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

**Interview Questions**

**#13, Midwood/Marine Park, recruited September 29, interviewed September 30, 2018. TO114E01.mp3**

*Background Questions:*

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

**50**

1. What is your race or ethnicity?

**Caucasian**

1. What is your gender?

**Male**

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

**Post-graduate degree.**

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

**About 45 years**

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

**14 years**

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

**I can’t speak for others, but I am very 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?)

**Health reasons, economic reasons, environmental reasons.**

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

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**I ride my bicycle daily. I don’t know if I can quantify the average, but I do all of my local shoppings using my bicycle. I travel from the Rockaways to Brooklyn almost every other day, and on the weekends to do my shoppings. I travel sometimes to Queens, depending on my needs, but I – but I do ride my bike daily.**

[f/u Q: I should probably ask, since I’m focusing on bicycle riding in Brooklyn, what proportion of your bicycle riding takes place in Brooklyn?]

**You can say about 70%.**

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

**2 to 4 hours**

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

**Almost 100%. There’s always motor vehicle traffic. There isn’t a day that there’s no traffic.**

[f/u Q; The focus is when there’s a lot of motor vehicle traffic. Would you say that there’s usually a lot?]

**I avoid – I avoid -- I try not to drive my automobile to avoid motor vehicle traffic. And so that’s part of the reason why I prefer to ride my bicycle, because it’s a lot easier to get around and not have to suffer finding a place to park your vehicle and, you know, just waste gas and time. So with the bicycle, I achieve a number of goals – I – there’s health satisfaction, there’s economics: I save money on tolls and on -- and I also contribute to a cleaner environment.**

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

**Probably 10%. I don’t normally ride in the dark, because a lot of the streets are not properly lit up, and it’s unsafe.**

*Primary study questions:*

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

**Predominantly unsafe, because most of the streets, although when you google maps -- bicycle routes -- you would find a bicycle route, but that is problematic, because in my estimation, for exam-- those bicycle routes don’t necessarily serve the social and economic purpose and interests of most bikers, and they oftentime go out of your way so you are forced to ride on bikes (sic?) that are not designated as bicycle roads, and that’s where it gets dangerous, when those roads don’t have clearly-defined bicycle paths, and the drivers don’t respect space and they feel that you don’t have the right to be on the road, they honk at you, they try to -- they try to scare you, so it is -- it makes me very apprehensive, honestly.**

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

**Cars. Cars – and irresponsible drivers.**  [Did you say irresponsibile drivers?] **Irresponsible drivers – yeah.** [f/u Q: Besides what you’ve already said about that in the last question, do you want to give any more detail on the ways that you feel they’re irresponsible?] **Well, they drive too fast, that’s one thing. You noticed yesterday while we were standing in front of the bike shop, we both witnessed a driver racing by himself on a street where the speed limit is 25, and he was probably doing, on average, about 70 to 100 miles per hour in this kind of, like, quarter of a mile (*unintelligible word*). There’s plenty of that, unfortunately, because most of the time it goes undetected or -- and those people -- like, there’s no police accountability a lot of the time. It’s terrifying to be on the road with drivers like that.**

Are there particular things you do while riding to avoid that kind of danger?

**I often find myself and my family, because my wife and I ride together 99% of the time, I find myself forced to sometimes ride on the – on pedestrian sidewalks. That’s inappropriate, because now, I’m forced to share the space with pedestrians, and that creates another hazard.**

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

**There are dangers and hazards everywhere, and with respect to bicycle riding, I think the number one danger will always pertain to whether drivers act responsibly and respect space or not. I think that is the number one danger (*unintelligible*), and that is something that basically places you in a state of mind in which you have to rest your faith in others, not in – not in a situation where the State has taken -- has taken the role or the initiative to designate safe riding paths to guarantee your safety, so you’re just relying on faith, on your blind trust of people, because the local government and the state government aren’t doing what they’re supposed to be doing.**

And besides what you said earlier, are there particular things you do while riding to avoid those dangers?

**Well again, as a bicycle rider, you have to ensure that you have the proper gear, you have the proper helmet, you avoid hazard areas, you follow traffic rules, cross where crossing is appropriate. You know, you want to try to do all of these things, and I think that’s common sense, but that still does not really create necessarily 100% safety.**

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

**I’ve seen, for example, bicycle riders ride their bicycles on bridges that cl-- are clearly designated for pedestrians and where bicycle riding is clearly prohibited -- I see that often on the bridge that connects the Rockaways with Brooklyn** [The Gil Hodges Bridge?] **yeah, the Gil Hodges Bridge. I see that on the Broad Channel Bridge as well, that connects the Rockaways with Broad Channel. People do that all the time. I’ve seen bikers without helmets, I’ve seen bicycle riders ride in the middle of the street, not on designated bike lanes – amongst cars, actually, occupying the space for, like, automobile cars, because some bikers develop the attitude of, this is the only way I can bike because of the traffic, I’m just going to bike just like I’m a car, and they take the risk of, you know, on their own safety. I see that a lot, everywhere -- everywhere I see that.**

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, one, they need to abide by the bicycle pedestrian traffic rules and instruction. Unfortunately, those rules and instruction are not very clearly stated in places where people know them. A lot of people don’t know these rules and instructions. Number two, I would say bikers should stick to bike lanes. But, that sounds good -- the problem with that: you don’t have bike lanes on many streets in Brooklyn, so that becomes a state/local city problem, not a biker’s, so -- Wear your helmet, most bicycle riders do wear their helmets, there are some who don’t, then it becomes the local cities and the state to decide whether there should be penalties on people, whether there should be no age limit on who wears the helmet or who does not -- again (*garbled*) -- but in the end, I would – I say the state needs to do a better job at creating safe environments for bicycle riders, and for the last fourteen years riding in Brooklyn, I haven’t seen that. I have not seen that, I don’t feel safe in Brooklyn. I see bicycles marked as commemorations on the roads where people lose their children in car accidents, and they just coat their bikes with flowers, they tie them up to the street signs to tell people: my child died here riding the bike. Because, you know -- I see plenty in the Rockaways and Brooklyn, plenty of that.**

[f/u Q: Given the situation in Brooklyn where a lot of the streets do not have bicycle lanes, what would you tell adult riders about how to ride safely when there is no lane?]

**Avoid riding on the street, and ride on sidewalks, unfortunately – or, ride in the opposite direction of traffic so you could at least have a view of vehicles as they approach you, instead of -- instead of giving them your back. I do that often – I feel safer if I see the cars approaching me as opposed to giving them my back.**

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.

**Well, you have to work like a reconnaissance radar to be frankly honest. You have to keep your eyes in all directions. You have to keep your eye on the traffic lights, keep your eye on cars approaching you from all directions, you have to keep your eye on pedestrians – it’s a lot of maneuvering that you have to do, but as a bike rider you sort of, like, do these things spontan-, mostly without thinking about them, so, like, they are -- they are automatic responses, just like driving a car. And in the end, you can do all of that, and that still doesn’t mean you’re safe. To a large extent, your safety rests not only in your own actions but oftentime in the actions of other people.**

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

**Yeah, apprehensive. They make me feel very apprehensive due to the volume of traffic.** [f/u Q: How would one ride safely in the area of intersections?] **You have to be patient, number one. Patience – you have to wait until it is completely safe for you to cross. And unfortunately, on intersections, even when you see the pedestrian crossing signs, still, cars coming from another angle can still make an entrance into the intersection, so the traffic on the intersection doesn’t completely stop for you to make a safe crossing.**

* Traffic signs and signals

**I think traffic signs should include bicycle instructions – ideally, there should be -- that should be included, to suggest to bicycle riders the best time to cross the street. Yeah. And that’s nowhere to be seen in Brooklyn, actually.** [f/u Q: And with traffic signs and signals as they exist currently, what’s the best way to ride safely?] **You just have to take it upon yourself to use your own common sense. You know, you just have to advocate for your own self – your own safety, you just have to be cautious, watch your surroundings, ride on the side- you know, the sidewalk, ride against the traffic. Sometimes, just get off the bike and walk – you know?**

* Right-of-way

**Yeah – well, for motor vehicles, drivers, auto drivers, right-of-way is understood as a license to kill people. And if they feel that they have the right-of-way, they have no respect for anyone else. They feel like, I have the right-of-way, so, you know – so, if you’re a bicycle rider, you really have to be very careful of that.**

* Pedestrians

**I think pedestrians, by and large, are not different from – you know -- they’re not totally disconnected from the grievances and the problems faced by bicycle riders, because a pedestrian using the sidewalk has to – has to be very -- does not – does not assume that the sidewalk is shared with a bicycle rider. A pedestrian’s natural assumption is that, that’s where pedestrians walk, and then – they don’t feel like they have to be careful. The bicycle rider has to be careful if he or she uses the sidewalk.**

* Speed

**With respect to speed, there -- I think of -- the – I think the speed -- cars, the speed in Brooklyn is reasonably regulated, I think 25 miles per hour in general, 30 miles is a safe speed. I think the execution and prosecution of violators should really be vigorous again – and the violations of people who speed irresponsibly and those who strike pedestrians and bicycle riders should be so severe, so that people could think a million times before they act irresponsibly on the streets.**

[f/u Q: Do you consider the bicyclist’s speed a factor in bicycle safety?]

**No matter – no matter how fast the bicycler speeds, they don’t speed beyond – you know -- I don’t think it’s dangerous – I -- most bicycle riders can’t speed past 5, 6, 7 miles per hour – you know -- You’re not on a racing track, you’re on the streets of Brooklyn. You are forced to ground your speed to 1-2 miles per hour most of the time – you’re not racing.**

* Respect

**I think *respect* is the word. Respecting yourself, respecting people’s space, respecting rules and regulations, and we don’t have a lot of that, unfortunately.**

* Trucks, buses

**Very dangerous because of the blind spots. I feel like by, psychologically speaking, large vehicles, buses, drivers feel a sense of entitlement – they don’t – they feel like they own the road, they use the size of their vehicles as tools of intimidation, and they don’t – they are the most dangerous in my estimation. They often -- They show incredible disrespect and lack of sensitivity on the road. I see that a lot in Brooklyn.**

[f/u Q: Do you have thoughts on what a rider should do to stay safe around trucks and buses?]

**They should never ride next to a bus or a truck – just like riding a motorcycle. They should – they should ride at least 20 meters away from, behind a bus or a truck, and just get out of their way because those people just don’t care.**

* Parked cars

**Parked cars – well, in Brooklyn, I mean, people are -- do understand very well the rules pertaining to parking and where to park, but there is also the phenomenon of double-parking – that is common in some of the areas of Brooklyn where there’s very little space for people to park, where parking space is really scarce. Double-parking, sometimes parking on bike lanes can be very dangerous. I have been in situations where people would open up the doors and almost strike me, while I’m on a bike lane. As a bicycle rider, I am very careful not to approach parked cars, because you don’t want to damage them or damage yourself, so there is that kind of responsibility that a bicycle rider has to exercise, but the double-parking is (*garbled word –* really*, maybe*) a problem for Brooklyn, I noticed that.** [I’m sorry, could you say that again?] **Double-parking.**

[f/u Q: Can you tell me more about how double-parking creates a problem for bikers, and how to deal with it safely?]

**It’s a problem because in many instances, in congested neighborhoods, people who can’t find a place to park, they double-park next to a car that is already parked and they block the bike lane. And so, when you’re a bike rider, you’re biking on the bike lanes, and you’re confronted with a car that’s double-parked blocking your bike lane, and now you have to maneuver and get out of the way, but then look: You are now riding in the middle of the street. So the safest thing to do is just completely stop, look behind you, look around you to make sure you could make a safe pass, and then you pass it and you – and you go on. So that double -- The car driver who double-parked doesn’t feel the sense of responsibility, you know, he just feels like he can do that, and the bicycle rider has to worry about his own safety.**

[27:57]

* “Taking the lane” [I had to give him a definition]

**I mentioned earlier that I do see that phenomenon [*unintelligible word*) in the streets of Brooklyn.** [f/u Q: And do you have thoughts or -- ] **I think it’s dangerous – it’s dangerous that people do that, because, again, you can’t count on people being responsible. People are often irresponsible, and people shoot each other in New York City when they’re aggravated -- you know -- it’s crazy, it’s a crazy place. Let alone to aggravate a driver who has just smoked a couple of weeds and had a couple drinks, or, you know, had just been, you know, experiencing psychotic mood shifts, you don’t know how that driver is going to perceive you when you’re blocking his way. He could just go through you, you know?**

* Pet peeves

**Nothing.**

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

**They’re all very important topics. I feel, in New York City, we -- we’ve done a lot. We need to do more in the City of Brooklyn, because it’s a very diverse city with very special character. More should be done to provide safe riding, from pedestrians to bicycle riders to veh-- to car riders, drivers, to make it an attractive place for people to go shopping. We enjoy shopping using our bicycles, I think that’s very important. I think that should be the direction, the trajectory of the future, and our government should encourage people to use environmentally-safe means to go and get around and shop, because you achieve many objectives with, you know, with initiatives here. People save money, they save their own health, they save the environment, they reduce -- they reduce traffic congestion, so I don’t really – it beats -- it’s beyond me that in the 21st century, at this time and age, we still don’t have that taken care of, especially -- there should be a bicycle lane on every road, every road, major or local, in -- throughout New York City and in Brooklyn specifically.**

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