

Declan O'Donnell

Professor Bednar

Roadside America

18 October 2021

Constant Spread of Road Rage

“Life is 10% of what you experience & 90% of how you respond to it” - Dorothy N. Neddermeyer. This quote is not only the synopsis of what the killer said in *Unhinged*, however it is also the the internal meaning of road rage. Someone cuts you off on the inner city road while your late for your 9-5 job, that is the 10%, how you respond is the 90%. Almost like an illness everyone has on the road, the slightest inconvenience happens, and/or the 10% happens, which leaves the little bit of sociopath in you to show. Whether this be through a honk, a middle finger, or what the killer would like to call it in *Unhinged*, a “courtesy tap,” it is all the 90%. In 2002 a study over road rage was done, primarily why do we have road rage, Smart and Mann concluded “the underlying determinants of aggressive driving may range from pleasure seeking to risk taking or an aggressive personality and represent more chronic or longer term traits. Conversely, road rage refers to an acute event or act motivated entirely by anger within the context of driving” (Asbridge, 3).

Unhinged, directed by Russell Crowe, is a thriller that was released directly into theatres after the 2020 pandemic lockdown. It all starts off with a mother late to drop off her son at school and get to work, this results in anxiety, stress, and even anger which was shown in her confrontation with the killer. Sitting ancy at a stop light directly under a bridge she is second in line at the stop light, stressed as ever the light turns green and she immediately lays on the horn

to the truck in front of her with zero remorse, this resulted in the truck not moving as quickly as she would have hoped so she darts off into the other lane and turns accordingly. Stuck sitting thinking of the consequences of being late, she sees the same truck pull up right next to her at another stop light. He rolls down his window and calmly asks her to roll hers down by pointing his finger downward, while she knew better than to roll her window down, her son in the back had a different idea which led to him rolling down the window while his mother was angered and stressed.

He asks the son, "I don't even get a courtesy tap first? Do you know what a courtesy tap is young man."

"Just ignore him," the mother says in anger and bits of confusion.

"It's light. It's friendly" the man calmly says as he does three light honks of his horn, then states,

"It's just like your trying to get somebodys attention."

He then asks, "is a courtesy tap what you meant?"

"No, it's not the light was green and you were not moving," she says furirated at everything happening to her.

Little did she know, this slight sociopathic act of hers would have her in a world of trouble or as this killer would say, "I don't even think you know what a bad day is. But you're gonna find out. You hear me miss?"

One small thing ended up making the rest of this day living hell for her, while it is not her fault that she did this to a killer that was inspired by *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, her actions had her end up almost killed.

It is obvious that Russell Crowe exaggerated and overplayed the consequences of road rage however the concept remains the same. Your in a rush, someone cuts you off, so you

retaliate and ultimately end up screwing yourself over. In 1995, the AAA did a study on road rage, specifically people's response to getting tailgated (having someone ride your bumper or uncomfortably close to you while driving). There are many different ways to retaliate to road rage however a few of the interviewed people's responses are the most common things you would see on the road. A 31 year old man says he uses his horns as "another appendage" and says that, "My horn is like a sixth finger. I use it constantly when I'm in the car. I'm on my third-horn I wore out the other two blowing it as assholes who shouldn't be on the road. If they are in my way or cut me off, I let them have it" (Herman, 4). Some treat the road as a place to assert dominance, and/or not letting anyone get ahead of them in any form or fashion. A 23 year old college student says, "You can't let people get an upper hand on the road. You've definitely got to take the law into your own hands. Once an old lady was driving in front of me, I passed her and she kept speeding up and passing me and she would purposely slow down." (Herman, 6). However, the most common way to deal with road rage is cutting someone off, everyone does it and has done it at some point in their time of driving. Vincezo, a 26 year old immigrant, said, "Driving in America is easier than driving in Milan or Rome. European drivers have been road raging for centuries and they have it down to science... One of the major ways I get people who do me wrong is to cut them off, even if they run into a ditch..." (Herman, 4). While driving them into a ditch might not be the greatest idea and a bit extreme, everyone has cut someone off out of anger which is a form of road rage.

According to Bankrate Car Insurance road rage is becoming more and more popular, to be specific there has been a 500% increase in car crash fatalities between 2006 and 2015. In 2021 alone 30 deaths and 1,800 accidents have been due to road rage, this does not undermine the fact that 78% of drivers report committing at least one aggressive driving behavior this year. This

78% includes honking, yelling, hand gestures, cutting someone off, and tailgating. As previously stated and used in *Unhinged*, the number one cause of road rage and number one excuse for road rage is running behind for an event. An interesting fact that I have drawn and makes complete sense considering male car insurance is higher is that males are more likely to get into a crash during a road rage incident. In fact, males have a 10% higher chance of tailgating, honking, yelling, gesturing, blocking from changing lanes, and cutting them off.

Is there a way to stop road rage? A realistic answer to this question is no. Only in a perfect world could everybody enjoy every drive they take, not getting angry or frustrated at any moment without taking it out on someone else. Mark Asbridge says, “a reasonable approach to road rage prevention would be to focus, at least initially, on the small group of the most serious road rage cases, especially those involving serious personal injury, threats, or property damage. Prevention of minor road rage cases involving shouting or obscene gestures would be seen by as many as a secondary or less immediate concern” (Asbridge, 3). Prevention of road rage is nearly impossible, road rage is not only contributed by running late or having a bad day but also could be previous mental issues. An example of this is in *Unhinged*, like I’ve said the killer is a huge extreme however people could be psychotic like the killer, depressed, anxiety, bipolar, or have anger issues which would all make sense to minor or even major road accidents.

The concept of road rage was portrayed precisely by Russell Crowe. The concept of what happens when road rage kicks in from the 10% however the other 90% is entirely determined by you. Road rage is common problem all around the world and will never stop, although, it can be understood by drivers that if you are planning on letting that little bit of sociopath in you out on someone else or vice versa just understand the consequences that can come with it.

Work Cited

Thomas, Lauren. "Road rage statistics and facts in 2021." Bankrate; July 30, 2021

Bergal, Jenni. "Cops Scramble to Deal With Deadly Road Rage During Pandemic." Stateline Article; July 30, 2021

ASBRIDGE, MARK, et al. "CAN WE PREVENT ROAD RAGE?" *Trauma, Violence & Abuse*, vol. 7, no. 2, Sage Publications, Inc., 2006, pp. 109–21

Herman, Nancy J., et al. "ROAD RAGE: AN EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS." *Michigan Sociological Review*, vol. 13, Michigan Sociological Association, 1999, pp. 65–79

I have acted with honesty and integrity in producing this work and am unaware of anyone who has not.

/s/Declan O'Donnell