

70 Police J. 263 (1997)

Research into Causes and Manifestations of Aggression in Car Driving; Lowenstein, L.F.

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## RESEARCH INTO CAUSES AND MANIFESTATIONS OF AGGRESSION IN CAR DRIVING

### An Illustration

Mr Smith (not his real name) left the house in his car to drive to work. He was no different from any other person using a vehicle to get to work. What was perhaps different about him was that he carried a machete in his car. He had been a client whom I had attempted to treat for aggressive behaviour and most especially aggression while driving. He revealed to me that he had carried the machete because when he was angry with another driver he felt very much like using it. In fact on a number of occasions, machete in hand, he had chased a driver who had "cut him up", as he put it, or who drove too slowly in front of him. Thus far he had not used this weapon. Smith had already spent a period in prison for attacking a number of people and as he was a tall (6ft 4in) and broad man, he was powerful. He suffered from a variety of conditions including a low frustration tolerance, paranoid feelings and, of course, aggression.

Mr Smith is one extreme example of someone whose aggressive behaviour can become interlinked with driving but certainly it is not relegated merely to his driving. To a lesser degree there are other similar individuals on the road. Rather than manifesting such aggressive thoughts and intentions, there may be individuals who shout, or think hostile thoughts towards other car drivers. This article will attempt to offer explanations as to why this occurs and what can be done to rehabilitate such individuals who are obviously a danger to others as well as themselves. The following sections will deal with a) associated features of aggressive behaviour while driving and b) methods of helping individuals with such problems.

### Background

Virtually all the research carried out between 1973 and 1994 has been concerned with causes and associated features, as well as manifestations, of aggressive behaviour in car drivers. There has been some interest in sex differences and a variety of other factors which are associated with aggressive driving. Virtually no research has been conducted into the various treatment approaches that could be utilized to deal with the problem and thereby reduce the likelihood of accidents. It has already been well established that there is likely to be more aggressive behaviour among males, especially young males, than females. Another significant factor is the time of the day, with more aggression being shown in the afternoons

July 1997

The Police Journal

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