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

**Interview Questions**

**#18, Bushwick, recruited 10-7-2018, interviewed 10-09-2018**

**TO123E01.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?

**White**

1. What is your gender?

**Male**

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?

**44 years**

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

**Off and on since ‘96**

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

**I think I’m more careful now.**

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

**Yeah – 2.**

[f/u Q: Would you care to share what happened?]

**Yeah, so the first one, I was rear-ended on 6th Avenue – this was back in the ‘90s, by a bicycle messenger, and he had a fixed-gear and I braked suddenly – ‘cause, like, a bus was turning across me, and he smashed into the back of me, actually threw me under the bus, but fortunately I -- I got out before the wheels went over me – yeah –so that – I used to race on the track, but -- you know, I can ride a fixed gear, but, you know, if you’re riding a fixed gear in traffic, you should always have a front brake. So that was one. And then another – then later, this would be 2000 and maybe ten, I was driving down the Bowery, right outside the Bowery Mission, actually; somebody did a u-turn across all six lanes and, yeah, knocked me down and drove over me. I ended -- I actually spent the night in Bellevue Hospital – (*unintelligible word*) had a concussion and quite a sore knee for a long time, and it trashed – it trashed the bike, quite a nice bike – I was coming back from riding in Central Park** [interjected comment of sympathy] **yeah, 22 years in New York, it’s – well, it’s not – yeah, it’s okay, I guess.**

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?)

**Well, I use it for – I have one bike I use as a city bike, and I just run all my errands on that bicycle – you know, so -- pick my daughter up from school on a -- with a bicycle – she rides her own. So yeah, basically, I -- you know, just about – I usually -- I actually live in Ridgewood, but still -- it’s right on the Brooklyn border so I cycle -- and then commuting to work is the other thing, commuting to work, and then -- also, I used to race and still ride for – as a -- for a hobby – and actually ride -- actually, that’s in Brooklyn, isn’t it? Around Highland Park? I’m the only work person riding around Cypress Hills on a bicycle.**

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

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**Every day**

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

**Probably 2 hours – 120 minutes.**

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

**Maybe all of it**

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

**Well, I guess it’s more in the winter, isn’t it? But maybe 30 %.**

*Primary study questions:*

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

**Brooklyn actually I don’t find too bad apart from that one bit which is the Grand Street Bridge along Metropolitan up to Flushing – that’s terrifying, that’s maybe the scariest – at night that’s the scariest place I’ve ridden.**

[f/u Q: I’m not familiar with it – what makes it scary?]

**Okay, the traffic’s moving fast because you’ve been in – it’s been very congested going out to Queens on Metropolitan. The traffic’s been very congested, and the road suddenly opens up into, like, a dual carriageway , and the cars all hit, like, 45 miles an hour. And then it suddenly narrows when you hit the scrap metal dealers, and as a bike you’re kind of forced to move over and so it’s pretty much two cars can barely squeeze by, so if you’re a bicycle it’s super-dangerous – also, it’s really dark and, yeah, it’s just terrifying. And that’s -- that’s the one I’m campaigning for a bike lane on – it’s -- that’s -- it’s a pretty univer– it’s quite a well-known place as being really scary to ride. And there’s so much garbage on the sidewalks from the scrap metal dealers; so if you try and ride on the sidewalk, you get, you know, metal shards and things – you get a puncture.**

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

**Okay – doors, getting doored – even if you use the bike lane. I’ve been doored a couple of times, I guess. And – that’s one thing. The other thing is the Uber drivers using their phones or the -- You know, the not -- the TLC drivers, I guess Uber, Lyft, and the others, they’re on their phone a lot, they don’t pay attention, they’re not very expert, they’re a lot worse than the yellow cab drivers. So that -- those two things. And then I guess, in the industrial areas like Bushwick, at night you’ve got to be pretty careful. Because those big semis, you know, when they’re turning. And much of it’s not very well lit at night, so, yeah, that’s the other thing.**

So, with those particular things in mind, are there particular things you do while you’re riding to avoid them?

**Dooring, I ride – well, the answer seems to be not to ride too close in to the cars, but then you have to, you know, you have to ride at 20 or 25 miles an hour, because otherwise then you risk getting hit from behind by a car – so that’s getting doored. And then the TLC drivers: just try and stay away or, you know, just think ahead of the game: you know, you know they’re going to suddenly cut left or, you know -- guard against that. And then the trucks: just be, just have to be -- slow down and be super cautious, because I’ve seen a couple of people – I didn’t see it personally, but on my way home from work, there were two people killed (*unintelligible 1-2 words*) since I’ve been commuting -- that in the last five years – sorry, six years.**

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?

**Well, dooring. I don’t think you can do much about that. I guess, then, the other thing that I do see more in Manhattan, though, is pedestrians with phones and -- earbuds and phones, it’s a pretty deadly combination.**

[f/u Q: Would you say that that is a significant issue in Brooklyn as well, or mainly Manhattan?]

**It’s mainly Manhattan – I haven’t seen that so much, because it’s less -- I guess maybe the exception’s Williamsburg. What is it, is it the Kent Avenue? – the Kent Avenue bike lane. So, it’s like those bike lanes where you can get up a decent bit of speed, and they still walk out, they ignore the – they jaywalk, they ignore the traffic signals.**

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

**Well, I guess definitely riding a fixed gear with no front brake, I think it’s stupid – even if you lock the back wheel, it’s still, like – you know, it’s still dumb. I guess the other thing is, you know, riding – riding inbetween cars quickly – I mean, you know, I used to do that, but at some point you get doored. What else? Generally I think, you know, cyclists aren’t too dumb. I mean, I guess further out – if you go further out to, like, Cypress Hills, you get the young kids on their -- you know, they’ve got those 29-inch, like, single speed mountain bike deals, that they do all the stunts on? I actually think it’s quite cool. You know, I’d rather see them do that on a bicycle than rip around on a dirtbike, which is the alternative. So, you know, those guys, so, you know, if there’s a big crowd, a mob of them, then they’ll slow the traffic down. I guess it’s dangerous, but, you know, if you’re living out in the ‘hood, it’s not a bad way to spend the afternoon.**

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, I think I would give them some directional instructions on how to avoid some of these really dangerous places – like, rather than taking Metropolitan, you can use Grand to get to Johnson. So I think one thing would be effective education with maps and making it clearer where the bike lanes are, and having a more logical route for bike lanes. Because people are commuting further now, right? Riding 10 miles each way to work – that’s become a lot more – a lot more common. So that would be one thing. I think another thing is maybe, you know, in the parks I used to race and I used to remember the crazy things they used to do, and we used to have, like, a Central Park nighttime nightmare ride through the nights on weekends, you know, there’d be 150 guys racing around the Park at 30 miles an hour in the dark and no lights, it was awesome! Yeah – it probably wasn’t so smart. So, maybe the other thing is, be considerate, right? Oh yeah, that would be a thing, you know, if there’s a cop parked at the light, don’t run the light in front of the cop. Okay? You know, a lot of the times you can get away with it, but as soon as there’s a crackdown – I got dunned for that because it was raining -- it was pouring with rain, and I’d waited for a long time at Knickerbocker, and I didn’t know there was a cop behind me, he just pulled up, and that was a big fine, it was, like, $240, so, you know, just be more considerate of the police, so that if -- when we do need some flexibility, we get some. That’ll be it. So – bike lanes, definitely we need more of them in the Park, and then, you know, don’t run the lights in front of cops.**

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, if – oh yeah, the other thing I didn’t mention was potholes, I mean, obviously riding in traffic and you’re following a car, you don’t get much warning if there’s a big hole, so -- and if you don’t know the route, it’s -- that can be a bit – that can be scary -- so, yeah, (*unintelligible word*) look for potholes. Don’t ride too close in to the cars on the side of the road because you get doored. The other thing is overtaking cars will try and squeeze by you and squeeze you into the parked cars – if you go in close, they think they can come round, so very often it’s better to ride faster in the middle of the street. I guess the other thing is: look ahead. I mean, I know, sometimes I, you know, listen to music but it’s probably kind of smart not to listen to music. But it’s, it’s – yeah, the road surface is a big one. I guess, use – bike lanes, you know, use them when you can, but also, some of the bike lanes when all the traffic is turning across you all the time, that’s also really scary. So what else am I looking for? You know, just -- it makes me a much more cautious car driver. You just need to be ultra-aware and have – you know, you need to have that same awareness when something goes in your peripheral vision you can automatically slam the brakes on, and that’s the kind of thing, you know, like a motor reaction you learn, it’s like, it becomes instinctive, and I think newer cyclists don’t have that. The other thing is, I think sometimes it can be risky to go too slowly – you know, it’s better to have a bit more speed. What else? Yeah, I think that that’s really it, you know, you’ve just got to – you can’t trust anybody – you know, you always have to have a bailout action, or if you don’t, you know, you’ve got to be quick on the brakes.**

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 – slow down, look both ways.**

* Traffic signs and signals

**Pay attention. I can’t say I obey them all, but pay attention.**

* Right-of-way

**On a bicycle, don’t believe you ever have the right-of-way.**

* Pedestrians

**Check for earbuds and iphones. So – smartphones.**

* Speed

**Well, I don’t think that there’s necessarily a problem with that. I would say, don’t go too slowly. I don’t – I don’t think it’s – you have to be, you know, super-fit and doing 30 miles an hour before you really run into a problem with speed in New York.**

* Respect

**Yeah, I think definitely respect NYPD because every time there’s a crackdown, it gets far worse if people don’t respect them.**

[f/u Q: Could you say that again? I think I missed some of the words you said.]

**Okay -- Respect: It was, like, respect NYPD, because otherwise, when they do have these periodic crackdowns – like the last one was Vision Zero – they just pick on anybody, you know – it’s like the end of the Giuliana era.**

* Trucks, buses

**Buses are professional drivers so they’re usually pretty good. The things that scares about me with trucks are all the delivery guys and their small, like, Mitsubichi trucks who smoke weed all day or take weed all day -- that scares the hell out of me and there’s no test yet.**

[f/u Q: Is there something particular that you do to avoid having problems with trucks?]

**No, not really, to be honest, just, you know, just don’t trust them, especially those delivery guys – we have a lot in our neighborhood here.**

* Parked cars

**Yeah, give them a berth so you can’t get doored – try and see if there’s anybody inside.**

* “Taking the lane”

**Yeah definitely take – sometimes at night you can’t, but I try to do that during the day, and, you know, get the speed up to 20 miles an hour and not coast along at 10.**

[f/u Q: What is your feeling about taking the lane from the perspective of safety?]

**Well, you’re kind of damned if you do – well, definitely I’m more worried about getting doored than being hit from behind – except at night. I will also say -- I’ve got to say – this is an aside -- I think, car drivers are a lot more aware in Brooklyn of cyclists than they are in Queens, and I was talking about that to another cyclist today. Queens is worse, and (*unintelligible word*) actually, Long Island is even worse than that.**

* Pet peeves

**Well, pet peeves are the TLC drivers – I mean, (*unintelligible word*) also when I’m in a car, I mean, they’re terrible. What else? Yeah, when people park in the bike lane. Or, you know, especially, like, the TLC guys, you know, they’ll just pull into the bike lane and dump their passengers, and you have to slam on your brakes – that’s really annoying. I don’t think so – I mean, you know, even driving a car you have to be pretty careful in New York. What else? Oh yeah, I guess, you know, people from out-of-state. If you see somebody with, like, Virginia plates on, or Pennsylvania plates in our neighborhood here, the standards of driving is often – they’re a lot less aware of bicyclists.**

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

**[discussed his campaign to have bike lanes named after bicyclists who were killed. And another idea as well.]**

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