (Hockey & James, 2003; Hockey, 2012).

Overlooking grandtravel also neglects a potentially rich site of emotions and affective flows in tourism. Grandparenting can involve deep bonds with grandchildren but also conflict and anxiety around ‘interfering’ (Marhánková, 2015; Hebblethwaite 2015). Given the heightened reflexivity associated with tourism (Edensor, 2007), we may expect grandtravel to encourage reflection and stir emotions concerning intergenerational identities, roles and relationships. Although tourism research has long been underpinned by a rationalist philosophy, tourism itself is suffused with emotions including anxiety, fear and disappointment as well as joy, pleasure and love, all playing a role in ‘processes of becoming, being, doing, performing and recalling’ (Robinson, 2016, p.37). Lipman (2006) highlights geographers’ increasing recognition that emotions do not just concern psychological states, but are also social and relational, and she calls for greater attention to mundane, subtle and ambiguous emotions. Similarly, from a sociological perspective, Jacobsen (2018, p.3) highlights how emotions ‘inform and influence the way we collectively act, think and feel’. Building on these perspectives, tourism scholars have recently called for greater attention to affective flows - ‘the more abstract dynamic that emerges when emotions circulate and flow across the social field’ (Ahmed, 2004, p.120) - which are as important for what they *do* as well as what they *are* (Buda, d’Hautesserre, & Johnston, 2014; d’Hautesserre, 2015; Molz, 2017). This raises questions about the relationship between grandtravel and wellbeing. Given grandparents’ increasing involvement in family life, and the importance of grandparenting roles to later life identities (Marhánková, 2015), it is important to understand whether, and how, grandtravel fosters intergenerational wellbeing. Synthesising the extensive literature on tourism and wellbeing, Smith & Diekmann (2017) suggest that tourism’s wellbeing effects may be short, medium, long-term or even permanent. Their model of integrative wellbeing in the context of tourism experience combines hedonic with eudaimonic dimensions that include meaningful experiences and altruistic activities.

On holiday or at home, family life is bound up with time as well as emotions (Mullaney & Shope, 2015). Time is social and linear, subjectively experienced and externally controlled, and understood, synchronised, and negotiated by families (Adam, 1995). Much research has examined the idealized togetherness of ‘family time’ (Daly, 1996) and tensions arising during family holidays when parents and children disagree about appropriate amounts of ‘together together time’ or have different needs for ‘own time’ (Heimtun, 2019; Gram, Therkelsen, & Larsen, 2018; Schänzel & Smith, 2014). Given differing temporal needs and orientations between parents, grandparents and grandchildren (Adam, 2008), this raises questions about whether there may be distinctive time-related emotions and affective flows associated with grandtravel, and what their implications may be for intergenerational wellbeing.

This paper addresses these research gaps by exploring grandparents’ and grandchildren’s experiences of holidays together. We define grandtravel broadly as grandparents and grandchildren on holiday together, with or without the middle generation. Following Heimtun’s (2019), we define holidays as travelling together for pleasure on day trips or taking longer trips together with overnight stays. Drawing on an interpretive study

undertaken in New Zealand and Denmark, this paper explores how both generations experienced this form of together time.

The paper seeks to contribute to the literature on family holidays, and on temporal, emotional and affective dimensions of tourism in several ways. First, it extends the analytical lens beyond the nuclear family, exploring what is distinctive about grandtravel as a phenomenon. Second, the analysis of grandtravel highlights connections between temporal and emotional dimensions of tourism, and the blurring of everyday and holiday times. Third, it theorises the relationship between grandtravel and intergenerational wellbeing. Specifically, it proposes three kinds of time involved in grandtravel. It identifies affective flows and intergenerational bonds associated with each time, and shows how these foster hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing at individual and intergenerational levels. Before offering further detail on the study and its findings, the paper reviews prior research on the ties, times and emotions associated with nuclear and extended family relationships, at home and on holiday.

### **(NUCLEAR) FAMILY TIES, FAMILY TIME AND HOLIDAY TIME**

Reflecting the increasing complexity of family structures, conceptualisations of family have moved beyond ties of blood and marriage towards the ‘doing’ of family through shared practices, routines and activities (Morgan, 1996, 2013; McCabe, 2015). ‘Doing family’ thus highlights the dynamic nature of family identity - how family is created, maintained and changed through practices. Family identities and relationships are also infused with emotion and imagining; these develop through ‘sociability, intimacies, close contact, shared memories and shared biographies’ (Smart, 2007, p.79) but are also shaped by socio-cultural norms and discourses (Morgan, 1996; Chambers, 2012).

Many researchers highlight temporal dimensions of family sociality, even arguing that family practices are ‘*about* time’ (Morgan, 2013, p.79). The concept of timescapes captures the multiple, interconnected dimensions of time, including timeframe, duration, sequence, temporal processes, timing, tempo, and the modalities of past, present and future (Adam, 2008). Family members are embedded in complex collective timescapes that include but are not limited to the synchronization of schedules based on seasons, clock or calendar time, or the rhythms and cycles of particular practices; they also engage with the biographical time of individual lives, the generational time connecting kin from different generations, and the historical time in which their lives are located (Adam, 2008). For Morgan (2013, p.76), imaginative family practices include ‘constructed pasts and imagined or hoped-for futures’.

Time and emotions are closely connected in family life (Mullaney & Shope, 2015). Lois (2010) explores busy mothers’ complex ‘temporal emotion work’ including *sequencing* and *savouring practices*: drawing on nostalgia for earlier phases of their children’s lives, mothers projected themselves into a future beyond current commitments, helping them appreciate the present and act *now* to evoke *future* nostalgia rather than regret. Much research has focused on time-poor parents worrying about the limited quantity of time they spend with their children, leading to an emphasis on ‘quality’ or ‘family time’ (Kramer-Sadlik, Fatigante, & Fasulo, 2008). An ideologically-loaded term, ‘family time’ evokes togetherness, positive engagement and child-centeredness, with discrepancies between expectations and lived experiences potentially leading to disillusionment, frustration or guilt (Daly, 1996; Kremer-Sadlik et al., 2008).

Tourism offers many opportunities for family time. Indeed, the social tourism movement highlights the role of family holidays in strengthening family bonds and contributing to wellbeing and resilience under conditions of poverty, disability and other challenges (Minnaert, Maitland, & Miller, 2009; McCabe, 2009; McCabe & Johnson, 2013). Trips may be planned as family reunions (Kluin & Lehto, 2012) or visits to relatives (Backer, Leisch, & Dolnicar, 2017), and some may help family members come to terms with the darkest and most extreme emotions arising from traumatic past encounters with evil and atrocity (Kidron, 2013).

Returning to more mundane and ambiguous emotions (Lipton, 2006), actual experiences of family holidays often fall short of 'family time' ideals (Gram et al., 2018; Obrador-Pons, 2012; Schänzel & Smith, 2014). Tensions can arise from conflicting preferences, such as children seeking fun whilst parents seek relaxation (Small, 2008; Gram et al., 2018), or adult children struggling to balance filial duty with their desire for 'me-time', privacy and agency (Heimtum, 2019). Thus, 'own time' can offer valuable respite and enhance 'together together' time on holiday (Mikkelsen & Blichfeldt, 2015, 2018). Little is known, however, about experiences of time or the circulation of emotions involved in grandtravel.

## **INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONS AND HOLIDAY TIME BEYOND THE NUCLEAR FAMILY**

Family tourism research has traditionally prioritized the nuclear family (McCabe, 2015). Parent-child or spousal dyads have dominated, alongside parental/maternal perspectives (Schänzel & Carr, 2015). Relatively few studies have examined family holidays 'through the eyes of a child' (Rhoden et al., 2016; Poria & Timothy, 2014). Emerging research indicates that while children enjoy relaxed times and shared activities with family members, they particularly value fun, excitement, freedom and interaction with other children (Small, 2008; Rhoden et al., 2016; Mikkelsen & Blichfeldt, 2015, 2018). Hebblethwaite (2017) laments the virtual invisibility of grandparents in family leisure research. Clearly, grandparental situations and dynamics can differ greatly (Moore & Rosenthal, 2017). As many people live longer, healthier lives, however, and as families become smaller and both parents increasingly work outside the home, there is greater potential for stronger, sustained grandparent-grandchild bonds (Marhánková, 2015), even if these weaken in children's teenage years (Antonucci, Akiyama & Takahashi, 2004).

Regular childcare is part of many grandparents' lives (Glaser, Price, Monserrat, Di Gessa & Tinker, 2013), as is leisure time with grandchildren (Hebblethwaite, 2017) and grandtravel is increasingly common (eDreams, 2017). Several of Nimrod's (2008) Israeli retirees referred to holidays with children and grandchildren, while Mikkelsen & Blichfeldt (2018) found that Danish family holidays in caravan parks allowed grandparents to interact more intensively with their grandchildren. Exploring family leisure among three-generation families, Hebblethwaite (2015) notes that alongside the pleasures found in shared experiences and passing on skills and values, tensions could arise from different generational priorities, and grandparents' efforts not to 'meddle'. Beyond such glimpses, little is known about how grandparents and grandchildren experience holidays together.

There are several reasons to expect grandtravel to facilitate close connections, intense emotions and distinctive affective flows. Marhánková (2015) suggests that the contemporary cultural script for grandparenting, particularly in middle-class families, revolves around being

a ‘sensitive companion and friend’, while other studies refer to ‘friend/playmate’ or ‘magic maker’ roles (Godefroit-Winkel, Schill & Hogg, 2019; Moore & Rosenthal, 2017).

Over the lifecourse, and as bodies experience illness, perceptions of time and orientations towards the past, present and future change (Adam, 1995). For children, future trajectories generally involve physical, emotional and cognitive development, whereas grandparents face declining health and abilities (Burton-Jeangros, Cullati, Sacker, & Blane, 2015). Later life, and transitions such as retirement, can lead to ‘life review’ and encourage generativity, a desire to transmit wisdom, stories and values to younger generations (Bertaux & Thompson, 2005; Erikson, 1950). This can lead to grandparents playing roles such as ‘kin keepers/value transmitters’, ‘mentors/teachers’, and ‘nurturers/supporters’ (Moore & Rosenthal, 2017). Over time, the lives of previous generations ‘become sedimented into family stories and traditions and even ways of knowing and seeing’ (Smart, 2007, pp.86-87), colouring family understandings of past, present and future. Grandtravel, then, may offer opportunities for passing on knowledge and skills to grandchildren, sharing stories from the past, generating positive memories and creating a family legacy (Hebblethwaite & Norris, 2011; Hebblethwaite, 2015; Kastarinen, 2017). Since reflexivity is ‘part of the normative performance of tourism’ (Edensor, 2007, p.202), grandtravel may intensify generative practices and evoke distinctive patterns of emotions.

Overall, within the tourism and leisure literature, there have been calls for greater attention to emotions and affective flows (Buda et al., 2014; Tucker & Shelton, 2018) and to a wider range of family roles, relationships and perspectives (Heimtun, 2019; McCabe, 2015). Further studies are also needed of how families ‘do’ time (Southerton, 2006; Adam, 2008). As grandparents become increasingly important to the ‘doing’ of family, and as multigenerational holidays and grandtravel become increasingly popular, there is a need for greater understanding of the relational, emotional and temporal terrain of grandtravel.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This paper draws on a broader interpretive study exploring grandparent-grandchild relationships. The study’s exploration of grandtravel was contextualized by participant accounts of regular routines and interactions, acknowledging the porous boundaries between tourism and everyday life (Crouch & Desforges, 2003; Edensor, 2007). It adopted a weak constructionist perspective, seeing meanings as ‘inherited, maintained and shared through activities, traditions, languages, and symbols’ (Pernecky, 2012, p.1128). For Pernecky, constructionist studies can generate new knowledge concerning the collective generation and transmission of meaning in tourism, including the experiences and performances of various actors and roles. Forty-three semi-structured interviews were conducted with grandparents and their grandchildren, among eleven Danish and seven New Zealand families.

Initially, the study set out to compare grandtravel in Denmark and New Zealand. Located in different continents, both are small, relatively affluent countries with life expectancy of over 80 years. While the grandparenting role is therefore likely to extend over decades in both countries, Denmark is a wealthier country with a more highly developed social welfare system; Danish state funding allows many mothers – and grandparents – to remain active in the labor market, resulting in fewer than 1% of Danish children receiving informal childcare (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2016). In New Zealand, where the level of state-supported childcare is significantly lower, one in four children receive regular care from grandparents (Stats New Zealand, 2017). As discussed below, however,

although these structural issues may explain some differences in the data, the key meanings and experiences of grandtravel emerging from the analysis did not differ, and so the findings are not organized as a cross-cultural comparison.

In both countries, participants were recruited primarily through a local Facebook group, supplemented by approaches to senior sports organizations in Denmark, and snowballing from personal contacts in New Zealand alongside posters in public places. Institutional constraints limited New Zealand recruitment to a shorter period, resulting in fewer families and a narrower grandchild age-range than the Danish sample. The sample was restricted to families where grandparents and grandchildren had travelled together to generate accounts of this form of tourism. All participants were Caucasian and none identified themselves as other than heterosexual. Some families had encountered divorce, separation or death, with some grandparents bringing new partners into their families. Although the study's small, bounded sample cannot reflect the diversity of contemporary families, small-scale qualitative studies can still add value by illuminating under-researched areas of family life (Poria & Timothy, 2014).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 23 grandparents and 17 grandchildren aged 6–28 (Tables 1-2). Reflecting the harried nature of family life (Southerton, 2006), arranging interviews at times that worked for everyone required considerable researcher flexibility. All interviews took place in the grandparents' homes to create a comfortable, informal atmosphere. Clearly, there are challenges in engaging children in research, particularly at the younger end of the age-range (Canosa & Graham, 2016; Mikkelsen & Blichfeldt, 2015). Aided by a research assistant, the interviews were undertaken by two authors with extensive experience of informal, child-centred research (Rhoden et al., 2016).

As Pritchard, Morgan, Ateljevic, and Harris (2007) remind us, researchers cannot separate themselves from research contexts or their own embodied social positions, so researcher positionality should be acknowledged and incorporated reflexively as a resource. In this case, the researchers' positions as middle-class Caucasian mothers negotiating their own relationships with children and grandparents helped build rapport with participants and offered an experiential resource in probing emergent issues in the interviews. One interviewer had raised her family in Denmark, the other in New Zealand, adding a level of cultural rapport and understanding. The study received ethical institutional approval, and consent was obtained from all participants and the children's parents. Grandparents remained in adjacent rooms while the children were interviewed. Anonymity and confidentiality were assured.

Interviews explored the meanings of being a grandparent/grandchild; the nature of their relationship and its place within broader family dynamics; and how they spent their time together. All participants were asked open questions about daytrips and longer holidays spent together. Probes typically explored locations, durations, family members involved, and experiences. To explore individual and collective understandings of intergenerational family practices (Schänzel, 2010), grandparents were interviewed first (average 60 minutes), then grandchildren (average 26 minutes), and, in 12 cases, they were interviewed together (average 22 minutes). Most detailed accounts came from the individual interviews, although joint interviews allowed interviewers to observe warm interactions between grandparents and grandchildren as they discussed activities they would enjoy doing together.

Research on family relatedness clearly elicits 'motivated narratives' (Hockey, 2008), informed by ideological dimensions of family life (Morgan, 1996, 2013). Despite invitations to discuss less positive experiences, narratives foregrounded harmonious relations, with less

discussion of tension than might be expected. Particularly towards the end of the individual interviews, however, grandparents often acknowledged less straightforward aspects of family life in general, with allusions to divorce, tensions with in-laws, and intergenerational conflict around “treats”, screen time, and levels of supervision.

All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Transcripts were subjected to thematic analysis, an approach compatible with constructionist research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The New Zealand transcripts were analysed independently by all authors and the Danish transcripts were analysed in detail by the first author, with co-authors using detailed summaries of the interviews and translations of particular extracts. Thus, as with Kremer-Sadlik et al. (2008) the unavailability of fully translated transcripts for part of a cross-cultural dataset is clearly a limitation, although additional Danish material was translated as the analysis progressed.

An inductive approach to analysis was undertaken, focusing initially on the data and emergent themes related to time and emotional dimensions of grandparent-grandchild relationships and interactions. Subsequent iterations of the analysis related data to literature on family relationships, family tourism, time and emotions. The process of writing, sharing and commenting on drafts was an important part of the analysis. The international composition of the research team, together with the range of intergenerational family dynamics experienced by team members, encouraged the questioning of assumptions and contexts as the analysis developed. Understanding gradually moved from more descriptive codes (such as having fun together; teaching and learning; and thoughts about the future) towards overarching themes of fun, finite and legacy time. Following Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton (2012) further conceptualisation was then undertaken, relating to affective flows, bonds and connections to wellbeing.

## **FINDINGS**

Given social policy differences between the two countries, it is not surprising that the New Zealand grandparents tended to be more involved in day-to-day childcare than their Danish counterparts. Even so, both generations in New Zealand saw such regular together time as special, particularly when the parents were not around. This highlights the blurred boundaries between everyday and holiday time and the difficulties separating the ‘being-ness’ involved in tourism from that of everyday life (Edensor, 2007; Robinson, 2016). Key qualities of everyday together time for grandparents and grandchildren are highlighted below before offering a more detailed analysis of the meanings and affective flows around time spent on grandtravel.

### *Everyday time and holiday time together*

Although parents typically spend considerable time with their children, the tempo of family life can be hectic (Southerton, 2006), and ‘family time’ often competes with work, chores, and parents’ desire to relax alone or as a couple (Daly, 1996; Kremer-Sadlik et al., 2008). For grandparents and grandchildren in this study, the pattern was one of occasional co-presence (Morgan, 2013), allowing grandparents to savour togetherness, even when providing childcare: as New Zealand grandfather Dennis put it, ‘It’s the old story. Spoil them rotten and send them back’. Having so much ‘own time’ (Schänzel & Smith, 2014) helped grandparents



focus on the grandchildren's desires and preferences while they were together, on holiday or otherwise.

Grandparents' enjoyment of time with grandchildren also seemed bound up with a sense of biographical time (Adam, 2008). Notwithstanding the irreversibility of aging, New Zealand grandmother Elizabeth linked her 'unconditional love' for her grandchildren to how '[t]hey keep you young, they make you laugh'. Visiting his New Zealand family from the United Kingdom, John described the fun he had teasing his grandchildren, 'cos they're still gullible at this stage'. He reflected on how he had changed from being a parent to being a grandparent finding it easier now to appreciate the present:

But grandchildren are a joy [...] we have a different outlook on life somehow I think than when you're bringing a child up. You're worried about your future and things like that [as a parent].

This sense of enjoyment was echoed by the children in the study, who appreciated their grandparents making time for them and having fun together. Jokes and laughter featured frequently in their stories, including those from John's granddaughters, aged 10 and 7:

- Emma: [...] Grandpa tells stupid jokes that are actually funny because he laughs at them.  
Rosie: And then we start laughing 'cos he's laughing.  
Emma: And I laugh at them because they're so stupid that you shouldn't laugh at them. But I do laugh at them anyway.

The benefits of spending concentrated periods of time together was also highlighted by some of the grandchildren. Iris, 12 years, New Zealand, described time with grandparents as 'funner' than being with parents:

- Iris: [...] they don't have to be as strict with you, and they give you more treats. And, yeah, you get spoilt more.  
Interviewer: Why do you think that they are less strict with you?  
Iris: Maybe because they don't have you the whole time. So when they perhaps have you the whole time, they see how naughty you are and everything. When you're with a grandparent you're quite good, 'cos you know that they'll spoil you 'cos they don't see you as much as your parents.

Thus, the limited duration of together time made it special, allowing both generations to focus less on rules and discipline, and more on enjoyment. This created a virtuous circle: grandparents could focus on entertaining the children, while grandchildren responded positively to the attention and sustained good behavior more easily than they could in 'the whole time' spent with parents.

When discussion turned to holidays, it was the Danish families who referred to more expensive, far-flung grandtravel experiences and to family-owned holiday homes. Despite these material differences, strikingly similar meanings and emotions associated with grandtravel were found in both contexts, suggesting that this particular form of family holiday fostered individual and collective wellbeing (Carr, 2011; Hebblethwaite & Norris, 2011; Lehto et al., 2009). Specifically, as discussed below, grandtravel offered opportunities to create fun, finite and legacy time. As outlined in Figure 1 below and discussed below, the affective flows of joy, loss, appreciation, hope and confidence associated with these times

helped develop playmate, poignant and continuing bonds between grandparents and grandchildren, contributing to a holistic and integrative form of wellbeing (Smith & Diekmann, 2017).

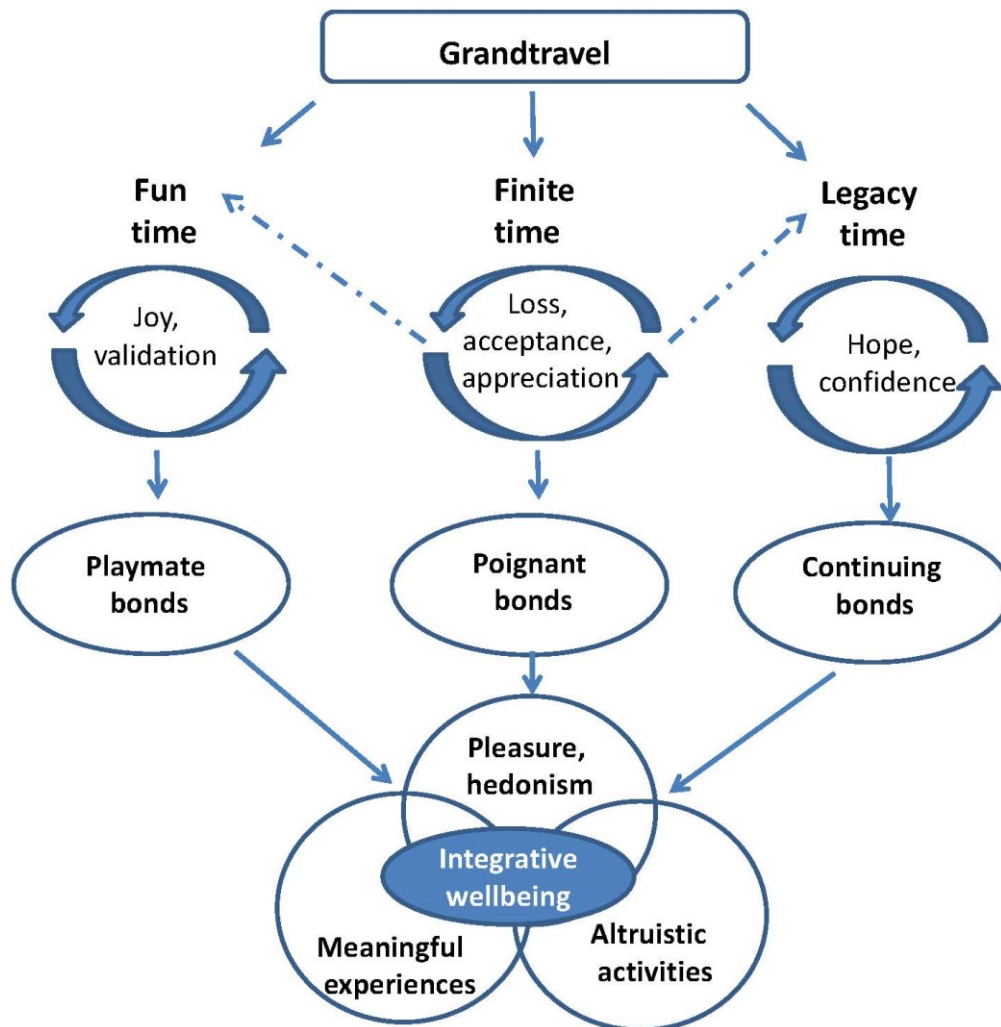


Figure 1. Grandtravel as a facilitator of wellbeing.

### *Fun time*

Participants told many stories about visits to museums, parks, and art galleries; city, fishing or sailing daytrips; and holidays with or without parents. Like some of Nimrod's (2008) retirees, grandparents often paid for trips and holidays with grandchildren, even when the parents accompanied them. One Danish grandmother had treated her daughter, son-in-law and three grandchildren to holidays in Norway and China, for example, and taken two grandchildren on individual European holidays. Across the sample, regardless of the level of extravagance involved, the pleasures of grandtravel were recalled. For example, Anders, a 15-year-old Danish boy, mentioned that he and his grandmother enjoyed walking 'miles and miles' together on family holidays. Reflecting the blurred boundaries between holidays and everyday times (Edensor 2007), fun often began even before reaching the destination. Seventeen-year-old Karen described a special weekend (before the trip) with her Danish grandparents to plan the London city break they gave her as a confirmation (religious ceremony) gift. Eleven-year-old Julie talked about the simple pleasures of driving to their

destination with her grandparents. Asked why she found car journeys with grandparents ‘way more fun’ than with parents, she explained:

Julie: Different music styles in the car. Just laugh more. More jokes. That’s basically it.

Interviewer: What else? What makes it more fun?

Julie: There are a few more things. Sometimes my poppa tells some stories about his past. And then we all laugh. We stop off at like an ice-cream shop and get ice-cream on the way. Like a little treat. Might stop off at a beach and have a little – like wash our feet in the water, and walk across the beach [...] That’s basically it.

Although the embodied sociality involved in travelling is often taken for granted (Crouch & Desforges, 2003), there can be delight in sharing the tight space of a car, and even routine car journeys create opportunities for ‘doing’ family (Laurier et al., 2008). Julie highlights the hedonism of car trips as part of grandtravel, and her enjoyment of treats and spontaneity along with more laughter than she would have with her parents.

Podilchak (1991) argues that it is not leisure activities themselves that are fun, but the reframing of them with others. He sees fun as social and egalitarian, characterized by a ‘with-equal-other social bond’ (p. 140). While Small (2008) suggests that 12-year-old girls experienced holiday fun in this way, being ‘friends together’ (Godefroit-Winkel et al., 2019) may also be an important feature of grandtravel. Danish 8-year-old Sander explains his love of family holidays:

I love travelling with them [grandparents], and especially because me and my grandmother share the same room, because then we tell each other secrets at night.

This image of secrets being shared communicates a sense of reciprocity and curiosity, and highlights the importance of social identities across the lifecourse; as Kastarinen (2017, p.108) notes, ‘For grandparents, it is important to get to know their grandchildren as they are, and in return, to be known by their grandchildren as they really are’. Similarly, Julie’s relationship with her grandparents deepens as she learns more about their music preferences and hears stories about her grandfather’s past; hearing stories of older family members’ younger selves creates imaginary yet profound connections across generations (Smart, 2007). Indeed, Latour’s (2004) theorizing of embodied affect highlights how we seek to be recognized and have our existence validated by others (d’Hauteserre, 2017).

Several scholars have drawn on Heidegger (2010/1927) to explore how tourism might offer opportunities to challenge ‘the complacency and routine of ordinary and conformist life’ (Brown, 2013). Existential authenticity is fundamentally concerned with an appreciation of one’s own mortality, but grandparents valued how their jaded, taken-for-granted ways of being in the world were upended by seeing it through their grandchildren’s eyes. Thus, Danish grandfather Eigil described his grandchildren’s curiosity on seeing old typewriters and slide-projectors in an antique shop during a day trip. Although the activity itself would be boring on its own, ‘when the kids are there, too, it suddenly turns exciting’. Seeing places and activities through grandchildren’s eyes meant that mundane days out became extraordinary, familiar museums felt fresh, and travelling was much more fun when experienced with grandchildren. For Danish grandmother Joan:

it is so lovely to experience their interest for different things and their observational skills and their humour and their fun [...] And it rubs off on us old ones [...] Well, it is life-affirming, as simple as that [laughs].

Such experiences were not only fun and rejuvenating at the time; they also became shared resources facilitating further bonding after the holiday. Danish grandmother Tine talked about staying in a hotel with her grandson:

we share a lot of experiences and have a lot of memories to look back on, and we have a lot to talk about: “Do you remember when we were there, and we took the stairs running while the others had to take the escalator?”.

Racing on the hotel stairs gave Tine more than the simple enjoyment of being playful with her grandson; it offered a sense of connection, both at the time and in reframing the activity together when back home. Her account highlights the thin membrane separating tourism from everyday life (Edensor, 2007): staircases amenable to racing on are not only found on holiday. This account also illustrates how a spontaneous, momentary experience such as this can be a ‘future-creating action’ (Adam, 2008, p.11), something that Tine and her grandson could look back on and savour later, in an act of co-memoration (Zerubavel, 2003). As with Karen’s London trip, shared experiences provided collective memories, contributing to the ‘doing’ of family through intergenerational intimacies and shared biography (Smart, 2007).

At one level, then, the joy circulating around fun time can be seen as contributing to short-term hedonic wellbeing for both generations. The fun and joy they experienced together ran deeper than this, however, contributing to a more holistic and integrative form of wellbeing that incorporated meaningful experiences as well as pleasure and hedonism (Smith & Diekmann, 2017). Recreational tourism can facilitate experiences of ‘intensely authentic, natural and emotional bonds, and a real intimacy in the family relationship’ (Wang, 1999, p.364). In this case, sharing fun, stories and perspectives constituted meaningful experiences, which helped each generation feel joyful, appreciated and valued; this can be seen as facilitating and deepening *playmate bonds* between the generations, and strengthening connections between families’ past, present and future (Adam, 2008). This bonding was not restricted to the trips themselves; anticipating and planning beforehand, and sharing memories afterwards, deepened their emotional connection and validated their relationship.

### *Finite time*

For Smart (2007), imagining is a vital part of ‘doing’ family. Some grandparents had already planned or imagined further trips with grandchildren. Danish grandmother Katrine recalled her ‘fantastic’ trip to China with grandchildren before anticipating a clash between her dreams and reality:

Imagine if one could travel to the USA with them. But it has to fit in, and they do get older and one turns 18 and finishes secondary school and will start studying, and the third...you can’t take anyone out of school anymore.

Resonating with prior research on sequencing (Lois, 2010) and Flaherty’s (2012) account of social experience as ‘saturated with provisional endings’, grandparents expressed an awareness of finite, limited time for travelling with grandchildren on two levels. First, looking back – sometimes with regret - on their own experiences as parents, they remembered how quickly children grow up. Second, looking ahead, some grandparents

anticipated a time when their grandchildren would not want to spend time with them, or when grandtravel would no longer be possible.

Discussing visits by their 13-year-old grandson Mads to their holiday house, Danish grandparents Lisbeth and Henrik commented that ‘we want to make him come as long as possible’. Respecting his changing priorities and resigned to the weakening of his emotional ties to them (Antonucci et al., 2004), they gave him more independence and time alone when he came to stay. Similarly, John drew on his experience of parenting to acknowledge that his New Zealand granddaughters would become less enthusiastic about joint holidays:

And I think we noticed with our son as well [...] there comes a time when they don’t particularly want you with them on holiday. They’ve changed, they’re growing, and you’ve got to accept that.

Future grandtravel was not only threatened by changing grandchildren priorities. As Picard (2012, p.3) observes, tourism can offer time and space for contemplating ‘fears of loneliness, time, mortality and the (hopefully not too) soon-to-come event of death’. For Heidegger (1927/2010), Dasein, or Being-in-the-world, is always ahead of itself, projecting itself into its future and its possibilities (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006). Ultimately, Dasein is being-towards-death, the end of all possibilities but authentic existence requires accepting rather than denying this by ‘falling’ into the dull comforts of routine, conformity and everydayness (Brown, 2013; Shepherd, 2015). In this vein, some grandparents discussed future holiday plans in relation to their own body time and biographical trajectories (Adam, 1995, 2007). Anticipating the end of grandtravel, John and Margaret were resigned to this, but planned to savour remaining opportunities (Lois, 2010):

Interviewer: Do you think you’ll keep going on holiday with your grandchildren?  
John: As long as we can. They’ll decide.  
Margaret: Well yes, until they suddenly decide – Granny and Grandpa aren’t doing the things that they want to do. I think for the next few years they’ll still want to come.  
John: Provided I can still horse ride and cycle and things like that.

John’s use of the conditional here (“provided I can still...”) suggests some anxiety about the future. Several grandparents referred to ageing and age-related health issues as potentially affecting future trips together. New Zealand grandmother Sheila was philosophical about the contrasting trajectories facing her grandchildren and herself, joking about possible future infirmities:

There’ll come a time when Sven [grandson] will want to go and do other things [...] So as long as they’ll keep on having me, as long as I don’t dribble or wet my pants [laughs] they’ll still take me.

Some grandchildren offered their own perspective on future travel. While younger children simply anticipated more fun times together, some older grandchildren sensed a phase potentially drawing to a close, because they - or their grandparents - were changing. Danish 17-year-old Karen, for example, spends a week each year in her other grandparents’ summer cottage along with siblings and cousins. Despite describing this as ‘nice’, she noticed that these grandparents prioritized their own routines rather than adapting to younger family

members' interests. For her, the slower tempo made time at the cottage drag, especially when there were "a lot of things happening at home":

Well, they [paternal grandparents] are very much like: they take a walk every Monday, so they are a bit like everything happens as it usually does. [...] At the beginning it was a whole week, but by now I think a week is a bit of a long time.

Karen is also ambivalent about future travel with the maternal grandparents who had taken her on the London trip that she had enjoyed: while she would like to travel with them again, 'I would also like to travel with a friend or something [...] It is perhaps not my highest priority with them'.

For Danish 15-year-old Anders, the intimacies established on previous holidays meant there would always be 'something insanely special' about travelling with his grandmother, but encounters with family illness and death constrained his future imagining:

Well, both my maternal and paternal grandfathers have passed away and my paternal grandmother can't [travel], and then my maternal grandmother crashed on her bike on her way to Berlin and broke her collarbone [...] She seems to have fragile bones, so it doesn't take much before suddenly then [...] they will be getting old enough to die at some point in time, so...

Flowing through these accounts of grandtravel as finite time, then, are feelings of uncertainty and impending loss, particularly among grandparents and some of the older grandchildren. Flaherty (2012, p.91) characterises poignancy as 'a temporally induced sorrow...occasioned by our self-conscious perception of endings and finitude'. On first impression this does not seem conducive to wellbeing, yet Tucker and Shelton (2018) remind us that affective tourism narratives can be selective, privileging hope or loss for example. Consistent with this, accepting the finitude of grandtravel allowed grandparents and older grandchildren to appreciate or savour it all the more while it remained a possibility. This fostered *poignant bonds* between the two generations, heightening the fun times and amplifying the joy still to be shared and remembered. In Heidegger's terms, this acceptance and what flowed from it could be seen as authentic Dasein. In these ways, acceptance of grandtravel as finite can facilitate wellbeing in the form of pleasure and meaningful experiences (Smith & Diekmann, 2017).

### *Legacy time*

Generativity has previously been identified as a grandparental concern (Hebblethwaite & Norris, 2011; Kastarinen, 2017). In this study, grandparents' acceptance that grandtravel was finite also appeared to encourage reflection on how this time together could be used to pass on their enduring love and leave their grandchildren with a sense of who they were as people. Thus, imagining a future beyond his own lifespan, New Zealand grandfather Dennis hoped he would be remembered as 'someone who gave very good advice. Who loved them. Who did things with them'.

Stories shape tourists' memories, experiences and identities over time (Bosangit, Hibbert & McCabe, 2015), and positive tourism memories can provide evidence of lives lived to the full and happy family times (Desforges, 2000; Shaw, Havitz, & Delemere, 2008). In this study, doing things and going places together, and revisiting these experiences through stories,

photos or videos allowed grandparents to weave themselves into grandchildren's futures as well as making connections to their past and enjoying the present (Smart, 2007). Eight-year-old Esben's Danish grandmother, for example, always made him a special photo album after their holiday together. Family photo albums are sites of social memory, constitutive of 'a past that is not only commonly shared but also *jointly* remembered' (Zerubavel, 1996, p.294). Furthermore, the practice of taking holiday photos calls into being a 'future-perfect' by creating images to be savoured long after the holiday is over (Crang, 1997). As Julie's car story indicates, travelling together also built grandparents' legacies by prompting storytelling at the time as well as being a source of future stories.

Grandparents also saw grandtravel as an opportunity for passing on their particular knowledge, skills and values, thereby helping their grandchildren flourish in the longer term. An altruistic, future-focused agenda is evident in Dennis's reflection:

I think that's one of the best things you can give them [...] new experiences that will stay with them and give them confidence as they grow up. And also broaden their mind [...] And hopefully a lot of these new experiences as they grow older will see them through in later life.

Several grandparents talked about teaching grandchildren life skills and passing on practical knowledge, and described feelings of pride and satisfaction on seeing grandchildren develop confidence through holiday experiences. Danish grandmother Joan described taking her granddaughters to London. The trip included an English-language guided tour of the Houses of Parliament:

Joan: They [the granddaughters] listened and asked questions and afterwards [...] You can feel that I am so proud of them...

Interviewer: Yes of course.

Joan: And then the guide says, 'It is absolutely fantastic with girls like this who are interested'.

Joan's granddaughter Karen also took pride in remembering this trip, but for her the key story was that she had taken the lead, supported and 'inspired' by her grandparents:

Karen: But we went out to see something every day, and it was me actually who had decided what to see. They had inspired me and told me what there was to see and so on.

Interviewer: Yes, OK.

Karen: And they had given me a guidebook, so that I could keep track of it.

These two accounts of the London trip illustrate the lived experience of generativity (Erikson, 1950), showing how it was recognized and valued by the grandchild as well as a source of pride for the grandparent. A less successful foray into this territory was reported by New Zealand grandmother Hannah, for whom generativity involved passing on her love of books, music and art to her toddler granddaughter Annie. One visit to an art gallery was particularly memorable. To celebrate Mother's Day,

I went with the girls [Hannah's daughters] and Annie, and we attempted to have a bit of a look around. But she touched – there's a painting – a New Zealand artist [...] who's probably one of the most valuable artists – and she just ran up and put her

finger on this piece of art. Well, it really caused me to have to fill in a long form saying what had happened. So we left then and went to the café [laughs].

Despite this chastening experience, Hannah was pleased that at least Annie ‘knows about the art gallery’, and ‘kind of has this concept of these places’. Such trips could be seen as enactments of positive grandparent identity (Moore & Rosenthal, 2017) and as deliberate future-creating actions (Adam, 2008). Hannah remained optimistic that Annie would come to share her interest in art, and looked forward to future cultural expeditions with her.

In these ways, grandtravel as legacy time generated affective flows of hope, purpose, and confidence: grandparents could imagine a future in which they had left traces, ‘exerting influences and changing lived experience’ (Smart, 2007, p.188) in ways which resonate with ideals of contemporary grandparenting (Marhánková, 2015; Godefroit-Winkel et al., 2019). Grandtravel could also build grandchildren’s hope and confidence as they mastered new skills and developed ways of being-in-the-world. This facilitated the forging of strong, positive and *continuing bonds* (Klass, Silverman & Nickman, 1999) between the two generations and contributed to their wellbeing: generativity occurred through shared, meaningful activities that provided satisfaction and self-fulfilment, validating grandparent and grandchild identities and relationships.

## CONCLUSION

Nuclear families and parental perspectives have been privileged in the tourism literature on family travel (Schänzel & Carr, 2015), neglecting the roles, relationships and experiences of those involved in the growing phenomenon of grandtravel. Prior studies have offered valuable but limited accounts of family holidays in relation to emotions (Heimtun, 2019; Obrador-Pons, 2012) or experiences of time (Heimtun, 2019; Gram et al., 2018; Shaw et al., 2008). Drawing on interviews undertaken in Denmark and New Zealand, this interpretive study contributes to critical scholarship on tourism, families and emotions by showing how temporal and emotional dimensions were woven into the distinctive fabric of grandtravel experiences, and how this holiday time was an intensification rather than an abrupt departure from everyday together time. It also contributes to the literature on tourism and wellbeing, by showing how even short, relatively mundane family holidays could achieve both hedonistic and deeper, longer-term eudaimonic wellbeing as previously associated with specialist volunteering trips, retreats or pilgrimages (Smith & Deikmann, 2017). This study found that grandtravel generated distinct affective flows surrounding fun time, finite time and legacy time. These flows fostered playmate, poignant, and continuing bonds between grandparents and grandchildren. They allowed grandparents and children alike to enjoy and revisit shared experiences and to feel seen, valued, and embedded more firmly in the ‘staggered and overlapping narratives’ (Carr, 1986, in Daly, 2001, p.182) that comprise family life over time. In particular, appreciation of the finite time available for grandtravel encouraged grandparents and older grandchildren to ‘find meaning, beauty, and even joy in that which is only temporary’ (Flaherty, 2012, p.101) and approach the future with hope and confidence, finding integrative wellbeing.

Qualitative studies are generally based on a small number of participants, located in particular socio-cultural contexts. This study’s theorizing is based on data from two countries from different continents with important differences in state childcare provision. Although we found similar meanings and experiences across these two sites, we make no claims that the



times, affective flows or bonds identified there are the only ones facilitated by grandtravel, or that they would be found in other family groups or contexts. In other words, our findings offer insights into the *existence* of phenomena rather than their *incidence* within the wider population (McQuarrie & McIntyre, 1988). Nonetheless, we believe that the *existence* of these times and bonds matters. In policy terms, we suggest that grandtravel can facilitate playful, poignant and continuing bonds between grandparents and grandchildren, making a potential contribution to intergenerational wellbeing and generativity, and to active, positive ageing agendas (Marhánková, 2015).

This study was based on relatively privileged families, but the contrast between some of the more expensive holidays reported by Danish participants and the less extravagant ones mentioned by the New Zealand families emphasizes that grandtravel does not need to be ‘grand’ in order to generate the times, bonds and wellbeing benefits identified here. Indeed, participant accounts indicated that what they valued most about grandtravel was not so much the place or destination, but being together in a holiday-like timescape or atmosphere. Thus, grandtravel comprising simple day-trips or even staycations could still provide fun, finite and legacy times to families unable to afford long haul trips or expensive city breaks. Furthermore, previous research has highlighted how social tourism enhanced the wellbeing of economically disadvantaged older people (Morgan et al., 2015) and families experiencing various forms of social exclusion (Minnaert et al., 2009; McCabe, 2009; McCabe & Johnson, 2013). Social tourism initiatives could perhaps enhance family bonds and wellbeing by including grandtravel – even in shorter forms - in holiday programmes, helping grandparents in difficult circumstances to build playmate experiences and generativity into relationships with grandchildren (Hughes & Emmel, 2011).

Several fruitful avenues for further research emerge from this study. While interviews allowed participants to reflect and remember their experiences, other methods including participant observation, photo-elicitation, diaries or video diaries could further engage participants and illuminate this form of family tourism. Experiences of grandtravel among less privileged and more diverse family groups merit detailed attention. Studies in cultural contexts where intergenerational relationships generally differ from those described here would also be valuable. Future studies could also focus on grandparents and grandchildren in different age ranges, holidays with and without parents, and different kinds of travel experience, including packaged and independent holidays; long and short trips; vacations and staycations. While this study highlighted interactions between past, present and future, focusing on particular trips could allow more detailed examination of embodied experiences of time such as rhythm and tempo (Adam, 1995). Longitudinal studies could also offer further insights into the role of grandtravel in family dynamics, as could research exploring gender differences in grandtravel experiences.

Finally, family life and family holidays are prone to idealization (Obrador-Pons, 2012). This may have shaped how participants in this study ‘displayed’ family to outsiders (Finch, 2007), making it more likely that they would highlight positive rather than negative aspects of grandtravel. Although these were only mentioned in passing, it was clear that shared holidays could also involve tension and emotions such as disappointment, embarrassment or frustration, as indicated in Hannah’s story about her toddler granddaughter’s interaction with the art gallery painting. Further research could explore this dimension further.

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## Appendix: Grandparent and grandchild informants

**Table 1.** New Zealand (NZ) informants (GC=grandchildren; GP=grandparents)

Family	Grandmother	Grandfather	Grandchild	Geographical distance	Frequency of contact	Grandtravel
NZ 1	Anne (75) (retired)	Divorcee	Iris (12) interviewed	Walking distance	Daily/ weekly	Domestic camping trips
NZ 2	Margaret (73) (retired)	John (74) (retired)	Emma (10) Rosie (7) interviewed	GP live in the UK	Annual extended holiday	Holiday in NZ/Greece
NZ 3	Jane (82) (retired)	Widow – remarried	Mia (10) Nathalie (6) Interviewed	Walking distance	Weekly	Day trips to the mall or museums
NZ 4	Dawn (“60s”) (left work to help with childcare)	Paul (“70s”)	Michael (11) Caroline (9) Interviewed	Walking distance	Daily	Holidays in Australia/NZ
NZ 5	Elizabeth (69) (retired)	Dennis (68) (working)	Julia (11) Interviewed	20 km apart	Weekly/ monthly	Special occasions to Rarotonga and Hawaii
NZ 6	Sheila (66) (working)	Divorcee, not living with partner	3 GCs discussed	Within 5 km	Daily/ weekly	Holidays in Australia/special occasion to Fiji
NZ 7	Hannah (64) (working part- time)	Married, husband working	2-year-old GC discussed	20 km apart	Weekly	Day trips to museum or on the ferry

**Table 2.** Danish (DK) informants (GC=grandchildren; GP=grandparents)

Family	Grandmother	Grandfather	Grandchild	Geographical distance	Frequency of contact	Grandtravel
DK 1	Janne (56) (works reduced hours)	Partner (age unknown)	-	International	Once/twice a year	Travels to visit family
DK 2	Stine (65) (retired)	Gert (65) (retired)	Josefine (13)	20 km	Almost daily	Camping, summer cottage
DK 3	Tine (61) (working)		Sander (8)	20 km	Weekly	Package tours, Southern Europe
DK 4	Kristina (59)	Peter (57)	-	400 km	Every month	Small trips GC prefer staying at GP house
DK 5	Inge (71) (retired)	Eigil (73) (working)	Louise (8)	25 km	Weekly	USA with granddaughter
DK 6	Joan (66) (retired)	Partner (age unknown)	Karen (17)	30 km	Monthly	Cultural excursions, London and Vienna
DK 7	Katrine (72) (retired)		Anders (15)	2–3 km	Weekly	Barcelona with grandson, 3-generation holidays
DK 8	Lisbeth (69) retired	Henrik (63) retired	Mads (13)	30 km	Weekly	Yearly family trip, Disneyland Paris; 3-generation South Africa trip planned. Summer cottage
DK 9	Ragnhild (80) Retired	Widowed	Wilma (28)	Live in same city		Cultural excursions, South American cruise
DK 10	No grandparents interviewed		Carl (8)			
DK 11	No grandparents interviewed		Esben (8)	Live in same town/other GPs three hours away		Summer cottage, GP and cousins; Southern Europe