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Review of
Cycling and Society:
Eds: Paul Rosen, Peter Cox, David Horton
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1 Introduction

This is a collection of essays by university-associated teachers and researchers in fields that link sociology and transportation, all with primary interests in cycling. Each essay is a chapter in the book, with its own bibliography. I describe each in its own section of this review.

2 Individual Essays

Introduction

An overview of the diversity of cycling by location, historic time, purpose, and social position. "But we also believe attempts to promote cycling could be much more effective if they incorporated greater understanding of cycling's complexity and diversity, even within a single society. We hope this collection is one contribution towards such greater understanding."

Academic study of cycling can be divided into four types: history of cycling; cycling sport; planning to increase bicycle transport; bicycle engineering.

"Our hope is that [this book] inspires more research into cycling, and in its own small way also contributes to a renaissance of cycling, a practice seemingly made for sustainability."

2.1 Cycling the City: Non-Place and the Sensory Construction of Meaning in a Mobile Practice: Justin Spinney

This starts with opposition to some sociologi-

cal assertion that places are interesting while travel between them is not. But no matter, the rest is an enjoyable account of one cyclist's trips over one day in London, concentrating on the places with interesting cycling conditions, amplified by accounts of the same places given by other local cyclists who had previously been interviewed about their cycling experiences.

These examples demonstrate that different cyclists receive interesting enjoyment from different aspects of the trip: the flowers along the way, the satisfaction of surmounting a climb, the intricacies of traffic. This has always been obvious to me and my cycling associates, and Effective Cycling contains sections describing the joys of urban cycling, but is rejected by American bicycle advocates and planners. They have claimed that if I cycled because I enjoyed cycling I must not have cycled in heavy traffic or at commuting hours. They evaluate urban cycling on normal roads as an unpleasant burden; it may be that this formal study for a PhD thesis can serve as a truly academic refutation of their view.

2.2 Capitalizing on Curiosity: Women's Professional Cycle Racing in the Late-Nineteenth Century: Clare S. Simpson

Women's "foray into the public space of the velodrome or the road race was at a cost: their display brought ridicule and threats, public criticism and, in the interests of their safety, a ban on women's racing that persisted for half a century." Aside from that, the organizational requirements

to support women's professional cycle racing were the same as for any professional sport for either gender.

2.3 Barriers to Cycling: An Exploration of Quantitative Analyses: John Parkin, Tim Ryley, Tim Jones

Much, though not all, of the data considered in this chapter is from the UK, with contributions from USA, and fewer from The Netherlands and Denmark.

Having stated that governmental cycling policies have not significantly increased the volume of bicycle transportation, the authors write: "It could be argued that, despite cycling policy failing to deliver positive results, cycling remain high on the transport agenda because of its potential contribution to policies on climate change, social inclusion, health, exercise, obesity and sustainable development."

"The derivation of relationships between an observable choice to cycle and the factors that influence that choice is a complex process. ... First, the range and type of data collected and analyzed needs to be broader than what is deemed adequate for other modes of transport, to include factors relating to effort and environment. Second, the choice mechanisms that ought to be considered in relation to cycling may be more involved, and result from more complex response factors, such as life stage, not often considered in transport modelling."

In short, it is all very complicated and no governmental policy has been well-enough based on knowledge to produce a significant effect.

I found only surprise in the information that British cyclists do not consider that bike lanes reduce the hazards of cycling. The American public and cyclists clearly exhibit the opposite opinion.

2.4 Hell is Other Cyclists: Rethinking Transport and Identity; David Skinner, Paul Rosen

This essay is based on investigation of participants in Cambridge (UK) Cycle-Friendly Employers, both employers and employees.

"However, our analysis shows that over and above such [commonly cited] factors, individual transport choices are enmeshed within a complex inter-linking of individual, domestic and work-based assumptions, obligations and priorities. ... [A lengthy list of factors is given] ... None of these

factors operates in isolation from the others; they are best understood as dynamic constellations that inter-play and develop over time."

I would describe these commuting cyclists as likely to be vehicular cyclists with the traditional point of view. "These respondents see themselves, then, as clearly distinct from both irresponsible cyclists and dangerous motorists. Safe and responsible actions, and an ability to see the other road user's point of view, are integral to their identity as cyclists, and this distinguishes them from many others they encounter on the roads."

Many years ago, on the basis of personal observation, I distinguished certain professions as more likely than others to be cyclists, especially commuting cyclists. Those more likely to contribute cycle commuters were those in which the individual's professional standing would not be adversely affected by being known to cycle, while those professions that depended on personal empathy were less likely. These authors found much the same within the narrow scope of the professions studied. "[W]e found that engineers (both software and hardware) who cycle to work regard their professional identity as inherently cycle-friendly. They present themselves as the kind of people who rationally weigh up the options in order to arrive at the best solution." As one engineer said: "I guess there maybe is a certain amount of going against the grain, so you need a certain amount of stubbornness to do it."

2.5 The Flaneur on Wheels?: Nicholas Oddy

A flaneur is a street-side idler with critical vision. Don't really know why this essay on the "dark age" of cycling between 1900 and 1930 has this title. The essence is that over this period the standard black utility bicycle reigned supreme with practically no higher-grade bicycles sold. (Oddy doesn't describe it further, but I presume rod brakes, mudguards, maybe chaincase, such as ridden by British postmen in films depicting the 1930s, and made in China to this day)

I believe that Oddy overstates his case somewhat. My father wrote of his school days about 1915. "Although bicycles were tolerated, *faut de mieux* (motor bicycles had just been banned) convention decreed that they must be tall, heavy, inefficient machines with raised handlebars -- a convention which exists to this day [written in 1930], one of the few which I cannot understand or sympathise with. I was the only boy

out of eight hundred or so who used a light bicycle at school, although there were two or three daring spirits who kept similar ones concealed at home for use on holidays and other occasions when the school could not know of it." When, aged seven in 1937, I was comparing my first black standard bicycle with those owned by the slum kids down the hill, I wished that I had a machine as superior as theirs. The social answer is obvious. Those who had little need for a bicycle were content with the standard black, while those whose lower station in life made a bicycle more useful and desirable bought sportier ones.

In this respect, Oddy fails to mention that British working class men first received two-day weekends in 1920. The Cyclists' Touring Club was in a bad way in 1920, what with members taking up motoring and the after-effects of WW1. The two-day weekend for men and women who did not expect to ever buy a car provided new members for CTC and sparked the production of sporting bicycles by small frame-builders, often made-to-measure with personally chosen fitments.

2.6 Bicycles Don't Evolve: Velomobiles and the Modelling of Transport Technologies: Peter Cox, Frederick Van De Walle

This essay opposes certain historical and sociological theories about the evolution of personal transport technologies and their place in a hierarchy. In short, the standard bicycle is not the best bicycle, evolved to perfection, and it does not exist at the bottom of the personal transport technology hierarchy.

So, if some people prefer recumbents, and others bicycles enclosed from the weather, and others tricycles, some prefer road bicycles while others prefer mountain bikes, so be it; it doesn't matter; each has its place. The argument here presented precisely that used to explain that all living beings have equally long heritages and may be considered to be similarly well developed. That's true, but why this argument needs to be stated about bicycles escapes my understanding.

The other part of the essay, that cars didn't replace motorcycles didn't replace bicycles, appears equally unnecessary. None of them replaced walking, did they? The pertinent point may be, although it is not properly presented, that we need to be alert to a future with a mix of more types of vehicles with smaller differences between each type. Consider the golf cart, now allowed on

some roadways, as neither an automobile nor a wheelchair.

2.7 Fear of Cycling: Dave Horton

Horton's essay considers only fears felt by British cyclists; only one reference discussing fears felt by American cyclists, but not listed in the bibliography (Ken Kifer's website).

Horton starts out with a descriptive listing of many different fears felt by cyclists: Fear of being seen as inept, of performing physical activity in a public space, of getting sweaty, of losing status, and other fears, even a fear of being seen by the public. Horton doesn't attach much importance to these, which are mostly individual peculiarities. He should have distinguished between fears that are individually felt and controlled and social denigration expressed by others, such as loss of status as the result of others knowing that one cycles. As I have frequently told, I discovered that, during the 1950s and early 1960s, once employers discovered that I cycled to work I received no further promotion; I was no longer "trustworthy" and "competent" and "one of us". If society is such as to act in this way, the individual cyclist cannot be criticized for keeping his cycling hidden.

Horton then moves on to the general fear of traffic. He refuses to "take sides in the debate over whether cycling ought to be perceived as dangerous and thus as a practice to be feared." Instead, he concentrates on how this fear is constructed. "Fear of cycling is most effectively produced through constructions of cycling as a dangerous practice." Horton's thesis is that safety campaigns that depict the dangers to be avoided inevitably produce greater fear.

Horton starts his detailed discussion with road safety training. Early on, I think he makes a great mistake in quoting the words of the former chairman of the Pedestrian Association: "[B]y far the greatest burden of responsibility for avoiding crashes ... should lie with the motorist." To adopt this policy would reduce motor speed to walking speed in all places where pedestrians might appear. Horton fails to realize that we have developed a system of highway operation in produces a reasonable blend of safety and convenience when all parties obey the rules. It is disobedience to the rules that is the greatest cause of crashes.

Horton then describes the way that safety training creates fears. "[R]oad safety education tries to instill in 'the vulnerable', primarily school children, a fear of motorized traffic, and then to

teach them tactics to escape from road dangers as best they can. ... The road safety industry thus strives to reduce casualties by inculcating fear in children, and giving them not incentives but disincentives to walk and cycle."

Horton's next fear producer is the helmet campaign. The official British campaign looks more gruesome than the American campaigns. Again, Horton refuses to take sides in the controversy, because his point is that the campaign itself is based on fear and produces fear of cycling. Indubitably so.

Horton next discusses "New Cycling Spaces", nearly of which concerns off-road trail cycling. "In the UK, recent years have also seen major development of off-road cycling routes ... And with the expansion of places to cycle off-road, the expectation grows that such places are *the places* to cycle. The road stops feeling like a place to cycle; it begins to feel as though cycling does not belong there."

Horton describes cyclists' resistance to cycle paths in the 1930s, quoting from a Cyclists' Touring Club paper of 1937. "It is impossible to escape the conclusion that most people and organizations who advocate cycle paths are not actuated by motives of benevolence or sympathy, although they may declare that their sole concern is the welfare of the cyclist. ... A great deal of the cycle-path propaganda is based on a desire to remove cyclists from the roads. That is why the request for cycle paths is so often accompanied by a suggestion that their use should be enforced by law. Therein lies a serious threat to cycling."

Horton spends little space for bicycle lanes. "Although often criticised and sometimes ridiculed, at its best this infrastructure aims to make cycling journeys more attractive; quicker, easier, safer, more pleasant." There is no discussion of controversy over any of these claims.

The fear of cyclists felt by others is also considered. "The cultural acceptability of cycling's spatial marginality, particularly when combined with the cyclist's stigmatized identity, is highly consequential. It means that those cyclists who do not stick to the margins, but either consciously or unconsciously attempt to 'center' themselves, are experienced as threatening and unsettling, and are demonised -- most visibly and powerfully within the mass media."

2.8 Men, Women and the Bicycle: Gender and Social Geography of Cycling

in the Late Nineteenth-Century; Phillip Gordon Mackintosh, Glen Norcliffe

This essay concerns gender relations in late Victorian times as exemplified by different modes of cycling. While of historical significance, I think it has little relevance to modern times. However, here is a summary.

By late Victorian times, economic conditions emphasized the difference between male employment outside the home and female employment within the home. Also, society was getting nicer, more like the feminine stereotype and less like the masculine stereotype, with women leading the domestication parade. This created a "male crisis", causing men to exaggerate their masculine traits, such as cycling on high-wheeled bicycles in a sporting manner. Meanwhile, if women took to cycling it was with tricycles, particularly with tandem tricycles used by couples, all built to suit women's dress. One may say that this has largely to do with dress, but, of course, society required the kind of dress that comported with society's view of acceptable female behavior.

Some disagreed. Family legend has it that a great-grandmother on my mother's side rode a bicycle, getting up early so that the neighbors would not be exposed to the unacceptable sight of a woman riding astride. Since my grandmother was married about 1895, it is quite likely that my great-grandmother rode a high-wheeler. In the posed photograph of my grandmother's cycling club, about 1895, four out of twenty are women, including my grandmother and a great-aunt.

But most women, after the advent of the safety bicycle, saw bicycling as a family activity and a way to domesticate the masculine impulse. I think little more needs to be in this review.

2.9 Bicycle Messengers: Image, Identity and Community: Ben Fincham

Four ways of observing bicycle messengers produce different stereotypes. Messengers can view their activity as skillfully courageous, or as fraught with injury and distrust. Outsiders can view messengers with romantic praise, or as urban nuisances. "The image of cyclists, and in particular bicycle messengers, as being engaged in a marginal activity is perpetuated by media representations, both negative and positive. There are consequences to these representations in terms of acceptability of cycling as a reasonable thing to do and of cyclists as being considered reasonable people." For our purposes, this summation of pub-

lic opinions suffices.

3 My Conclusions

I think that four essays contain thought that is relevant to advocacy of bicycling, both for transportation and otherwise, and I will discuss those shortly.

I now discuss, to put it aside early, a fifth essay, that of Cox and Van De Walle on the different types of vehicle. It has been sarcastically claimed, as *reductio ad absurdum*, that each of these types of vehicle must be provided with its own lane and operating rules and traffic signal phases. While we should consider some proliferation in vehicle types, my conclusion is that the highway system should retain the long-standing division into entities that obey the rules of the road for drivers of vehicles and entities that obey the rules for pedestrians. These two classes sufficiently provide the safety and utility for the two great types of movement.

Now to consider the four essays with current relevance to bicycling advocacy. The three essays by Spinney, and by Parkin, Ryley & Jones, and by Skinner & Rosen, all state, in slightly different ways that, while there are some identified factors, nobody has been able to work out any system for producing reasonable estimates of who, individually, or how many, statistically, will undertake bicycle transportation.

Parkin, Ryley & Jones demonstrate the basic problem in planning for bicycle transportation: that the individual decision to cycle is a very complex process dependent on many factors. No process of planning has produced useful predictions of that decision. Given that, any present consideration of implementing any new system for bicycle transportation has no basis. More research, producing more knowledge, and, probably, the application of creative thought to those results, with then more experimentation to demonstrate trial results, will be required. Until then, only small, rather obvious, and easily demonstrated changes should be made.

The other three of these four essays demonstrate classical errors that have been made in bicycle planning.

Bicycle planning, so far as it has developed, is based on providing facilities that are based on four superstitions.

- 1: The superstition of the exaggerated fear of same-direction motor traffic;
- 2: The superstition that facilities that protect from

same-direction motor traffic make cycling safe, particularly for those unwilling to obey the rules of the road for drivers of vehicles;

- 3: The superstition that these facilities will make motoring more convenient by shoving cyclists aside;
- 4: The superstition that the exaggerated fear of same-direction motor traffic is the major reason why people don't use bicycle transportation, so that removing that fear will unleash a great volume of people cycling for transportation.

In short, bicycle planning is based on the idea that transportation cycling on normal roads is frightening and unpleasant, nothing that any normal person would want to do. As a result of these superstitions I have been accused of never having done transportation cycling because I wrote that I cycled for enjoyment.

By using rather standard interviews, Spinney demonstrates what should always have been obvious but is nearly always missed by bicycle planners and bicycle advocates. That is, many cyclists enjoy urban transportation cycling, and there are several sources for that enjoyment, including both the physical effort of moving about and the mental effort of operating well in traffic, as well as some scenic pleasures.

Skinner & Rosen studied the propensity to cyclocommute in the employees of a group of employers near Cambridge, UK. As would be expected from other studies, the decision to do so is very complex, but they identified two significant factors; self-confidence both in traffic-cycling ability to obey the rules of the road and in professional standards and standing. Engineers had a significantly higher than average rate of cyclocommuting. They explained their decision as meeting with engineering standards both as to cycling and as to its social or professional implications. As the authors wrote it: "[W]e found that engineers (both software and hardware) who cycle to work regard their professional identity as inherently cycle-friendly. They present themselves as the kind of people who rationally weigh up the options in order to arrive at the best solution. ... These respondents see themselves, then, as clearly distinct from both irresponsible cyclists and dangerous motorists. Safe and responsible actions, and an ability to see the other road user's point of view, are integral to their identity as cyclists, and this distinguishes them from many others they encounter on the roads." One can easily see that

these are most likely to be vehicular cyclists.

Thirty years ago, from observation of the cyclocommuters I knew, I had described many of them as those with such professional standing that their reputations would withstand any adverse effect produced by public knowledge that they rode bicycles to work, examples being professors, scientists, doctors, engineers, lawyers, and the like. I also stated that few of them had jobs which relied on personal empathy from clients; few salesmen, politicians, clergymen, and such.

Dave Horton demonstrated the extent and the procedures by which our society produces fear of cycling in traffic. He shows three methods: Traffic-safety cyclist training produces fear of traffic in general; Helmet promotion programs produce fear of death and disability if hit by a car; Bikeway promotion programs are both based on and assisted by this fear of traffic, and themselves amplify that fear.

Of course, we should not have the kind of traffic-safety course that is based on fear of traffic, any more than a swimming course that is based on fear of water. Such courses simply teach that it is better to avoid the dangerous activity. We need traffic-cycling courses that teach the safe operating procedures so that the students gain proficiency and confidence. Those are the characteristics of the courses developed by Franklin in the UK and by me in the USA.

Horton describes the generation of a generalized fear of traffic that does not have any specific attributes. The instruction then proceeds to methods of avoiding the danger.

When discussing bikeways, Horton spends almost all of his space on off-road paths, without understanding their characteristics, except that of being away from motor traffic. Therefore, he discusses at length the growing public expectation, based on the pleasure and "safety" of paths, that cycling should be, and mostly will be, done on paths. Horton spends only seven lines discussing bike lanes, "Although often criticised and sometimes ridiculed, at its best this infrastructure aims to make cycling journeys more attractive; quicker, easier, safer, more pleasant."

3.1 Differences Between UK and USA

I find most of the information provided in these essays to be rather similar on both sides of the Atlantic. Considering that many American bicycle advocates excoriate me for holding sociological and psychological views similar to those

advanced by these university academics in the subject, this confirms my confidence in my own views.

The one glaring exception is the significant difference between the UK and USA views about cyclist safety and governmental programs concerning bicycling. Because the US program for bicycle transportation is far more insistent and threatening than the UK program, American cyclists have developed the discipline of bicycle transportation engineering to a far greater extent than has occurred in the UK.

In his discussion of a generalized fear of motor traffic, Horton apparently fails to understand that the highway operating system produces operation that is reasonably safe and reasonably useful, and that it is the disobedience to its rules that causes collisions. Therefore, Horton fails to evaluate the generalized danger avoidance instructions in terms of probable effectiveness.

While Horton spends considerable space on the CTC's opposition to path legislation, he does so only in a political context, ignoring the safety aspects, particularly important for side-paths.

Parkin, Ryley & Jones exhibit the same attitude when discussing bicycle lanes. They refer to a study of British cyclists whose abstract states: "Facilities for bicycle traffic along motor trafficked routes and at junctions are shown to have little effect on perceived risk and this brings into question the value of such facilities in promoting bicycle use."

Americans have different views about cycling than do the British. Americans exhibit two linked attitudes that are little present in Britons. Americans feel cyclists are illegitimate road users who are greatly endangered by same-direction motor traffic, the traffic best arranged to maltreat these trespassers. In the most motorized nation, in which the only recognized cycling was that done by children, motorists ran the "bike-safety" programs to suit their own interests, using fear, as portrayed by Horton but to a far greater extent, with far greater consequences. American cyclists feel inferior to cars and in constant danger of assault.

These attitudes and emotions have enabled American governments and society to adopt a bicycle transportation program that is based almost entirely on providing protection from same-direction motor traffic, regardless of the accident facts and regardless of cyclists' rights. Whatever the truth of the matter, most Americans strongly believe that their bikeway system and its greater

plans legitimize cyclists and make cycling safe, particularly for children.

These beliefs have no factual basis; the strength with which they are held requires that they be classed as controlling popular superstitions. When such superstitions are the basis of governmental and societal action, it is necessary to develop the proper technical discipline that distinguishes facts and reason from superstition. Some cyclists in America rose to the need and worked out the technology of bicycle transportation engineering.

That discipline enables us to recognize the driving superstitions of the American bicycle program, and why the results are harmful to lawful, competent cyclists. The history and the discipline together explain why Americans, compared to Britons, have such exaggerated fears of motor traffic, make such exaggerated claims about the "increased safety" that bikeways are supposed to produce, and such exaggerated predictions of the increase in bicycle transportation that bikeways will produce.