

Children's expectations and beliefs toward the relative safety of riding bicycles at night

William J. Vigilante, Jr.^a and Raymond W. Lim^b

^aRobson Forensic Inc., Lancaster, PA

^bPsychology Department, California State University, Los Angeles

Abstract

This study examined middle-school-aged children's expectations, attitudes, and perceptions toward the relative safety of riding bicycles at night with reflectors and/or head and tail lights. Three hundred and sixty-three children in grades 7 through 9 were surveyed. Half of the children reported that it was not dangerous to ride a bicycle at night with only reflectors or only lights, while almost all reported that it was safe to ride at night if they had both reflectors and lights. More than half reported that it was difficult to see a bicycle that had reflectors but no lights. However, bicycles that had lights but no reflectors were perceived not difficult to see. Most of the children reported that they would not ride their bicycle at night without lights if they knew it was dangerous because drivers could not easily see them. The findings also indicated that only 22% of the children had lights on their bicycles; while over 51% reported riding their bicycles at night at least once in a while. The results of the study suggest that children riding their bicycles at night without lights are under-estimating the dangerousness of the activity. Furthermore, a large percentage of children are underestimating the ease at which drivers can see them on their bicycle at night without lights.

Keywords: Warnings, Safety, Risk Perception, Bicycles, Children

Vigilante, W. J., Jr. & Lim, R. W. (2006). Children's expectations and beliefs toward the relative safety of riding bicycles at night. In *Proceedings of the 16th World Congress on Ergonomics* (pp. 1381-1386). Roma, Italy: International Ergonomics Association.