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PSYCHOLOGY OF TRANSPORT CONFLICTS

The concept of conflict refers to the wide range of phenomena, any field of science or practice. The analysis of the diverse work on the study of conflicts shows that this topic is being dealt with: psychology, sociology, philosophy, pedagogy, history, jurisprudence, technical and military sciences, etc. Let's look at the concept of road conflicts and their influence on road safety from the point of view of their psychology.

A road conflict is viewed as a product of a list of factors, among which are: conflict prone personality of the driver and improper road communication, including that based on certain ethnic traditions. Therefore, there are two approaches to the research: personality-based and communicative, or social psychology based. Road conflict research assumes viewing traffic from the social psychology point of view, investigation of its communicative nature.

A particular step in the development of the social psychology view on traffic behavior and its conflict studies is represented by D. Klebelsberg's works. He starts with the idea that in its historical development road traffic changed from individual to social, i.e. into people's interaction, their social behavior. The approach of individual behavior to social reflects the intensification of transport and pedestrian traffic. At the same time, the social behavior of people starts being characterized by a "limited ability" for mutual understanding between road users, which is the reason for road safety violations. According to D. Klebelsberg, the formation of social nature of road traffic has two steps, which he calls "symbolic" and "realistic" which are reproduced in the individual process of a driver's development.

D. Klebelsberg uses the concept of a "conflict situation" (road conflict) by viewing it as opposite tendencies in behavior of road users. However in a number of

cases the concept of conflict becomes less defined, covering “a comparatively large number of deviations from normal behavior”.

A conflict situation, according to D. Klebelsberg, is created by actions such as hard braking undertaken in order to give way to an unexpectedly appearing vehicle, change of traffic lanes, untimely braking, sharp deceleration, rapid evasion (to avoid a collision), emergency braking etc. The reason for the conflict is non-normative behavior on part of one of the road users. Psychologically the reason for the conflict is a sharp change of emotional state of at least one road user. Conflict is one of the four primary road situations: error, traffic rules violation (legal offense), conflict and traffic accident.

Additionally, D. Klebelsberg singles out “critical events” that remain within safety limits (untimely or inappropriate braking, extreme acceleration, rapid maneuvers, particular forms of emotional expression, gesticulation). Errors are the smallest deviation from norm. Traffic rules violations happen much more often than traffic accidents. The frequency of conflicts is larger than the frequency of traffic accidents as well. This is why it's road conflicts and not traffic accidents that should be a measure of road traffic danger.

Systematic registration and study of conflict situations allow for identification of their material preconditions which can be removed. Most phenomena of road interaction described by D. Klebelsberg falls under the classification of “aggression”. Some differences between aggression outside of road situations and aggression during driving have been found. Greater anonymity in road traffic predisposes towards lesser control and greater aggression. Nonetheless there is a connection between aggressive behavior in both types of circumstances.

One of the primary questions in road conflict research is related to understanding its psychological structure.

Scientists have proven that the structure of conflict as a communicative phenomenon reproduces the structure of communication and psychological structure of persons participating in it, consisting of a set of interconnected cognitive, emotional and motivational and behavioral properties and processes.

Cognitive links of the road conflict structure are determined by dynamic conditions of transmission and reception of information by the drivers. Functions of cognitive processes including in road conflict are to build the interacting images of the conflict situation, including images of the object of road conflict, the opponent and the self, and searching for a way out of the dead end on this basis. In all of the above questions the primary role is played by visual perception. As is well known, as the speed of movement increases, the field of vision narrows, which leaves a large amount of information outside perception. People involved in traffic accidents often state that they simply did not see the person or object they then collided with.

A driver needs quick and precise perception covering both the objective part of the situation and the social part. Weakness of social perception is a precondition for conflict, it is the first sign of a person's communicative incompetence. A socially mature driver perceives not only a vehicle, but the person in it who possesses properties important for the development of the situation.

Thought processes leading to conflict or complicating its resolution are often mistaken or thoughtless decisions resulting from incompetence, slowness, weakness of social intellect, and its suppression by emotions, which happens in the event of low psychological stability.

Emotional components of road conflict structure consist of open exchange of emotions carrying an aggressive charge, which performs the function of influence and emotional release. The latter circumstance explains certain tolerance of drivers towards rude phrasing of comments and interpersonal evaluations. In competitive conflict emotions are a motivating factor, the goal of the contest.

Motivational and behavioral components of conflict communication are the interpersonal set of motivations such as the urge of road users to control, remove, get ahead, dictate, punish, defend, retaliate, demonstrate on the road, humiliate, protect own self-esteem, and to assert their right for priority passage. Motivational structure of a socially mature conflict includes the desire to prevent disorder or reinstate the normal mode of traffic.

Thus the sides of conflict form images of the conflict situation, including the images of self and each other. Formation of these images happens under influence of

a number of internal and external factors. Internal factors include: the image of an unacceptable driver, stereotypes of various categories of road users. External factors include perceptive information, which is to say the results of immediate perception of the road behavior of the opponent, the results of attribution, i.e. ascribing the opponent particular traits and motivations, and immediate emotional reactions to the conflict event. Each of the mentioned factors can dominate in the process of creating an image of the opposing party. Insufficient communicative competence of opponents leads to images they create being inadequate and not allowing for a productive debate.

Participants of the conflict – drivers of various vehicles and pedestrians – are characterized by greater or lesser tendency and willingness towards conflict behavior, as well as particular communicative competence. All of these people pursue their goals and act on corresponding motives. All of them have particular intellect, which determines the level of communication, number and importance of errors. In a conflict people play certain roles which can change along the course of development of the conflict. They are also representatives of particular groups and carry their values.

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