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Anthropology of the Crowd, Blog 1

Lucia Aguilar

Virginia Commonwealth University



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People are People

DATA AND VARIATION

OCTOBER 12, 2015 | LEAVE A COMMENT

Could we have collected more info or other info?.... Yes. And why is all this variation so darn important?

There is always lots of different information you can ask people to get more information on variation, but then that would have made the whole experience a little more daunting and less fun. I think it would have been interesting to ask people not just about their country of origin, but also ethnicity. A variety of people can all be from one country, but be part different ethnic groups. That might be too personal a question to ask a stranger. Still I think it would have been very interesting to see that information.

In the end we asked a bunch of questions and gathered a bunch of answers, so what does it all mean. I think it gives us a more visible breakdown of the crowd that came out to the Big race. Unfortunately I think the information maybe a little skewed to show primarily American spectators, but that makes sense. It was easier for Americans to come out to the race and also it was probably easier for us students to approach and ask American spectators our questions for data collection. Still the data shows that there was some strong international fandom that came out to the race, but unfortunately to me the information just supports my view that the crowd was mostly white Americans and Europeans. Trying to get information on variation at events like this is important to get a better view of some fandom patterns and where there might be some shifts. Like seeing in our data the number of Eritreans who were out in support of their team and learning how cycling is a big national sport for them. Seeing data like this helps people more easily visualize and think about variation as well as how we can always strive for more diversity.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF DATA COLLECTION

OCTOBER 12, 2015 | LEAVE A COMMENT

Like I've said before the biggest challenge was just working up the nerve to talk to people.

It was simple actually going out to one of the more spirited locations during the race like at the Finish line or Libby Hill. For the most part people were very friendly and open. I don't think I would have changed our approach. When trying to get the information for our data it was naturally going to be hit or miss with people. There was also having to be careful about trying to ask certain people for data because of the language barrier. I think language skills may have been a bit of a hindrance in getting more variety in our data collection. It's was an international crowd, so I think it would be safe to assume not everyone was super fluent in English. Which did happen a couple times when I was trying to ask people some questions. I think the nature of interviewing strangers is just naturally challenging, but not the worst experience.

COOL CROWDS

OCTOBER 9, 2015 | 1 COMMENT

The most interesting aspect of the crowd was the general love and support for the sport. People are passionate about cycling and pair that with some national pride you get a pretty spirited crowd. Cycling is it's own little culture like I think most sports are. Ya everyone feels competitive and wants "their" team to win, but there is still an overall sense of unity and camaraderie. I am a sports fan, so I really enjoyed the positive vibe the crowds were putting out. There is really not to much more to say about that.

A GLOBAL GATHERING?

OCTOBER 9, 2015 | 1 COMMENT

Do I think that the sample of humanity in the crowd accurately reflects the "global population" of the world?

No.

Like I've mentioned before, there was a little diversity, but it not enough to say it reflects the "global population". It's a European dominated sport and I think it will be a European dominated sport for sometime. Maybe one day that won't be the norm, but as for now I still expect the crowd to reflect that European norm for years to come. Pushing past the fact the crowd was not as diverse as I would have hoped it was the first time I had been around a diverse groups of Europeans. Not that I had the nerve to

speak to them, but it was neat seeing the level of passion they have for the sport. I can also imagine travelling to Richmond isn't exactly cheap for many people outside of the U.S. which probably plays a large role in who can and cannot come out to see the race. It's interesting that a majority of the diversity in the crowd came from the Americans in the crowd. Cycling fans came from all corners of the country to see this race which was neat and I guess it makes sense that it would be more affordable for a variety of Americans to travel to Richmond for the race compared to Europeans and others from around the world.

NOT A SOCIAL BUTTERFLY

OCTOBER 5, 2015 | [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)

The hardest part of collecting data...
Is talking to strangers awkward?

ABSOLUTELY

But it's cool because it was all for the sake of anthropology. I have to admit it was pretty consistently terrifying for me. I have never been a social butterfly and I don't see that aspect of my personality changing anytime soon. I'm too busy and stressed out to be a socialite, still I dug deep and pushed myself to at least talk to a couple people on my own. I unfortunately had to be at work most of the times my group met up except for one day. The one day I could meet up with other members of my group was the first day I was exposed to the process of interviewing people. Even with the moral support, just getting people's attention to answer questions is terrifying. I didn't even have the nerve to conduct the interviews. It was just my job to corner someone and get them to start talking. Once we got some people's attention it was pretty interesting hearing them answer some of the questions. It was pretty neat talking to a couple young Eritreans from DC who came down to support the race too.

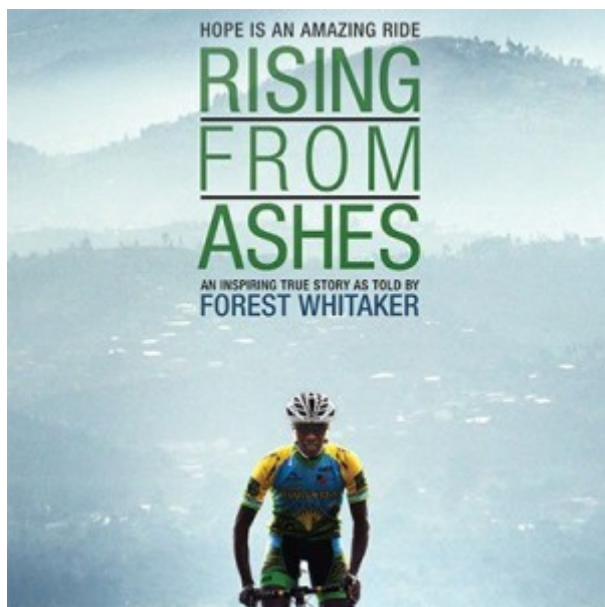
The next time I went out to interview people was on my own and I think I almost had a stroke from being so nervous, which is why I only got through about 5 before I lost my nerve. I'm the kind of person that does not like to bother others, I give people their space. When I did have the guts to ask questions people were very friendly. The only time it got weird was when asking to photograph their arm. To be fair I think most people would find that to be a very weird request. Thankfully most were game. So what did I learn about this experience?... Just that I am still very very very awkward with people.

CAN'T SHAKE THIS

OCTOBER 1, 2015 | LEAVE A COMMENT

Okay so I just blabbed on about the race crowd, but I really want to just talk about somethings through a free prompt entry.

I do not think enough credit or attention was given to some of the countries participating in the Big Race. I think it was a shame that there was not enough attention given to the screening of *Rising from the Ashes*. It was a great documentary spotlighting cycling in Rwanda.



Movie poster

Movies like this would have been a great source for many to get a better understanding of how countries outside of Europe have fought to be part of this sport. Rwanda's story was very inspiring and wish I could have learned more about the women coming to the race to. The story of female cyclists from these countries would be even more miraculous, but that wasn't meant to be.

So ya it's awesome that all these countries and people have come together to celebrate this sport and support each other through a grand event, but I believe that it's important to also utilize this kind of excitement to get people to think about the bigger picture. We are in a globalizing world where we have to be more conscious of what is going on around the world and not just in our comfort zone. It is good to get to know and better understand the culture and history of places outside our cultural bubble. If I was not informed about Rwanda's history or Eritrea's I probably wouldn't even stop to appreciate how amazing it is that they are participating in a race of this caliber.

But what about the other countries, like I wish I knew more about the female cyclist from Mongolia or the riders from Latin America. I wish there was more to celebrate the diversity and roots of these

athletes during the week of racing and events.

SOME SURPRISES

OCTOBER 1, 2015 | 1 COMMENT

Post race time and I guess I've got lots of things to cover.

A. It was pretty awesome.

B. I wish the city wasn't so terrible at hyping this event in a positive fashion so that locals actually cared and stayed in town for the event. There was still some local love especially on the last couple days, but unfortunately the city for the most part was a ghost town during the race..... Fail RVA.

C. Moving on I think today I want to reflect on the crowd and if it met my expectations.

It totally was what I was expecting to see. Europeans EVERYWHERE! not to mention some serious love for Norway being shown.



Norway love

I had a way cooler pick of the corner of Belvidere and Broad where they had a bunch of Norway flags set up with some people in viking hats, but I just got a new phone and haven't been able to access the photos on my old phone yet. Not sure why they were so popular. So this is just one example of the European domination of the sport. There were still some fans an love from outside the European standard. I saw

several Colombian fans on Broad street one day and I definitely could not ignore the amount of Eritrean fans that came out.

I was so happy to see this much fandom for an African country and especially for a country I never would have guessed to have a fairly strong cycling team (Eritrean cyclists were the first black Africans to participate in the Tour de France this year

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/07/12/why-it-matters-that-eritrean-cyclists-are-wow-ing-the-tour-de-france/>). When I think of Eritrea all I think about is human rights

violations and the thousands who risked their lives seeking asylum in Europe by crossing the Mediterranean. Eritrea is a country that not many people are familiar with and I think that their having representation at an international event like the UCI race is a great way to get people to think a little more about the world outside their own cultural bubble.

That being said, I hope that as time goes by we will see more diversity in sports like cycling. This is a white European dominated sport which means a predominately white European fan base, but as access increases in a range of countries and more diverse groups discover their potential passion for cycling this will lead to more diversity seen at events such as the UCI race.

JUST THINKING OUT LOUD

SEPTEMBER 24, 2015 | 2 COMMENTS

It's Thursday, so I've had some exposure to the race crowd by now. It's time to get to business thinking about what I have noticed and I would like to start with a free prompt.

To my pleasant surprise there seems to be some diversity in participants in this race. I was lucky enough to get out of work early on Tuesday and decided to wander down to the starting line of the Women's Elite Individual Time Trials. I wasn't prepared to ask anyone questions or take pictures because my phone was dead, plus I had a hangry boyfriend at my side, so I wasn't going to spend much time observing the crowd. I just wanted to get a look at the participants launch themselves from the starting gate. It was neat, but it raised a lot of questions in my mind.

First I saw a German woman, then a French woman, then American favorite Armstrong and several other Europeans, before I saw a woman from Rwanda followed by a Salvadorean participant. How many of these international women came from countries outside the traditional white European norm seen in this sport?

So I decided to explore the race website to get the list of entries and ranks for the women and countries participating. I was not surprised by what I found. When looking at the long list of entries and all the countries sending women cyclists it becomes very clear that this a white European dominated sport. Most Latin American, Asian, and African countries participating listed only about 1-3 cyclists while dominant (and very white) countries like Russia, France, Australia, and the Netherlands sent 10-12 participants (Italy has the most with 14). Then I decided to take a close look at the final rankings for the Women's Elite Time Trial and it became even more obvious how much the sport is dominated by people of white European decent. The highest ranked cyclist outside of the European norm was the Japanese participant at 18th. The rider from Rwanda was last at 44th.

So why did I just rant about all this? Well because to be honest it kind of bothers me and I am curious. It is awesome that these women coming from the margins of the sport made it into this competition, but I would love to better understand or to learn more about what kind of short comings they potentially had to overcome to make it to an event of this level. What advantage do these predominately white European participants have over the other culturally diverse riders?

Now I also challenge people to go to the UCI site for this exciting international event and try to find a single spotlight on a non white European participant. <http://www.uci.ch/road/news/> Please I hope you find something because I found squat. Now I also understand that most of what they have posted is about the winners, but why shouldn't people care about the stories of people who came from cultures that are outside of the cycling cultural norm? Those are the stories I want to hear. That is what I would find inspiring about this sport and international event.

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

SEPTEMBER 17, 2015 | 1 COMMENT

So what's it all going to look like? Probably a little bit of everything. I have never been one for large international sporting events, but this should be interesting. It's more than likely going to be a western European crowd as well as participants in the race. To be totally honest I do not expect to see a very large level of racial diversity among the participating racers because most come from Western European countries. Also cycling isn't exactly a sport that screams racial and socioeconomic diversity. My brother has worked for a big bicycle shop for years and he can tell you that serious cycling nuts are usually well off white males (thankfully there are also women's races at this event which is awesome). Professional cycling bikes like the ones that are going to be used in the race cost THOUSANDS of dollars, so it's not the most accessible sport in the world.



Argonaut Spacebike 2.0 (\$13,720)

Still I would like to hope that there will at least be a little more diversity in the crowd of spectators. This is a great opportunity to bring people in from different parts of the US and to show of Richmond, not just to the world, but also to the US population. I hope the crowd will have lots of people from different parts of the country enjoying the race and the festivities that will be going on. I hope that the international crowd will enjoy it too. I think that the plethora of Western Europeans coming will at least be able to appreciate and enjoy the many preserved historical sites in and around Richmond. I genuinely hope the crowd will be more diverse than what I expect, but we'll see once the BIG race starts.
