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## Anthropology of the Crowd, Blog 11

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# Anthro of the Crowd

The world is coming to Richmond...

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

Maria Vera Alvarez

## Getting Ready for the World!

**September 3, 2015**

So we are two weeks into the Fall semester and as a transfer student, I think I'm handling it quite well! I am so excited for the bike race. The pedestrian bridge on Main Street is looking like it's almost complete and that just adds to my excitement. I don't really know how to picture the bike race crowd. The motto around Richmond has been that the world is coming to Richmond, and that just makes me picture an extremely diverse group of people. I am hoping that there will be people from all around the world, maybe I'll be able to find someone from my country, woo Paraguay! With all these people there will most likely be an incredible amount of noise pollution. Not only from the fans themselves, cheering on the bikers, but also from the traffic that the road closures will be causing. I am so ready to try out my hand at Anthropology, this being my first time taking a formal Anthropology class.

-Maria

## Describing the Crowd

September 27, 2015



The Netherlands and Belgium being represented right at the start line!

The crowd at the race was very diverse! I think it really did live up to my expectations in terms of diversity. Although, I don't think I realized how many Europeans would be in Richmond. Almost all the people I talked to came from Europe. Because there were so many Europeans, it was very easy to find people that spoke English along with their native language. It's fantastic how bilingual many people were, they easily answered our questions. We only found a few people who didn't speak English and even then they were able to communicate a few things with us.

It was cool to see all the different countries represented, but I think I would have liked to have spoken with more people from other places in the world. It does say a lot about how much it costs to travel for this race!

For a while the Euro was doing better than the US dollar, but now the dollar is worth more. Travel expenses for coming to this event must be a lot which would really explain the types of people at the crowd. I noticed that the people were much older than I had expected and less foreign families were there. There were a lot of couples watching the races! Many people have come to this event for many years, which was cool to find out.



This man only spoke French but was able to tell us he has gone to all the UCI events on his flag!

Did the World Really Come to Richmond?

September 27, 2015



Like I mentioned a bit in my previous post, I really do not think the bike race crowd accurately reflects the “global population” of the world. The

money involved with traveling to Richmond for this race implies that the people who are here are of middle to upper class. Also many folks at the races were older. This also could go along with the money aspect because older generations tend to have more in savings and more stable jobs. Even thinking about the racers, I was reminded that it takes a good set of circumstances to become an athlete. One has to have access to training facilities and money to buy all the things needed to train to become one of the best.

I also noticed there weren't as many people of color as I originally expected. I don't have an explanation for this aspect, but I did expect there to be more diversity. I didn't actually notice this until I took a look at my pictures of people's skin. There was very little variation in the skin colors I personally collected. However, there was a little more diversity when I was walking around. I did only get twelve out of the thousands of people I encountered at the race.





## Hardest Part of Collecting Data?

September 28, 2015

One of the hardest parts of collecting data about the spectators was fighting the anxiety built just before approaching someone. I am very outgoing and I love talking to people, but the first person of each day I was out at the race was always a challenge. I had to work really hard

to overcome the anxiety and stress I built up, but once I started the conversation and introduced myself they were always very nice!

Another aspect that made collecting data difficult was the occasional language barriers. A few times I was turned down because they either spoke no English or the person did not feel comfortable enough with their knowledge of English to answer questions. This type of field work was actually pretty simple. There wasn't anything I found super challenging minus overcoming these two hurdles.

### Crowd Favorites

September 28, 2015

I loved seeing how people from different countries dressed up to support their racers! Two of my favorites were the Norwegians who set up their "Norwegian Corner" on Broad and Belvidere and the Dutch couple who walked around sporting all orange!

It was really fascinating to see how each country came to support. There were so many HUGE flags waving, but there were also people wearing their flags. There were also fans who did more cheering than they did dressing up. That was also cool to take note of. I ended up talking to a lot of people from the Netherlands without even realizing it until I asked them questions. I had just been so used to the folks wearing all orange or sporting the Dutch flag on their backs!



Check out that awesome Italian flag!



All the colors of the countries being sported in the crowd.

## A Day in the Life of #VCUanthcrowd Data Collectors

September 28, 2015

I did most of my data collection at the start line. I felt really comfortable talking to people along this strip because they seemed to be the most interested in the race! My day began by taking the Campus Connector from the Siegel Center to the Larrick Center on the MCV Campus. I



had only been to this part of campus twice so the first time around I was glad to have my group with me so we could all figure out where we were going together. From the stop it was a straight shot down 9<sup>th</sup> Street to Broad Street where the majority of the race events were taking place.

From there I walked up and down Broad from 9<sup>th</sup> Street to 6<sup>th</sup> Street stopping to ask random strangers if they wouldn't mind being interviewed. If I could change something about the way I collected data I would definitely find other places in the city to take data. I was really limited to the parts of the city I could go to because of how many roads were closed and how far the major fan zones of the race were from where I live. However, overall I think data collection went really smoothly and I had a blast doing this type of work!

## Linguistic Wishes

September 28, 2015

I am very interested in linguistics after doing some work with Zapotec in Mexico this summer. I really wish that I could have collected some sort of linguistic data other than cheer words! At first I was going to suggest that my group ask some people to teach them one word in their language. I am very fascinated in what types of words people use to teach each other languages. I think the types of words people choose can be really useful in determining what types of things are important in a language. Working with tone languages this summer I realized there is much more to languages than I had originally known. Also, many things that we see as common and normal ways of grouping or describing things may not work the same way in other languages. I think that is why it is a cool aspect of linguistics to focus on what first words native speakers think are important!

## Variation, Variación, Variatie!

September 29, 2015

Measuring variation in a crowd is important because it allows a different look at the data.

If there were little variation in the data, this may call in to question the way that the samples were taken. Also making note of the variation in the crowd can help find deeper meaning within the data collected. Knowing that there were people from all over the world makes the words we collected make sense because maybe the people we asked to give us words were not comfortable with English or it wasn't the first language so the words they gave us were not exactly what they may have said if given the opportunity in their native language.

This type of sample was a bit more difficult to get a random variation. I found myself constantly saying "Oh I'd love to interview someone from Brazil or \*insert country here\*". I think we can learn that large variation doesn't always mean bad data, or small variation, good data. The data we collected was extremely varied and diverse, but that was somewhat the point of our collecting data. We knew our sample was supposed to be of the crowd and we all thought this crowd was representing the world. One major thing we can learn from variation is to remember to account for what exactly is being represented in the sample. Our sample had a bias towards the wealthy because it costs a lot of money to travel to Richmond for the bike race. Also not every single nation was included in the race, so that should be accounted for.

## [Understand You and Me](#)

October 2, 2015

Human variation can contribute to how we understand ourselves by providing us with insight as to how others view life. By getting perspective through other people with different qualities than ourselves, we are able to more fully understand both the world around us and our purpose in it. Also human variation can contribute to how we understand others by providing a basis for what about us is different than others. By understanding the fundamental differences we can begin to piece together how these differences may affect us or others in various ways.

## Reflections

October 2, 2015

My favorite aspect of the race was getting to see how some people from some countries look, act, and speak. A lot of cultures have very different ways of handling themselves when they're around friends and even strangers. I particularly liked how I couldn't always tell where a person was from unless I asked them. I think this got me thinking more about how a certain country is perceived by Americans. However, getting to travel a lot for a person my age, I was able to pick out people's nationalities of the countries I had visited by the way they were speaking or their appearance. That was interesting because although I had only been to the Netherlands twice, I could still see the resemblance of some of my family members in the people of the crowd! It was really cool being surrounded by lots of people from different countries.

## Final Thoughts!

October 2, 2015

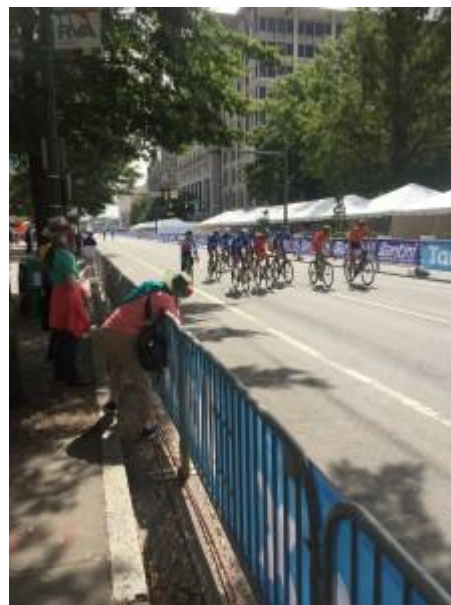
One thing that really stuck out to me about the way Richmond held the race was the emphasis put on by the race of being green. I really appreciated that! Every volunteer I saw had a claw which they used to pick up any litter left on the ground. Also there were trashcans on almost every corner and Richmond provided water at many intersections of the race. As someone who tries to conserve and preserve for the sake of the Earth, I really valued that Richmond thought of these things. Although I wish they had been a bit more accurate on the amount of business the race would bring.

I saw that many businesses, particularly near the VCU Monroe Park campus, were struggling this week. There was little to no business in these areas. The small mom and pop store next to my apartment complex asked me about the race because they thought no one had come to see it. They asked me with sadness in their voice where all the people were. That really made me upset because Richmond local

businesses are fantastic and we really need to do our best to preserve them! Those are the businesses that care the most about their customers and want to give their very best for them!

## Archaeological Assemblage!

October 7, 2015



There was so much that went into the race in Richmond this year! Luckily so many people said they thought it was one of the most organized races they had gone to and our city did much better than some other cities had done previously. There are so many things that

were important to the race and very related to the event! I chose Rodney the Ram (mascots in general), the barricade, the tents and the banners. If these things were found in the future, I don't know if those archaeologists would immediately think "Bike Race! Duh!" The banners posted up around downtown were probably my favorite piece of decoration that the city did. I loved seeing all the different languages cheering everyone on. However, I think the saying on the banners would probably confuse people of the future. Most of the banners didn't say UCI Championships on them, but they all had some form of encouragement in a different language. I think this would raise the question, "what were they cheering on" if the banners were to be found. As awesome as they were at the race, I think when you remove them from being near the race, it is harder to understand their purpose. Rodney the Ram would also raise some eyebrows if it were found. While mascots are a very normal thing for us, I think it would be really strange to find a costume among the dirt and other race memorabilia. The finding of a mascot might suggest there be a different sporting event that had happened since cycling doesn't usually have mascots. Lastly I think the tents and barricades would give the picture of this big event, but I don't think many people immediately think of bike races when they think of a race! If I had been on a team that uncovered these artifacts I would know there was a big event that required people to cheer them on (the encouraging words of the banners gave that away), but I would probably be more inclined to think it was a marathon or some sort of running event rather than a cycling event!