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

**Interview Questions**

**#10, Sunset Park, recruited 9-15, interviewed 9-17-2018**

**TO102E01.mp3**

*Background Questions:*

1. What is your age? (Were you born prior to this month and day in the year 2000?)

**28**

1. What is your race or ethnicity?

**White Caucasian**

1. What is your gender?

**Female**

1. What is the highest level of education that you completed?

**Master’s degree**

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

**Would have to go back to when I was a kid – 5 years old?**

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

**6 years**

1. Compared to most other bicycle riders you have observed, are you more careful, less careful, or about the same?

**I would say I’m probably about the same.**

1. Have you been in any bicycle crashes that involved other vehicles or pedestrians?

**I have been, but it was not in Brooklyn – it was before I moved here. I was hit by a car while I was bicycling in Pittsburgh.** […..I hope it wasn’t serious.] **No, it wasn’t. I was very lucky. But it was a jarring experience nonetheless.**

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?)

**I would say, transportation to other locations – I’m looking at your question here. Also for – I guess, exercise as an added benefit, but I usually am not going out just for a ride for the purpose of exercise. Usually more recreational and to get myself to the store or to a workout class or to a friend’s apartment where maybe transportation -- public transportation isn’t as convenient or would take longer than bicycling.**

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

**The last 12 months are a little – a little bit of an odd – I don’t know -- I guess, acharacteristic riding patterns– probably because I moved and I previously was not riding on a regular basis, so I would say it was more like a couple times a month. But as of the last two months or so, I’ve been riding a couple times a week.**

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

**I’d say, on average -- I’d say, on average, like, 20 minutes or 30 minutes or less. Or each way I suppose. But I think, on average, I think that’s about right – about 30 minutes or less.**

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

**I would say, like, all of it. I feel like I’m rarely riding where there’s not -- when there’s not a lot of motor vehicle traffic.**

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

**I would say at least 50% if not more.**

*Primary study questions:*

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

**I’d say -- I’d say that it varies, and it depends what streets you are on. But it’s -- I feel – I usually feel – I usually feel pretty safe when there’s a bike lane. If I’m on a street without a bike lane or with sharrows, I’m much more cautious. So -- when you’re around other, like, cyclers and, you know, when you’re in a bike lane and you’re kind of just part of a group of people that are on the same path or route, sometimes you just feel really safe and comfortable, but when it’s doing maneuvers where you’re not in a bike lane or, you know, you have to, you know, make a weird left-hand turn, that’s when I feel more at-risk, or – you know, or when you’re in a situation where you think the cars maybe aren’t expecting to see you – yeah. Let me know if I can elaborate on any of that for you.**

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

**I would say, doors opening -- you know, for cars that are parked on the curbside and you’re) pass them in lane. I would also say, people that are double-parked. I ride frequently up and down Fifth Avenue – it’s, like, you know, one of the common, I guess, like, north-south routes. But it’s not a separated bike lane and it’s a really busy road as well and there’s a lot of double-parking because there are so many stores, and if you have -- if folks are double-parked, then you have to – they have their flashers on -- you have to kind of go closer to the yellow line at the center of the road to go around them, and then people aren’t expecting you on the other side, or maybe the car that’s double-parked starts to pull out, and I’ve almost gotten kind of - I don’t know -- those are the situations, I think, that I find – I feel are the most dangerous because I have to now, like, veer off of the bike path -- or the bike lane.**

With regard to the parked cars … doors opening and with regard to the double-parked cars, are there particular things you do while you’re riding to try to avoid these hazards?

**I think it’s a little easier with door opening – I mean, I try to be -- it’s front-of-mind for me often, so I just try to maintain as much distance between my bike and the cars that I can, while staying in, like, the bike lane. I think with -- I think with double-parked cars, it’s a little bit harder, because you have to signal. I guess the one thing I would -- I try to do is, if I have to go around a double-parked car, like, there might be car traffic behind me, and now I have to kind of steer into where the car traffic is, so I make sure I’m using hand signals so that they see me coming over and *(unintelligible*) like, I need to get around the parked car too. So, I try to – I try to do that, so that other cars behind me, like, you, know, know what’s going on.**

1. Are there dangers or hazards that are difficult or impossible for a bicycle rider to see and react to?

**Well, so -- When I think of this question, I think of, like, more like roadway condition kind of things. Yeah, so -- That’s the first thing that’s maybe coming to mind – so, like, there are times, like, those big, like, potholes in the bike lane or in the roadway and there are times when you roll over them or you see them and you can slow down or go around them or kind of, like, you know, jump your wheels over them, but there’s times when, like – man, I didn’t see that until the really last thing and, you know, made me fall over or throw me from my bike or something, so those will sneak up on you because you’re not necessarily inspecting the road right below you as you’re riding. That, and this is maybe just a bit more of a pet peeve, but -- you know those big – I guess they’re, like, steel (*unintelligible*) that they put over the roadway in some places where they’re doing construction that involves some tunneling? There’s often, like, a big lip on the edge of those, and if you’re, like, at speed coming up to them, ramming your, like, front wheel into those, I always get worried that I’m going to, like, damage my bike, and so I’m reacting to those often, and it feels like -- something that, like, is challenging to, like, see that as I’m approaching, it’s going to be something that I’m going to jump over, so those are – those are a couple things. Other dangers or hazards that are difficult or impossible to see or react to? I think a lot of other things are quite predictable except for, like, the doors opening – I mean, that’s -- again, you don’t know what’s going to happen until you’re – you know, have a near miss.**

So, with regard to the road conditions or those metal plates, are there things you can do to help you avoid those problems?

**I mean, I guess I just try to -- I think it’s just paying attention, I don’t know if there’s a whole lot to do aside from that. And kind of, like, learn how to deal with that in a way that you – that I -- like, that feels right for me – I’m riding, like, a road bike, so, I guess, putting air in tires – like, if I had a knobbier tire, I maybe wouldn’t mind so much going over, you know, a one-inch steel, like, lip, but being concerned about my bike and, like, how to crash into that at speed, I, like, kind of, like, try to, like, jump my front wheel, like, up and onto those metal plates, so that’s one way that I deal with that so that I don’t feel like I’m damaging the bicycle.**

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

**Riding – riding against traffic or riding the opposite way down the bike lane. I think that – see other bicycle riders do that is dangerous? – I think – I think, dangerous is kind of, like – I guess it’s all – it’s all relative, right? So, kind of what your own safety practice is, I suppose. So, like -- I almost always am riding with a helmet, but when I see others not riding with a helmet, like, I don’t -- I don’t necessarily perceive that to be, like, overly dangerous – so, I mean -- it’s not safe, but. I also think that sometimes – it may be -- I don’t know who it’s dangerous for, but riders who are more experienced or maybe feel more comfortable will often, like, accelerate into – like, through an intersection before the light has turned or during a red light, and sometimes that can send the wrong signal to other people that are following them – so even if you’re not riding together, if you see someone cruise through a light, you might want to cruise through it behind them – like, it might not actually be safe for you, it may have just been safe for them in that four-second window . So I think that sometimes that can be – that can be a touchy thing, when you see people do that, for others around that are looking for those clues, or for pedestrians that may be, you know – they’re looking at you ride through as a sign that the light has changed and that it’s safe to cross, so I think people that are using the street, like, you’re observing others and how they’re behaving in the intersection to gauge whether it’s safe for you to cross as well, and sometimes that’s not a good indicator when you’re -- do have people with different levels – like, perceived levels of risks of crossing when the light hasn’t changed yet.**

[f/u Q: When you’re riding, do you make it a practice of looking at what other bicycle riders or pedestrians are doing to give you clues on whether it’s safe to proceed?]

**I do. I mean, I try to check for myself also, but there’s, like, some – there’s some things I use as, like – for example, if I’m approaching – if I’m approaching an intersection and the light is – the light is red, but I can tell for me – that I can tell that it’s about to change, because maybe the light in the perpendicular direction is yellow, if I see, like, a parent with a stroller or children beginning to cross the road, traveling in the same direction that I would be, from -- I’m coming up behind them and I see that happening up ahead, to me that’s a signal that it’s safe to cross – because I perceive those people to be, like, very cautious. If you’re willing to, like, cross the road without (?) your child, it’s probably also safe for me to continue pedaling and accelerate through the intersection, because you’re in the road -- we’re going to be in the road at the same time. So, like, that’s something that I – that I would – that I do regularly.**

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?

**I would say, wear a helmet; Use bike lights if you’re riding at night; and follow the bike lanes** [I’m sorry, say that again] **follow bike lanes or bike paths, or stick to roads that have a designated or at least partially-designated, you know, space for bikers – and use whatever hand signals you’re comfortable with. Because I think – there’s – you know, I do -- I don’t know what drivers know and what they don’t know, but people usually perceive, like, if you’re pointing with your left hand you’re going left, you’re pointing with your right hand, you’re going right. I know that those aren’t necessarily the technical -- the technically appropriate hand signals – but I think that, like, if you’re new to riding in the City, it’s better to be, like, clear than to be, like, timid or not feeling sure of how you’re supposed to be signaling, like, as long as you’re doing some signaling, do what feels comfortable and make it, like, obvious to others.**

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.

**Okay, so imagining – so I’m – so, like I said, I have a road bike, so you need to, like, keep your head down when you’re riding, but, like, I try to keep my head up and scanning as much as I can. I have a helmet on. I have – like, if it’s at night, I have, like, lights flashing on my bike. I’m – Yeah, I mean, I’m following the traf – I will usually follow all the – well, that’s not really -- I was going to say I usually follow all the traffic signals, but that's not necessarily – I don’t always do that, but I always look – I always look in the direction of traffic, if not both ways, when I’m crossing an intersection. So I either slow down enough or I have enough of a view of the intersection to see if there are cars coming in, you know, whatever direction they may be coming from. Yeah, I’m very cautious with that. And I don’t just trust the light, because if the light is green, like, I always – I always look both directions before crossing an intersection. I try to stay in bike lanes. Yeah, I think those are the -- I think those are the major things. I also don’t go very fast downhill because that makes me scared. (*Unintelligible*). Not that’s there’s that many of them, but sometimes there are and that’s something that makes me nervous.**

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

**Just looking, checking, checking both ways of traffic.**

* Traffic signs and signals

**I mean, I think we could -- I could rely on them more than I do. I think riders tend to use them – I mean, I (*unintelligible*) -- I tend to use them as more of a – (*unintelligible*) more of a suggestion than as a rule, and if I feel like it’s safe to go through a red light when there’s no traffic in the other direction, or to get a jump start on a green light, I do that, if I’m, like – if I have a history of what the traffic is, sometimes I don’t always pay attention to them.**

* Right-of-way

**I -- In my mind, I want cars to let me go first, (*unintelligible*), because I think to myself, I’m working a lot harder than you are, dude (*unintelligible*) to drive your car – let me -- let me go. But I think I try to assume that – I don’t -- I don’t let them – I don’t let people won’t see me or that a car is not expecting me** [Q for clarification: I missed that, can you say that again?]  **I tend to assume, in practice, even though I wish it wasn’t the case, that, like, the cars won’t see me, or that even if I have a right-of-way, even though maybe that’s the case, it doesn’t necessarily mean a car’s expecting that or will do that so I have to defer obviously to, like -- to cars if I’m feeling like it’s risky.**

* Pedestrians

**I heard this, and it’s actually been something that is, like, interesting for me to think about while I’m riding, which is, like, if you keep pace while I’m riding, and, like, a pedestrian is moving someplace, people can predict your -- people have much easier ability to predict, like, your speed and your maneuvers when you’re moving confidently and, like, consistently, but when you start to, like, slow down, or someone’s, like, road crossing an intersection, if you start, like, slowing down or swerving your bike, like, you create confusion, and then the pedestrian will, like, stop and panic, and you can create a situation where there’s a potential collision, like, unnecessarily – So, I don’t know, that’s something that -- that I think about sometimes -- .but pedestrians are a little easier to deal with because they move more slowly and you can, like, (*unintelligible*) use your verbal communication with them.**

* Speed

**Speed -- Most I think about speed is, I try not to pass cars more often than I need to – sometimes you’re going down the street and, like, you’re traveling more or less at the same rate that the vehicles are, so you get stuck at the same lights, and this can happen for, you know, kind of, like, a long straightaway, for, like, you know, a long period of time, blocks and blocks and blocks, and so what I try to do is time my riding such that, either, like, maybe I’m the last car or the last vehicle, like, through an intersection on the light – like, I’ll try to make the light so that way I can ride for the next block without any other cars coming up behind me – sometimes I try, like, to speed up or slow down based on that – and similarly, if, you know, if you have to ride between the, like, lane of traffic and a lane of parked cars, it’s not fun to kind of, like, have to weave around their – what are those? The side mirrors? -- the side-view mirrors. And so the more times you have to, like, pass the cars, and then they pass you, and then you pass them again, and then they pass you – like, each one of those, like, feels – I don’t know – like, unnecessarily, like, dangerous, so I try to avoid that – like, those types of back-and-forths as much as I can.**

* Respect

**Respect the bike lane – it just doesn’t happen very often. That -- That’s what that word makes me think of, is the lack of respect that people show to the bike lane.**

* Trucks, buses

**Trucks are huge and scary. Buses I feel more comfortable with, because I think the drivers are more – they’re – like, at least New York City buses, I feel like they’ve got an eye out for me. I don’t know if that’s true or not, but, you know, they’re – I think -- I feel relatively safe biking near a City bus, because I know that they deal with, like, pedestrians and cyclists on a regular basis, so, like, they’re very experienced drivers, so I don’t feel as concerned about being near or riding – riding past or with a City bus.**

[f/u Q: And what is your feeling about trucks?]

**Trucks, I just – I think, maybe it’s similar to, like, when you’re driving – going -- I try not to, like, hang around near them very often, because, like, I don’t know what it’s like to drive a truck, so I don’t know what, like, the blind spots are, and things like that. And also, like, the exhaust that comes out of trucks can be often, like, more at face level when you’re biking, and it can be, like, significantly more uncomfortable if you’ve got kind of, like, smoke and things like that in your face, so I try to get out from behind them as quickly as I can.**

* Parked cars

**Parked cars -- I think I touched on that earlier – whether they’re, like, you know -- if they’re parked on the side all the way on the side of the road for commercial parking, sometimes I look to try to see if there’s someone in the driver’s seat or not – to me -- every once in a while you’ll notice that there is someone in the driver’s seat and that the car’s not empty and then I think greater caution when going by because they’re potentially more likely to open the door.**

* “Taking the lane”

**I don’t know if I know what that means.** [Provided definition] **I think – I think it can be safer --** **To me, that’s safer than a sharrow, where you’re kind of pushed off to the side of people, like – cars will pass you but you don’t really have designated space, and then cars are kind of going around you out into maybe even oncoming traffic almost, to try to get around you. Sharrows are definitely scary and I think taking the lane is sometimes safer because you’re actually in the center of someone’s field of view, and they can’t pass you and then potentially, like, sideswipe you. So I think in certain cases, especially when speeds are slow and everyone’s more or less traveling at the same speed, it can be much safer just to make your presence really known, because I think sometimes that’s the more risky thing is when people don’t realize that you’re there, they’re kind of (*unintelligible)* bikers, and you feel like cars will, like, you know -- they’ll still pull out from being parked or they’ll, you know, try to make a turn into you, not seeing that you’re coming up in the bike lane. So I think there are -- in certain cases, I think taking the lane is safer because you’re more visible.**

[f/u Q: You mentioned sharrows a couple times. What are your feelings about sharrows?]

**My feelings about sharrows is that I wish major thoroughfares didn’t have them. I understand from, like, a planning perspective why every road can’t accommodate a designated bike lane, and a sharrow is at least giving bikers a path of some sort, but you’re trying to force two uses into the same space, and I think it’s – to me those are, like, my least favorite lanes to ride on, and if you’re, like, plotting your course somewhere, you know, you look it up, you see where the bike lanes are or you, you know – you kind of get to know what the east-west north-south major options are, and then there’s kind of the last bit of it that maybe you have to go on roads that have no bike lanes – but especially when the sharrows are on the major thoroughfares like Fifth Avenue, I really don’t like that. It doesn’t feel – it doesn’t feel sufficient for, like, the bike corridor that people are using it for.**

* Pet peeves

**Pet peeves – pet peeves are when – well, it goes back to something I mentioned before, but, like – I try to avoid, like, recurring passing, like, the same vehicles over and over again. Like, cars will often try to, like, do that to get in front of you, and then you end up passing them, and then they’ll do it again, and then you end up passing them, so sometimes cars not knowing, like, actually – not caring or not knowing the safest way to, like, interact, I guess, when there’s a bicycle on the road. Other pet peeves that have to do with safety: I think I mentioned those, like, metal plates on the road that are, like – that are very annoying to me -- and -- yeah, I think it’s just like – yeah, there are situations where it’s, like, very clear that drivers just, like, aren’t paying attention -- they don’t expect to see anyone else on the road besides other vehicles, so that’s frustrating, but that’s kind of a general thing, not something particularly specific.**

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

**I would say just in -- kind of in summary of, like, my general feeling about biking in Brooklyn is, I generally feel, like – I generally feel safe doing it, and I do feel -- I’ve become feeling more safe the more that I’ve done it, because you get accustomed to kind of, like, how to react. I also think it’s a lot of fun. I think it could be more safe certainly, but safety – not feeling safe riding has never prevented me from riding someplace that, like, it made sense for me to ride to, so it hasn’t deterred me – it hasn’t deterred me from biking. Yep.**

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