

2015

Race, Gender, Sexuality, Ability, Identity and Cycling, Blog 5

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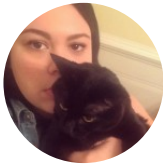
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ENDO: transforming cycle culture

Race, Gender, Sexuality, Ability, Identity and Cycling — UNIV 291 SEC 039



About Elsbeth M.

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Ethnography

by **Elsbeth M.** on September 30, 2015 in **Bike ethnography**

So for the ethnography portion of this class, I wanted to observe two different bike cultures that I found out have more in common than I had previously noted: BMX and Quickness bike delivery.

For anyone who may not know, Quickness is a company in Richmond that delivers food via bike from a BUNCH of different local restaurants and coffee shops. Lamplighter, Lunch/Supper, and Rostovs just to name a few. If you're ever in the city, you have most certainly seen the Quickness riders. They are the bikers with a metal "shelf" on the front of their bike with a catering bag sitting in it. One thing I've noticed about Quickness is that there is definitely not an equal gender ratio. I see way more male employees than female employees (for the sake of observation, not including anyone who may not identify with gender). I wonder why this is? I don't know if it has to do with the rough terrain of going through church hill on your fixie or what, but it doesn't make sense to me that girls would not go for this. Obviously we've talked about cycling being a male-dominated sport...but we're not talking professional bikers here. When I see people biking around the city for transportation or pleasure, I believe the gender ratio to be pretty equal. So why not for Quickness? It is a strange phenomenon that I've experienced in my own life of the idea that women don't have the physical endurance for particular jobs. I'm a delivery driver myself and when I got hired, I was the only girl. Two years later, there has been one other female employee out of about 8 drivers. Another aspect of Quickness bike culture that I've noticed is that they are daredevils. They will bike at high speeds going between a long line of cars, and I've definitely seen instances where someone was very close to being hit off their bike. I suppose they do what they have to in order to get food out on time.

So I went into Fan Fest inside the Richmond Convention Center and found a group of BMX bikers doing a tricks show for the audience. They had ramps set up and did some amazing stunts. It got me thinking about BMX as a bike culture that I don't think we have really talked about! Personally, I hadn't thought of it until now. Similar to Quickness (yet more extreme), women are HEAVILY excluded from BMX biking. I honestly cannot recall ever seeing a female BMX'er. If you have, please leave a comment and inform me! I think it'd be cool to see a girl get out there and do that stuff. Again...we face the issue: are women not strong enough? Maybe too delicate? Obviously people in the BMX culture are also risk takers. I mean, I saw some insane stuff at Fan Fest. From doing flips 20 feet up in the air to riding around standing on the front wheel of a bike. However, I feel like BMX differs from quickness in that Quickness is definitely more urban (and people in their late 20's/early 30's) and BMX seems to bring out maybe more suburban folks who are younger. You also see a clothing style with BMX that is a little closer to skateboarding, whereas Quickness is more grunge/punk/tattooed.

As for the actual UCI bike race, I went to the final race that occurred on Sunday the 27th. There was a very exciting and energetic feeling in the air. It was cool because people of all different races and ethnicity were there. All different types of languages were being spoken from different parts of the world including the Middle East, Africa, and Europe. I enjoyed seeing the different countries' flags being waved. It felt like one big melting pot. I felt that pride at two different instances. The first being when I would see a USA rider, and the second being when I saw a Slovenian rider. My mom is Slovenian and I didn't know that they were partaking in the race, so it actually caught me off guard and I felt pretty emotional and warm. I had no idea how excited I would feel at the race. I ended up waiting for probably about 20 minutes from when I got there til I saw the first rider complete a lap and as everyone started screaming and banging their hands on the guard rails I found myself doing the same as my heart fluttered. I didn't even know who had passed me or what country he was from! It just brought on some type of one-ness with the crowd and everyone's passion becomes tangible. I saw some spectators with their bikes down there. I also saw people of all different ages. Babies, children, college students, middle adults, and the elderly. I like that cycling brings diverse fans of all ages. I did not notice any physically disabled spectators, which is sad because I'm sure getting to an event like that with soo many people is very difficult. I hope that they had accommodations for people with disabilities, because attending the UCI race in the town that you live in is a once in a lifetime opportunity that I think everyone should have the chance to do!!

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Artifact Analysis: Brompton World Championship!

by **Elsbeth M.** on September 23, 2015 in **Artifact Analysis**

Richmond will host the Brompton World Championship (BWC) this year on September 25th. The Brompton bicycle originated in London back in the 1970's, and it appears that the BWC is an amusing and creative way to celebrate these little toys. It seems like the beginning of the race initiates an air of excitement among everyone, seeing as how the competitors have to start on foot as they all trip over

each other to reach their bikes. Bromptons are a funny-lookin' thing that have to be unfolded before ridden, so that's an extra step most of us don't consider before hopping on our rides:



I think the BWC is a great way to let people in the community feel important. Unlike larger races such as the Tour de France or UCI, there isn't an expectation to be a professional cyclist. I get the feeling that this championship is more about fun than anything. Looking over the rules, pretty much any adult in decent health can join, and there are prizes for several different categories of people; even veterans! There is something the BWC is very strict about, however...dresscode. Their rules state "All participants, both male and female, must wear a suit jacket, collared shirt and neck tie. Shorts, threequarter length trousers and skirts may be worn if preferred, though visible sports attire (e.g. Lycra shorts/leggings, tracksuit pants, etc.) is not permitted." Ah yes, here we have what the BWC may be most famous for: every competitor looking absolutely dashing. Unfortunately, I don't have a suit jacket so I will not be partaking this year. Anyways, I think Richmond is the perfect place for the championship to happen right now. The competitors will be using the UCI route that is already set up. It's a really special chance for locals and non-locals alike to feel significant! Any regular bike enthusiast will have the opportunity to race on the UCI track without the pressure or qualifications of actually racing in the UCI. Pretty cool if you ask me. And remember, you get to look great while doing it. It's like prom...but on bikes.

Roadbumps? I don't really foresee anything bad happening seeing as how Richmond has already so thoroughly prepared their roads and community with the other races going on. The fact that the BWC has happened on several other continents including Europe, Asia, and South America, it just feels very honoring that Richmond has been picked to host in 2015. Good luck to the riders this Friday!

<http://www.brompton.com/Events/Posts/2015/Event-BWC-USA>

photo taken from <http://totalwomenscycling.com/commuting/accessories/christmas-gift-guides-urban-cycling-presents-for-women-17949/11/#lmjq350eBWPGxspr.97>



My Focus

by **Elsbeth M.** on September 18, 2015 in **Introduction/focus selection**

Hello there, my name is Elsbeth. I am a senior with a psychology major/French minor. I love gender studies, feminism, and riding my bike around the fan!

My focuses are:

-nude rides in other cities

-#nopodiumgirls movement

-UCI regulation differences between genders



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