**Safety-oriented On-road Practices of Adult Bicycle Riders in Brooklyn, New York USA**

**Interview Questions**

**#1, Bay Ridge, recruited July 7, interviewed July 23, 2018.**

**TO109O1.mp3**

*Background Questions:*

1. What is your age? **39 40 in Sept**
2. What is your race or ethnicity? **Caucasian**
3. What is your gender? **Male**
4. What is the highest level of education that you completed? **BA**
5. How long (in months or years) have you been riding bicycles?

**Since I was a child – I’d say, since I was 10.**

1. How long (in months or years) have you been riding bicycles in Brooklyn?

**I would say – I started in around 2007, but consistently in the last 2 years. So, from, like, 2007 to about – well probably to about 2017 or 2016 it was more, like, leisurely and stuff, and then in the last two years it’s been more of a regular consistent activity.**

1. Compared to most other bicycle riders you have observed, are you more careful, less careful, or about the same? **More careful**
2. Have you been in any bicycle crashes that involved other vehicles or pedestrians? **No I have not.**

During the past 12 months…..

1. What have been the main reasons or purposes for going bicycle riding? (Commute? Errands? Transportation to other locations? Exercise? Recreation? Part of your job? Other?)

**Exercise, transportation, and kind of using it for errands – I mean, as well as – I mean, I combine the leisure with the exercise, I guess. Does that make sense?**

1. On average, how frequently have you ridden your bicycle?

**I try to ride it at least 4 times a week.**

1. On average, how long (in minutes) did you ride each time you go bicycling?

**I try between an hour and two hours.**

1. How much of your bicycle riding took place when there was a lot of motor vehicle traffic**?**

**I would say,** **95% of it – I mean – I guess, what would you consider a lot of motor vehicle traffic? Like, you know – like yeah there’s – I mean, I do a lot of my cycling here in the City, so it’s a lot of that, but, I mean – I do some cycling, like for example the bike path on the West Side Highway that runs alongside – there’s no vehicle traffic, so, you know –I guess yeah, I’d say between 90 and 95%.**

[To refine the question a little bit: How much would you say takes place or took place when you were on major thoroughfare with real heavy traffic?]

**Sure – I would say, like, 75% of the time.**

1. How much of your bicycle riding took place in darkness or low light conditions such as dusk?

**It’s a lower percentage – probably like** **20 to 25%**

*Primary study questions:*

1. From the perspective of safety, what is it like to go bicycle riding in the streets of Brooklyn?

**I would say, there are some sections where it is fantastic and then there are some sections that are quite harrowing**.

[Can you describe in more detail orgive examples of the parts that would be more harrowing?)

**So, I live in Bay Ridge, and so the section of 4th Avenue between basically – basically 4th Avenue in Bay Ridge/Sunset Park and then, I guess, South Slope a little bit – are very dangerous – and that includes -- I mean, that also includes 3rd Avenue and 5th Avenue, even though 5th Avenue does have a bike – some bike signage – Sunset Park, it’s a bit of a nightmare. As you get into, like, Park Slope it’s very nice. The greenways, like down by the water on Shore Road are great. The greenway that goes from Coney Island up to Prospect Park is great. Prospect Park itself has some really – is great – in terms of safety, great to ride on. And downtown Brooklyn – you know, the bike lanes are very prominent, so it’s very easy and I feel much safer. But definitely, like, I’d say, from, like, South Slope down, Sunset Park, Bay Ridge, Coney Island – those are not safe.**

[So, what do you feel makes it different, say, comparing Sunset Park with Park Slope?]

**There seems to be more – definitely – well there definitely seems to be more schools in that area, so in the morning, you’re definitely trying to navigate around school buses and parent drop offs – also dealing with a lot of delivery trucks in Sunset Park, and a lot of that traffic doesn’t really – or seems to me, doesn’t really take into – take into account bicycle safety. I feel that – it’s a very -- it feels like a very crowded – very crowded areas. I feel like the pedestrians and the delivery trucks and the buses and the people are right on top of each other in this neighborhood, and I just feel there’s just a general disregard for bicycle safety in those areas. You know, the other thing about it is when you get to Park Slope, the -- you know, the bike paths are clearly marked, the signage is clearly marked, there’s even a green pathways, which we don’t have between Bay Ridge and South Slope, and I think that – and that does make a huge difference to me, I think, because the drivers – anytime I’ve experienced drivers, whether it’s delivery trucks or just regular cars or school buses, they seem to pay attention more to those greenways than when it’s just a sign that says “Shared Bike Lane”. I mean, the other thing is, 4th Avenue -- specifically 4th Avenue, I think it’s the double-lane, the cars on that street just are, are -- drive very fast. And, I mean, it doesn’t matter if it’s – you know, it doesn’t matter if it’s one o’clock in the morning, or it doesn’t matter if it’s one o’clock in the afternoon, or 8 a.m., I mean, they’re just – they have, they have an open stretch, a lot of these cars are just flying.**

1. For a bicycle rider in Brooklyn, what are the most common dangers or hazards that confront a bicycle rider?

**I definitely think – disregard – I think there’s, like, a general disregard for bicycle safety in sections of Brooklyn, specifically those areas – those neighborhoods I mentioned. The cars drive very fast. They drive very – you know -- there just seems to be little – I guess, respect would be the right word for it, or consideration for sharing the road with a bicycle rider. And that’s just in terms of speed and – you know, they’re trying to navigate around delivery trucks and we’re trying to navigate around them, and there’s just – you know – there’s not a friendly share-the-road kind of attitude with a lot of the motor vehiclists. I also feel one of the challenges is, some of these roads are in very bad condition, so on top of trying to avoid cars and trucks and pedestrians and other cyclists, you also have to navigate around, like, some really crummy potholes and cracks and divots, and so it’s – especially in Sunset Park on 4th Avenue, like, around the 20s and the 30s – like around the subway station on 36th Street, it’s – the road is just awful, so it just adds another obstacle in that section.**

With respect to those things which you discussed, are there particular things you do while riding to avoid these problems or deal with them?

**Well, first off, I never -- unless it is an absolute necessity, I don’t have my phone anywhere -- like, I don’t -- I have it sometimes mounted on my – on my bike if I don’t have a watch on, I mean, and I only use it for a timekeeping device, but I do not talk on my phone, I do not listen to my music, I do not, like, use a GPS on it. If I have to, like – if I have to take my eyes off the road, I will pull over and look at my phone if I, like, look at a map or GPS or something. So that’s something I definitely do. I obviously – I have lights -- I have 3 different lights: I have one for headlight, I have a taillight, and I have, like, another spare one that I’ll either use as another taillight or I’ll put it on my helmet, as well as – like, a headlamp – kind of flashlight, which I use in the darker times. But I really just apply a lot of the – apply a lot of, you know, almost defensive driving philosophies to riding my bike.**

[f/u Q: Could you be specific about, or give examples of what that means?]

**Sure – so, when I ride my bike, and I’m, you know, driving, let’s say, up Fourth Avenue in Brooklyn, I will pay attention to where the one-ways are, so I know, like, which direction I should be looking first or anticipating a flow of traffic. So I pay attention to one-ways quite a bit. I just kind of – you know, from years of living here, I just kind of know where there’s just high vehicular traffic, specifically, you know, cars coming off the highway, cars coming off the major routes, the major avenues, the major streets, major cross streets – so just kind of orienting – orientating myself to, like, the car layout, the vehicular layout of an area and just kind of knowing where there’s just going to be trouble spots.**

1. Are there dangers or hazards that are difficult or impossible for a bicycle rider to see and react to? Are there particular things you do while riding to avoid them?

**I mean -- a car driving at excessive speed is very hard to react to – even, you know – and that’s – I try to, like -- I try to, you know, keep an eye over my shoulder, you know, to see if there’s anything coming. But, like, you know -- somebody who is just flying down Fourth Avenue or flying down Fifth Avenue because they’ve got a string of green lights is just very hard to avoid or react. I also try to give space to buses and delivery trucks, because I know a lot of times I’m going to be in a blind spot if I’m behind them or next to them, so I do my best to, like, give them the right-of-way. And definitely try to make sure I can see their rearview mirrors so that at least I know they have a chance of seeing me; it doesn’t always work that way, but that’s something that I will frequently do. But yeah, I mean, it’s just a matter of just paying attention to the people you’re sharing the road with. And that’s just, you know, it’s -- I always kind of keep -- I always kind of keep looking two or three blocks ahead of myself and kind of turning around and seeing two or three blocks behind myself.**

1. Please describe things you have seen other bicycle riders do that you consider to be dangerous.

**Anytime I see anybody riding with their music -- with their headphones in their ear, it’s to me incredibly dangerous in New York City. I see a lot of cyclist doing that, I see a lot of cyclists – you know, these people with the really expensive bikes and the really expensive get-ups, you know – you know, racing their bikes on thoroughfares when it’s, like, you know, Saturday afternoon or Sunday afternoon when there’s all sorts of other people and that’s very – their attitude is very aggressive, and I find that that’s very dangerous. I think, you know -- riding the wrong way on, like, a side street is okay, but, you know, if you’re riding the wrong way on a very busy avenue or street, that’s also something that’s dangerous. Like, I know everybody does it every once in a while where they just kind of use -- having a bike’s to their advantage of going through a red light or going the wrong way down a one-way or whatever -- you know, you have to – in my opinion, you’ve got to pick and choose when you’re going to do that. It’s okay for me to do it on a side street, but I’ve had people come straight up on me on, you know, Second Avenue in Manhattan, and it’s, you know – it’s just so dangerous.**

1. If it were your job to teach other adult bicyclists how to stay safe while riding in the streets of Brooklyn, what particular instructions would you give them?

**Well, first, don’t have your music in your ears at all – don’t have anything in your ears at all. Because you need as much, you know – as much of your periphery sensors as possible. Definitely, you’ve got to be careful at night – I limit my night-time riding, or I have in the last year, because, you know, a lot of the avenues in Brooklyn, once the green lights change so that there’s a bigger stretch, those cars drive, like, insanely fast, so just be careful at night. And then, just get to know – get to know the layout of the neighborhoods you’re going to be cycling through –you know, because if – like, for example, on Fourth Avenue, there’s a lot of schools, so just know, like, between 7:30 and 9, there are a lot of, like, buses and parents dropping off, like – it’s rush hour, you’ve almost got to treat it like you’re in a car, so get used to – so know the layout of, like, the neighborhoods you know you have to go through frequently to get to work or get to a neighborhood you like cycling through or whatever.**

1. Imagine for a moment that, right now, you are riding on a Brooklyn street along with other traffic. Tell me all the different things you are doing to keep yourself safe and avoid a crash or collision as you ride.

**Keeping my eyes up at the one-ways and where the traffic’s going to be coming from, keeping my eyes and ears on the other traffic signs or traffic lights, stop lights, and see where – you know -- making sure I know I will be able to go through a red – or go through a green light safely, and just keep my – you know, keep my awareness also to the back of me, and just making -- keep my ears and senses open just to hear and see what’s coming behind me.**

1. Now I would like to throw out a few words or phrases and ask you if they trigger any additional thoughts about how to ride safely:

* Intersections

**Caution.**

[Do you want to say anything more about that?]

**No, that’s fine.**

* Traffic signs and signals

**Paying attention to them – they’re like your allies. They’re your friends, they’re not obstacles.**

* Right-of-way

**You know -- cars, pedestrians, school buses, buses – you know -- you’ve got to respect who has it.**

* Pedestrians

**Caution, sharing – you know -- enjoyment – they’re part of the scenery, too, nice to see them.**

* Speed

**Deadly.**

* Respect

**Mutual, sharing respect, having mutual respect – you know -- kindness and awareness.**

* Trucks, buses

**They’re obstacles.**

[f/u Q: what challenge do they present as obstacles?]

**There’s low visibility from their drivers, they’re large -- they take up a large amount of space to navigate around, and a lot of cars as well – cyclists do not like to be stuck behind them, everyone tries to zip around them.**

* Parked cars

**Caution – you know – yeah, obstacles, caution. I’m generally not too worried about them, but, you know, they’re there.**

* “Taking the lane”

**Yeah, it’s like textbook – textbook riding.**

* Pet peeves

**Riders listening through earbuds, cars driving too fast, cars driving -- cars honking at cyclists who are just trying to get around, dismissiveness toward cyclists or cycling or the importance of cycling.**

1. Please feel free to offer any other thoughts about the topics we have discussed today.

**I guess something that we didn’t talk about – can I give you a personal anecdote? A couple years ago I started having, like – you know – nothing serious, but some red flags concerning my cardiovascular health, and I realized that I had to do something, or my -- I had to change some of my habits. And I -- I rode my bike a lot when I was in high school and I was – I mean, everybody’s very thin when they’re in high school, but – I had managed to keep a lot of weight off. And so one of the reasons I started riding my bike was to exercise, and in the last three years I’ve lost like a good 40 pounds. A lot of it is diet-related, but a lot of it is cycling-related. And so, you know -- My grumpy Republican father was bitching about bike lanes and I told him straight up: I said, look, without bike lanes, safe bike riding, there’s no way I could lose the weight that I did, you know, no way. So that’s just something that, like – just, the exercise for me is so critical. I mean, the enjoyment is great, and, you know, the freedom, the independence you feel when you bike is great, but for me, I don’t like going to the gym, I don’t like lifting weights, I don’t like running, but I love riding my bike, and that’s helped me take on a more healthy lifestyle as I get into my forties.**

Thank you very much for participating in this research study and especially for taking the time and effort to complete this interview with me.