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Anthropology of the Crowd, Blog 8

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bikes&people: bicycle races are comin' your way

<https://rampages.us/emmaynard/>

Erin Maynard

EXPECTATIONS FOR THE BIKE RACE CROWD

UNCATEGORIZED

emmaynard / September 7, 2015 / 0 Comments

Even though the bike race is a few weeks away, I feel like I have a pretty good idea of what a lot of the crowd is going to be like. I'm renting out my apartment the week of the race (because my street is closed off for the one of the courses) so I've already seen a sample of who's going to be here. I'm expecting mostly younger people, ya know early 20's to mid 30's, and I think a lot of them are going to be from the East Coast or not too far from that. Sure there's going to be people from all over the world who are actually racing, and their families of course, but I think the largest percentage is going to be people from the United States.

When it comes to the way they talk, however, I think that no matter what language they're speaking most of them are going to sound like my boyfriend and his roommates. They're constantly talking about their bikes, biking, new parts, what cool bikes they saw throughout the day, etc. I've learned a ridiculous amount about bikes just from sitting in the living room while they talk, and most of it still goes over my head. So hopefully I'll

learn enough by the time of the race to be able to fit in with all the bike nerds.

BIKE RACE CROWD COMPARED TO GLOBAL POPULATION

UNCATEGORIZED

emmaynard / September 23, 2015 / 0 Comments

So I know the races aren't over yet and there's still plenty of people coming for the big races on Saturday and Sunday, I don't believe this will accurately reflect the global population at all, really. From what I've seen so far, what I know about cycling, and people I know in the Richmond cycling community this isn't exactly a sport anyone can be a part of. Sure, if you have sponsors it can be a lot easier to pay for everything but for the most part cycling, especially professionally, is a wealthy person's sport. Most professionals are riding bikes that are worth upwards of \$10,000. And, of course, that's

not to say that everyone in the crowd is going to be wealthy, but from what I've seen a good amount of them are. For example, the VIP tents are usually pretty full of people and tickets for those are \$300-500 per DAY. And then you look at the people in the crowds on the sidelines wearing their own professional gear on their \$5,000 bikes who are just there to watch! That added with travel costs makes me infer that most of the crowds, aside from locals, are of the upper sort and thus don't very well reflect the global population.

UNFAIR CRITICISM

UNCATEGORIZED

emmaynard / September 25, 2015 / 1 Comment

Since the all the races started, I've been hearing almost nothing but complaints and I want to rant a little about how it's not really fair to do. For example, I've seen someone on facebook criticize the races by inferring that, since she has been inconvenienced, they are useless and unhelpful to anyone in Richmond. Her problem is that she had to take a very expensive cab to work because her normal bus route was messed up. First of all, hi...it's 2015, take an uber. It's easier and cheaper. Second, you had literally months to prepare for this and could have secured a ride from someone.

But aside from that, the main people complaining are the ones who have no idea what's actually going on. Yes, Richmond has seemed like a ghost town but a lot of that has to do with the fact that a ton of Richmonders are sitting at home, cowering in fear of road closures and crowds. IT'S NOT THAT BAD PEOPLE, GO OUT TO YOUR LOCAL RESTAURANTS AND CHEER UP THE SAD SERVERS WHO THINK NO ONE IS COMING. Also there's the fact that big races aren't until Saturday and Sunday and, trust, there will be tons of people and business for all!



they look, some fans at the finish line

THE HARDEST PART(S) OF COLLECTING DATA

UNCATEGORIZED

emmaynard / October 15, 2015 / 0 Comments

Ok honestly, I really thought that this was going to be the easiest part for me. I'm a very social person, not shy at all, and I actually enjoy public speaking. I was like, "Psshhh, interviews will be easy, I got this" but, as it turns out, approaching people was very difficult for me. All of the interviews I did were by myself, and it was surprisingly awkward. Approaching a group of people was way more intimidating than I thought it would be. I got all nervous and the fact that I already speak very quickly was not helping. And it was even worse when the people were foreign. I tried to make my intentions as clear as possible, but I'm pretty sure they all just thought I was really weird.

Another difficult thing for me was finding variation. When I was near campus or downtown, most of the people I saw/talked to were Richmonders. I think a reason behind that, at least for those spots, is convenience. These are the places that are the easiest for locals to walk to to see some of the races, not necessarily the best places to see the action. People that are travelling to be here would want the best views, so if they were downtown they were going to be in places like the VIP tents. I eventually found more variation when I went to Libby Hill for the big race. That's where all the out of town and hardcore fans seemed to be.

\$\$MONEY\$\$

UNCATEGORIZED

emmaynard / October 15, 2015 / 0 Comments

One thing I found very interesting about this race is the amount of money people were willing to spend. Seriously, the tickets to the VIP tents were something like \$300-\$500 per DAY. That seems insane to me. But my boyfriend said that if he'd had a full time job during the races he would absolutely be willing to pay that much for at least a day. It's just such a foreign concept to me. I can't imagine spending as much money as a round trip plane ticket just to have some shade, some drinks, and a slightly elevated view. Plus I actually preferred the views on Libby Hill and on Governor Street.

Then, there are the people that spent thousands of dollars just to get here. I talked to a couple from Belgium (which is roughly 4000 miles away) and I can't even imagine how much they spent. And they were definitely not the only ones. I saw people from all over the world speaking tons of different languages. Some didn't even look all that wealthy and I think it's so interesting that they would spend all that money to come watch people they care about (or are even just fans of) race.

A DAY OF DATA COLLECTION

UNCATEGORIZED

emmaynard / October 17, 2015 / 0 Comments

An average day of data collecting for me went something like this:

1. Go out and find a spot where people will be, preferably a diverse crowd.
2. Find interesting, non related looking people to talk to, preferably ones that seemed like they spoke some English.
3. Try to explain what I'm doing and ask questions without sounding like a crazy person.

Sounds easy enough, right? You'd be surprised. The first time me and a few group members were out together, but there weren't a whole lot of people. And since we were close to campus, almost everyone we talked to was local- which wasn't terrible, just not the diversity we hoped for. But on the good side of that, people thought it was normal that we were doing a bike race project for school.

Going out on my own was a little different. On one hand, I got to go wherever I wanted instead of just the easiest spot for the group to meet up. So, obviously, I went to the Libby Hill area where all the action was. There was a ton of people everywhere from all over the world, so I got the diversity I'd been looking for. But since I was by myself, it was a little weirder to approach people. Everyone was really nice but the foreign folks I talked to seemed a little weirded out by me.

If I could change something about how I interviewed people I probably would have stuck to group interviewing. I wish I could have had someone up at Libby Hill with me because I started feeling a little awkward all by myself. But going up there was definitely worth my time, for this and for the awesome views I got of people biking up that serious hill.

WHAT I WISH WE HAD ASKED

UNCATEGORIZED

emmaynard / October 18, 2015 / 0 Comments

For the most part, I was happy with everything we asked people. But there's one thing that has been bothering me. I wish we'd asked people how many languages they speak. I really think we would have found that most of the non-Americans we interviewed probably speak multiple languages. There's a few factors that I think are at play in this. First, in most European countries children are required to take at least one foreign language in school. My stepfather is British and he took French and German in school and can still speak them almost fluently. Another factor that I think might be involved is how widespread English is throughout the world. English has replaced French as the international language of business, so I think it's safe to say that there is

currently a huge population of people that can speak English in addition to their native language. I'm actually going to use my stepfather as an example again because he happens to work for a Belgian-based company. Whenever he comes back he talks about how incredibly well all of his Belgian colleagues speak English. Apparently, since a lot of them went to boarding schools, they typically speak English with a British accent and it's almost impossible to tell they're Belgian.

There's another thing that I think could be a factor, but this one is going out on a limb a little. I think that it might have been easier for people to travel to the United States for this bike race if they could at least partially speak the language. Again, this is more of a guess because for me personally the fact that I can't speak a foreign language fluently hasn't actually affected my travel plans. I've been to several countries around the world where I've spoken fractions of the language and it hasn't really slowed me down all that much.

*On a side note, the show that I currently have playing in the background has the American FBI agents in Mexico investigating a crime. Only one FBI agent speaks any Spanish, but all of the Mexican cops, victims, and witnesses speak English. Just sayin'.

MEASURING VARIATION

UNCATEGORIZED

[emmaynard](#) / [October 19, 2015](#) / [1 Comment](#)

Measuring variation in a crowd is always important. It teaches us all kinds of information about the people involved, about the similarities and differences within a population. This could be useful for a number of different reasons. For example, if a company wanted to figure out where to advertise a product this kind of thing would be the first thing they should look at. They could look at a sample of a crowd to figure out where to advertise. Since the bike race crowd had a lot of wealthy, older, and most likely retired men, it would be a great idea for tourism boards from different cities to advertise at similar events. Or even a pharmaceutical company wanting to advertise medical issues that tend to affect older men.