"We Usually Go Out Instead, So That He Forgets About His Tablet": (Great-)Grandparental Mediation in the Generational Order

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Research on mediation of children's media use has primarily focused on parents, while the role of other social agents, such as grandparents, has gained little attention. This article furthers our understanding of grandparental mediation by exploring what mediation strategies are used by grandparents and great-grandparents to mediate children's digital media use. Furthermore, it contributes to our understanding of how mediation is shaped by the generational order, in this case how parents play an important role in influencing grandparents' mediation practices. The article draws on qualitative interviews with 18 older adults in Sweden who had grandchildren and great-grandchildren whom they were with regularly or occasionally. The results reveal that (great-)grandparents employed the strategies of restrictive mediation, active mediation, co-use, participatory learning, and deference. The use of these strategies was clearly shaped by the generational order, where restrictive and active mediation were especially delicate to manage within the dynamics of intergenerational relations.

Keywords: grandparental mediation, parental mediation, mediation strategies, intergenerational relations, grandparent, great-grandparent, grandchild, great-grandchild

　　　　　Since the 1980s, parental mediation research has sought to deepen our understanding of the ways in which parents try to minimize risks and maximize opportunities of the media using various mediation strategies, with the overall goal of promoting their children's well-being (Clark, 2011; Valkenburg, Krcmar, Peeters, & Marseille, 1999). Recently, some research efforts have been directed toward investigating how other social agents engage in mediation. Some studies have focused on teachers as well as on peers (Kalmus, von Feilitzen, & Siibak, 2012; Karaseva, Siibak, & Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, 2015; Martínez, 2021; Shin & Lwin, 2017). The role of grandparents has gained some attention lately (Elias, Lemish, & Nimrod, 2020; Elias, Lemish, & Nimrod, 2021; Nimrod, Elias, & Lemish, 2019; Nimrod, Lemish, & Elias, 2020). Research on how social agents other than parents mediate children's media use is important for understanding how mediation can vary between agents depending on social context and type of relation. It

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contributes to our understanding of the different kinds of support children receive in questions related to the media.

This article contributes to our understanding of how different social agents mediate children's media use and how mediation is formed by the structure of particular relationships. It does so by directing attention to how grandparents and great-grandparents employ various strategies to mediate children's digital media use and how their mediation is shaped by the generational order, in which the parents have an important mediating role (Ochiltree, 2006; Thiele & Whelan, 2006). Only a handful of studies address grandparental mediation of children's media use. Pioneers in this field—Galit Nimrod, Dafna Lemish, and Nelly Elias—have studied grandparental mediation among grandparents to young children (2–7 years old), primarily in Israel (Elias et al., 2020; Elias et al., 2021; Nimrod et al., 2019; Nimrod et al., 2020) but also in the United States (Elias et al., 2021; Nimrod et al., 2020).

These researchers have paid attention to different aspects of grandparental mediation, including factors explaining these practices. Most relevant for the present study is their focus on grandparents' mediation strategies. In a survey study, Nimrod and associates (2019) examined variations among grandparents in mediation patterns and found three types: the highly involved mediators, the nonrestrictive, and the less involved. The first pattern was the most prevalent, thus showing how grandparents were highly involved in mediating their grandchildren's media use. The study also showed how parents' instructions appeared to play a dominant role in shaping grandparental mediation, particularly concerning restrictive mediation. The majority of respondents indicated that parents asked them to follow various instructions regarding media use. Additionally, they found that the mediation strategy of co-use was rare, thus showing "a missed opportunity for more shared leisure time" (Nimrod et al., 2019, p. 15).

Based on the same survey study, Elias and company (2020) have highlighted that grandparents most commonly used the strategy of supervision, followed by restrictive mediation, instructive mediation, and co-use (see also Nimrod et al., 2020). Elias and colleagues (2020) also reported findings from qualitative interviews with 16 grandmothers, showing how those who engaged in using media together with their grandchildren "reported a sense of involvement in their grandchildren's world, which helped the two generations to feel closer to each other" (p. 102). The interviews confirmed that when employing restrictive mediation grandparents commonly used parents' rules. However, some were reluctant to apply parents' rules, as they wanted to have a more cooperative and peaceful interaction with their grandchildren. Based on these findings, the authors called for "closer attention to the intergenerational dynamics of mediating children's media uses" (Elias et al., 2020, p. 105).

The present article answers this call for a closer analysis of the intergenerational dynamics of mediation. Therefore, this article advances our understanding of grandparental mediation by analyzing in greater depth the ways in which grandparental mediation is shaped by the generational order. The present study also enables a more multifaceted understanding of grandparental mediation by considering a wider array of mediation strategies than previous studies (Nimrod et al., 2019). Moreover, it includes the experiences of great-grandparents, who are rarely included in the literature on grandparental mediation. Although they form a smaller group in the empirical material, the analysis can nevertheless open up

opportunities for relevant insights that can stimulate future research. The research questions guiding the study are as follows:

RQ1:   *What mediation strategies are used by grandparents and great-grandparents when mediating children's digital media use?*

RQ2:   *How is (great-)grandparental mediation shaped by the generational order?*

Mediation Strategies

Extant research on parental mediation has identified a range of different mediation strategies. This section outlines and discusses these strategies as they are used for analyzing (great-)grandparental mediation. The notion of generational order is also central in this article's conceptual framework and is discussed in the following section.

Research on parental mediation initially focused on parents' attempts to manage children's television viewing. Three overarching mediation strategies were identified: active mediation, restrictive mediation, and coviewing (Valkenburg et al., 1999). Active mediation (also called instructive or interpretive mediation) concerns parents talking with their children to instruct them on the media, for instance how to understand certain media content (Valkenburg et al., 1999). Restrictive mediation concerns parents setting rules for and restrictions on children's media use regarding, for example time and content, as well as using and enforcing these rules (Nathanson, 2001). Coviewing (later called co-use) refers to parents using the media together with their children for social purposes (Valkenburg et al., 1999).

Later research on digital media, such as the Internet and computer games, has sought to understand whether these mediation strategies are also employed in the digital media environment. Several studies concluded that parents use these strategies also in relation to digital media (Nikken & Jansz, 2006; Nikken & Jansz, 2014; for an exception, see Livingstone & Helsper, 2008), but they have also identified additional mediation strategies. Among the additional strategies is *supervision*, which means that children's Internet use is under direct observation by a nearby parent. The purpose here is to keep an eye on what the child is doing and help them if need (Nikken & Jansz, 2014; Zaman, Nouwen, Vanattenhoven, de Ferrerre, & Looy, 2016). Parents can also create a social media account for the purpose of supervision (Daneels & Vanwynsberghe, 2017). Related to supervision is the strategy of *monitoring*, which means that parents check children's media use afterward, such as browser history or emails (Daneels & Vanwynsberghe, 2017; Livingstone & Helsper, 2008; Livingstone et al., 2017).

Related to the strategies of supervision and monitoring is the strategy of *deference*. In this case, parents grant autonomy to their children and trust them to be able to manage digital media and to act responsibly. Parents form an opinion on how digital media use is progressing and do not interfere unless they note any negative impacts of the media (Daneels & Vanwynsberghe, 2017; Zaman et al., 2016). Deference can be understood as distant mediation, that is, parents using this strategy do not actively intervene in children's media use (Daneels & Vanwynsberghe, 2017).

New versions of restrictive mediation have been identified, including *interaction restriction* and *technical restriction* (Livingstone & Helsper, 2008), as well as *technical safety guidance*, such as the use of filters (Nikken & Jansz, 2014). Jiow, Lim, and Lin (2017) categorized different activities that parents undertake when applying their mediation strategies and highlighted *diversionary activities* as one way to undertake restrictive mediation. Diversionary activities entail parents' efforts to divert their children away from media use by promoting engagement in alternative recreational activities they consider more positive for their children's development.

Clark (2011) developed the idea of *participatory learning* as a mediation strategy. In contrast to active mediation, where parents promote their interpretations and attitudes related to the media, participatory learning concerns moments when children and parents engage in joint learning about the media. This also includes children taking the lead in instructing their parents about their media use with parents as active listeners. This mediation strategy has been studied empirically in only a few studies (see Zaman et al., 2016). During moments of participatory learning, adults learn about children's digital worlds. These insights can be valuable resources when evaluating how to employ active mediation, for instance (Martínez, 2021).

In practice, mediation strategies are fluid and can be intertwined in various ways (Jiow et al., 2017; Zaman et al., 2016). One example is how co-use can easily evolve into active mediation and participatory learning (Zaman et al., 2016). For analytical purposes, it is nevertheless relevant to analyze mediation as composed of relatively distinct categories as they indeed represent social practices with different characteristics and purposes.

The Generational Order

Various factors are involved in shaping the relationship between grandchild and grandparent and grandparents' grandparenting practices (Ochiltree, 2006). Among these are geographical proximity to the grandchildren, age and gender of the grandchild and grandparent, the number of grandchildren in the family, how grandparents interpret their role, and family disruptions such as divorce (Geurts & van Tilburg, 2015; Mueller, Wilhelm, & Elder, 2002; Mueller & Elder, 2003; Ochiltree, 2006). To understand grandparents' role in the mediation of children's media use, this article focuses on one important structural dimension of the grandparent–grandchild relationship, namely, the generational order.

The concept of the generational order has been developed in childhood studies to understand the relationality of childhood (Alanen, 2020). The generational order is defined as "a structured network of relations between generational categories that are positioned in and act within necessary interrelations with each other" (Alanen, 2009, pp. 161–162). This concept can also be used to understand the grandparent–grandchild relation. Most commonly, except for situations when grandparents step in as primary caregivers, the generation in between—the parents—has an important impact on the role of grandparents. Responsibility for the children is distributed according to the generational order, where parents have the overall responsibility (Ochiltree, 2006; Thiele & Whelan, 2006). The role of the grandparents and what constitutes their responsibilities is less clear and needs to be negotiated. Parents greatly influence the relationship between grandparent and grandchild, for instance regarding the opportunity for contact (Mueller

et al., 2002; Thiele & Whelan, 2006). Important for understanding the grandparent role within the generational order is also that grandparents commonly have a dual role in the family, as they have a relationship with both their own children and their grandchildren. As Ochiltree (2006) contends, "the grandparent role is not simply a relationship between grandparents and their grandchildren but is imbedded within the family system and relationships within and between the generations" (p. 14).

As this study also includes great-grandparents, it is therefore important to understand their role in the generational order. Previous research has found that great-grandparents have less frequent contact with their grandchildren than grandparents due to factors such as older age, health issues, and geographical distance (Castañeda-García, Valle-Sanz, & Gutiérrez-Barroso, 2017; Nussbaum & Bettini, 1994; Roberto & Skoglund, 1996). However, there seems to be little difference between grandparents and great-grandparents when it comes to what activities they engage in with their great-grandchildren (Castañeda-García et al., 2017; Roberto & Skoglund, 1996). One could argue that grandparents and great-grandparents have a similar role in the generational order with respect to the grandchildren, as parents in both cases function as the important generation in-between, having responsibility for the child and the childrearing.

It should be emphasized that the generational order does not *determine* the ways in which grandparents and great-grandparents relate to grandchildren. (Great-)grandparents are active social actors who interpret this structure in particular contexts; therefore, how they approach grandchildren within the generational structure also depends on circumstances and individual differences (Alanen, 2009; Højholt & Schraube, 2016). Exploring grandparents' and great-grandparents' narratives of their practices and how they motivate these practices is one way to gain insights into the ways in which they mediate children's media use and manage the generational order in this pursuit.

Method

This study is based on semistructured interviews with 18 individuals (12 women and 6 men) aged between 70 and 92 years, recruited primarily in community centers for older adults situated in urban, suburban, and rural areas in Sweden. The interviews were conducted individually, except for one interview, which was conducted with a couple on request. Shorter follow-up interviews were carried out after two months to gain additional data and to clarify information (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). These interviews are part of a wider study exploring how older adults learn together with younger generations, mainly children and grandchildren, about digital media. In total, 22 individuals were interviewed; and in the present article, only those participants with grandchildren and/or great-grandchildren below the age of 18 whom they met regularly or on occasion are included. Participants' grandchildren and great-grandchildren were of different ages, including young children and preteens, as well as teens (see Table 1).

Table 1. Interview Participants and Their Grandchildren and Great-Grandchildren.

Participant, age (years)	Grandchildren, age (years)	Great-grandchildren, age (years)
Woman, 73	Nine grandchildren, 1–23	
Woman, 92	Seven grandchildren, 30–40	Two great-grandchildren, 1 and 10
Woman, 82	Four grandchildren, 15–30	One great-grandchild, 3
Woman, 85	Three grandchildren, 7–12	
Woman, 90	Two grandchildren, 30	Two great-grandchildren, 9 and 11
Woman, 76	Four grandchildren, 9–14	
Woman, 82	Seven grandchildren, 8–24	
Woman, 73	Two grandchildren, 11 and 13	
Man, 79	Four grandchildren, 9–13	
Man, 75	Four grandchildren, 15–17	
Man, 76	Five grandchildren, 5–25	
Woman, 79, and man, 82	Two grandchildren, 30 and 5	
Woman, 78	Five grandchildren, 16–33	Two great-grandchildren, 4 and 5
Woman, 77	Thirteen grandchildren, 7–40	Six great-grandchildren, 2–7
Man, 70	Eight grandchildren, 8–23	
Woman, 81	Four grandchildren, 14–19	
Man, 83	Four grandchildren, 14–22	

The interviews were conducted in the homes of the older adults or in smaller rooms in the community centers. Prior to the interviews, all participants were provided information about the study, such as their right to anonymity and routines concerning data protection; and they were assured that their participation could be ended at any point. During the interviews, questions were asked about their media use and how they learned about digital media from younger generations. As part of the intergenerational focus of the project, participants were also asked questions on how they contributed to the younger peoples' learning about the media. These questions were initially open to enable participants to speak freely about the ways in which they related to children's digital media use, including their use of smartphones, tablets, and computers.

Subsequently, questions were posed to capture their use of mediation strategies, as defined in previous literature. For instance, participants were asked whether they set rules for children's media use as well as enforcing these rules, and whether they talked with children about the media, for instance on how to interact with other people in social media and how to engage critically with information. If they did not spontaneously motivate their use of mediation strategies, they were prompted to provide explanations. The participants were probed with open questions and were not asked specifically about the role of parents to see what mediation strategies were spontaneously motivated with reference to parents.

The audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim, including indications of laughter and significant tones of voice. The transcripts were analyzed using qualitative coding (Bazeley, 2013), which was both data driven and theory driven (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Predefined codes of mediation strategies as defined in parental mediation literature were used to categorize the data (see Table 2) to see what mediation strategies were used by grandparents and great-grandparents. In the coding process, I also coded

when participants stated that they did not use a particular mediation strategy. When participants stated that they deliberately chose not to use a particular strategy, as they did not perceive any problems but were ready to intervene, this was coded as *deference*. In the coding process, I also aimed at identifying potential new strategies or new versions of mediation strategies not reported in previous research.

Following this, the coding process focused on (a) what motivated their use (or the absence) of certain mediation strategies, (b) whether these mediation strategies were employed by grandparents and/or great-grandparents, and (c) whether they were used in relation to young children, preteens (around 9–12 years), and/or teens (13 years and older). Participants' motivations, which commonly involved the role of parents, were important in the last step of the analysis, namely, the interpretation of how (great-)grandparents' mediation is shaped by the generational order.

Table 2. Predefined Codes Used in the Coding Process.

Code	Definition
Active mediation	Adults talk with children to instruct them about the media.
Co-use	Adults use the media together with children for social purposes.
Participatory learning	Children and adults engage in joint learning about the media.
Supervision	Adults are nearby and keep an eye on what the child is doing and help them if need.
Monitoring	Adults check children's media use afterward, such as browser history or emails.
Restrictive mediation	Adults set rules for and restrictions on children's media use regarding, for instance, time and content, as well as using these rules.
Deference	Adults form an opinion about children's media use and do not interfere unless they perceive negative impacts of the media. They grant autonomy to children and trust them to be able to manage digital media and act responsibly.

Results

The participants engaged in five main mediation strategies: restrictive mediation, active mediation, co-use, participatory learning, and deference. The results section is structured around these mediation strategies, except for deference, which is discussed in relation to the other strategies because they are closely related. The role of parents in forming (great-)grandparental mediation is discussed throughout the section, and a more overarching interpretation of the generational order is presented in the discussion.

Restrictive Mediation

Participants described how they employed restrictive mediation in two main ways, as either *indirect restriction* or *direct restriction and rule setting*. Indirect restrictive mediation was practiced by grandparents who did not engage in setting and using rules but who tried to restrict children's media use indirectly. One way was to try to limit time spent with digital media by making spontaneous suggestions to engage in other

activities they considered more beneficial, such as going out to play sports or to interact with grandparents and friends. One participant (75 years), concerning his teenage grandchildren, conveyed:

> And one might say at times that, yes, "It's good for you to go out and play a little football. You don't need to sit at the computer." I just say it spontaneously. But otherwise we don't have anything to do with it, definitely not.

Here, this grandfather stated it was not their task, but that of the parents, to set rules regarding their grandchildren's media use, which was a common argument for engaging in indirect mediation. Consequently, they tried to influence in a more voluntary style, as they had opinions on the children's media use, which some considered highly excessive. This indirect form of restrictive mediation resembles what Jiow and company (2017) described as diversionary activities. However, while parents seek to divert their children away from the media by trying to create an overall balanced life by encouraging both organized and spontaneous recreational activities (Jiow et al., 2017), participants used diversionary activities directly in relation to situations of media use. Although grandparents may not decide on children's leisure-time activities in the same way as parents do, they can try to promote children's well-being by encouraging alternative activities in spontaneous situations.

Indirect restrictive mediation also involves participants' efforts to influence parental mediation. These participants argued that it was neither their task nor their responsibility to restrict children's media use when parents were present in a multigenerational setting. However, they tried to influence the parents to set rules concerning time and in what contexts children used digital media. One respondent (82 years) described eating with her granddaughter and 3-year-old great-grandson in the presence of a tablet:

> What I don't like, and I've told her [granddaughter] so, is that I think it's wrong. When it's time for us to eat . . . then the tablet will be to the side of the food, and he mostly sits and looks at it. He doesn't eat much. And I think it's totally disgraceful. . . . One time I said that I thought, "No, I think this is insane." And yes, "It's fine, he'll still eat," in that manner. Then I don't say anything else, and let it be. She can deal with it herself.

This woman viewed her great-grandchild's media use as a threat to his well-being and thus experienced the need for intervention. However, as was also found among other participants, the complexity of the intergenerational setting—with multiple relations and roles—required that she balance this need with the need to respect the autonomy of the parents' role and to protect the relationship with them (Ochiltree, 2006). The solution in these cases was to carefully try to influence the parental mediation and not go overboard.

Consequently, *indirect restrictive mediation* is not only an indirect but also a limited form of restrictive mediation. Restrictive mediation includes a broad array of practices, including setting rules for and restrictions on children's media use, as well as using and enforcing these rules (Nathanson, 2001; Valkenburg et al., 1999). Indirect restrictive mediation was confined to efforts aimed at restricting time spent with the media without using specific rules and efforts to influence rule-setting without actually enforcing these rules. These practices can be understood in relation to the generational order, in which

parents have the main responsibility for the childrearing (Ochiltree, 2006; Thiele & Whelan, 2006). In the case of indirect restrictive mediation, grandparents did not take on the role of employing restrictive mediation in its fullest sense as they considered this to be part of the parents' responsibility.

In contrast to indirect restrictive mediation, some participants expressed how they engaged in direct restriction and rule setting of children's media use, which commonly concerned restricting time spent with digital media and in what situations digital media could and could not be used. Common among these participants was the view that children used digital media excessively and that this focused interest in digital media hindered other valued activities. When time was up or when there was time to engage in other activities, such as dinner, they gave direct instructions to stop using the media. One woman (76 years) related one such episode with her preteen grandchild: "Now you mustn't sit any longer playing video games. Now you have to come in and spend time with us." Here, the goal in restricting the grandchild's media use was to be able to spend time with her. This was a common practice among participants: rules were applied to promote social connection between the generations. These time restrictions were commonly in line with parents' rules, as seen also in previous research (Elias et al., 2020; Nimrod et al., 2019). However, one participant stated that she applied stricter rules because she thought the parents did not do enough to limit the children's media use.

These examples of restrictive mediation concerned children's own media devices. However, rules were also applied to the participants' own devices. Some feared that grandchildren would damage their computers if, for instance, they played online games on them. Concerning his young grandchildren, a respondent (76 years) remarked, "They aren't allowed to get anywhere near my computer. . . . I put the cover on it and shut the door to the room." The role of parents was not mentioned in this context, probably as participants considered their own media as within their own domain. However, direct restriction of grandparents' own devices was not applied to promote children's well-being but rather to protect the grandparents' practical interests. In contrast, other participants allowed their grandchildren and great-grandchildren to use their digital media devices (see below under *co-use*).

The interviews also showed how direct restriction and rule setting could slide over into diversionary activities, which illustrates the fluidity of mediation practices (Jiow et al., 2017; Zaman et al., 2016). One woman (78 years) communicated how she restricted her 5-year-old great-grandchild's use of a tablet because he did not want to engage in other activities. When her rules were challenged, she sought to divert his attention by going outside:

> I also set a few rules, but then he says, "Yes, but Mom said that I have permission and. . . . " We usually go outside instead, so that he forgets about his tablet. I don't want to scold him too much—his mother gets to do that (laughs).

In this quotation, the great-grandmother conveyed she used a diversion to evade a potential conflict with her great-grandson. Applying rules that lead to conflicts was considered part of the parents' role. The lack of full responsibility, as embedded in the role of the grandparent or great-grandparent (Ochiltree, 2006; Thiele & Whelan, 2006), thus meant an opportunity to prioritize having fun and to build the relationship during the time they spent together. Furthermore, the woman also experienced that the

child sought to contest her rules by alluding to the highest authority (the parent). This shows another dimension of the complexity in (great-)grandparental mediation: that children can contest their mediation by using the parental mediation as an argument.

Lastly, some participants reported they had not engaged in restrictive mediation. They commonly argued that restricting children's media use was the responsibility of the parents and that they had not experienced the need to involve themselves. Participants stated that the parents managed their children's media use appropriately. Moreover, they did not experience any problematic media use when spending time with the children, whom they considered having a balanced everyday life containing various recreational (often physical) activities. Some participants added they might intervene if they experienced problematic behavior. With regards to her teenage grandchildren, one woman (81 years) disclosed:

> I think that they have managed it very well (parents). None of them brings their phone along and sits with it when we are spending time together and such. . . . Had there been any misuse of it, I might have stepped in, but that has never happened.

This way of approaching children's media use can be interpreted as *deference*, that is, a form of distant mediation where adults grant autonomy to children and do not intervene as long as they do not experience problems (Daneels & Vanwynsberghe, 2017; Zaman et al., 2016). However, deference in this case was not primarily about granting the children autonomy and responsibility; rather, it primarily concerned the role of the parents. Participants observed that children's relationship with the media was well managed by the parents. Thus, they did not need to interfere unless the situation changed. This again shows the primacy of parental mediation.

Active Mediation

Some participants discussed how they engaged in active mediation of media-related risks, which primarily concerned preteen and teenage grandchildren. They talked with their grandchildren about risks to the brain and the eyes when using screens for long periods and the threats to personal safety when interacting online. One woman (73 years) described how she advised her preteen grandchildren:

> If someone you come into contact with online says that they're the same age as you, it's not always certain that they are. It might be someone older who is tricking you into doing things you shouldn't do. I've told them. Because I think there's bad stuff today. I've brought this up. . . . "You aren't in contact with anyone you don't know, right? And you can't tell them everything, and you can't do things that they urge you to do. . . . " I've told them about this, to "watch out for such things." It's not actually my place to tell them, as their parents can do that themselves. But I think that there's so much ugliness today that they are tricked into with this stuff.

In this excerpt, the woman instructs her grandchildren to be critical and careful when communicating with strangers online. Although she demonstrates her engagement in these matters, she still accentuates that it is primarily the parents' responsibility to teach the grandchildren about online safety.

Active mediation was provided not only in the form of direct advice but also as interpretations of children's media use. Some participants perceived excessive use of digital media as leading to antisocial behavior, thus hindering interactions with their grandchildren. Concerning his teenage grandchildren's media use, one participant (83 years) disclosed, "No, I'm not particularly happy about it. Because they lock themselves in their little worlds. They don't get around to chatting with us; instead, they're concentrating on the game." He added he had shared these views with his grandchildren to try to curb their gaming time. Other participants described how they communicated these views when restricting grandchildren's media use (see also above).

Active mediation of media-related risks and interpretations of children's media use as excessive and antisocial sought to form grandchildren's views, values, and understandings of digital media to promote a safe and healthy lifestyle. In addition, some participants actively mediated their grandchildren's media use to promote practical skills. One grandfather (75 years) had taught his teenage grandchildren photo editing software. A grandmother (73 years) instructed her young grandchild how to play digital games: "She wants to play Doctor Panda and Tora Bora and little games like that, and I have shown her. . . . I can do this." Consequently, active mediation of media-related risks centered on the preteen and teenage grandchildren, while active mediation of practical skills could also involve the youngest children.

However, participants commonly expressed that they had not engaged in active mediation. They frequently argued that the responsibility of the children's media use should lie with the parents and that they did not want to interfere in their childrearing. Some participants stated that they knew, or at least hoped, that the parents talked to their children about digital media; others accentuated that the parents were very competent in issues concerning digital media. One woman (73 years) related:

> I wonder about how they are handling contacts on the Internet. The sexual things that are present there, and how aware they are. But I've left that to their parents. So I have no idea of how it's going, but I do know that they have installed blockers and such on their phones, and keep good tabs on what they're up to. . . . I don't think I need to insert myself into this. I've never wanted to insert myself into how my children are raising their children unless I see that things are obviously going wrong.

In this passage, the woman states that she does not want to interfere in her children's childrearing, nor intervene unless a situation is harmful. Consequently, participants also employed the strategy of *deference* (Daneels & Vanwynsberghe, 2017; Zaman et al., 2016) when it came to active mediation. They described how they sometimes reflected on issues related to digital media in the lives of the children but chose not to intervene.

Some participants also argued that their grandchildren or great-grandchildren already had adequate knowledge to handle digital media in a responsible and critical manner. Some even added they had little to offer in this regard as the children were more knowledgeable. The children's competencies were noted during vacations and at dinners together, for example. Therefore, participants chose not to engage, but they were prepared to step in if needed.

Co-Use

Most participants used digital media with their grandchildren and great-grandchildren to some extent. Co-use commonly concerned digital games, with "coplaying" transpiring in different forms. One form of coplaying was using the same device to share the game experience, commonly the grandparents' or great-grandparents' devices, and this primarily concerned the youngest children. One man and woman (79 and 82 years) explained how their 5-year-old grandchild enjoyed playing with them on their computer:

> Man: She liked it, the little one. She came home here to play Ludo (laughs).
> Woman: And it goes down—she thought that was so much fun. Otherwise, she pushed it away, Ludo. But here when we pressed, she said, "Ooh, it goes down" (said with enthusiasm); and she thought it was really fun.

It is evident that the grandparents were highly engaged in and enjoyed their grandchild's positive game experience. Later, they expressed their disappointment that this game was lost when they got a new computer, thereby showing how much this co-use meant to them both socially and emotionally.

Another form of coplaying was the use of separate devices, which concerned the preteens and teens with their own smartphones. One woman (73 years) related playing Candy Crush with her preteen grandchildren: "So we played a bit against one another, then. We talked about how far we had gotten and things like that. We were able to ask one another 'How far did you get?'" Seemingly, mobile games provided opportunities for joint activities across the generations. However, participants often related that this co-use was temporary, as the grandchildren soon found new interests.

Co-use also concerned activities other than playing games, such as watching videos and photos or listening to songs together. One participant (77 years) described how she used her smartphone with her young great-grandchildren: "We play on the phone as much as we can. . . . They want to look . . . at all the pictures I've taken, and at the song I like." What is more, co-use of the media commonly involved the grandparents' or great-grandparents' own devices, as seen in the quotation. Hence, these participants valued sharing their own devices with the children, in contrast to others mentioned earlier.

Some participants acknowledged they had not been engaged in co-use of the media. They argued, for instance, that they did not share interests in the same games, or that the children preferred to play with their friends. If games were played jointly, they were board games, not digital games. Unlike active and restrictive mediations, the parents were not mentioned in connection with co-use. Instead, the focus was placed on the grandparent–grandchild relationship. This may be due to co-use having primarily a social and not a pedagogical purpose, with the grandparents and great-grandparents thus in a position to make decisions more freely without having to consider the role of the parents.

Participatory Learning

Participants described how moments of co-use sometimes evolved into moments of participatory learning, where they collectively learned with the children about their media use. In contrast to active

mediation, participatory learning is about mutual learning, where the child is actively involved in teaching the adult about the media (Clark, 2011).

Participants described how during coplaying they also engaged in joint learning, which involved mutual instruction on games. A grandmother (73 years) related such an experience with her preteen grandchildren:

> It was in San Diego, and I had charge of the grandchildren, and we were able to spend some time together playing Lemmings. . . . We each played separately, but we still talked with one another about what we had done. And we were able to give one another tips on how to reach a particular door.

Here, we have a description regarding tips on how to reach certain goals in the shared game. In this case, learning about digital media flowed in both directions. Playing together and sharing knowledge was a way to socialize and connect across generations.

Parents were not mentioned in relation to participatory learning, as was also the case with co-use. Participatory learning can involve moments of mutual learning where the generations learn from each other. However, as this was about how to play games and not about more sensitive questions related to childrearing—such as setting rules and promoting norms—it was probably considered a legitimate domain for grandparents and great-grandparents to manage independently.

Discussion

This article has sought to further our understanding of (great-)grandparental mediation, thus advancing our knowledge of how different social agents mediate children's media use. The results show how grandparents and great-grandparents employed various mediation strategies, including restrictive mediation, active mediation, co-use, participatory learning, and deference. The use of these strategies was clearly shaped by the generational order, but in slightly different ways. Restrictive and active mediation were commonly considered the domain of parents. Restrictive mediation was often practiced in the form of indirect restrictive mediation, where the participants chose to divert the children away from media use and to influence the parental mediation, or where they chose to maintain distance by using the strategy of deference. Consequently, restrictive mediation was in many cases both indirect and distant.

In line with this, deference was also commonly chosen before active mediation. In contrast, participants spoke about co-use and participatory learning without making references to parents. As argued earlier, these strategies were probably not considered as interfering with parents' childrearing as they are not to the same extent about forming values and behavior. Thus they can be practiced more independently from parents. The generational order—in which the parents have the overall responsibility for childrearing (Ochiltree, 2006; Thiele & Whelan, 2006) and which includes setting rules and forming norms—thus enables grandparents to be more autonomous in their use of co-use and participatory learning as mediation strategies than with active and restrictive mediation.

These results indicate that the role of grandparents and great-grandparents in mediating children's media use is different from that of parents. The fact that they do not have overall responsibility for the children and that they need to consider the complexity of intergenerational relations, including caring for the relationship with the parents and parents' autonomy (Ochiltree, 2006; Thiele & Whelan, 2006), means that grandparental mediation takes a more distant and indirect form. Co-use and participatory learning can be seen as more easily managed within the dynamics of intergenerational relations, and in line with the role of grandparents and great-grandparents, than restrictive and active mediation, as these strategies are more about forming social relations and sharing experiences. Based on this, one could argue that (great-)grandparental mediation shares similarities with that of peer mediation, which is also more focused on mutual help and recommendations than on instructive remarks (Shin & Lwin, 2017).

However, the results also show how some grandparents did take a more active role in setting and using rules and in discussing with grandchildren about the media. Grandparents and great-grandparents are active in interpreting the generational order, which makes possible individual differences (Alanen, 2009; Højholt & Schraube, 2016). The results show examples of how grandparental mediation in some cases focused on important aspects of children's learning about the media, such as how to use digital media responsibly, advice that may be valuable for children's development.

This article has also paid attention to the experiences and practices of great-grandparents. No substantial differences could be found between grandparents and great-grandparents regarding mediation of children's media use. On an overarching level, great-grandparents were engaged in using the same mediation strategies as grandparents, which is in line with previous research on the role of great-grandparents in children's lives (Castañeda-García et al., 2017; Roberto & Skoglund, 1996). In both cases, the role of parents shapes the (great-)grandparental mediation, and the presence of another grandparent in-between does not seem to matter. However, one difference found in the study was that there were no great-grandparents engaging in active mediation. This is probably due to the fact that the great-grandparents primarily had younger great-grandchildren and that discussions related to social media and critical engagement with the media are more relevant in relation to preteens and teens, who are more engaged in using social media. As this study includes only a small number of great-grandparents, future studies are needed to explore further the nuances of great-grandparental mediation.

Very few previous studies have paid attention to grandparental mediation. The results of the present study are to some extent in line with previous research but also show some differences. However, as previous research is mostly quantitative in nature, one should be careful in making comparisons. Nimrod and colleagues (2019) concluded that the mediation strategy of co-use was rare and that this shows "a missed opportunity for more shared leisure time" (p. 15). In contrast, the present study finds that co-use was a central mediation strategy among grandparents, which was used to connect with grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Elias and associates (2020) and Nimrod and company (2019) also found that the strategy of supervision was the most common mediation strategy. Supervision was not identified in the present study, and it may be the case that grandparents' and great-grandparents' engagement in co-use made the strategy of supervision less relevant. When spending time with their grandchildren and great-grandchildren during co-use, they could also form an idea about what they were doing.

In contrast to Elias and colleagues (2020) and Nimrod and associates (2019), the present study has identified the use of participatory learning and deference as mediation strategies, and it has also shown how restrictive mediation is employed in different ways. This contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the multifaceted nature of grandparental mediation. Elias and cohorts (2020) have stated that some grandmothers were reluctant to apply parents' rules, as they wanted to have a more cooperative and peaceful interaction with their grandchildren. The present study shares similar results and extends our understanding by showing how diversionary activities were used to restrict children's media use in a less confrontational manner. Future research should further explore the nuances of restrictive mediation to better understand the complexity and inventiveness of grandparental mediation.

These previous studies have somewhat highlighted the role of parents in grandparental mediation. Nimrod and colleagues. (2019) and Elias and associates (2020) showed that parents' instructions appeared to play a dominant role in shaping grandparental mediation, particularly concerning restrictive mediation. The majority of respondents indicated that parents asked them to follow various instructions regarding media use. The present study also demonstrates how some participants engaged in applying the same rules as parents. However, by interpreting grandparental mediation within the generational order, this study shows how grandparental mediation is shaped by the intermediate role of parents more overarchingly and in a variety of ways. Grandparents (and great-grandparents) reflected on the ways in which they should approach mediation of children's media use, while at the same time respecting and caring for the parents, which contributed to shaping their mediation strategies.

A number of limitations with this study need to be addressed. The study included (great-)grandparents of young children, preteens, teens, grandparents who took an active part in caring for their grandchildren, and those who only meet them occasionally. These participants probably had different levels of digital literacy, something which was not assessed in the present study. These different factors impact mediation in various ways (Livingstone et al., 2017). To better understand the role played by the generational order, these factors also need to be considered. This is an important task for future research. The present study was also conducted within a cultural context where intergenerational relationships are formed in certain ways. For instance, in Sweden, as in other North European countries, multigenerational households where grandparents share their everyday lives with their grandchildren (United Nations, 2019) are uncommon. Living arrangements may impact grandparental mediation and how the generational order shapes mediation, something which future research should study further.

To better understand grandparental mediation, future research should explore the perspectives of grandchildren and great-grandchildren. This study has shown how grandparents make judgments about their mediation to a large extent in relation to the role of parents. It is, however, relevant to also acknowledge the position and perspectives of children, for instance how they experience and value grandparents' use of different mediation strategies or lack thereof. To receive support in questions concerning digital media and to develop digital literacy is part of children's rights (United Nations, 2021). Consequently, if children's perspectives and rights are acknowledged and brought into the discussion, this may cast new light on the role and value of grandparental and great-grandparental mediation. This may encourage grandparents and parents to find new ways to manage the complexities of mediation within intergenerational relations, thus strengthening grandparents in their role as mediators.

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