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## Transportation Research Part F: Traffic Psychology and Behaviour

Volume 3, Issue 3, September 2000, Pages 167–179



### Provoked driver aggression and status: a field study

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#### Abstract

Male and female students enrolled in introductory psychology at a small public liberal arts university North Dakota, USA volunteered for the present field experiment. Driving their own vehicles, participants followed directions given by an accompanying experimenter. At a predetermined stop sign, participants were honked and gestured at by a male confederate who drove either a low or high status vehicle. Various aggressive responses to provocation were measured, including rate of acceleration, duration of vocalization, presence of nonverbal gestures, and horn honk duration and latency. The results are discussed in the context of Doob and Gross's (A.N. Doob and A.E. Gross, *Journal of Social Psychology* (1968) 213–218.) "horn-honking" study in which participant drivers were frustrated by high or low status drivers. In the present study, provocation rather than frustration was used to elicit aggressive responses. Participant drivers accelerated more quickly relative to a baseline measurement in the low status condition. No gender differences in driver aggression were observed. It was concluded that instrumental aggression rather than affective responding is influenced by status.

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#### Keywords

Aggression; Driver behavior; Provocation; Road rage; Field experiment; Horn honking; Gender differences; Physiological arousal

#### Figures and tables from this article:

Table 1. Means (and standard deviations) of DURATION, ACCEL, and JUDGE for high and low status conditions



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Table 2. Means (and standard deviations) for aggressive Responses (duration of vocalization, in seconds; increased rate of acceleration to 20 mph from baseline; and subjective judgment on a 1–7 scale) of male and female drivers



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