

Experiential Learning With a Role in Decreasing Traffic Aggressiveness

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Abstract

We are confronted daily with ill-favored attitudes in traffic, with a dysfunctional dynamic in traffic, that is tiring and sometimes even dangerous. The study brings forward the effects of aggressiveness and especially the one manifested in traffic. From the aforementioned type of aggression to actual antisocial acts in traffic the line is very thin, the study suggests few solutions to diminish aggressiveness and to create a safer traffic. The exercises chosen for the intervention prepare the drivers for adequate reactions at the steering wheel and for the penalty of those who trespass the security limits.

Keywords: driver, aggressiveness, traffic, intervention

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I. Introduction

Throughout time there have appeared several classifications of aggressiveness – physical – verbal, passive - active, direct – indirect, of the adult vs. that of the child, individual vs. collective, but what are mostly interested in in the case of the participation to traffic, is the classification which pertains to the manners of answer of the subject and specifically reactive and proactive aggressiveness. In the case of reactive aggressiveness – the person responds through it to any provocation, while in the case of proactive aggressiveness – the person initiates the aggressive behavior without precursory challenge. In traffic, we recognize these people especially through aggressive driving, groundless fury manifestations, ill-favored or exaggerated answers to other people's gestures in traffic. "There are many positive function of anger in every day life: it energizes behavior, it serves as a catalyst for resolving interpersonal conflict, it promotes self-esteem, and it fosters a sense of personal control during times of peak stress" but it unfortunately also has negative functionalities. (Gentry, 2011, pag 11)

Looked at from the perspective of the followed aim, some aggressive behaviors are oriented towards producing "some harm" to another person, while others are oriented towards demonstrating the "power of the assailant". If we bring this meaning to explaining aggressiveness in the dynamics of traffic relations, the it manifests itself towards demonstrating the power of the aggressor – he should be the first to leave when the light turns green, to be the first on its lane (always in a hurry, outrunning everyone to be closer to the front, and faster), to honk or make a sign with the lights if the person in front of him or her does not move sufficiently fast, to honk if the light turns green and the car(s) in front did not leave the 'second' the color changed, to outrun the car besides hi or her, etc. Shuster, cited by Hăvârneanu, defines aggressive driving as "an incident in which the angry or impatient driver intentionally hits a participant in traffic. In current usage there is the tendency to consider aggressive driving as the manifestation of certain risky behaviors, including excess of speed, dangerous slalom through traffic, ignoring causeway signaling and of he red light" (Hăvârneanu, 2011, pag. 61).

There is a myriad of aggressive behaviors in traffic, and so is their causality, while aggressive drivers belong to all age groups, all sexes, all types of socio-professional preparation, any type of practiced job, etc. Studying the causes and the conditions in which a person can become aggressive, we have reached the conclusion that aggressiveness has a multiple causality – having drawn in factors of a biological, psychological,

psychosocial nature, behavioral models that are acquisitioned, but also spontaneous emotional reactions.

For the way in which people justify their aggressive actions, Bandura proposes a model which has four components:

- Finding excuses for aggressive behavior; invoking moral principles, comparing with more grievous situations, appealing to "euphemistic etiquettes";
- minimalizing consequences;
- denying responsibility;
- blaming or dehumanizing the victim. (apud Bandura, 1983).

From the Bandura model, we usually meet in traffic the first three components especially. Aggressiveness does not only manifest on an action-behavior plan, but also verbally. "The intensity of aggressiveness and of the specific experiences significantly amplifies in a crowd, just like happiness does" (Golu, 2007, pag.653). Thus it is not wanted that aggressiveness in traffic is accepted or even encouraged. If traffic is alert and its participants do not respect each other, it is clear that this negatively influences all the participants to traffic. The studies realized by Parker and its collaborators evidence the fact that drivers action in an aggressive manner to other aggressive behaviors of other drivers (apud Parker et al, 1998). Each person has a reaction to stressful exterior stimuli and this reaction is conditioned by the personal psychological equation, which means the one that determines the evaluation of the situation, the particular reactivity to psycho-physiological subsystems that are employed in the situational answer, vulnerability or the tolerance of the situation, the choice of manners of answer.

The reactions of drivers also take into account the flexibility of the person in finding the answers to the situations they are going through, to the degree of adaptability and the maturity of each on an affective ,axiological and voluntary plan. An insufficient precocity in these three plans will affect the manners of perception and correct evaluation of situations and the possibility of efficient translation in concrete actions, of decisions taken (apud Rudică, 2006). Traffic aggressiveness manifests itself through aggressive behaviors: honking, threatens, obscene gestures or expressions, verbal abuse, etc. or under that shape of an aggressive attack. He would suddenly outrun and cut the way for others, changes direction with no signaling, obstructing the way, hitting other vehicles and/ or other people. According to Shinar, cited by Hăvârneanu, there are two main types of aggressive behavior: hostile and instrumental. The hostile type is, for example, when a driver decides to follow another vehicle in traffic, a

vehicle who might have outrun him brusquely, while the instrumental kind is when a driver goes from one lane to another just because he or she is in a hurry (the latter is not aimed at someone else, but is used to attain a certain but, and after attaining it, it stops in itself) (apud Hăvârneanu, 2011).

The tendency to react aggressively in traffic as an answer to the behavior of another driver is influenced by the emotions lived by him or her, which are irritability, competitiveness, anxiety or hostility. The study follows the relation between anger and hostility and the performance in maneuvering the vehicle. It is a known fact that traffic safety is given by a few indicators – respecting the circulation rules, the absence of carelessness, or traffic negligence, the ability to drive the vehicle, responsibility, the capacity to handle several factors at the same time, finding adequate solutions, that are not aggressive to any traffic situations. Using the data from the measurements, one can create an experiential learning program to diminish traffic aggressiveness and to avoid risky situations. Safe driving assumes the manipulation of the vehicle, but also the knowledge of the journey, adapting the speed to the weather, but also social intelligence to seize others' intentions in traffic.

The main objective of the study

Catching the relation between the performance of maneuvering the vehicle while side-slipping and hostility and anger. Starting from these figures we initiate an intervention program that is centered on the enhancement of traffic security.

The hypotheses of the study

A. There is a correlation between the performance in maneuvering the vehicle in a side-slip and the aggressiveness (anger, hostility) of the subject.

The two sub-hypotheses of hypothesis A are:

1. There is a relation between the performance in maneuvering the vehicle in a side-slip and the subject's anger.

2. There is a correlation between the performance in maneuvering the vehicle in a side-slip and the subject's hostility.

B. It can be diminished through experiential learning.

II. Methods

In order to test the hypotheses, we have used the data accumulated along two months from 70 subjects. The data has then gone under statistical analysis in SPSS 20. Following the procurement of the starting figures (data regarding anger, hostility, correlations of the two with maneuvering the vehicle)

we have done an intervention (along 10 weeks) in order to diminish traffic aggressiveness and to accrue traffic security. The tools utilized in research are the Buss&Perry test (only the anger and hostility scales) and the side-slip simulators.

III. Results

Hypothesis 1

Sub hypothesis 1. Anger represents an emotional attitudinal element that feeds aggressiveness. Anger, in the context of driving, represents, on one hand a source of traffic precariousness and of an aggressive traffic, and on another hand a consequence of a society that encourages aggressiveness in all forms and having it perfectly reflected in traffic situations. The tendency to manifest certain high values on the anger scale is also given by the fact that in the context of such values on a social level, the risk of losing physical integrity while transiting routes, makes the traffic become a source to survive (apud Gatej, 2013).

The data obtained from the statistical interpretation are: the value of the Pearson correlation coefficient, for the correlation between the anger parameter and the indicator that followed the correct maneuvering of the car in a side-slip, and that is $r = -.797$ on a threshold of $p = .000$. We can thus ascertain the fact that a negative influence of the existence of anger in the reactions of the driver while maneuvering the vehicle.

Sub hypothesis 2. The second factor that we studied is hostility and the interpretation of statistical data, we ascertain the following: the value of the Pearson coefficient is $r = -.740$ on a threshold of $p = .000$. The data draws attention, this time as well, as in the case of anger towards the negative influence this factor has on the performances obtained in traffic, in the side-slip simulators.

Starting from these indicators, we have done a 10 week long intervention, centered on diminishing traffic aggressiveness. "The behavior can be appreciated only in a developmental context. Nothing that happens can be fully comprehended and isolated from the past. The behavior fits into a continuum, or sequences, or events. Determining factors in the past drive us to particular conduct in the present intended to achieve specific goals in the future. There is no way to read today's events without understanding what has preceded them" (Gaylin, 2001, pag 102).

Evaluating the need of learning in an area, "means finding those areas where there are discrepancies between what there is, and what it is meant to be, to define nature and the importance of these discrepancies and to propose action plan that

lead to the reduction of the differences found” (Paloş, 2007, pag. 267).

Hypothesis 2

The intervention is centered on methods of experiential learning, and was done on the following dimensions: diminishing the level of aggressiveness, anger management, anger perception, the augmentation of traffic responsibility, making the ability to drive safely more efficient, the optimization of the amenity, scrupulosity and adaptability dimensions. At the start of the intervention we have given the participants a questionnaire. It targeted the subjective perception of traffic situations and of the anger that is provoked by them. Predictive models for anger underline the existence of three types of dimensions – anger instigated by gridlocks, the one instigated by dangerous driving and that instigated by direct hostility. (apud Parker, Lajunen, Stradling, 1998). The reaction of the drivers in traffic is also given by the subjective safety felt by them, safety that has the following facets: age, gender, personality, education, abilities, experience, perception of risk, decision making capacity, adaptability. We can thus ascertain that these can be made more efficient in a long-term intervention.

Following the intervention, we have applied the same questionnaire again. The results draw the attention towards the fact that, even though traffic situations are perceived less dangerous, or are not situations that are perceived as dangerous, the anger levels have decreased.

The experiential intervention thus leads to changing the attention from the false competitiveness to preventive driving, from a low adaptability to traffic aggressiveness to an augmented adaptability to it, from adjusting one’s own behavior while driving and to an efficient and agreeable participation to traffic. “Changes in other people often call for changes in ourselves and in the way that we relate to each other” (Milne, 2003, p.54)

IV. Conclusions

The given study brings data on the negative role of aggressiveness in traffic and on the possibilities to make our reactions while driving and our behavior in

traffic more efficient. Understanding the phenomenon of aggressiveness, of its negative role in traffic and empowering for traffic safety, ultimately leads to an amelioration of its quality. “We are made to search for safety and we do not last long in dangerous and uncertain environments” (Nuță, 2011, p.19). The study starts precisely from this assumption of the fact that we seek safety in all our life situations, i.e. in traffic as well, and thus one of the first wishes in this situation is exactly that. In the interaction on the road this thing radically changes if we set aggressiveness free and if we escalate the situations that arise. Experiential learning brings to the forefront all our possibilities to react assertively to inadequate traffic situations and to remain in contact with our wish to keep safe.

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