

Cycling & Memory in Milwaukee

A research study on how cyclists experience and remember their everyday routes

What this study is about

I'm Sana Avar, a PhD student in Urban Studies at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, and a Milwaukee cyclist myself. This study is part of my dissertation. I'm interested in how people experience the routes they ride regularly — the places that stick in their memory, the feelings a ride brings up (positive or negative), and how all of that shapes the way they know the city. There are no right or wrong answers. I just want to learn about your ride from your point of view.

What you'd do as a participant

Taking part is simple and happens in one day:

1. **Ride your usual route.** Ride a route you normally take, the way you normally would. While you ride, just pay a little extra attention to what you notice — your feelings, the places that stand out, and any memories that come up along the way. That will be great if you can record yourself. Also tracking your route on apps like Strava or other convenient app is required.
2. **Meet me at a café or a public space the same day.** Right after your ride, we'll meet at a nearby café of your choosing.
3. **Draw a map of your route from memory.** On a blank sheet of paper, you'll sketch out your route however it lives in your head — the landmarks, turns, and spots that matter to you, places you like or don't. It doesn't need to be accurate or neat, it will be your feelings.
4. **Talk with me about it.** We'll have a relaxed conversation about your map and your ride — what you remembered, how it felt, and what those places mean to you.

The whole meeting takes about an hour. The ride is just your normal ride, so it doesn't add time to your day.

What I'm looking for in participants

I'm hoping to include a wide mix of Milwaukee cyclists — different ages, genders, and experience levels, from casual riders to people who bike every day. You're a good fit if you:

- Ride a bike regularly somewhere in Milwaukee
- Have a route you ride often enough to have a feel for it
- Are comfortable riding it and then meeting me afterward the same day
- Live or ride in or around preferred locations: Riverwest, Shorewood, Bay View, the East Side, or downtown. To make the result comparable.

Both regular bikes and e-bikes are welcome, and it doesn't matter whether you usually ride solo or with someone. I'm aiming to talk with around 20 people across the seasons. 10 in Summer, 5 in Fall, and 5 in winter.

A few practical notes

- Participation is voluntary, and you can stop at any time.
- I'll ask a few basic questions about you (like age, gender, and how long you've been cycling) to understand the range of people taking part.
- This study has been reviewed and approved by the UWM Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Interested or have questions?

I'd love to hear from you. Please reach out and I'll share the next steps.

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