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

**Interview Questions**

**#12, Prospect Heights, recruited September 23, interviewed September 24, 2018. TO108E02.mp3**

*Background Questions:*

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

**25**

1. What is your race or ethnicity?

**Middle Eastern**

1. What is your gender?

**Male**

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

**Master’s**

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

**13 years**

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

**2 years**

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

**More careful**

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

**No**

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?)

**Commuting**

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

**4 times a week**

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

**1 hour**

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

**Let’s say 80 %**

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

**About 30 %**

*Primary study questions:*

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

**It’s terrible. It is consistently, let’s say, nerve-wracking and dangerous due to the cars.**

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

**The main issues are cars that either don’t respect your bike lane, or they’re aggressive at your -- just your presence in the street. That’s number one. Number 2 is drivers of vehicles that threaten violence on bikers pretty regularly.** [f/u Q: Has that happened to you?] **Yes, that has happened. And I guess the last thing is police and other vehicles that park in the bike lane. It’s extremely common, and it puts bikers in dangerous positions.** [f/u Q: Can you tell me a little bit more about what drivers do that threaten violence against bicycle riders?] **Well yeah, so generally, if -- when drivers see bikes, they honk at them, that’s even if they’re in the lane, out of the lane. And then, when – if the bike lane is obstructed, I’ve found that drivers basically take that -- they basically assume that the bike will not exit the obstructed lane. So then whenever you do exit the lane, every time this has happened, then the driver will verbally, like, accost you, in the few times this has happened, and, like, threaten you or indirectly threaten you with, basically, like, pulling down the window and, like, using their words. And in one instance, I -- there was a driver trying to use my part of the road to pass other cars, and he sort of, like, inched towards my rear wheel in another threatening way. So, yeah, I would say, it’s either words or just using the vehicle itself to threaten your safety.**

Are there particular things you do while riding to avoid these dangers?

**I don’t respond to any aggressive drivers; I try to stay away from them. If things are extremely packed on the street, I will go on an empty sidewalk. But generally, I just try to avoid driving where there -- to the extent possible, where there’s congestion and traffic.**

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

**Definitely. I think the most common ones are sort of sudden violations of the bike lane – so, vehicles suddenly pulling into the bike lane – on the Kent Avenue bike path, which I take, sometimes, like, 18-wheelers will make wide turns that suddenly go into the bike lane, that you wouldn’t know -- similarly when there’s construction, sometimes the bicyclists are not *(garbled word*) managed by the traffic – the traffic operators – so, yeah, I think, just sudden entry into the bike lane is the biggest issue.**

Are there things you are able to do while riding to avoid those difficulties?

**Generally no. I mean, if something like that were to happen, you’re just done.**

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

**I guess the only thing I will say is using headphones, like over-ear headphones. I think that’s just the only thing I could complain about with bicyclists.**

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 think, first I would say, try to avoid riding your bike at all, because it’s so dangerous. But if they still want to ride, I would definitely advise them on maximum safety gear, a really well-tuned bike that can stop on a dime, if that’s possible. And then the biggest thing I would say is just, to the extent possible, actually avoid vehicles, in the sense that, try to plan your route around areas where there’s cars. When there are vehicles, just stay as far away from them in the bike lane and err on being toward the parked cars, because even if you get doored, it might not be as bad as getting run over. And then I guess the last thing I would say is, assume every driver doesn’t care if you live or die. And avoid them at all costs, and don’t speak to them or look at them or anything.**

{f/u Q: You mentioned at the beginning, I think, maximum safety gear – what would you include in that?]

**Definitely, I guess the biggest thing is just the helmet, with all the certifications, so, you know, not one of these dinky cheap ones. So, you know, that’s (*unintelligible*) -- so not just front and rear impact, but also side impact as well. And then mirrors if possible, if they can outfit them on your bike. And finally, I guess I would even add a camera on their helmet, if they can spring for that, because that’ll really save you.**

[f/u Q: What role would the camera play for you?]

**The biggest thing would be is, if you’re struck, you have some evidence that it wasn’t your fault. And also, I would say, a defense against the police, given how adamant they are about ticketing and harassing bicyclists. I just think in general it’s good to have your own video footage.**

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.

**So, I’m definitely watching for erratic drivers that are in a hurry or honking, because they don’t -- they will swerve into the lane, so I’m kind of listening. On the other hand, I’m watching the parked cars to see if someone’s about to open their door. I’m generally looking out for obstacles in the bike lane, especially, let’s say, like, open ditches, parked cars, things like that. Let’s see, what else am I doing? And then I guess, finally, I’m also looking out for police that will arbitrarily ticket me for a lifesaving maneuver, because that’s also something to avoid.**

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

**If possible, run the red, when all the cars are parked and there’s no one around, so you can be alone. Otherwise, assume that – assume that cars will blast through there on any light, red or green for them.**

[f/u Q: So if you can’t get through ahead of the cars and you’re assuming they’re going to blast through, then what do you do instead?]

**So generally, I mean, even if it’s sort of green for you and red for the other, for sort of the opposing direction of traffic, I always kind of slow down and look, because I’ve seen too many cars run reds in Brooklyn. But let’s say that all the cars are stopped, there’s definitely no cars coming across traffic, and there are no police, I will probably try to run the red, because that gives me distance from the drivers – which is actually, I think, it also -- because they see you, because many times they don’t see you and then they’ll try to, without signaling to turn left or right, so I think actually that’s a preventative safety measure, is to just get out through there in the intersection. Yeah.**

* Traffic signs and signals

**Traffic signs and signals -- I guess – I guess, generally obey them, but don’t assume that the bike lane signage is safe, because in -- especially where I go near the Classen, I think that’s the BQE, the bike lane is actually extremely dangerous, so if you were to follow the bike lane, you were more likely to get injured than if you were to avoid the bike lane. So yeah – so take -- so take everything with a grain of salt, is what I think about signage.**

* Right-of-way

**Right-of-way -- Assume that driver’s won’t respect your signaling or right-of-way. I’ve had many times I signal and start a lane change and a driver will just go through. So cars always have the right-of-way – and police, double!**

* Pedestrians

**Pedestrians -- Know your neighborhood. I think in some neighborhoods where people ride bicycles frequently, you can sort of count on unobstructed bike lanes, but if it’s a neighborhood where, just for various reasons, people don’t really ride bikes – local population -- assume that people consider the bike lane part of the sidewalk.**

[f/u Q: Assuming that pedestrians are treating the bike lane as part of the sidewalk, then how do you avoid accidents in that situation?]

**I think it’s just making sure your bike’s in a shape where you can brake well, and then generally -- I wouldn’t say it’s – yeah, I think, just being aware, because generally in that kind of situation, your bell or your voice doesn’t do anything. So it’s more about being aware – you know -- swerving, braking, things like that.**

* Speed

**Speed -- You’re not going to get to go fast, you know, even if you tried – but generally slower is safer. And, I think, don’t be afraid to stop actually, if things start to get unsafe. Stop and get off, and at least you’ll be a person standing in the road rather than another variable where someone – you know, you could make a wrong move and get hit.**

* Respect

**Respect – yeah, I mean, no one will respect you as a biker, so don’t try to respect anyone else, or else you’re going to get stuck. I think it’s just, assume zero respect to ensure your safety. I think that’s it – yeah.**

* Trucks, buses

**Trucks and buses -- Stay away. Stay away. Yeah, it’s -- Distance is key for these – that’s kind of (*unintelligible*) for those.**

* Parked cars

**Parked cars – yeah, parked cars will be anywhere, and assume that they’ll move at anytime. So never get too close from the front or the rear, or the side. I think that’s it for that.**

* “Taking the lane”

**Taking the lane – let’s see -- I would say it’s something actually more useful than people do, it should be practiced a bit more, but I will say that it can be dangerous with aggressive, violent drivers, so you have to sort of get a feel for your situation. If there are no cars around, I think it’s a good idea, but if there’s cars nearby, it’s – actually, stop if you think that’s going to make you safer, you should probably just stop and let some cars pass, because I think here, drivers, if they’re aggressive and you try to take the lane, they’re going to respond with a show of force. Whereas I think maybe in other cities, taking the lane actually works, here I think it actually puts you in danger in some ways. But it should be used a bit more than it usually is.**

* Pet peeves

**Pet peeves -- I would have to say, the NYPD stationed on the (*unintelligible*) that are just there every other day, just ticketing, basically, cyclists in an empty bike lane, but letting cars run reds and turn without signals. It’s just, like, so -- I think it’s hilarious to see, like, given the pandemonium of how the cars drive, you know, the consistency with which they ticket, you know, like, people going four miles an hour, you know, the wrong way in the bike lane or something.**

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

**That’s all. I’m surprised I still ride a bike after we explored all these things. But no, I think that’s it, that covers it.**

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