The Everyday Breakaway: 
Participant Perspectives of Everyday Life Within a Sport for Development 
and Peace Program

By

David Justin Joseph Marchesseault

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Abstract

This dissertation considers the precarity and politics of the everyday lives of sport for development participants within a post-genocide Rwanda. Pushing beyond sport for development research that has traditionally centered on organizations, policies, and approaches, this study is grounded within its participants’ lived experiences. Extracting from ethnographic field research in rural Rwanda, this dissertation’s process-oriented sociological inquiry seeks to invert such hegemonic positions, by taking “recipients” from passive objectivity as beneficiaries of development, to “active” agents in their everyday lives. This dissertation presents the dramatic processual complexities of ‘choice,’ or lack of choice, for participants in a sport for development program. By using their bodies, cyclists from within this particular program choose to subject themselves to the structures, ambitions, and processes of those in power, uncertain if such aims align with personal aspirations. This dissertation, then, contributes to an understanding of this exploration of ‘choice’ from within a development organization.

Such reflexive methodological inquiry highlights the ways in which the cyclists are active agents of their own life narratives, disrupting the tightly bounded meta-narratives of a post-conflict nation and a development organization working from within it. This dissertation reveals the power relations that structure the lives of many ordinary Rwandans and, in particular, my participants. By providing space for cyclists to resist, rich cultural and historical understandings of the underpinning mechanisms influencing their identities, processes, and actions are uncovered. Such agency does not negate the hegemonic system exclusively bound to my participants, but rather acknowledges the tangled-up power hierarchies and grand narratives structural forms of inequality ultimately produce. This dissertation focuses on the agency created, employed, and exploited by these cyclists in their everyday life, and contests sport for development as a means of social development by asking the question: does sport really matter?
From the tea-laden fields of the mountainous northwest to the rolling roads of the southeast, this dissertation reveals the inconsistencies between grand narratives and those of the participants, as well as the mechanisms of resistance developed and implemented by the cyclists themselves. As a result, this study exposes the bicycle not as a symbol of freedom but as a tactical tool used by the cyclists. This is an ethnography about how people use certain mechanisms in particular contexts to make do, and how meaning is given to those mechanisms through how those people identify themselves in relation to such tangled spaces. On the African continent broadly, and in Rwanda in particular, identity is complicated, fragmented, and formed through multiple webs of interaction and meaning. Sometimes these conflict and disrupt. The disruption is not neat, but messy, complex, and contextual.
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Chapter One: Introduction

Racing (Everyday) Life

While scrolling recently through photos on social media, I came upon a particular image that stopped me short. It came from the Instagram account of Team Rwanda, the American sport for development organization whose mission is to unify African countries through cycling. The organization has gained immense publicity in recent years, which is one of the many reasons I decided to focus on this organization for my research. Staring back at me on my phone was a friend, someone I had met almost a year ago on the winding, oxygen-sapping roads of Rwanda’s northwest region. He was a participant in my research - a promising young African cyclist and a targeted participant of the organization behind Team Rwanda - who had shown immense physical capacities and a committed desire to win cycling races. I most remembered Mussa\(^1\) as a devoted cyclist with a jovial personality. He was kind, with personable parents who cared immensely for his well-being, yet in the photo (see below) he isn’t smiling as he always had when I was around him. He is muted, blank; eyes gazing forward catching the viewer awkwardly. In large block letters written over his face, the image reads: “RACING IS LIFE, EVERYTHING ELSE IS JUST WAITING.” The words dominate the image, over-writing the young man, cyclist and friend I recognize. Beneath the photo is a link to the organization and Team Rwanda’s donation page.

This image is symbolic and reflective of a much broader Western culture in the way global aid has coopted the image of the Black African for profit. The white text emphasizes cycle racing as the focal point of life, which homogenizes his identity and the complex narratives he may have to tell. In an era where privileged people publically advertise and celebrate their altruism, individuals are often drawn to consume such a ‘brand’ of philanthropy that conveniently allows them to benevolently participate in the type of development represented by Rwandan cycling.

\(^1\) All participants in this dissertation have had their names changed to conceal anonymity.
To me, this image demonstrates the major disparity between the image of a sport for development organization and the everyday lived experiences of the participants themselves. This disjuncture between mediated images and reality in sport for development is something I will unpack in this dissertation. I believe images, and the commercialization of these images, exemplify how people are becoming increasingly more interested in pursuing new and innovative ways to affirm their altruism and generosity through philanthropic gestures in specific spaces – sports spaces being one of them – rather than considering the production of those spaces and needs in the first place. Campaigns, donation drives, charity runs, and online-giving, I suggest, all seek to capitalize on one’s perceptions of being charitable within an ever-increasingly digitally-connected world. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are adopting and promoting popular discourses that legitimize and encourage various interventions in the ‘best interests’ of the world’s most vulnerable. In many instances, Western NGOs have capitalized on communities in crisis by developing vivid and dramatic narratives of participants and contexts as a means of capturing increasingly scarce donor support. This has led to the sensationalizing and dramatization of development aid, which for the most part has underrepresented the participants themselves and their experiences.
Also in vogue is the growing legitimization of sport for development – the use of sport and/or physical activity as a focal point of a development intervention – within development programs, appearing in refugee camps, conflict zones, and inner city streets. Whereas early sport for development literature (Kidd, 2008; Richards, 1997) relied heavily on assumption-based language (e.g., Sport for good!) to describe causes, people, participants and outcomes; NGOs can now draw on international conventions that declare play and physical activity to be fundamental rights to justify their particular pursuits of development goals (Kidd & Donnelly, 2000; UNOSFD, 2012). The sport for development spectrum is vast; from organizations who use sport and play in accessing and engaging youth (e.g., Right to Play), making sport the ‘hook’ for development interventions, to organizations whose principal motivation is the development of sport and athletes (e.g., Team Rwanda) for the sake of professionalization, with claims that personal, communal, and national development result from such focused interventions. Coupled with sensationalized media – poverty porn² – that glosses over or blatantly lies about critical contextual issues, celebrity endorsements that overshadow the potential flaws of sports’ use in particular development interventions, and the increasing academic research that is critical, yet optimistic (see Coalter, 2013; Darnell, 2012; Guest, 2009; Sugden, 2015), sport for development NGOs can confidently position themselves as benevolent entities within the increasingly competitive international development arena. Thus, this dissertation will rethink sport for development as a means of social development by asking the question: does sport really matter?

In a time where the global economy is rife with uncertainty, and global donations to charities have diminished (World Giving Index 2014, p.13), NGOs are becoming more guarded and suspicious of those critical of development projects. NGOs reproduce tightly-manufactured narratives to justify using sport to perform benevolence and aid – for example, using the bicycle as a symbol of freedom and prosperity in post-genocide Rwanda. Such boundary-making of grand narratives often censor critical perspectives, and minimizes and/or erases the complexity required for “understanding of social/cultural contexts; an uncovering of social hierarchies; and revealing of lived contradictions” (Millington & Wilson, 2010, p.30), as well as the lived, everyday experiences of participants. Despite the contribution by sociologists and other disciplines to gain further insights into diverse issues surrounding the operational processes of sport for development organizations, the vast majority of research contributions make the organization, its policies, and its approaches, the centre of analysis – not its participants and communities. Uncritical presumptions allow for a sport for development evangelism – both within and

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² The term poverty porn is defined as “any type of media, be it written, photographed or filmed, which exploits the poor’s conditions in order to generate the necessary sympathy for selling newspapers or increasing charitable donations or support for a given cause” (Collins, 2009). It was popularized largely in the 1980’s, where humanitarian crises such as the Ethiopian famine created disturbing images of starving men, women, and children.
outside of academia – which ignores fundamental questions of sport’s ability to do what it claims, and bases a large amount of research on ‘mythopic’ understandings of sport’s ability to cure any and all social ills (Coalter, 2010). Consequently, many gatekeepers of such grand progressive narratives disavow and discourage others from doing such work as it unsettles the metanarrative that is foundational to the idea of the Western saviour that has developed and cultivated — and on which, I believe, sport for development is built.

Through observations of the norms, behaviours and practices that I encountered during my fieldwork, the validity and authenticity of Team Rwanda’s organizational practices were brought under question. Approaching my research from a grounded theoretical lens I began to question: How do Rwandan cyclists construct and understand racing in the context of their individual pursuits of social, financial, and cultural mobility? What range of opportunities and limitations exist for cyclists within this development program? As my research methodology (Chapter 2) centralized, prioritized, and situated cycling and development through the experiences and daily lives of the cyclists, I began to recognize the deeply contrasting narratives being produced by those outside the cyclists’ meta-community (Chapter 5). Employing Ervin Goffman’s dramaturgical perspective on social interaction – in relation to frontstage and backstage performances – permitted me a theoretical launching point for this research. His concept highlights the relationship between the roles individuals or organizations perform at given moments to particular audiences in order to demonstrate best practice or conceal reality – saving face (Goffman, 1959, p.65). Through my interactions with the cyclists and staff in the early stages of my field research, it became clear that a deciphering of such performances, by cyclists in Rwanda, would become the key to this dissertation project. As Taussig (1987) posits, I became less interested in what people perform, focusing instead on “why my subject is not the truth of being but the social being of truth, not whether facts are real but what the politics of their interpretation and representation are” (p.xiii). An uncovering of such politics of everyday life – its performance, narratives, and communities – of cyclists, such as Mussa, was the basis of my fieldwork and my academic contribution to the sport for development literature.

**Everyday Life as Problematic**

This dissertation explicitly and implicitly addresses the ‘everyday’ as a problematic, as a contested and complex terrain, where meanings are not to be found ready-made but have been coopted by various actors and enlist a multitude of different meanings and mechanisms depending on the context and personalities involved. This dissertation, like Lefebvre (1991), argues “everyday life is defined by ‘what is
left over’ after all distinct, superior, specialized, structured activities have been singled out by analysis” (p.97). To invoke such a mundane, shared, everyday culture from the ground/field is to make what has been invisible visible, bringing emphasis to lives of individuals and groups that have been marginalized by dominant narratives and accounts of social life. The sociologies of everyday life generally assume that “one’s identity is formed through reflection on the verbal and physical feedback offered by others in situated contexts of interaction over time” (Atkinson, 2003, p.209). Sociologists of everyday life, such as Becker (1963), de Certeau (1980), and Goffman (1959) consider the profound significance of performance and symbolic interaction to the study of the everyday. As a theoretical starting point, the analysis of the everyday life from within the lives of Team Rwanda participants allow me to deeply and directly engage with the narratives and the ways in which particular experiences of corporeal suffering and pleasure develop in, around and through the physical culture of cycling. Drawing from Becker, I use narrative and visual methodologies in creating reflexive representations of my participants’ everyday perspectives.

With such understanding of everyday life, I consider the particular – the interconnected ways that relate to various perspectives of the everyday. Highmore (2002) tells us that “in approaches that have privileged the particular we can find tendencies that have stressed other features of everyday life: the agency of individuals in daily life, forms of resistance or non-conformative to social structures, and a stress on feelings and experience” (p.5). This is in stark contrast to broader research that has typified contemporary sport for development research, which grossly privileges social structures, institutions and discourses. Such research of the particular in everyday life invokes precisely those practices that have been traditionally ignored or excluded from historical accounts, or strategically censored. To question everyday life and to allow everyday life to question typical understandings of the world is to specifically invite theoretical articulation of the everyday. This type of everyday theorizing “throws our most cherished theoretical values and practices in crisis…What if theory was beneficial for attending to the everyday, not via its systematic interrogations but through its poetics, its ability to render the familiar strange?” (Highmore, 2002, p.3). This is not to suggest that everyday life is anti-theoretical, far from it, but that by attending to the everyday, such theory is never a purely critical or deconstructive project. Therefore, in this dissertation, I acknowledge broader structural everyday forces while struggling to articulate the everyday life of cyclists within the Team Rwanda sport for development program. I suggest constructive and inventive theoretical thought be given to participant voices – their agency resistance and conformity – within these sporting and development spaces by giving a platform and priority to the cyclists’ narratives.
Writing Realities, Representations and Resistance

This dissertation does not seek to establish a knowable “truth,” but instead illustrates what counts as truth, who or what evokes it, how it circulates, and who gains and loses by particular nominations of what is true, real, and significant (Thomson, 2013, p.128). Hence, what you are about to read is in a constant state of flux. It is a moving, pedalling, inscribing, changing, emboldening, challenging, silencing, and perhaps poisoning text. It is like a snapshot, taken in a fleeting moment, capturing an emotion, a position, an angle, an understanding. Then, like a photograph, I hope that the gaze will change and everything will be set anew.

Current global aid, as a system, produces a narrative of those who “provide” and those who “receive.” Such a framework turns the “recipients” into objects of top-down, decision-making and planning after silencing, rather than engaging individuals with their own (re)development goals. This dissertation’s process-oriented sociological research seeks to invert such hegemonic positions by taking “recipients” from passive objectivity as beneficiaries of development, creating a space that highlights the ways the cyclists are active agents of their own life narratives. Such ‘telling’ is often seen as a form of resistance, conceptualized by Thomson (2013) as “any subtle, indirect, and nonconfrontational act that makes daily life more sustainable in light of the strong and centralized power” (p.133). By providing space for cyclists to resist, richer understandings of the power relations in which their everyday life are enmeshed are uncovered. Such agency does not negate the hegemonic system exclusively bound to one individual actor, but rather acknowledges the tangled up power hierarchies and grand narratives that structural forms of inequality ultimately produce (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). Therefore, this text is a gateway into the everyday processes – perspectives, reflections, negotiations, and relationships – of young Rwandan participants of an American sport for development organization (Prus, 1987). Although I have compiled their stories, it is through their understandings of themselves that I reconstruct their complex identities, in order to share their understandings and meanings of cycling (and the organization) from within their everyday life.

While I stress that interpretations within the following pages are mine alone, and do not directly reflect the views of any one particular cyclist, it is equally important to recognize that my participants were keen to tell their stories even in the face of potential retribution. Cyclists disclosed to me that I was one of the first foreigners to take interest in their lives “outside of cycling,” something they construed as
both odd and stimulating. This peculiarity further distinguished me as a member of their inner circle, or subcommunity (see Chapter 5). We met in unusual circumstances, related to one another, and became community members for a 27-week period. Although this dissertation will unpack my research method and position in relation to broader cultural forces, Bert Ingelaere’s3 excerpt from his time in Rwanda beautifully reflects my own positionality:

I have never attempted to become, or considered myself to have become, a Rwandan among Rwandans. I still do not know what it feels like to have your family exterminated or to be in a Rwandan prison for decades, and I do not know how it feels to personally appear in a gacaca court as a plaintiff, defendant, witness, or judge. In the field, I was aware of the fact that I had an international passport, a credit card, and a plane ticket in my pocket (or hand). But I attempted and progressively managed to bracket (not erase) these conditions and move closer to these practices and experiences. Indeed, I am confident enough to say that if required, I could now emulate the logics of certain behavioural practices I studied. As a consequence, I would be able to pass a test that some ethnographers aspire to [is] ‘if you think you understand X then you should be able to act like the X’. (2015, p.280)

It was the ability to progressively “bracket” myself that created an accelerated avenue of understanding and insight into their everyday lives. I was offered access to a culture and to social relationships that very few people cared or knew how to involve themselves in, and the cyclists in my research were given a platform to tell their stories. It was a mutually beneficial ethnographic circumstance that yielded surprising moments of insights for both participant and researcher. In many instances, any one cyclist’s view could be at odds with official government and organizational narratives about development in Rwanda. As a result, they put themselves at potential risk of retaliation, reprisals, and/or removal. Nonetheless, many cyclists insisted on telling their stories and urged me to write about what they told me and not to be concerned with consequences, which they understood better than I and knew how to deal with. As one cyclist explained to me, “we have been silenced because if we speak, they will take our work, our ability to make a better life. But they cannot stop me from telling you about my life. It is mine to tell, not only theirs.”

3 Bert Ingelaere is Post-doctoral Research Fellow from the Research Foundation - Flanders (FWO), Belgium. His research focuses on the (micro-)dynamics of violence/genocide and transitional justice, poverty, socio-economic mobility, ethnicity and governance issues in Africa’s Great Lakes region where he has undertaken over 38 months of fieldwork since 2004.
So, although I am deeply concerned about the potential consequences and criticisms for the cyclists who embedded and embraced me within their families, lives, and communities (should someone speak about their stories outside of the boundaries of my ethical protocols), I would be doing them a disservice here to not present their accounts based on the critical perspectives that they articulated through enquiry and debate, not simply organizational criticism or defamation. It is in this process of ‘giving voice’ and discovering ‘thick description’ that I come to present an account of bicycle racing and development based on the critical perspectives cyclists articulated to me.

**Disrupting the Meta-Narrative**

Broadly, this dissertation disrupts the tightly bounded meta-narratives of a post-conflict nation and a development organization working from within it. It reveals the power relations that structure the lives of many ordinary Rwandans, and in particular, my participants – Team Rwanda’s cyclists. Rwanda – synonymous with genocide after the brutal extermination of nearly a million of its people – is being celebrated by the international aid community as an emblematic picture of what is possible when reconciliation and international development are adequately implemented. Its rebel commander turned post-genocide leader, Paul Kagame, is controversial. His brand of “disaster capitalism” (Klein, 2007) is publicly praised by global personalities such as Tony Blair, Bill Clinton, and the executives of Starbucks as “one of the greatest leaders of our time” (The Guardian, 2015). Why? They cite his quantifiable (primary school attendance is nearly one-hundred percent child mortality has halved, and parliament has achieved the highest proportion of female members in the world) and visible (plastic bags are illegal, pavements are clean, and roads are pothole free) accomplishments made since the 1994 genocide as being revolutionary for a country destroyed by systematic violence. The aesthetically salubrious imagery associated with contemporary Rwanda has gone a long way in establishing the congratulatory climate the country is currently enjoying within the global development community. In a region where few countries execute aid plans to design – due to dogmatic situations of corruption, dependency, and foreign aid failure that interrupt development objectives – Rwanda is the exception. It has quietly done without historically “typical” interruptions, positioning itself since the beginning of the 21st century as a potential African middle-power.

Kagame has achieved such public success, however, largely through what I describe as administrative authoritarianism, ignoring human rights, transparency, and democracy, while instilling a state of fear, repression, and obedience under the banner of state-backed reconciliation, unity, and reconstruction. Former high-ranking members of Kagame’s inner circle – sentenced from 20 to 24 years in prison –
describe him as "a callous and reckless leader" shaped by 'greed for absolute power.' There is more to Rwanda and Paul Kagame than new buildings, clean streets, and efficient government. … Rwanda is essentially a hard-line, one-party, secretive police state with a façade of democracy" (Nyamwasa, Karegeya, Rudasingwa, & Gahima, 2010). So, although on the surface Rwanda is a peaceful, quiet, and clean country, a paradise for foreign aid workers, Kagame’s repression has created a janus-faced situation where foreign organizations and governments now benefit from such ideal development conditions. With a genuine desire to suppress violence, the Rwandan public is held silent, fearing that opposition to obedience would be a precursor to renewed violence. Sundaram (2016) believes “[Rwandans] are so traumatized by the experience of extreme violence that they accept a great deal of control and repression from the Rwandan state without fighting back or pushing back.” Rather than focusing on the validity of the above claims, a rich cultural and historical understanding of mechanisms influencing Rwandan identities, processes, and actions underpins this dissertation’s micrological analysis. By focusing on the agency created, employed, and exploited by the Team Rwanda cyclists in their everyday life, I consider spaces from which agential mechanisms of identity can be employed.

**Developing Images**

While the Rwandan government continues to commit human rights abuses, development organizations are meeting program targets, securing future funding, and gaining international acclaim, ensuring Kagame’s repressive tactics continue as long as they serve the benevolent image of both Rwanda and foreign governments. When particular projects or programs benefit the Rwandan government’s narrative as a modern, up-and-coming nation state, they are often employed and lauded as further symbols of Rwanda’s image as a peaceful, strong, and resilient nation-state. Organizations who were previously unsupported or struggling, are then supported directly by the state, driving a government position that “We [Rwandans] need a fresh start with new symbols to represent Rwanda as it is: peaceful and prosperous” (Interview with Minister of Culture, 2006, from Thomson, 2003, p.118). Team Rwanda and its cyclists have been found to be formidable symbols for the country’s public relations machine – both within Rwanda’s borders and abroad. Their bodies have been transformed, (re)shaped into symbols worth celebrating, having been trained since 2006 by foreign staff. These efforts have turned them into international calibre professionals capable of winning Africa’s biggest bicycle races. Now, poised for international “export” through dominant performances at the 2014 and 2015 Tour of

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4 In chemistry a microanalysis is the chemical identification and quantitative analysis of small amounts of substances within chemical elements. Micrological analysis, as interpreted in this dissertation, is the qualitative investigation and analysis of small groups and sub communities via ethnographic techniques.
Rwanda, and unprecedented success at the All-African Games, the cyclists of Team Rwanda have invigorated this small land-locked African nation. My dissertation investigates how Rwanda's passion and support for the sport of cycling has occurred largely through a reimagining of personal circumstances through the individual identities of these cyclists. From marginalized family situations, the cyclists' personal transformation from single-speed cyclists to professional racers has captivated the interest of a nation deficient of sporting heroes. In a recent speech to Team Rwanda members, Minister of Sport, Julienne Uwacu “expressed how this team and the five riders leaving to join professional teams are ambassadors for their country. She said that when they do well, not just in a race, but also in their interactions with the international community, it is a direct reflection on Rwanda, how the world perceives Rwanda” (Coats, 2016). Such praise only (re)affirms the cyclists as symbols of Rwandan development, but does it reflect the realities and the narratives of the cyclists themselves?

More narrowly, this dissertation is a study of the individual lived experiences of a group of Rwandan cyclists within a sport for development organization. The cyclists who participated in my research live complicated lives, and a contextualization of that complexity by participants themselves of how they live every day within the social history, politics, and economies of a particular place sheds light on the often simplistic narratives emanating from sport for development organizations and the state. This type of research – understanding what cycling means to participants as a practice – is lacking in contemporary sport for development (Chawansky, 2011; Darnell, 2012; Forde, 2013; Wilson, 2014). Building on participatory work of sport for development academics such as Guest (2009) and Nicholls (2009), my dissertation presents the inconsistencies between grand narratives and those of the participants, as well as the mechanism of resistance developed and implemented by the cyclists themselves. The bicycle is not a symbol of freedom but a tactical tool used by the cyclists. I illustrate how people use certain mechanisms in particular contexts to make do and how defining themselves to others gives meaning to those mechanisms. On the African continent broadly, and in Rwanda in particular, identity is complicated, fragmented, and formed through multiple webs and meshes of interaction and meaning. Sometimes these conflict and disrupt. The disruption is not neat, but messy, complex, and contextual.
Conclusion: Voices from Below

“Every great cause begins as a movement, becomes a business, and turns into a racket.”

(Eric Hoffer, 1967)

I begin by underscoring the ways in which understandings and boundaries are formulated, erected, and reinforced by those in positions of power and control, and used Mussa’s superimposed Instagram photo as an example. The case in question surrounds an American sport for development organization based in Rwanda. Drawing on shared symbols and meanings, such organizations can establish mutual recognition of sport’s intrinsic qualities for good through collective cultural systems (Atkinson, 2003, p.210). When presented to potential donors with altruistic intentions, the capital, and the intent on giving, such symbolic modifications of one’s identity can be powerful mobilizers for action. By repurposing the bicycle as a tool for transformation and reconciliation beyond simple survival, sport for development has purposefully transformed the body culture of Rwandan cyclists themselves in the name of development. Therefore, I examine the construction of a systematized body culture that not only endorses particular bodily movements, but also normalizes particular bodily techniques that are in conflict with societal norms and identities, that is, “a body culture created and reinforced by governing norms embodied within competing systems of corporeal management” (Gilley, 2006, p.58).

This dissertation doesn’t seek to demonize or undervalue the contributions made by any particular state, organization, or individual. Rather, this ethnographic account reveals the gaps and disparities from which the image of development and its everyday practices are understood, interpreted, and resisted by those at its core – the participants. Through careful involvement in the cyclist’s lives, I was able to examine how their everyday lives work and how they understand themselves vis-à-vis their position(s) within Rwandan society. In studying their physical performance as a process and product of their everyday lives, I demonstrate the personal, interpersonal, and socio-cultural holistically to fully grasp the sociological significance of their lives and training as cyclists for Team Rwanda.
This dissertation, ultimately then, is an ethnography of everyday life as it is lived, experienced, and negotiated by the post-genocide generation of male Rwandan cyclists. From the scattered banana stands alongside Rwanda’s freshly paved road network, to the dampened confines of cyclist’s traditional mud-built homes, this ethnography is a journey symbolized by the difference between the photo I began with and the one immediately above. This photograph, taken from the balcony of a cyclist’s – Aimable’s – home (bought through cycling opportunities afforded to him) exemplifies the stark contrast between the everyday reality and the constructed images of sport for development. The spontaneous photograph displays Aimable pedaling lightly on the Tacx’s rollers – a gift from a foreigner friend – as a warm breeze washes through banana trees adjacent to his plot of land and through the hair of his newborn son, Alex, in the foreground. His wife, once a cyclist herself, hangs laundry in the background; hand washed every other day on the line next to the garden, full of organic vegetables meticulously maintained by friends when he is off training or competing. Aimable smiles as he pedals a meticulous rhythm to the beat of the music on his smartphone – another symbol of his success as a cyclist. The smells of curried potatoes and beans permeate the backyard as young children peer their heads through the cracks in the gate to
catch a glance of a Rwandan icon. When I showed Aimable this photograph, he said, “this is my kingdom.” The photograph is symbolic for Aimable, as his son represents the future, his wife his support system, and his bicycle and body his tools for success.

It is this kind of rich, complex, and nuanced representation and understanding of everyday life that is missing from within the sport for development literature and at worst erased from the representation of local people in NGO programming. This is a snapshot that is representative of one rider, but more broadly the Rwandan cycling culture, filled with the complexities – lived and represented – of his world. This dissertation aims to make explicit the everyday ‘kingdoms’ of cyclists in Rwanda.
Chapter Outline(s)

The dissertation opens, in Chapter 2, with an overview of the integrated theoretical and methodological foundations of this research project. From the beaches of Sierra Leone to the tea-laden hills of the Rwandan countryside, I unpack the rationale behind a human and ethically guided research project. From within what Prus (1997) describes as the perfectly normal, almost tranquil spaces of the cyclists' 'subcultural mosaics,' I consider the normative body as an arena of endless social power and self-determination. By explaining the study of everyday life through physical performance as a process and a product, I underscore the importance of a reflexive “interweaving of the personal (self-definition and use of the body), interpersonal (social exchange of communicative gestures through the body), and sociocultural (existing codes about the body and its displays) in order to grasp fully the sociological significance of the body-self relationship” (Atkinson, 2003, pp.210-211). This chapter, ultimately, describes the development of my core problem by recounting my methodological path: why is it important to take interest in understanding the ways people experience life within small groups and institutions in particular political, historical, economic and social contexts?

Chapter 3 moves from method and theory to the symbolic embodiment of the bicycle from within the historical confines of Rwanda and its people. This narrative history centres on this piece of technology that allows for the understandings of agency and freedom to be comprehended. Career contingency theorists such as Hughes (1937), Becker (1963), Prus (2010) inform the occupational development and individual processes accompanying the career of bicycling in Rwanda. From the mechanisms in the development of interest and attainment of skill to the mechanisms associated with the acquisition of ideological commitment and internalization of motives, this chapter ultimately makes clear the various motives and cases for how career movements make possible new experiences, transforming self-image and thus creating conditions for future movement (Prus & Carper, 1956).

Chapter 4 follows cyclists’ advancement into the world of international representation and development through the evolution of bicycle racing in Rwanda by keeping with a spatial and temporal fluidity that is necessary for any ethnographic journey (McGee, 2015). Contextualizing the conditions of social change within the post-conflict state of President Kagame, analysis is then centred upon the cyclists themselves as thinking, reflective subjects. The complex contradictions of their everyday lives reveal divergent identities of the cyclists themselves – as images of a “revived Rwanda,” bodies that have been trained and moulded to symbolize and represent the resilient and recovered nation state, and as members of a
marginal majority of Rwandan citizens trying to eke out an existence within this tightly controlled post-
conflict state. Against these paradoxes, I argue that the cyclists, within the highly constricted neoliberal
post-conflict climate of Rwanda, engage and conform to the contextual practices, relationships, and
perceptions that bind their bodily identity to the bicycle as an attempt to advance themselves within an
increasingly stratified society. At the crux of this chapter, therefore, is an attempt to theorize the
perspectives of the processes from within which the cyclists become involved and enveloped, and I offer
a narrative into the contradictions and controversies facing their everyday life as participants of this
sports organization. My conclusions validate my lived realities, that although participants in sport for
development programs clasp tangible benefits to participation, it is at a cost that is often incredibly
difficult to measure socially, culturally, financially, and politically.

In establishing how Rwanda cycling’s image, direction, and support is chiefly propagated, reinforced and
sustained by global outside forces – be it the global development discourse, organizational funders, or
individual donors – Chapter 5 ethnographically investigates networks of social relations marked by
mutuality and emotional bonds amongst their members – the local communities and the meta-
communities of Team Rwanda cyclists. Employing Fiske’s (1992) writings on relational models, a critical
unpacking of how cyclists see value in communal development as part of growing individual freedoms is
established. I illuminate the various mechanisms and rules established and employed by the community
members as a means of continuity and survival by drawing on narrative life histories of the cyclists’
everyday lives. Uncovering such seemingly trivial strategies and procedures, allows me to consider the
micro-politics of everyday tactics as a means of disrupting, for brief moments, the broader disciplining
powers. Like de Certeau (1984), I was interested in the tactics described and demonstrated by the
cyclists in resisting social norms (e.g., authoritative foreign NGOs) and weakening the strength of these
institutions through forms of ‘anti-discipline.’ Such ‘collective communities’ provide a unique window of
investigation into the formation of groups whom collectively relate culturally and socially to the
contradicting frameworks of power and agency, as presented in this case study. Such communal
organizing is interpreted as a form of power and agency for members of such groups seeking social
mobility – through corporeal labour – in a highly constrained society.
Chapter Two: A Methodology

Method is about process. The point of method is to make that process public, to open it up to inquiring eyes so that anyone can evaluate the claims the researcher makes about what group is like. (Agar, 1996, p.14)

Introduction

A particular method is required to explore the phenomenological meaning of cycling relative to the everyday lives of a group of East African youth. I have taken a methodological approach grounded and instantiated in territorialized localities as a specific transnational process (Tsuda & al., 2014, p.124) that has formed the perspectives and behaviours of those living within them. Throughout this methodology’s maturation, I have come to understand that a clear disengagement with contemporary sport for development research – fraught as it is with “development imperialism” (Barry-Shaw & Oja Jay, 2012) as well as development-centred victim/perpetrator dichotomies dealing with issues such as race, class, or gender – is required for more humane, micrological, ethically-guided, emotionally sensitive, embodied, and interpersonal research. This realization has made me deeply attentive to the striking similarities, rather than mass differences, of the human experience occurring both within and around me (Atkinson, 2014). I have discovered substantiated fields of ethnographic research both in Development Studies (Olivier de Sardan, 2005; Weisgrau, 1997) and Physical Cultural Studies (Grossberg, 1997; Howell, Andrews, & Jackson, 2002) that seek to better understand the various temporal complexities and particular undertakings of organizations, groups, and individuals in relation to the everyday lives of those targeted.

In this chapter, I demonstrate the complex ethnographic process of attempting to describe and interpret all culture (Agar, 1996). I will unpack why and how I chose a diagnostic ethnography5 in, and of, the first-person as the most reactive, reflexive and resolute way of conducting critically informed Physical Cultural Studies research within the dynamic context of Rwanda. Erik Wright and Mitchell Duneier, at the University of Wisconsin, coined the term diagnostic ethnography to explain that the ethnography

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5 Mitchell Duneier is a sociologist who uses what he calls “diagnostic ethnography” to study the lives of poor, black, urban people. In his book Sidewalk (1999), he focuses on three blocks of Sixth Avenue in Greenwich Village, where a group of magazine and book vendors, scavengers, panhandlers, movers, and assistants form a complex social network that has ties to both the formal and informal economies.
does not exact a theory out of fieldwork data. Rather, diagnostic ethnography instructs the “ethnographer [to come] to a site with the sociological equivalent of the doctor’s medicine bag of diagnostic tools derives from already-existing sociological theory and [to use] these tools to generate a specific explanation for the ‘symptoms’ in the site” (Duneier, 2002, p.1566). In Sidewalk, Duneier (1999) is interested in the moral choices his subjects make within the constraints of larger racial, political, and economic structures, but he is also deeply committed to helping these people get their voices heard. These commitments are what my dissertation adheres to. Moreover, this type of ethnographic detail is absent in current sport for development literature and through its use I hope to expose the simplicity of universalizing a sport for development organization’s models and discourses.

This chapter gives insight into the epistemological, ethical, practical, and contextual considerations undertaken during my 27 weeks spent doing ethnographic research within a post-genocide African state. I first introduce you, the reader, to myself as the vessel of this research through a brief self-description. By presenting an honest and transparent portrayal of who I am as the researcher, I uncover the opportunities and limitations of my research, and identify how they were addressed, while dialectically illuminating the project’s evolution. This chapter explains the development of my core problem by recounting my methodological path: *why is it important to take interest in understanding the ways people experience life within small groups and institutions in particular political, historical, economic and social contexts?* In doing so, I hope that this contribution – the study of the human condition – provides a much-needed phenomenological perspective to the sport for development literature.

I embody and interpret life on the fringes of development within the heart of a rapidly globalizing continent from within the everyday lives of a group of elite Rwandan cyclists. An ethnographic field study of East African cyclists then emerges, “located at the intersection of the most remote forces, connections and imaginations” (Burawoy, 2001, p.148). The result is a study that I hope moves beyond traditional sport for development research, and historical depictions of Africa’s populations as helpless and dependent others, and into complex engagements of “embedded and embodied social inquiry” (Wacquant, 2015, p.4).

**Personalizing the Global**

*This past weekend, early in the morning on Saturday when most are nursing hangovers from the night before, I met up with a group of guys on Lumley beach to go for a jog at 8am. Unlike most jogs I’ve done here in the past 3 months, either alone or with some expat friends, this one was distinct in that I was one of only 3 people with all of my limbs. That’s right, limbs. On Saturday I joined the Sierra Leone Freetown Amputee Soccer Team in*
their regular Saturday morning practice. Starting with a 3-mile jog on the beach at a pace that would make half my friends in Canada winded, I was expecting something a bit more amateur. I was wrong. Twenty or more guys and I, mostly leg amputees, made our way down the beach, stopping intermittently to do either push-ups or sit-ups headed by the team’s coach Mamud. Fisherman watched and encouraged us as we raced after coach. After the warm-up, I sat and spoke with Bono, an amputee on the Freetown team (there is a league with 5 teams throughout the country). Bono and I know each other a bit since we live in the same slum neighborhood, Juba/Lumley junction, and he’s a dreadlock Rasta that hangs out near where I get my bike checked out often — near the bottom of my hill. Athletic as can be and one of the older guys on team Bono tells me very simply that this team is often the lifeline and family for many of the guys. “Many of the boys have gone through so much, losing a leg or an arm, and here [in this country] it’s not easy. Family, friends, society, they all see you differently. Many are isolated and become down [depressed]. Here we are a family, and you are now part of our family.” I don’t know where I fit in with these guys but it is an honor to see them so accepting of someone who just wants to get to know their story. I have an obligation now to make it known. I feel that while I watch the guys play I see what humanity is supposed to look like in front of my eyes. They are laughing, they are fighting, they are yelling, they are struggling and they are succeeding together. They are alive and they are living. I can’t fathom the psychological mountain of challenges resulting from someone chopping off your hands, legs or both, often in public. Think about that sentence. You watched as someone else took from you a part of yourself in the most barbaric of ways. The machete.
You screamed.
You pleaded.
You prayed.
A part of you died, but you survived.
Often I am sure some of them wish they hadn’t. And now you must gather the strength to move on and rebuild yourself. These stories, these experiences are moments I don’t think I would have the strength to overcome. Yet, surprisingly those emotions and tensions don’t feel present at the field on the beach that morning. All I feel is positive energy, teamwork and friendship as I walk around, meeting the players and chatting with them about life, football (because I am such an expert at football…silence…) and how it is to be part of the team. I know many people back home can appreciate the benefits of sports and physical activity can have on people (health etc…) but I have witnessed again first hand the benefits brought on by sport in this post conflict situation and it has reenergized my beliefs that sport can overcome even the hardest of situations.
(Fieldnotes, Masters Thesis, 2009)

Why are we starting here? This journal entry, from my Masters field research in Sierra Leone in 2009, conveys the innocence, curiosity and ignorance of my former self. These notes were jotted down in a notebook near the edge of the Freetown peninsula where I began to observe myself transforming. It is from these moments, back in Freetown, that I recognize the need to consider certain development issues littered within the intensely-diluted environments of these dilapidated and dysfunctional nation states, and consider unpacking what I believed to be normal practice of international development.

I was, unknowingly, beginning what Faulkner (2009) describes as thick exploration, unaware that these stories and their consideration went beyond mere observation. This exploration is a key dimension through which intimate interactions within a particular social world are studied with the intent of uncovering new concepts while developing new, nuanced understandings and interpretations of existing phenomena. Rather than simply describing what is conventional ethnography, I critically unpacked the contexts and meanings that shape local lives, asking, “what could be” (Thomas, 1993, p.4).
I was also unknowingly developing and creating my own ethnographic proficiencies while deepening my understanding of international sport for development from the “ground up” as I listened to, and cared for, the lives and histories of Mamud and Bono. This was evident when I interpreted their lives as athletes, fathers, Sierra Leoneans. This passion for systemic change in how We (with a capital W, i.e., the West) conduct ourselves as people of privilege and good intention within ‘developing’ or destroyed communities, originates from innocent conversations and interactions such as those on the beach at Lumley. Whether this was the result of my French Canadian upbringing or the privileged international experiences that were presented to me in my young life,6 I cannot be certain. The inherent humility I acquired throughout my significant travels at a young age created a change in perspective – from an understanding that We are here for the benefit of those in “need,” to more complex comprehension of context and culture. My life could no longer be attributed to what Teju Cole (2012) described as White Saviour Complex7 but to an active questioning and recognizing of my complicity in the increasingly neoliberal model of humanitarianism and development.

Edwards (2008) would have most likely diagnosed me with having a “crisis of NGO faith,” becoming increasingly sceptical about the motivations behind organizations, States and individuals who intervene and interject themselves into the lives of underprivileged others. On the hot, claustrophobically congested streets of Freetown, my internalized interpretations of international development boiled over, and I began to experience and feel what Barry-Shaw and Oja Jay (2012) describe as the slow descent of development NGOs from idealism to imperialism. From the privileged settings of air-conditioned UN helicopters, large white Land Rovers, militarized convoys and all the well-equipped offices in-between, I acknowledged that I was a part of an actively negotiated disconnect between “us/them,” “black/white,” “developed/savage.” This disconnect has been built and reinforced historically, codified within a culture of power relations that I experienced resisting, and ultimately reinforcing, every day whilst working in the field. I had acknowledged a limitation to my ideologies on life, yet did not consider it a barrier to the fruitful ethnographic work needed to be done with such groups.

I experienced little academic respite, as the rhetorics within political science and international development proclaimed a ‘development discourse’ from the top-down. I was reminded of how “the

6I travelled extensively internationally without parents starting at the age of eleven, then lived a year abroad at the age of seventeen, and had a number of years working in some of the world’s harshest landscapes with organizations such as the United Nations.
7White Saviour Identity, a term coined by Teju Cole, a Nigerian-American writer, describes an inherently problematic lack of recognition of social privilege. Although I wasn’t obnoxious about my privilege when abroad at a young age, my lack of acknowledgement, recognition, and consideration made me a complicit actor in this power narrative.
North’s superiority over the South is taken for granted, and development aid, as it’s viewed by Westerners, is considered the norm” (Kapoor, 2004, p.629). This norm has become interpreted as the righteous, and dominant, ideology of Western development discourse and it bothered me, knowing that it lacked consideration for “the other”/the recipients of that aid. I took to writing and photography to illustrate, and make sense of, what I was witnessing and experiencing. These reflexive exercises became transformational moments in my career as I began to better recognize my position within these communities, and the profound impact I had on the everyday lives of the participants. I learned that my behaviours, language, and interactions, were predicated on meta-understandings of race, power, and privilege, imposed on us through cultural understandings and upbringings of the other. I was not sure, however, how those effects were interpreted and internalized by participants of development programs themselves, and questioned why such understandings were being evaded.

Acknowledging this reality was difficult, as I aspired to have a career abroad within the expanding development nexus. Yet, ironically, through “living one’s way” (Walcott, p.42) into these cultures and communities, I slowly realized how broken the international development system truly was, and thus began a reflexive manoeuvring around how I, described, engaged with, and interpreted development. This reflexive exercise became my methodological bread and butter in the years to come, and paved the path for my current research ethos.

As I left Sierra Leone, I believed there was a need to study and understand “sites [NGOs] of considerable internal struggle over politics, positioning, program priorities and power” (Choudry, 2013, p.10) from the perspectives of the participants and community members. I gradually drew on reflexivity as a means of consciously thinking through my thoughts, decisions, and actions as I searched for an appropriate outlet to exercise the internally-traumatizing feelings I was experiencing as myself (a white, Western male) within this complex global development system. These reflections are further explored within the genesis of the research study below.

**How Did it Come to This?**

I was left to reexamine what I had come to understand as contemporary international development after my time spent in the villages, slums, and beaches of Sierra Leone. The professionalization and depolarization of community-based NGO's now appeared as invasive and ignorant of the sensitive contexts they worked in, and were often questioned by those they sought to affect (Smilie, 1995). I became intensely aware of my slowly transforming identity from questioned outsider to accepted
community member. Living within the slums of Freetown as a “blatant outsider” (Brown, 2009), I made a conscious decision to embrace my difference and “get on with my day,” after recognizing my difference was never going to completely disappear. Through this deliberate nonchalance, I began to see that the lives of these communities, excluding the dramatically different cultural, political, and economic contexts, were often riddled with mundane similarities to my life back in Canada. I consciously altered the focus of my Master’s thesis, amalgamating my experiences in both development and sport, and unveiling scholarly work on organizations and individuals that claim sport as a means of meaningful reconciliation with the “other.” The result was a research project titled A Worthy Goal: An Examination of Sports Potential in Reconciliation. I drew case data from numerous examples and development theory as a means of determining that the power of sport – in the process of peace and reconciliation – was overwhelmingly held by the individuals (or organizations) involved in its implementation, not their participants.

Sport for Development, I would discover, was, and is, a burgeoning academic and practical field. Its literature influences academics and practitioners from various backgrounds, understandings, and perspectives. The progression of sport for development research is often entwined with NGO practices in the field. Participant voices, I concluded, were often ignored within organizational and academic spaces, creating a gap in both knowledge and literature. I believed that through a deep phenomenological analysis of youth voices, I could understand how participants live and experience sport for development initiatives, yet I had an unsophisticated understanding of what it meant or what was needed to realize such research.

What I did comprehend from my time in Sierra Leone was that such an intimate understanding of a social space could only come with time and trust. Returning home to Canada, I realized if a better understanding of how sport is consumed and interpreted by participants and communities could be achieved that this would, logically, lead to better designed and sustainable sport for development (Cutt, 1982). In 2010, this desire for a deeper understanding of sport for development influenced my work with a local rugby club in post-conflict northern Uganda as a means of personally navigating many of the “insider-outsider” (Forde, 2008) perspectives I was exposed to through my Master’s research. These conversations were foundational to where I am today, as they initiated the formation of Gainline Africa, a sport for development organization that I founded in collaboration with northern Ugandan rugby communities. Since 2010, I have spent considerable time living in northern Uganda where I have applied
my critical and theoretical insights. I have worked to instil a culture of ongoing consultation and reflexivity\(^8\) with staff, communities and participants.

Shortly after the creation of Gainline Africa, I decided to take up my doctoral research at the University of Toronto, where I would be close to committed scholars of sport for development, physical cultural studies and international development. Not only was I immersed in relevant topics but also my engagement with leading international organizations affiliated with the University of Toronto influenced my thinking and perspectives. I was able to focus on the dynamic personal, local, national, and global processes and connections that “potentially support and suppress an insurrection of subjugated knowledges” (Fisher, 200, p.449), within these geographical, academic, and intellectual spaces. Academia confirmed my inclinations towards the mythic status of sport (Coalter, 2007) within international development, and provoked my thoughts around how the processes at work within the conflicted ethical, cultural and political settings of an sport for development NGO may be relevant for others, in other contexts.

I was provided with practical and scholarly information within these opposing spaces. Each played upon the other simultaneously, actively evolving my curiosity. I was influenced by my experiences as a practitioner. My academic outputs were made rich by my intimate knowledge of the field, something that often was lacking in the classroom. This mutually beneficial academic-practitioner identity (re)confirmed the deep disconnect between researchers, sport for development organizations, and participant communities that I had originally suspected while living within the refugee camps of East Africa four years prior.

Through all this, I recognized the need for a study that sought to achieve an organizational understanding that probes deeper (Clarke, 1996; Pinkney, 2009) and I believed that a conceptualized ethnographic project that is civic, participatory, and collaborative would join the participants within sport for development organizations and me in an evolving ethical dialogue centering on their everyday lives. In this respect, the starting point for my study was an intimate urge to fulfill one of sociology’s

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\(^8\)I recognize that reflexivity has been a loosely used and often abused term within methodological literature. Following Hammersley and Atkinson’s (1995) definition of reflexivity as the “ineluctable fact that the ethnographer is thoroughly implicated in the phenomena that he or she documents, that there can be no disengaged observation of a social scene that exists in a ‘state of nature’ independent of the observer’s presence, that interview accounts are conventions of representation” (Atkinson, 2006, p.402) I will make meaningful use of reflexivity within my ethnographic research by making it a guiding principle. All ethnographic work implies a certain degree of personal engagement with the field and with the data. My identity and my subject matter (SDP in particular) have long been implicated in one another, something that has drawn me to this research, and is not something new or controversial in the field of social science research.
most enduring mandates, “to give voice to those whose experiences are typically marginalized or
discounted altogether” (Karp, 2009, p.39).

As a result, the intent of this dissertation is to illustrate how development processes shape, and are
shaped by, everyday life within the Rwandan cycling culture. Rather than experience the research subject
as a traditional ethnographic observer (Agar, 1996; Geertz, 1983; Van Maanen, 1988), I would replicate
the epistemological approaches I used in/with Gainline Africa by involving myself intimately within the
lives of participants. That is, I placed myself within the local context to experience (firsthand) the
intricacies of everyday life. I sought methodologically integrative ways to address questions of
interpretation, negotiation, and embodiment from within the current perspective and historical life
narratives of my participants. Questions from the outset included:

- How is the sport for development organization situated within the everyday life of the participants?
- How do its participants perceive the organization?
- What sorts of impact(s) are being derived from these experiences?
- How are the corporeal and moral dispositions of this sport for development organization
  interpreted, negotiated and embodied on and off the bike in relation to historical events endured by
  participants?
- How are sport for development spaces perceived, utilized and/or coopted by its participants?
- What contested social and corporeal dimensions of everyday life (within a sport for development
  organization) are relevant for others, in other contexts?

These preliminary questions needed a home where their answers could develop and breathe (Frank,
2010), and they helped provide investigations into the particular with hopes of exemplifying broader
socio-cultural contexts. Although Gainline Africa would have been an easily accessible research subject, I
wanted a degree of separation between the organization and myself, not only to promote neutrality but
also to encourage the exploratory curiosity that often comes with new places, persons, and
perspectives.

Equipped with methodological reasoning made clear by the lack of deep empirical and lived
understandings of sport for development participants, as well as theoretical and practical knowledge
from both my years spent abroad and in the classrooms, there were only two questions remaining: where and with whom?

From the Screen to Ethnographic Engulfment

“The camera can be the most deadly weapon since the assassin’s bullet. Or it can be the lotion of the heart.” (Norman Parkinson)

On October 24, 2012, I watched a documentary trailer on YouTube about reconciliation in Rwanda through a sports organization – cycling, to be exact. After watching it once, I proceeded to watch it several times. I was taken aback. This movie seemed like the cinematic embodiment of everything I had been theorizing and arguing for academically and practically for the past four years. I wanted to know more. I found the director of the film on Facebook and drafted an email to him describing my desire to learn more about the organization in his film. I learned that Rising from Ashes was directed and produced by T.C Johnstone, an Evangelical Christian American filmmaker. Mr. Johnstone serendipitously stumbled upon the opportunity to film this story, and did so over a seven-year span. This happened, interestingly enough, through his affiliation with American evangelical pastor Rick Warren, whom he was originally in Rwanda with filming a promotional video for his church in 2007. While ‘in country,’ Mr. Johnstone filmed the inaugural Wooden Bike Classic – a local bike race organized and sponsored by American Tom Ritchey – on September 16-17, 2006. There he would meet those Rwandans and Americans who would make up the nucleus of his film. His online bio colourfully depicts this transformation of his project and his thinking around international development:

T.C. Johnstone moved to Southern California to pursue his passion for filmmaking. While on assignment in Rwanda, Africa shooting a story on Rick and Kay Warren of Saddleback Church, life took a dramatic turn…
During production the team visited several small villages to meet with Genocide survivors and HIV support groups. While documenting the Warren’s travels, T.C. was introduced to a Global Initiative called the Peace Plan, which is a movement to mobilize 1 billion people to take on the world’s greatest problems by doing the things Jesus did while on earth.
Promote reconciliation.
Equip servant leaders.
Assist the poor.
Care for the sick.
Educate the next generation.
During the trip to Rwanda a simple question was asked by Dr. Warren, “What is in your

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9 Rick Warren is an evangelical Christian pastor and the founder of the Saddleback Church, the eighth largest “Mega-Church” in America. He is also the controversial best selling author of the book A Purpose Driven Life.
hands? What talents do you have that God could use?” Over the next 7-days it became clear; he was to make movies with meaning that would hopefully lead to transformative conversations. 
(T.C. Johnstone’s Website, Front page)

The prominence of evangelical faith-based activities, while certainly not inherently negative, and his push for ‘media with meaning,’ was a point of trepidation for me, a definite red flag, as I continued my online research. My years in East Africa specifically, and the continent more broadly, showed me that the power and influence of Western interventions are, more often than not, not in the interest of those most in need. Faith-based projects add a layer of complexity to countries where religion is a prominent pillar of society, operating through misinformation and messaging couched in religious references (see Ferrari, 2011). Add in radicalized, faith-based interventions within a post-conflict community such as Rwanda – where the disparities are even more pronounced – and there is the potential for malpractice and abuse. Evidence of this can be seen in Uganda where American pastor Scott Lively’s deceptive influence was the driving force behind Uganda’s controversial new anti-gay legislation.\(^\text{10}\)

Reservations about faith-based ideologies in post-conflict communities aside, the trailer immediately resonated with me, bringing to light what was currently missing within sport for development: first person voices describing their experiences within a sports-based context. I was keen on learning more about the organization, and the participants featured within it.

Mr. Johnstone was abrupt and to the point in his response. We exchanged a few emails back and forth, and he gave me a 24-hour pass to view the full-length documentary online. I watched it three times within the permitted timeframe. The movie continued the emotionally captivating tone of the trailer with stories describing “redemption, hope, and second chances” (RFA website) as the focal point. Breathtaking cinematography of the Rwandan foothills, beautiful Black smiling faces, and the athleticism of the cyclists provided the backdrop. The bicycle was a tool for salvation, and Forest Whittaker narrated. Although it became clear Mr. Johnstone was preoccupied, the film’s participants – the Rwandan cyclists – and their stories of trauma and violence, valorized on screen, captivated me and left me thinking about the sport for

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\(^\text{10}\) Member of Parliament David Bahati originally submitted a private member’s bill on 14 October 2009. A special motion to introduce the legislation was passed a month after a two-day conference was held in which three American Christians asserted that homosexuality is a direct threat to the cohesion of African families. The Parliament of Uganda passed the Uganda Anti-Homosexuality Act on 20 December 2013, with the death penalty proposal dropped in favour of life in prison. The President of Uganda signed the bill into law on 24 February 2014.
development organization featured in the documentary. As I scanned through available online documentation and resources on the team, the project, and its founders (in French and English), I got the impression that there was a lot more to this story than was being portrayed in the dramatic trailer and within the documentary itself. The information online summarized a plethora of “good news” stories and politically-correct social media jargon, web pages that typify the contemporary neo-colonial benevolence we see represented by organizations today (Barry-Shaw & Oja Jay, 2012). Personal blogs (see Coats, 2016) from those working for the organization further revealed descriptions of embodied neo-colonial development ideologies, and a ‘taking advantage of locals’ idiom that was worrying. Combined with Rising from Ashes, the organization’s understanding of itself set off alarm bells for me, and my cynical understandings of sport for development began to question the neatly described narratives being presented by the organization within such a politically and socially charged context as Rwanda.

Following what Wilson (2014) describes as a “contextual cultural studies tradition” of research, I began to analyze how the organization’s messages made particular social and cultural practices and assumptions (e.g., sport can solve societal ills) seem “natural” and commonsensical. I became captivated by the political correctness of the stories being told, from the organization to its participants, as I re-read and re-watched online videos, interviews and news clippings. Each story unfolded within a tightly-scripted narrative that supported the organization’s objectives while actively ignoring the delicate political, economic, and social contexts that surrounded them. The rhetoric, responses, and repetition by participants made it clear that the true voices at the epicenter of this story, the cyclists’ voices, were being shut out or constrained. They were replaced by what can be described as a ‘generic voice of the vulnerable,’ a complacent, thankful, smiling other, presumably to appease those higher up in the development hierarchy. There was a story to be told far beyond what was being said and a dynamic, participant-centric research methodology would provide the ideal platform to present these previously unheard voices of sport for development to a broader audience.

This dramatic constellation of factors (post-conflict communities, American evangelicals, an elitist sport, a high-performance focus, racial hierarchies) posed as an opportunity for deeper investigation beyond traditional sport for development research. I believed a deeper investigation, with the hopes of following Grossberg’s (1997) idea of “destabilizing some of these connections that appear natural and extremely stable”(p.155), was needed. I would endeavour to go to Rwanda equipped with what Anderson (2002)

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11 For example, “providing hope, reconciliation, and assistance to countries and populations experiencing conflict through the bicycle” (see Team Africa Rising, 2015).
would say is a certain “sociological sophistication,” a particular perspective defined through the accumulation of theoretical and practical knowledge, and address what I saw as a central question: How do these particular individual participants interpret and conceptualize the sport of cycling in the Rwandan context?

I believed I had found a site needing investigation. I now needed a way forward.

**Rationalizing Study Design**

“Luck is the residue of design” (Branch Ritchey, 1946)

“No one without a strong stomach should watch sausage or laws being made. The production of good things might not be pretty” (Gary Allan Fine, 1993)

I approached my research knowing that to understand others, one must become intimately familiar with their life-worlds – their everyday lives, their ideologies, the socio-economic contexts of where they live. Intimate familiarity with such life-worlds is critical, as Shaffir (2012) describes,

> to see how people make sense of the situations they encounter in their daily routines and how they deal with these situations on an ongoing basis. Thus, in contrast to those who send out questionnaires to people or run them through sets of experiments, the approach taken here concentrates on achieving in-depth familiarity with the life-worlds of the people being considered by venturing out into these life-worlds. This means talking to people about their experiences and activities, as well as observing their behaviour and inquiring into their meanings, concerns, and practices, and, wherever feasible, participating in those same situations ourselves. (Sociology 3003: Qualitative Research Methods Course Description: McMaster University)

In 2014, Atkinson pushed my thinking forward by suggesting I seek out a person-first, radically empathetic, forward thinking physical cultural studies that not only writes ‘how the world is’ in its empirical reality but drives the researcher to write how the world ‘ought to be’ (Atkinson, 2011). Drawing from critical reflections of Thin (2014), Frank (2010), and Wilkinson (2004), he encouraged a project “that sees human suffering and the possibility of human pleasure through movement as a (if not the) core focus… [this notion] is the study of social life manifesting into and engaging with, as Burawoy (2005) writes, the possibility/existence of ‘better worlds’” (p.7).
Thinking of pushing beyond simple understandings of everyday life, and pushing into ‘deep investigation,’ I returned back to ethnography and its evolution beyond simply shared knowledge; reflecting on its practices of everyday life, the ways those practices are built out of shared knowledge, in addition to the social, economic, political, ecological, and cultural elements that are relevant in those instances. The ‘aha’ moment came when I recognized this enterprise of physical cultural studies (Atkinson, 2011; Silk & Andrews, 2011) – a systematic study of trans-contextual, trans-historical and generic aspects of the human condition through empirical accounts of human movement, activity, sport, leisure and health and wellbeing – as an extension of the realist-oriented ethnographic methodological camp which influenced me.

Agar (1996) explains that ethnography is quite different from the act of simply borrowing ethnographic techniques. Ethnography requires a researcher who will transgress theoretical and disciplinary boundaries while actively deciding to “speak in truth, to make suggestions, to be morally grounded, and attempt to rekindle a sort of positivism in research often decried as non-value neutral, biased or unscientific” (Agar, 1996, p.74). This would be no small task and, in preparing for this academic endeavour, I became most concerned with an over-consideration of techniques, ‘standards’ or frameworks; deliberations that create what I describe as analysis paralysis, disabling me from behaving naturally and comfortably as possible within ‘the field.’

In Ten Lies of Ethnography, Fine (1993) boldly sets forth a set of important concerns and set of ethnographic realities that are part of the “transformed presentation” of this methodology. Fine reduces anxieties of ethnographic performance by dismembering ethnography this way. In doing so, he clarifies idealism as a luxury in a pressured (ethnographic) circumstance and unveils that the researcher’s ability to navigate this web of demands will dictate the amount of deviation needed from formal and idealistic rules:

> Ethnography is ultimately about transformation. We take idiosyncratic behaviours, events with numerous causes, which may — God forbid! — be random (or at least inexplicable to us mortals), and we package them. We contextualize events in a social system, within a web of meaning, and provide a nameable causation. We transform them into meaningful patterns, and in so doing we exclude other patterns, meanings, or causes. Transformation is about hiding, about magic, about change. This is the task that

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12 Analysis Paralysis is an over-consideration of techniques, ‘standards’ or frameworks that is often seen and experienced by novice ethnographers, most likely graduate students. With the abundance of literature, advice, and techniques one can easily be overwhelmed with ‘rules’, ‘considerations’, and ‘advice’ for fieldwork. This over-zealous consideration could be to the detriment of the naturalization process of a fieldworker within his/her new context and cause participants to feel wary or suspicious of one’s presence there. I wanted to avoid this at all costs.
we face and is the reality that we must embrace. We ethnographers cannot help but lie, but in lying, we reveal truths that escape those who are not so bold. (p.290)

I allowed myself the possibility of creating something well suited for my particular setting and skillset, by embracing freedom from too-strict adherence to customary standards of doing ethnography. I loosely followed and adapted a series of practices that Atkinson (2014) would say underpin physical cultural studies research while fulfilling the need for what Elias (1987) describes as balance within ethnography. Balance, as Atkinson unpacks it, lies “between intense, empathic involvement with subjects (required to gain a sympathetic understanding of others) and cognitive/emotional detachment from them (required to sociologically recognise the conceptual themes, patterns, and structures – or, generic social processes – organising everyday life)” (p.21). This balance developed my involved/detached understanding of what it is like to be a sport for development participant while maintaining a degree of professional separation to objectively report on the experiences of those around me. These techniques by no means alleviated the problematic tasks of ethnographic realism – a mode of writing that seeks to represent the reality of a whole world or form of life (Marcus & Cushman, 1982, p.29) – presented within this research, nor the limitations of intersubjectivity existing within such a framework. Yet this imperfect ethnographic offering provides the substantive and theoretical understandings needed to navigate the temporal and contextual issues of everyday life through a reflexive and ethically-guided approach. This honest epistemology, with its direction purposely unclear, gave me the authority, empathy, intersubjectivity and freedom to “write an account of the culture that accurately represents its core values, structures, processes and participants” (Atkinson, 2012, p.26).

Issues of Access

It was not difficult to gain initial access to the Rwandan cyclists. Sparks and Smith (2014) highlight the self-evident, yet important, notion that the place we require access to lies within the questions we ask. It was logical for me as a methodological strategy to gain access to the Africa Rising Cycling Center – henceforth referred to as the Center – as my investigations surrounded the way in which cycling was

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13 First, the practice of PCS requires a researcher to be personally, affectively, cognitively, physically, and socially open to people. Second, it demands co-presence with them in the practice of everyday life, wherever possible. Third, PCS evolves as a concatenated effort to illuminate the commonalities of lived experience and the human condition, in the hopes of destabilizing conceptual differences between people that are used, so often, as a social tool of exclusion, power, dominance and exploitation. Fourth, it asks researchers to think creatively and simultaneously about how the pleasurable and not-so-pleasurable aspects of human existence are apparent in physical cultural practices. Fifth, such a vision of PCS asks researchers to allow themselves to be literally written, in a liminal way, by and through the research act; in short, to be changed quite deeply. Sixth, and finally, it requires new and innovative modes of representing the human condition as learned and deciphered through fieldwork.
embodied and perceived within the everyday lives of the particular African cyclists at the Center. I believed that by gaining access to the Center and the cyclists within their primary sporting environment, I would establish relationships that would open doors, with time, into deeper spaces of inquiry. With this understanding, I corresponded with the sport for development organization’s staff, initiated online video interviews, and had my research proposal vetted by the organization’s board in the summer of 2014. It was important to inform any potential gatekeepers of my intentions and research objectives from the outset, to ensure transparency between those involved in facilitating my project. To do so, I applied a two-pronged approach to maintaining communication with the gatekeepers. First, prior to my arrival (and during my stay), I made various attempts at distinguishing my “added value” as a member of the team. Not only would I be willingly available for daily chores but I was also keen on contributing to their organizational development, something often lacking for sport for development organizations. Secondly, I kept them abreast of my theoretical progress, research plans, outcomes, and strategies by sharing drafts of my proposal document, presentation and ethics forms, which I openly invited feedback on. Not only was I being transparent but I was attempting to facilitate discussion on my research objectives, methodological choices, and potential opportunities with staff. I was open about my intentions as a researcher, why I believed my research was valuable, and how this critical work could illuminate and aid their work prior to the Tour of Rwanda, the pinnacle of their cycling season. With a proposal submitted and defended, I arrived in Rwanda in the fall of 2014.

A Director of the sport for development organization revealed to me that my “insider” status of two important groups contributed to my ability to access the cyclists. First, my experiences as a founder and active director of a sport for development organization, Gainline Africa, in a post-conflict East African community contributed to my credibility as someone who understood the sport for development environment. The Directors of the sport for development organization were interested in my humanitarian experiences, asking me numerous questions about my work in northern Uganda throughout the vetting process. I believed I was considered a colleague, almost an equal, prior to my arrival at the Center due to my role in creating Gainline Africa and my ability to articulate the many nuanced frustrations and hurdles (political, social, cultural) they were actively dealing with as foreigners themselves in Rwanda. Our shared experiences connected us, ensuring their trust in me. Second, my membership as an athlete and coach provided me with further credit as a positive fit within the Center’s high-performance environment. I brought a well-developed understanding of team dynamics, leadership,

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14 In discussions with past volunteers and employees, I had noticed a recurring trend of comments regarding the disorganization of the organization’s strategy, focus, and direction. As I have training and experience in the areas of monitoring and evaluation, strategy, and organizational development, I was pleased that during our conversations prior to my arrival in Rwanda, there was discussion of my addressing some of these issues with staff.
and training to the team. Although my cycling experience was relatively minimal in comparison to others (the coaches, trainers, and mechanics) on the team, I had the ability to contribute – conducting English classes, aiding in the cooking, serving, and cleaning – and ‘keep up’ with the cyclists as an amateur cyclist, providing advice and camaraderie during the team’s off-bike exercises (yoga, plyometrics, strength training). I was cognizant that I might be seen as a burden and felt it was critical that I, as a researcher, emphasize my value to the cyclists every day as an outlet to discuss issues and ideas unsupported by other staff. To them I believe I was a friend. Seamlessly “blending in” was important to me as a researcher and I believe was understood and appreciated by the organization during my initial conversations with the team, and the organization’s leadership.

It was our mutual hope that this would be a collective win for all involved. This was reflected in my access, verbal and written, by the organization prior to travelling to Rwanda. I would give the cyclists a voice through my research. The organization added ‘help’. And for me, there was a research site full of potential.

Win. Win. Win.

I gained access to the cyclists as a researcher on one condition – that I would have a limited ability to interact and interview cyclists during races, or leading up to races (particularly the Tour of Rwanda). I was to respect the cyclists’ schedules, which are extremely regimented, particularly during racing, which I sympathized with. I agreed with staff that I would alter my data collection process during these taxing periods by focusing more on observational or contextual data collection tactics that did not directly, or adversely, involve the cyclists. They agreed, and I was elated by the prospects in front of me, a young researcher with what seemed like the ideal foray into “living one’s way into a culture” (Wolcott, 2002, p.42).

The veil of optimism and promise was lifted off my over-eager eyes soon after I had arrived in Rwanda and had driven north into the beautifully green peaks of the Virunga Mountains. The access, camaraderie, and cooperation I had agreed to in my extensive communications with the organization were actively negated, contradicted and denied. After only approximately six weeks at the Center, the directors decided that my presence there was not working, and promptly ended my access. This surprising turn of events came abruptly and forced me as a researcher, on the fly, to rethink issues such as access, safety, and ethics.
It became certain from my observations during my six weeks at the Center that the reality depicted in film was nowhere to be found. In the film the cycling team and their centre, was an oasis within a reconciliatory nation. In reality, the cycling centre only maintained a superficial image of progress, development and professionalization. The issues facing myself, the cyclists, and the organization were starkly different.

**A Change of Faith**

The process of gaining access to participants in qualitative research is described by Holloway (1997) as “a continuing process of ongoing inclusion and exclusion of informants and not a once-and-for-all procedure because the size of the sample is not always established from the beginning of a qualitative study but depends on the emerging concepts” (p.20). In my case, the initial gatekeepers who gave me access to the Center were also the ones who took it away. From within this dissolving ethnographic site, the Director had “created a situation [for me] that became unbearable, treated me with disrespect and disregard…something unexpected, as it has completely transformed [my situation] in Rwanda…crushed its very purpose” (Fieldnotes).

This (de)evolving process of my access and ethnographic identity as a researcher was intimately linked to the three major themes that are unpacked next: association, language and related suffering. These themes unexpectedly combined, subverting the power and influence of the initial gatekeepers who deliberately limited and constricted the access that I was previously permitted. Paradoxically, my access, and the credibility, authenticity, and trust I was given among the cycling community, was surprisingly increased. Although brief, my “participation in the world” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p.395) of the Center would unknowingly set the stage for what would come within a more fulfilling ethnographic undertaking.

**Association.** My association granted me serendipitous advantage. Upon my arrival at the Center, I was assigned living arrangements with the team’s head coach and mechanic. The coach and mechanic hold revered positions within the cycling team hierarchy. They are near the pinnacle of every team. They are focal points of activity and they dictate the team’s physical successes and well-being. My proximity to these individuals led me to the central participants of my study, the cyclists.

I was also quickly incorporated into daily team routines and rituals, and would often have extended time with the cyclists after being introduced by the coach or mechanic. I would train, clean bikes, fill water bottles, clean dishes and prepare meals, demonstrating my commitment to the team. Within these
spaces, I observed similarities and differences of narrative practices amongst the cyclists and began to consider how these personalized stories were both actively constructed and locally constrained based on circumstances of storytelling (Gubrium & Holstein, 1998, p.164). I began to relate to the cyclists on and off the bike. I bonded with them, feeling comfortable enough to share with them my research aims informally to not misconstrue my objectives for being with them. They accepted my openness, and gave me almost instant access to insights on group culture, conversations, and behaviour - something I would have not been privy to if the Directors who maintained a clear separation from the team and had not allowed me to associate with them. As I gained trust and association with respected figures from within the team, trust and respect from the remaining cyclists soon followed. During these initial conversations, or passings with cyclists, I wanted them to understand why I am here, my purpose, and a bit about myself as an outsider. These seemingly small, insignificant interactions would become critical ethnographic entry points later in my study.

**Language, Listening and Tone.** Language also became a powerful form of access, subversion, and 'capital' builder during my time in Rwanda. I was distinguished from other white staff, because I am a native French speaker, which is the official language of pre-genocide Rwanda. The only other French-speaking staff was one of two Directors who, as a professional cyclist in France, learned and spoke French very well. I was further able to befriend Rwandan cyclists and staff by speaking French. This also enhanced my credibility with many Rwandans, particularly long-standing members of staff who appreciated those who could speak in a native tongue uncommonly used by foreign staff at the Center. Staff often used French as a subversion tactic – as a means for Rwandan staff/cyclists to articulate frustrations about foreign staff and warn me about their moods, or communicate things they did not want others to know. This was a form of relationship building through language. French allowed me to better understand some of the tactics and ways cyclists and staff would challenge American-emplaced rules and regulations on a daily basis without their knowledge. For Rwandans, French, and more importantly Kinyarwanda (their native language), created a separate space within the centre where cyclists could speak openly, unbeknownst to outsiders. Later in my study, Rwandan staff and cyclists divulged their conversations at the Center in Kinyarwanda were often overtly directed at the foreign staff over issues of cultural frustration, difference, and behaviour. Matters of compensation or mistreatment were almost always discussed in a calm, unenthusiastic tone, a common characteristic of Kinyarwandan speakers. This made cyclists feel they were working as a group, diffusing tensions and building camaraderie and understanding between teammates and local staff (see Chapter 5). It was later explained that the cyclists and local staff manage interactions by keeping discussions about their feelings towards certain situations to themselves, or only speaking about things in their native language to avoid
arguments with western staff. For example, the cyclists frequently organized informal committees where they could openly discuss, and help, fellow teammates deal with domestic issues at home rather than involve foreign staff which could potentially affect a member’s status with the organization. Language and culture are strategic tools of reprieve, for cyclists, in the face of the prescribed social control by the organization both during their time away at the Center and when at home.

Ethnography is not so much about studying people as it is learning from them (Spradley, 1979). Aside from my ability to speak the local language, I appeared unknowledgeable and unaware of the local culture. This made me vulnerable in relation to my participants, and tilted the power of the ethnographic method into their hands, making it more appealing for them to share their thoughts, feelings and concerns with me. It also directed, in a way, how I spoke, approached and thought through my ways of doing with participants. I was not (un)intentionally imposing my customs and beliefs onto this foreign culture by reflecting on my actions; rather, I actively freed myself from adherence to customary standards and created something well-suited to the environment and participants at the centre of my research (Wolcott, 2002, p.103). This meant listening to, and relating with, the cyclists from the outset which helped me develop a dialogue to better understand their way of life and cultural formations. It is this approach that directly contradicted the way the “original” gatekeepers spoke and treated others at the Center. This began what Whitehead (2004) depicts as the ethnographic breakdown-resolution process:

The ethnographic process begins in earnest when breakdowns occur because the need for finding coherence prompts the development of focused questions and a search for answers—the process of resolution. The process of breakdown-resolution-process also accentuates the importance of being in the field, as such processes will occur more frequently in those environments in which ethnographic hosts spend most of their time. (p.18)

As I witnessed how the Center’s gatekeepers, its foreign Directors, spoke to and about the local staff and cyclists, I confirmed the need to move forward with my ethnographic study, despite how difficult it might be due to the precarious relationship I now had with the Center’s leadership.

Suffering. The catalyst in gaining access to the cyclists and their everyday lives can be attributed to the way I ‘suffered’ as a researcher physically, and emotionally. Through these sufferings, an empathetic connection developed between the cyclists and myself. Relationships were built that cemented the established trust and friendship necessary to become an insider within the cyclist community.
The physical suffering in cycling is well documented (Dauncey & Hare, 2003; Gilley, 2006) and the ability to endure extreme amounts of pain is a means of marking the Rwandan cyclists’ commitment to the culture of their sport (elaborated in Chapter 4). Catherine Palmer describes how “[professional] cyclists endure a physical pain and spiritual suffering so great that they seem to have come from another life” (1996, p.135). Ways of thinking and talking about cycling are frequently framed in terms of suffering – confronting the pain, silencing the beast, shutting up the legs – and for me to appreciate the physical pain endured by Rwandan cyclists meant experiencing pain on a professional level, despite my years cycling in Canada. For instance, on a particularly arduous part of a training ride with the team, I found myself being dropped\textsuperscript{15} from the group of cyclists who picked up tempo. As I started to struggle (and most definitely grimace), two young Rwandans came back to pace me (support me) up the climb as their teammates continued on. The pain of my contracting muscles and sweat pouring down my face must have been quite the sight for these two young men who were smiling and offering me a push from behind. I distinctly remember how awful I felt that day trying to keep up. As I painfully pedaled on, the team cheered me on and encouraged me upward until we crested the hill and I could gain my breath. Soon after, as we rolled between the peaks and through the tea-laden valleys, the young men slowly began to speak to me about their families for the first time. Through my hard work and attempts to keep up, the riders gave me newfound respect.

At dinner that evening, a few of the riders quietly congratulated me for my effort and thanked me for doing the laundry – one of my assigned chores that afternoon. This was something they had noticed but never mentioned. Vail (2001) corroborates my experience, stating that one must demonstrate an insider status within the particular culture to gain the trust of participants. Such insider status – sharing the characteristic, role, or experience with research participants – enhances the breadth and depth of understanding of participants that would be inaccessible to a nonindigenous researcher. The display of suffering and sacrifice that I showed earlier that day indicated to the cyclists that I understood what it took to be a road cyclist, and demonstrated my insider status as someone who understands (to an extent) what they are experiencing on a bike. I could never be as physically fit as the cyclists, but I understood how it felt to be at the limit of one’s physical ability. This insider knowledge became critical to participants in acknowledging me as someone who would not misrepresent them; rather, someone they could trust.

\textsuperscript{15} A term used when an individual is too slow to keep up with a group of cyclists and falls out of position behind the group of cyclists.
As I experienced suffering through the daily routines and structures of the Center, I gained social capital among the cyclists. The cyclists were prescribed a strict diet, sleeping hours and a communication ban with family and friends outside (detailed in Chapter 4). I, too, followed these routines to demonstrate my empathy. For example, when a team member got word that his small baby was sick, I went against centre rules to lend him my phone to speak to his wife, as he feared divulging the issue to foreign staff. In other instances, when cyclists wanted sugar in their tea, honey in their oatmeal, or some extra eggs, I gave them my rations or used my privileges to acquire more (within reason) to show my sympathy. These small gestures were critical moments in the evolution of my study, proving myself as a friend, fellow athlete, and (field) researcher.

Lastly, I experienced an increasing amount of emotional suffering at the Center, both overtly and covertly, prior to my departure. This did not go unnoticed. Many cyclists visited me in my room, expressing concern about my wellbeing and treatment by the Center’s foreign staff. They shared their personal experiences with foreign staff members with me as well as stories of fellow Rwandan cyclists who had been expelled from the team. Many have dealt with similar behaviours and pressures at the Center and wished to speak further about their experiences in private. In many ways, they related to my treatment as theirs. Numerous cyclists expressed that “[we] know what is happening to you. It’s happening to us also.” These unforeseen discussions allowed us to speak to one another openly and honestly, building the foundations of relationships that would later become critical within my research project.

Getting Out

I felt as if I was stepping out of a Western enclave and making my way back into what I had known and believed was “Africa.” The smells, the disconcern, the liveliness of the everyday. The solitude and quietness of the Center was broken for the reality of the street. (Fieldnotes)

As my access to the Center and Team Rwanda deteriorated, I was forced to organize my travel out of rural Rwanda and began re-evaluating my research, safety, accommodation, and potential exodus home to Canada. It was within this precarious period that my ethnographic research took a dramatic turn. While confiding in a group of senior team members, I was instructed to travel to Kigali where I would be met by friends of the team and taken to a small community, near some of the cyclists’ homes. There I would be able to organize and continue my research with cyclists unobstructed by the confines of the Center. In a single, covert conversation, my research had taken on a new life.

16 No cell phones while at the Center was a strict policy of the organization.
My project’s trajectory transformed. I came to recognize how important sustained immersion and sympathetic understandings of everyday life within a community is in gaining access and trust. Curiously and empathetically suffering and speaking with my participants at the Center achieved a degree of respect and access that is often not afforded to most other Westerners. Within my six weeks at the Center, although difficult, I observed and embodied the everyday lives of these cyclists – a necessary part of my social and contextual understanding as a researcher. The discomforts I experienced, albeit minimal in comparison to sacrifices made by the cyclists themselves, provided me with a greater understanding of the forfeiting and suffering experienced by my participants to become Rwandan cyclists. Furthermore, I accumulated sufficient cultural capital for the cyclists to accept me into their communities and homes as a researcher, despite the risks they faced in doing so. My participants risked repercussion from the organization for harbouring me in their homes, while I struggled with the ethical issues associated with my transforming ethnography and the life-changing positions my participants were willingly putting themselves in. These risks and moral challenges exemplify the desire by both researched and researcher to gain a depth of understanding not yet attained.

**Getting to Know the “Data”**

“Social insight is acquired by the quality of our association with others in real-life situations. In this respect, it is always highly contingent, partial, and caught in process. We should also anticipate that it is often the case that it can only be apprehended at a personal cost.” (Wilkinson, 2004, p.186)

“The past informs our thinking in the present, the present informs our reconstructions of the past. Both time and action are emergent phenomena. Thus, what we bring to our studies frames but do not determine what we learn from them.” (Charmaz, 2009, p.49)

I was shattered in the days following what I would come to describe as my “forced liberation” from the Center. This was a result of the ‘unraveling’ of my doctoral dissertation, the feelings of insecurity and isolation endured over the past six weeks at the Center. The environment of anxious tension and uneasiness crescendoed with my expulsion from my original research site. For the first few days away from the Center I did not write fieldnotes, call home, or connect with anyone. I simply slept, barely even eating17 or coming out of my new room in the home in the Rwandan hills (“collines”). From within the dark confines of this new space, I contemplated the past six weeks of fieldwork, and thought about how these events would play out within the broader scope of this work. It was during this time that Charmaz’s passage above rang true. Both time and action are emergent, and now outside of the Center, I

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17 A true sign of distress to anyone who knows me.
could continue to pursue my research aims and let the complex renderings of the cyclists’ interwoven lives reconstruct their pasts. With the proverbial ‘what’s done is done,’ this decision was supported by my determination to understand the multiple realities of my participants through deep, embodied research. My experience from within the Center only reinforced the evolving theoretical implications of my study. Moreover, I gained an epistemological perspective and certain theoretical sensitivity about my current position before continuing my research, recognizing that a degree of scrutiny of our experiences and disciplinary ideas needs to be ongoing in order to respect both the method and participants. This epistemological perspective formed the foundation for my research from this point forward, while ethnographic methods encouraged conducting it with theoretical and ethically sensitivity.

**Ethnography: A Study of Intimate Familiarity**

It was dramatically refreshing to transform “the field” I was working in. There was no longer running hot water, constant electricity, fibre optic internet, and Westernized food choices that made the Center what it was - an anomaly within a rural African setting. I felt a certain ease and freedom within the rural dwellings which was natural to the cyclists, who transitioned between the Center and their home regularly. Bucket showers, homemade meals, cemented floors, and red dust from the fertile soil covering your clothes became the norm.

It was a palpable dichotomy, one that I would have never fully understood if I had stayed within the Westernized, walled bastion of the Center. Although I have lived similar experiences, living within the lives of those you seek to understand is not replicable. The stark contrasts in the life-worlds of the cyclists further demonstrated the incredible wealth of knowledge and everyday tactics (see Chapter 5) they employ in harmonizing themselves between two very different *subcultural mosaics* (Prus, 1997). This dualism provided an opportunity to unearth stories of agency from within their multiple, lived realities.

In reframing my early weeks at the Center as *ethnographic reconnaissance* (Walcott, 2002, p.207), a preliminary ‘look around,’ the current state of my research now required me to devise a *critical* ethnographic strategy that would unearth the contradictions embodied within these cyclists. Agar (1996) describes contradictions within ethnographic research as raw ethnographic *rich points*. Rich points form

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18 I have lived extensively in East and West Africa over the past 7 years working for various international development organizations and not-for-profit.
19 Underneath all the different interpretations of the term critical lies a common thread — you look at local context and meaning, just like we always have, but then you ask, why are things this way? What power, what interests, wrap this local world so tight that it feels like the natural order of things to its inhabitants? Are those inhabitants even aware of those interests, and are aware that they have alternatives?
when a gap, or a distance between two worlds, is created when “an ethnographer learns his or her assumptions about how the world works, usually implicit and out of awareness, are inadequate to understand something that had happened” (p.31). Agar’s solution is a deepened coherence, engagement, and understanding of the people and contexts where these rich points emerge and can be confronted, questioned, and contemplated. In doing so, coherence with these situations and individuals develops, allowing for interpretation and more pointed investigation.

In seeking Agar’s rich points, I adopted three principled sources of ethnographic data (Prus, 1984): observation, participant-observation, and interviews, as well as more contemporary sensory techniques (Pink, 2009) to unearth narratives of everyday life. I grounded myself, and covertly\(^{20}\) continued my research from the villages of Rwanda’s coveted cycling communities with the expressed consent and support of the cyclists. I criss-crossed Rwanda on an old motorcycle I rented. I visited towns and villages of the cyclists, attending to, and studying the human qualities of human group life. In the following sections I detail my continued ethnological development through a set of instructive interactionist features of everyday group life put forth by the sociologist Robert Prus (in Dietz, Prus, & Shaffir, 1994). By framing the remaining section of this chapter through Prus’s features – as perspectives, reflectivity, negotiability, relationships, and processes – I emphasize their importance while describing the methods and partiality employed in collecting data that is “thoroughly sensitive to the human capacity for symbolic interaction” (p.20). This everyday sociological inquiry approach has not been explored within the sport for development literature.

**It’s All About Perspective**

Interactionists interpret people’s worldviews as multiple perspectives or realities. Interactionists believe that attending carefully to the realities of those they study is paramount in understanding people’s participation in everyday life. I embodied, more than applied, participant observation as the central tool of my day-to-day interactions with the cyclists by adapting a forward thinking yet reflectively cognizant methodology. I actively resisted prescribed behavioural norms of a white, male researcher to share, albeit imperfectly, the reality of my participants. Although I was a guest, a foreigner in many of these communities, I lived and behaved normally as I had done in East Africa for the past six years. It caught my hosts off guard that I was so comfortable in my surroundings. My participants felt at ease with me in

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\(^{20}\) It was important that I was not on the ‘radar’ of the foreign staff after leaving the Center, to minimize the risk my participants willingly took to harbour me in their homes and villages. I decided to be diligent with my online presence, refraining from social media, blogs, websites, Skype, etc.
their homes, as I tried to live the everyday as authentically as I could. This continued to build my rapport with the cyclists.

I enabled myself to create richer depictions of actions by not overthinking my method, and by exploring the social as it happens, in motion, as a continual concerting of activities. I did not simply observe from an Archimedean point of view, but remained materially grounded in my body in a specific context and a specific time and place to collect observational data (Smith, 1987). I began (re)building my understanding of the interpretive process that shapes and guides human behaviour (Wax 1971, p.3) by waking up every day in rural Rwandan villages. Evans-Pritchard (1974) describes that “to understand a people’s thought one has to be able to think in their symbols” (p.79). Through this deeply personal experience in rural Rwanda, I began to collect and unpack information from within the mediums, symbols, and experiential worlds that have meanings to my participants. I maintained close contact with the cyclists, their families, and their neighbours as a first step in this symbolic understanding. I would cook with cyclists’ mothers and grandmothers, plant potatoes and pick mint with their brothers and sisters. I would go to the market and barter for vegetables with house workers, drink beers with community officials at local pubs, and make popcorn in the village square for the after work commuters. I learned local customs from tea preparation to butchering goats to the intimate relationship between Rwandans, their cows and the land. I also (re)accustomed myself to the pace of village life, the pauses and the silences, the lulls and times of ‘rest’ that are often tortuously endured by Westerners who are used to the pace of modern capitalist societies (Cohen, 2015; Weisgrau, 1997). I experienced the raw accounts and emotions that stem from active participant participation within these communities. I was not only observing, but living.

I unmasked unique biographical details that are often muted in the presentation of sport for development participants by living with the cyclists and their families. For example, although apparent that my participants were black, Rwandan cyclists, a less obvious observation is the dramatic age range of cyclists (from their late teens, to their mid-thirties) and the social significance this had on both the cycling and broader Rwandan community’s (unpacked in Chapter 5). In many instances young cyclists were the defacto head of household due to family conflicts, or in some cases because of the country’s genocide. Many understood cycling, not as a sport or pastime, but as a potential livelihood. It was a means to support their large family support systems. As such, cyclists described abandoning opportunities such as education and other forms of employment in order to focus on the building and maintaining of a cyclists bodily identity. Such rich understandings of the meanings and contrasting standpoints of cycling within the various life worlds (home/Center/cycling) began to appear as I became infinitely closer to my participants. As I uncovered biographical details not afforded to me through my
time at the Center, I became more and more confident within my surroundings and fully immersed myself in the culture. I could maneuver with a sense of confidence, a sense of *ethnographic swagger* from place to place, knowing my status within the local community and a cyclist’s inner circle was safe because I lived in the home of a respected cyclist - a prized member of his community. With this maneuverability I could fully-engage with the senses, people, perspectives, and cultural nuances I may have missed if concerned with methodological technicalities rather than “living oneself into the culture” (Geertz, 1972).

The roads, villages, roadside stands, and people scattered across this densely populated landscape became sites of investigation as I familiarized myself with the routines of everyday life through the perspective of a cyclist. Although my participants originated from, and lived amongst, small-scale agrarian families (farmers or herders) or small business owners, these were starkly different surroundings and lifestyles to cycling’s required regimen of corporeal management and bodily movement. Such daily negotiations for my participants from within these sites dictated their everyday life, and in turn my own. My day was organized not by my administrative tasks relating to my research, but by the tasks expected of me by my hosts. It was initially uncomfortable to relinquish a degree of ethnographic authority and have my agenda dictated by cyclists’ daily tasks, duties, and commitments. This was, in part, a result of my experience at the Center and the lingering insecurity around my study. I was unaccustomed to the degree of ‘covertness’ my study now required and became academically anxious when I felt I was not gathering ‘usable data.’ Although an invented term, infield academic anxiety is something other early field researchers experience. I describe it as the way young academics constantly question their manoeuvrings, intentions and perceptions of themselves in the field. If left unchecked, this can become paralyzing, especially if they have a limited window of opportunity to connect with participants and collect data from those they seek to study. Ultimately, I recognized the counterproductive nature of my behaviour and reassured myself that the collective features of my research encouraged my subjects to impart themselves and their culture on me, not undermine me. All of this was data. I embraced the everydayness of this participatory approach and the urge to write everything down dissipated over time. I began to observe and interpret more experiences as internal tensions eased. I was living within the site of my research, not simply ‘visiting.’ Every minute of the day and night was a potential space for investigation, and analysis. I avoided a rigid research structure to give myself ample opportunities to take observations and short notes in a notebook, or jot ideas down in my phone’s notes application. Emerson et al. (2001) suggest:

> Field notes are produced incrementally on a day-to-day basis, without any sustained logic or underlying principle and on the assumption that not every observation will be
ultimately useful… a field note corpus needs have little or no overall coherence or consistency; it typically contains bits and pieces of incidents, beginnings and ends of narratives, accounts of chance meetings and rare occurrences, and details of a wide range of unconnected matters. (p.353)

I took notes when they came to mind, often while driving, on the street or at dinner, acting on the premise that these were not detailed or richly descriptive, but provided a sufficient amount of information to draw upon in my reflections on the lived perspectives of/about my participants.

Additionally, I took photographs and videos as further signposts to places, situations, or persons I’d met. Images and video focused on the everyday routine of participants in their spaces, and avoided the visually spectacular as a means of creating a dialogue around the competing and complementary meanings of images. This visual sociology (Becker, 1974) provided a further point of perspective (and then reflection) on the everyday life of my participants, and myself as an ethnographer seeking to bring out a “cultures fuller story” (Harper, 2003, p.244). Later, I would use these points, notes, photos/videos or voice recordings to further reflect and write-up daily fieldnotes, which I would record on my computer. I meaningfully began “to recognize and locate objects (including other people and oneself) within a meaningful context” (Prus, 2007, p.397) as I acquired varying perspectives and lived versions of reality. This builds upon what Mead (1934) describes as the ‘generalized other’ through embodied observation. Through such perspective I developed themes and understandings of the cyclists’ fluid identities within “the mundane, the typical, and occasionally extraordinary features of everyday life that a participant might not feel worth commenting on in an interview” (Smith & Sparks, 2005, p.1096). In order to replicate this process for you, the reader, I have dotted throughout this dissertation ‘photographic landmarks’ (Pink, 1999) made to compliment the constructed ethnographic narrative. These inserted photographic ‘pauses,’ much like the technique of photo elicitation (Collier, 1957; Wagner, 1978), has been done purposefully to evoke two forms of symbolic representation: text and image. Harper (2002) describes the power of the visual by explaining, “the parts of the brain that process visual information are evolutionarily older than the parts that process verbal [text] information. Thus images evoke deeper elements of human consciousness than do words; exchanges based on words alone utilize less of the brain’s capacity than do exchanges in which the brain is processing images as well as words.” (p.13) Therefore, in having photographic pauses between and within chapters, it allows the mind to contextualize and stimulate what has been/or will be visualized through the written word. It offers a deeper perspective.
Who was I researching?

Every participant cyclist in my ethnographic research was different. Each one possessed desires and priorities that functioned as the foundations of their moral compass and guided them on their athletic journey on the bicycle. Yet, for this ethnographic exercise, readers will benefit from a general understanding of who my participants are before particular stories and voices are unearthed and inserted into the text. To facilitate this understanding a composite character of a Rwandan who comes to this organization will be outlined below. This character, named Alpha, integrates crosscutting elements of everyday life to depict a cyclist’s identity within Rwandan society. Through Alpha, readers will gain perspective from where these individuals draw their purpose and understanding, and why their perspectives are critical in considering SDP’s utility.

Alpha

Alpha first saw a bicycle in his village when he was incredibly young. His uncle owned a bicycle, as a farmer, and used to carry potatoes and carrots from his small subsistence plot of land high up in the northwestern mountains of Rwanda, near the Congolese border. As a young boy, bicycles were often used for special occasions. When his mother could afford a bicycle taxi from the village Centre, Alpha would ride on the back with her and his younger siblings. At that time, he saw the bicycle as a useful tool to rural Rwandans. Alpha warmly described to me the feeling of pedaling a bike for the first time as a feeling of immense freedom. The feeling of the soft rubber tires on the paved roads felt like floating. The feeling of connection, of mobility, that the bicycle brought Alpha is very significant to him. Part of this significance is a result of Alpha’s interpretation of the 1994 genocide, where he escaped through the mountains on the back of his uncle’s bicycle. He remembers specific horrors but dismisses describing or talking about them. Some Team Rwanda boys, like Alpha, were young and spent time in the hills hiding during the genocide, or were babies in the enormous and mis-managed United Nations refugee camps that filled Rwanda’s border countries after the genocide. Alpha, like most Rwandans, lost many relatives, but none as important as his father. The genocide forced adult responsibilities upon Alpha, then just a young boy. He was now the oldest male in the household, which put a disproportionate amount of pressure on him to provide, somehow, for his family. As such, Alpha see’s his current identity formed not only by his current social status, but also by the choices and behaviours forced upon him in the aftermath of the genocide and conflict. He identifies himself as a product of his environment.

Years pass and Alpha, although at school, see’s education as a hindrance to the immediate needs of his family. An adept and strategic young man, Alpha see’s the opportunity to make quick money through the bicycle as a taxi driver. He gets a loan, buys a bicycle, and drops out of school to join the working force.
His mother disapproves, but ultimately can’t support multiple children’s educations and agrees that Alpha’s younger siblings should focus on their education while he provides for them. Profits from cycling were initially small, but he is contributing to his family’s well-being and his sense of meaning and value grows. He is a provider for his family and gains respect, from family and community, in doing this work.

The bicycle becomes an item of pride and passion. He loves the way the bicycle provides him with a sense of freedom but also of purpose. He is good at his job, something he had not experienced elsewhere. People begin seeking out his services, and his business soon grows. He buys another bicycle and loans it to another rider, for a small fee. He is thinking about how to make money and to think about the future. Cycling is central to his ambition.

Cycle racing is growing in Rwanda. Communities and Regional governments would host small races with prize money, so Alpha began training to compete. Alpha’s desire to race is strongly associated with the money that is available. Although financial gain was the priority, learning and competing with peers became a bi-product and central tenants of his love for cycling. He wanted to win each race in order to prove to himself, his family, and his customers that he was a strong, fearless, and competent individual.

Success racing pushed him to join a cycling club, where there were small sponsorships that would allow him to train, and continue supporting his family. He was now known as a bicycle racer and trained with other like-minded young men. Alpha became close with his teammates as they shared similar values, backgrounds, and goals. They would race together, fix their bicycles together, and discuss how their popularity as cyclists could improve their lives.

Alpha had heard of an American NGO looking for strong cyclists to train and compete. They would pay and they would provide good bicycles to train on for those riders who were strong enough. He sensed that this was an opportunity to continue what he had started doing – providing for his family through cycling – and wasted no time seeking out friends a way to be tested by the foreign coaches. Once in front of the coaches “they will see my power, they will see my abilities, they will need to train me,” he told his teammates. Alpha was committed entirely to the cause of the organization, knowing that this was his (and his families) biggest opportunity for social, economic, and political growth within their community. “I come from a poor family, but cycling has changed that,” described Alpha. In working hard and adhering to their rules, Alpha has a chance at self-improvement through the bicycle. So when he was introduced to the organization, through a former teammate (now member of Team Rwanda), it was clear to him that this was his opportunity. His identity as a post-genocide idle-youth could be utilized yet
ultimately shed through his unique ability to harness the pain and torment of his past into the pedals of a bicycle. In doing so, he would employ this body – as a symbol of Rwanda’s ability to rebuild and strive – to promote an image he didn’t fully consent to, but in reality understands that this is the mechanism, the trade-off, to get by.

**Uncomfortable Reflexivity**

Both Depraz (2001) and Thompson (2001) contend that by trying to empathically imagine what it might be like to be the other (i.e., a Rwandan cyclist) from the other’s perspective, we can experience another person as a unified whole, as their whole. This “moral imagination” (Smith, 2008) supports the notion that I could put myself in the place of my participants to challenge the constraints of the body and the idea of otherness through sharing views, merging with them, and entering into their embodied worlds. This oftentimes painful imagination – to consider the particular political, historical, economic and social contexts of my Rwandan participants – forced a reflexive habit upon me. I would ongoingly reflect on my behaviours “check myself” to avoid the projection of my own beliefs, attitudes, values and priorities onto the cyclists, as well as to avoid infringing on one’s *alterity* – their otherness that precedes any attributes – “as to not commit violence against the other” (Frank, 2004, p.115). This habit, which formed into a methodological tool, describes what Pillow (2003) asks us to consider:

How reflexivity can act not as a tool of methodological power but a methodological tool interruptive of practices of gathering data as ‘truths’ into existing ‘folds of the known’ to practices which interrogate the truthfulness of the tale and provide multiple answers and to what I suggest are unfamiliar – and likely uncomfortable – tellings. Such uses of reflexivity acknowledge the critiques without shrugging off reflexivity, while at the same time interrogating reflexivity’s complicit relationship with ethnocentric power and knowledge in qualitative research. (p.192)

The use of reflexivity to question my assumptions, positions and identities within these spaces demonstrates the importance of fluid and dynamic struggles within and throughout such a (field) research process:

*Spending time on that hot bus yesterday was a nightmare. The yelling, the older woman next to me who every once and a while smelled distinctively like feces, the chickens in the lap next to me. It was too much. Whereas before I may have relished in the experience of ‘cultural difference’ yesterday all I could think about was the crisp, clean air whizzing by me while the roaring engine of my motorbike buzzes between my legs. But is that wrong? What was it that allowed me, and interested me, in doing that to myself before? And what has changed? I don’t feel different. That freedom from those moments of being in a stuffy bus would perhaps be seen by a younger, inexperienced Westerner as avoiding a cultural experience. But I don’t care. I’m not above the experience but I don’t need to live it purely for the sake of sociological embodiment.*
I think that's something I've realized during my field research. Being tasked to self-reflect and observe, to me, in these places, is like being asked to come home and describe your life. These places have been a part of me for a long time and my habits and behaviours here reflect that evolutionary process of adaptation and integration. I have an understanding of the people and cultures that only comes from living within them, and that demonstrates and validates me speaking with a degree of competence, since to an extent I see their existence in relation to mine.

So although I would have much preferred the dusty road on my motorbike or bicycle, I have come to appreciate the takeaway and cultural understandings attained from both perspectives: the bus and the bike.

So although such ‘cultural experiences’ maybe feel overplayed for someone like myself, it is the reflections from within these positions and interpretations that is important to consider. This deliberation is important as it allows me a degree of intentionality to how those around me view me. As a white foreigner in these places you are bagged with certain prejudices. As a researcher and individual it is your task to either play into these culturally created understandings or break them down and recreate yourself to the manner in which you are or would like to be seen. So although my Rwandan bike served me incredibly well to gain physical insight and connection with distant groups, my shitty smelling bus in Kitgum will be just fine for now. (Field notes)

I have utilized reflexivity as a methodological tool to question and examine, in everyday life, my capacity to become an object of my own awareness – as the above passage suggests. Although not a complete reimagining of my worlds, this self-reflexive process or interaction is similar to what Altheide and Johnson (1998) describe as “a focus on how does who I am, who I have been, who I think I am, and how I feel affect data collection and analysis – that is, an acceptance and acknowledgement that how knowledge is acquired, organized, and interpreted is relevant to what the claims are” (as cited in Pillow, 2003, p.176). Yet reflection is quite different from reflexivity: “To be reflective does not demand an ‘other’… to be reflexive demands both an other and some self-conscious awareness of the process of self-scrutiny” (Chiseri-Strater, 1996, p.130). As such, my reflexivity was developed through an ongoing process of interaction with the cyclists, their families, and their realities; taking these experiences into consideration with respect to my own experiences, characteristics, and prejudices as a privileged ethnographer. This reflexive space is “a fluid space of crossing borders and, as such, a contradictory one of collusion and oppositionality, complicity, and subversion” (Villenas, 1996, p.729). With this interpretation of reflexivity, I recognize the cyclists’ initiative (human agency, enterprise, intentionality), which demonstrated their ability to become objects unto themselves. This agency was part and parcel of developing a degree of reciprocity with the cyclists. It is a physical and literal understanding of doing research “with” them, instead of “on” them, enhancing my ability to deconstruct and critique my authority in the research and writing process, and is a methodological response to authors like Pillow (2003), Chaudry (2000), and Villinas (1996, 2000) who advocate a move towards reflexivity that continues to challenge the representations (of our participants), while simultaneously accepting the political need to represent and find meaning.
Therefore, I endeavoured for a reflexivity that neither collapses under (self)scrutiny into narcissistic, self-indulgent stories ‘from the field,’ nor dismantles the need for this research through simple stories of participants. Rather, this methodological tool challenges the reader to rethink and reposition “reflexivity not as clarity, honesty, or humility, but as practices of confounding disruptions” (Pillow, 2003, p.192). This uncomfortable reflexivity is not about better methods or about representation, but about “whether we can be accountable to people’s struggles for self-representation and self-determination, including our own selves” (Visweswaran, 1994, p.32).

**Respecting the Negotiation**

Every-day micro social interactions, where participants constantly negotiate and resist their identities as individuals and as a group, give the researcher a broad area of analysis to focus on. However, these interactions also give us (as researchers and readers) the opportunity to analyse these relations with a panoptic perspective. We can, and should, ‘step-away’ and consider implications of these interactions on larger cultural structures.

Throughout this chapter, my methodological approach emphasized that one must respect the life-world(s) of their participants. This building of respect comes not only from Blumer's (1969) understanding of “intimate familiarity” through human lived experience “in action,” but also in the recognition of the conflicts and compromises (internal and external) that are made from within these lived spaces by the cyclists themselves. From within the villages, the roads, the gardens, the kitchens, and the homes of the cyclists, the major hurdle for me was the familiarizing and negotiation of the various foreign symbols and objects present. The reimagined spaces I was now a part of required a degree of negotiation, compromise, and resistance on behalf of both myself and the families and cyclists I was with. The participants, their families, and the communities I now lived amongst had hierarchies, responsibilities, and histories that were foreign to me as a researcher. Mundane tasks such as washing clothes, cooking meals, or bathing, involved complex historical, cultural, and ideological norms. As a cultural outsider, I tried not to disrupt the everyday reality of my participants, however, identity symbols such as my clothes, language and obvious whiteness, posed a challenge as they signified my difference. For example, early in my fieldnotes I articulate my discomfort in allowing female members of the households to wash my hands before meals or clear food and dishes after eating. Rwandan custom dictates that the men digest in the sitting room, while the women clear the tables and serve tea. Another challenge was our diverse understandings of religion, prayer, and morality. This brought lively debates between the cyclists and I (with whom I had reached a certain degree of rapport and
intersubjectivity) as I questioned, for example, how a cyclist could cheat on his wife yet quote the bible in justifying his actions. By doing so, I was questioning a cultural norm, which had been justified by its participants. This reaffirmed my difference and agency as a researcher within this subcultural group, but reminded me to be mindful of potential narrative diversions or ploys – the bending of the truth or the creation of false narratives – often used by participants both consciously and unconsciously while giving an account of their everyday (Agar, p.129).

Mitchell Duneier (2011) reminds us that “for every ethnographic project there are phenomena that are extremely inconvenient from the standpoint of the line of thinking or theory that has emerged from the fieldwork” (p.2). By being cognisant of these phenomena, we can identify and incorporate important points, voices, and perspectives into the research text while negotiating the intersubjectivity required to reveal the temporal, emotional, and contextual quality of the everyday lives and relationships of the cyclists. Many researchers ignore or deny these potential points of resistance, as they may be inconvenient to the researcher's theory or line of argument. Yet these points, if not detailed or described, could lead to a reader’s false understanding of a particular context. Ultimately, this would be disingenuous to the research project, the participants, and fellow ethnographers who seek to justify this method to balance perspectives. In How not to lie with Ethnography, Duneier (2011) outlines two simple thought strategies – “the ethnographic trial” and “the inconvenience sample”– both of which I utilized during my fieldwork in Rwanda. First, in the ethnographic trial, he asks us to imagine standing trial for ethnographic malpractice. In doing so, I pictured myself (and my dissertation) in front of a jury of Rwandan friends and family with whom I lived during my fieldwork. According to Duneier's technique, these imaginative jurors would distinguish between two types of errors within my ethnographic writings. The first error, if found to truly be erroneous, would lead to a significant change in the reader's impression of how the phenomenon under study works. The second is a harmless error not requiring change at all. The purpose of this internalized trial is not to confirm or uphold the rights of the community or people within the study but to maintain the reader's right to a “reasonably reliable rendering of the social world” (p.2). Duneier’s ethical call for an ethnographer’s reasonably reliable rendering is in line with practical and academic debates surrounding the transparency, accountability, and strategic understanding of organizations engaged in the betterment of marginalized or at-risk communities (see Pinkney, 2009). Both fields, ethnography and international development, acknowledge that it is important to conceptualize and identify empirically that which is being analyzed in as much as, for example, “where probabilistic sampling is impossible, the court should be sceptical of claims that attribute great weight to what ‘sometimes’, ‘often’, or ‘frequently’ happens” (p.8). Yet, unlike Duneier who ascribed this method as a single instance of looking for cases that force revision, I utilized this
method throughout my time in the field, actively revisiting observations that would force a rethink about a certain theory or conclusion. In this way, I was not only opening myself up to active reflexive action but was also reshaping and balancing my perspective that could easily be lost in a highly ‘involved’ and ‘emotionally charged’ ethnography such as mine.

Second, employing the “inconvenience sample” strategy was critical in keeping a balanced perspective while dealing with highly polarizing accounts from the interactions with subjects, objects and symbols from both within and outside the Center setting. Here, a certain amount of negotiated tact was required to consider questions such as: “Are there people or perspectives or observations outside the sample whose existence is likely to have implications for the argument I am making? Are there people or perspectives or phenomena within the sample that, when brought before the jury, would feel they were caricatured in the service of the ethnographer’s theory or line of argument?” (Duneier, 2011, p.8). In posing these questions throughout my time in the field, I devised an inconvenience sample consisting of those whom I felt might oppose my line of questions. This was fairly easy, as my experiences at the Center had revealed a ‘sample’ of participants I could consider. This inconvenience sample was meant to challenge my reflectivity and provide me with differing interpretations of a particular cultural context.

Although, naturally, my accounts may be biased, it is important to disclose, and gain an understanding of these biases presented to researchers who are seeking to understand perspectives and viewpoints that are fluid and changing. Such micro interactions/negotiations – local voices, experiences, and perspectives – are rare in sport for development research. In prioritizing participant perspectives and understandings, I negotiated my place and understanding as a researcher in the field by attaining mutual respect and understanding vis-à-vis my subjects, their goals, hopes and dreams, and my own. In doing so, I employed what Kay (2009) describes as a reflexive qualitative method that “widens the lens beyond sports programmes, provides a richer account of the broader social contexts and locates the experiences of local peoples everyday lives” (p.118).

In conclusion, I have drawn on five primary assumptions presented by Prus (1994) as a means of highlighting the implicit/explicit nature of the interactionist tradition in this continuing clarification of my fieldwork practices. Prus assumes that people develop bonds and selectively associate with them within everyday life. These relational aspects of group life are critically important within research. As a critically conscious and reflexive researcher, I had an understanding of not only the ‘baggage’ I was bringing to the field and the ways participants may perceive or interpret my involvement within their space, but also the efforts and sacrifices required to create a strong bond with a male, East African athlete. I also knew that
by entering research spaces that were intensely hierarchical, I was disrupting them. This prompted a highly reflexive praxis of manoeuvring my body and my research within these various contexts. Contexts such as the Center, cycling races, village councils, local markets, regional hospitals, fiancées homes, all presented differing levels of hierarchy, understanding and difference for the cyclists and myself.

I was interested in deciphering the experiences, loyalties, estrangements, disillusions, and hostilities that the cyclists have within these spaces, since “people do not exist as random or undifferentiated entities within the context of everyday life. The activities people engage in are made meaningful, and thus shaped by, the others to whom they attend to on a day-to-day basis” (Prus, 1994, p.19).

**Narrative Interviews**

I actively pursued interviews that would explore these complexities as they relate to sport for development through the reactive reflexivity within my everyday interaction with cyclists, former cyclists, staff, former staff, and volunteers of the organization. These interviews elicited narrative understandings of participants’ lives and how they perceived themselves and their everyday life from within the sport for development narrative of the organization (Carless & Douglas, 2009). I unpacked their understandings of how sport and development from within their everyday life transformed their identities and challenged them to integrate and coordinate the minutiae of their lives in new ways and, at times, reinvent themselves.

In total, 21 interviews were conducted over a period of 27 weeks. The cyclists, all from the Center, were eager to tell their stories. I started interviewing those in relative proximity to my home. Purposive sampling – the selection of specific participants to focus on particular characteristics of the population of interest – was thus the most appropriate technique for this phase of the research as I gained insight and better understanding through initial interviews. As the sample snowballed through the recruitment of participants through acquaintances and fellow teammates, the sampling technique became convenience sampling – the selection of participants due to their ease of access and proximity to the researcher. Resembling Atkinson (2003), I selectively targeted categories of cyclists and informants that emerged. It was important to get a spectrum of voices, perspectives from throughout the East-African peloton (Rwanda, Uganda, Eritrea, Ethiopia), from diverse age ranges (18-42), ethnic backgrounds (e.g., Hutu, Tutsi, Twa), athletic backgrounds, and time spent with the organization (3 months – 8 years). It was also
important to seek out cyclists, volunteers, and employees who had left, or had been banished, from the organization to provide a counterbalance to those currently ‘profiting’ from their affiliation to a sport for development organization.

Depicted by Atkinson (2003) as subjective in nature, interviewing is described as “any number of interactive contexts in which one person asks another question and then represents the question-answer process through some form of aural, visual, or performance-based text” (p.78). Cyclists who were interviewed were enthusiastic, even after being extensively21 briefed as to the objectives and potential outcomes/outputs of my research. They invited me into homes, local ‘sitting rooms’ (drinking parlours), hair salons, or restaurants. A conventional interview of sitting down in a room with a tape recorder and interview guide did not exist and was actively challenged by my research and context. First, rather than an obvious recorder, I used my phone to record interviews when possible. Originally I thought that it would be ‘out of place’ for me as a researcher to pull out, or even carry a smart-phone, yet the opposite occurred. Many people, especially my participants, carried smartphones that were more recent than my own. Therefore, this technique felt like a natural and unobtrusive way to record sounds, voices, and conversations. Cyclists felt more comfortable being seen with a bazungu – a term used for any white person – in public chatting rather than reporting with a recorder. Cyclists were made aware of, and consented to, the recording of our conversations. Second, the ways in which these interviews manifested themselves were often haphazard and spontaneous. Often interviews were conducted ‘on the fly,’ over lunch, a drink (tea or coffee, never a beer), a shave, or a walk through the market. In other cases, it was organized well in advance, and the cyclist received a briefing over the phone or in person days before the interview was scheduled. Some of the most intimate and important understandings of my participants occurred in conversation while hiking, cycling, or travelling on a motorbike where recording was not readily available. I therefore often documented these conversations as best I could in my field notes or audio recordings, after the fact or when it was safe to do so. I often took notes while riding on the back of motorcycles. Within this ‘loose’ framework, I closely drew my strategy from Atkinson’s performance-based understandings of ethnography while incorporating Lofland and Lofland’s (1984) interpretation of an interview as “a lightly directed conversation” (p.52) that can be altered, change course, or be diverted. My participants formulated narrative life histories from within their milieus within the freedom of this space and format. The spaces we frequented during interviews

21 All participants in this study received explanations from me and often a senior cyclist (in Kinyarwanda) about the purpose, use, and intention of this work. They were required to sign a release form, but more importantly we took the time to discuss this process and my perception around why I believed my work to be important. This allowed space for them to also vet the research, agree or disagree, and ask further questions surrounding the use, anonymity, and publication of this work. Of the 21 interviewees, no one expressed concern about reprisals (from the NGO directors) in speaking to me.
were places of safety, comfort, and familiarity. This was important as these familiar locations empowered cyclists (the power of place), but also empowered cyclists with the power of inscription, as storytellers, over myself as the active listener. This, I believe, was greatly appreciated by participants, many of whom described Rwandan culture as a society of stories, stories that are not openly shared but unveiled through mutual understanding, and agency.

Narrative life history is an interpretive process founded on the understanding that humans live lives in and out of stories (Smith & Sparks, 2008). As the cyclists recounted their life stories openly and honestly, I remained an active listener who refrained from commenting so the story could develop itself without interruption. However, as an active participant, I was also asked to speak, and respond to the cyclists’ stories, creating my own identity in the eyes of the participant. Throughout the interviews, I tried to read my participants’ responses and steered discussions only so far as they seemed comfortable, while simultaneously opening spaces for them to broach discomforting topics (Karp, 2009, p.54). I respected the graphic histories and cultural turmoil that my participants endured, and I often reflected and criticized myself, identifying myself as the stereotypical white researcher studying these difficult topics without sufficient credibility gained by having experienced them myself (Pinkney, 2009, p.20). I understood – largely through my experiences and training as a Protection Officer in Ethiopia and Somalia – how pushing issues of identity, financial survival, loss of family and culture could simply not be discussed directly with participants; rather, such topics had to be gently massaged open through dialogue, trust, understanding and, most importantly, time. It was never my intention to broach topics of loss and suffering (off the bike) unless the cyclists themselves were willing. Like Kathy Charmaz (1991), who explains the symbolic significance of slowing her pace when entering the world of people whose former lives had slowed or halted, I was confident with the cultural cues and nuances when entering the world of the cyclists. I was cautious in my movements, sensitive to the context, and patient in my approach, not only as a researcher but also as someone who understood the risks cyclists were taking in harbouring me as I wrote their life stories outside of the Center. The sensitivity that I showed contributed to my credibility, and ultimately a sense of embeddedness, within this subculture as my loyalty grew to and from those around me. Comparable to Adu-Lughod’s (1991, p.15) term “halfie,” many cyclists described me as the “white African,” an affable term referring to someone who understood, connected, and embodied the community’s ethos, behaviours and attitudes.

Interviews, like narrative stories, build on Smith’s (2010) instruction that we all think in story form. We

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22 I worked for the United Nations, which required doing narrative life interviews for hundreds of refugees (largely women and children) from 2008-2009.
make meaning through stories, and make sense of our experiences via the stories provided by the socio-cultural realms we inhabit (p.88). Stories have the power to help guide action. They help us make sense of the world around us and are a powerful element of this method. Those telling the story often embellish or alter it based on the socio-cultural influences around them. Although I had signed consent from participants, I constantly asked myself: am I becoming too close? Am I sharing too much? How was I affecting what I was seeing and hearing? In doing this field research, I was building trust and extending relations with participants through the telling of my life stories in the hopes of yielding rich understandings, but I often asked at what cost? An Eliasian (1987) interpretation, of such ‘involvement or detachment,’ recognizes a researchers part from within the social worlds they research, and that my involvement with the cyclists was an inevitable part of the research process. Yet, Elias advocates that researchers must endeavor to manage their ‘involvement’ as much as possible, as “high levels of ‘involvement’ would make more detached observation and induction of possible connections between events and phenomena more difficult, limiting scope for generating ‘reality-congruent knowledge’” (as cited in Quilley & Loyal, 2005, p.824). When I actively removed myself from my everyday fieldwork environment, for brief moments, I was able to reflect and better understand, and fully engage in a less embedded context with the lived experiences of the cyclists. As Agar (1996) notes, “the people who help you out are in control of the final representation as much as you are. It’s theirs as much as yours” (p.16). Although there is no innocence in ethnographic endeavours of this kind, by reflexively identifying my involvement, I was preserving the integrity of my research project and minimizing potential distortion to generate a more ‘reality-congruent’ picture of the cyclists’ lives (Dobson, 2009, p.186). I managed relations with cyclists that unearthed rich, cultural conceptualizations of their everyday lives by accepting a shared authority between researcher and participant.

**Writing Voices**

Through the analyzing and documenting of findings, I provide insight into the lived experiences of others through the various methodological processes employed and expanded on above, as a “way that can inform, awaken, and disturb readers by illustrating their [the readers’] involvement in social processes about which they may not be consciously aware” (Bochner & Ellis, 2002, p.221). During the 27 weeks spent with the cyclists in Rwanda, I pursued a grounded ethnography that would enable me to attend to the social process(es) (Blumer, 1969; Goffman, 1959; Prus, 1997) underscored when doing an interactionist analysis.

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23 I did this in many forms: going out for a long bicycle ride, taking my motorcycle into the nearest town, reading and writing in my room, or taking the bus into Kigali for coffee and a restaurant meal.
With a grounded theoretical methodology I could “seek out and conceptualize the latent cultural patterns and human experiences in a setting under study through the process of constant comparison (a fancy term describing the ‘constant’ interpretation of emerging data in a study with every bit of collected beforehand)” (Atkinson, 2015, p.39). Such a method supported narrative analytic techniques that accord significance which are set out to explore both sides of narrative storytelling – the individual and the social. This methodological focus is significant for this dissertation as I sought to unpack complex, subjective experiences, as well as the intentions, patterns of reasoning, and attempts to find meaning from personal experiences of sport for development participants (Woike, 2008, p.434). Through such analytical techniques I was able to think about my participants as unique individuals with agential capacities to shape the socio-cultural worlds they live in and, at once, as socio-culturally shaped by the stories ‘out there’ in the worlds they live (Smith & Sparks, 2009). A narrative analytical process focuses firstly on immersion of oneself with the data – reading transcripts, listening to recorded interviews, working on fieldnotes, and theoretical and processes memos – and then interpretation the date by examining how the narrative story’s position you to see (Frank, 2010). As such active reflexive questioning takes hold, I began to consider such dialogical resource and connection questions, such as: “What resources does the storyteller draw on to shape their subjectivity? Whom does the story connect the storyteller to? Who is placed outside this connection?” (Smith & Spark, 2009, p112)

In tandem, I employed an ‘open coding’ strategy where the data collection and coding occurred simultaneously, and continued until a core theoretical idea(s) or concept(s) is recognized and selected as the focus of research. The data collection and analysis processes generated creative theoretical insights into my research sites. From the analysis I developed my own open codes, and became accustomed to critical reflection on my own understandings and interpretations of my subject matter. I frequently revisited the fieldnotes, interviews, photos, and video I captured in the field. It proved useful to re-analyze this narrative data to help identify the types of stories present in a particular society, and understand how they frame individuals’ behaviours, and “may reveal the idiosyncratic ways a person appropriates, activity edits, and/or resists these stories in everyday life” (Smith & Sparks, 2008, p.280). Moreover, informal reflexive analysis was generated from ongoing commentary from a field journal. I weaved the narrative life histories of the cyclists I interviewed, conversed with, and observed, and compared them to my own embodied experiences and personal stories within these various subcultural

24 “An open code is an idea...that you believe conceptually captures something you saw, heard or experienced...you are not simply applying a well-worn sociological concept (like anomie, or norms, or alienation) to something you have observed, but rather coming up with potentially new codes/labels that emerge from your field study” (Atkinson, 2015, p.40).
mosaics/communities. I did this with the understanding that storytellers are always working within what Mishler (1999) describes as a “shared social and cultural frameworks of interpretation” (p.77). For example, I began relating to cyclists by asking them about why they cycled and what they cycled for. Such open-ended enquiry built rapport and trust through rhetorical storytelling of a shared experience. A refined understanding of everyday life as a Rwandan cyclist is unearthed through this consideration of narrative life stories.

This data came together to form preliminary theoretical understandings of the practice. I then considered, and further investigated, various understandings of generic social processes, conditions, and processes of everyday group life that emerged from such data collection strategies and open coding (Prus, 1997, p.263). Nuanced understandings of sport for development participation are illustrated when we can better understand the rationales of the narratives embodiment by participants and, in turn, this can lead to the development of more contextually sensitive theories and strategies surrounding sports utility in post-conflict contexts. Therefore, in recognizing that stories have multiple sides (Frank, 1995) I retained, rather than washout, the complex, subjective experiences of my participants.

With this approach, I narrowed my gaze towards reappearing open codes extricated from the interview and observational data. These open codes, then, became the focus of my study. Beginning with four categories that were reoccurring themes – Identity, Performance, Mythology, and Work25 – I began coding the hours of interview data, fieldnotes, commentary, observations, personal experiences, and quotes through these lenses, drawing out core points of reoccurrence and insight. I read each document several times to obtain its understanding and context. No formal, rigid analysis was carried out using qualitative software (e.g., NVivo 8); rather, I used coloured highlighters to carry out a systematic and analytic qualitative document analysis (Altheide et al., 2008). At this point, I ceased open coding and began ‘selective coding’ – coding solely for the core categories decided upon (Atkinson, 2015). This did not negate other codes and themes – as grounded theory is orientated towards constant discovery and constant comparison – yet these major codes purposefully guided my field observations, interviews and readings moving forward. I obtained a better sense of the interrelations amongst various themes.

25 Identity, Performance, Mythology and Work became the primary codes from which I analyzed my data. The ‘Identity’ code looked at the shifting understandings of the self by my participants. Participants expressed the dramatic changes in behaviour, responsibility, and self-image within and outside of the Center. The ‘Performance’ code analyzed and highlighted the understanding of participants as images of development and how their performance influenced their success both in the organization, and more broadly in Rwandan society. The ‘Mythology’ code deconstructed and analyzed the discourses of the cyclists lives presented through the media and their actual realities. Cyclists described their comprehension and dismay at the active dichotomy between their everyday lives and what is told in the media. Lastly, the ‘Work’ code investigated the role and act of cycling as work for the cyclists in the program. Although enjoyed and appreciated, the narrative of cycling (with the organization) as a logical progression and means of upward mobility for those with similar life narratives was frequently described.
participants, and communities within the Rwandan cycling orb by selective coding for key themes. This panoramic perspective of stories, data, observations, history, and contemporary context allowed for the emergence of an overarching theme – cycling as work – from the grouping of original categories identified. I sub-coded elements of cycling as work, for example, as cycling in the formation of work/home identity, hierarchical entrenchment, subcultural mosaics, bodily performances, and cultural practices. I developed sub-coded themes with this inductive-deductive approach, as proposed by Charmaz (2003). These codes emerged from participants’ meanings, actions and life worlds which present themselves as primary conceptual categories (Sparkes & Smith, 2014, p.42). Previous themes such as identity, performance and myth are thus not ignored; rather, they are aligned within the narrative of cycling as work and created a platform to think about these themes within the pragmatic circumstances and globally influenced contexts within which these young men exist.

Exhausting my understanding of cycling in relation to cyclists’ everyday lives, reaching ‘theoretical and data saturation’26 (Charmaz, 2003), my next step within this grounded methodological approach was to search and integrate my research within a sociological/anthropological literature that spoke to the data and codes acquired. ‘Career Contingency’ studies provided a base of departure as they focus on issues regarding the ways people would become involved, integrated, disinvolved, and reinvolved within a subcultural community. This holistic approach encouraged scholarly interactionist contributions such as Becker (1953) with jazz musicians, Prus (1984) with dice hustlers, and Sutherland (1937) with mobsters that depicted people’s involvements in particular situations over time. I believe that my research will contribute to this literature through an engagement with emerging analytical themes – such as examining role performance, analyzing subcultural mosaics, and developing generic social processes – while acknowledging a dominant or overriding analytical issue (Prus, 1997, p.263). To this end, a combination of such analytical themes is exemplary of the complex networks of understandings available within the data collected.

Reading Stories

The world you enter while reading this ethnography is not an exact account of Rwandan cycling culture; rather, it is an interpretation of a society-as-reconstructed. As Fine (1993) suggests, some contextual nuances are lost – often unintentionally – as ethnographies are reconstructed and coded through texts. Moreover, this dissertation does not – cannot – as Atkinson (2014) states, determine how readers will

26 When the selection of cases that are most likely to produce the relevant data that will discriminate or test emerging theories.
interpret my work as “we read, and read into, the text, based on our own background knowledge and assumptions” (p.2). The reader brings a host of competencies, capacities and prejudices to ethnographic research that, as a writer, I must consider when writing. Ellis (1995) asked readers of his research:

Did my story engender conversational response toward the text as you read? Did the story illustrate particular patterns and connections between events? Did you give the story to others to read because you think it speaks to their situation?...What text did you, the reader create of my story? Did this narrative make you think about or shed light on events in your own life?...Did the words I wrote elicit from you an emotional response to examine? What did you learn about yourself and your relationships through your responses to my text?

(pp. 318-319)

As an ethnographer my job is to evoke such questions from the data collected in a manner that conjures feelings of authenticity, believability, and generalizability. Therefore, I avoid contorting, or oversimplifying the complex nature of insights. Rather, I follow Atkinson (2015), who proposes that: “ethnographic accounts of the world are most compelling when they are theoretically generative, yes, but also descriptively rich, colourful and conversational with a reader” (p.44). Moreover, Coles (1989) who describes the beauty of a good story as its openness – how anyone reading it can take it in and use it for themselves – readers of my research should judge this text ultimately in a self-referential manner, asking such self-referential questions and using its knowledge to better understand ourselves.

This is the power of a good story.

A Reflection on Interaction

This chapter aimed to demonstrate the processes required to obtain a rich understanding of a person’s everyday life, how they take themselves and others into account in formulating their actions, and the ways in which they coordinate and negotiate activities with others and institutions. This is in contrast to “those studying non-interpretative objects, which require a methodology that is thoroughly insensitive to the human capacity for symbolic interaction” (Pawluch, Shaffir, & Miall, 2005, p.21). Considering the limitations of positivistic social science, I adopted an interpretive approach in my sustained examinations of the ways Rwandan cyclists purposively enter into “ongoing flows of community life as reflective, interacting, adjustive agents” (Prus, 2010, p.497). It is this understanding of the process(es) that is at the heart of this chapter, this research, and this work. Applying methodological techniques that reflect the cyclists’ social worlds, I have built upon the (multi)perspectual, reflective, relational, and processual features of their everyday lives. The information drawn from this methodological process is the
Acknowledged above, I leaned on an interactionist tradition that emphasised the "ongoing construction or forging of action by the people involved" (Mead, 1934, p.98). Such an interactionist approach stresses the experiences, and understanding, of people in 'doing behaviour' while recognising people's capacities for reflexivity as well as the plurality of meanings people may attach to things. Atkinson (2015) describes the path to intersubjectivity and argues that co-production of knowledge “is achieved when one is physically, emotionally and socially emplaced in a community, but still has a critical sensitivity to the sociological task at hand. The most important ethical principle...is to allow culture to be written on you as much as you will, in turn, eventually seize the mandate to write culture”(p.45). Although consideration should be given to a person’s abilities to influence, bond, or negotiate with one another, they should not stifle or deter the research process. Rather, these actions are part of the research process.

Acknowledging the symbolic interactionist positioning of everyday life, it is also important to recognise that the findings presented within these pages are empirically illuminative rather than definitive. Agar (1996) reminds us that ethnography can only be partial at best, and with this partiality comes not only the recognition that the gathering of ethnographic data is a slow, meandering, and demanding process (grounded in the input of others and vulnerable to change as a result of people's ongoing interactions) but also that it is a selfish enterprise often made tolerable through reciprocal 'rhetorics of reform' between researched and researcher. Wolcott (1995) reminds us that

> Engaging so wholeheartedly as we do in this 'rhetoric of reform' helps us feel we have addressed critical issues and courageously spoken our piece. We make it appear that if we cannot make a difference in the case at hand, at least we did not dodge the responsibility in bringing underlying issues before a wider audience. Pretty safe work...It is nice to seem to be at the cutting edge without having to do any cutting and without being noticeably near the edge. (p.140)

This passage from Wolcott, and similar passages from Dewar (1991), Manning (1997), Gore (1992), and Sparks (2002), speak to what it means to ‘have/give a voice’ and how we as researchers need to be cognisant and reflective of the way voices carry their own agency, agendas, and perspectives from within our research. Dewar (1991) asks what it means to turn traditional concepts on their heads (i.e., terms like ‘development,’ ‘sport,’ ‘reconciliation,’ etc.) and ‘give people a voice’ or ‘empower’ them to speak. How is it possible to create an unbiased platform to describe everyday life? What kinds of relationships does this imply? What kind of power and privilege is implied in the act of giving? What does this say
about how voices are heard and interpreted? Dewar’s questions forced me to consider the reciprocal relationships involved in research involving recipients of development aid. What was I gaining from being there? What were my participants gaining from speaking to me? Associating with me? “Did reciprocity exist, or is it an idealistic, romantic ideal created to purge the research of any concerns about exploitation?” (Sparks, 2002, p.70). These questions gnawed at me during my fieldwork, creating a reflexive self-awareness of the practices and constructions of knowledge I was a part of. This recognition produced more balanced, less distorted accounts of my participants’ experiences (Pillow, 2003, p.178). Reflexivity, as Hertz (1997) notes, is “an ongoing conversation about ‘what I know’ and ‘how I know it’ [experience] while simultaneously living in the moment” (p.viii). By developing reflexivity, reciprocity with the cyclists soon followed, establishing a research project ‘with’ them instead of ‘on’ them.

As I actively negotiated voice as part of the research process, Dewar’s (1991) questions did not paralyze my project; rather, they enhanced it. Within the narratives, memories, imaginations and human involvement that informed my study, understandings of what it means to ‘have a voice’ (as a researcher and participant) were actively contested. Understandings of participants within shifting networks of global and local development can be found through storytelling, performance texts, rich local ethnographies, and ethnoscapes unearthed in the fieldwork data (Becker & McCall, 1990, p. 50). Change was discussed openly within the research process by both the cyclists and myself. It was common to have heated discussions between myself and the cyclists as to the explicitness of my findings and the manner in which they ‘should be’ written. I saw this as positive. Participants pushed the envelope of narrative storytelling through graphic details of their lives, both on and off the bicycle, leaving me to “construct [a] textual ‘reality’ from the shreds and patches of appearances and verbal testimony” (Atkinson, 2014, p.61) brought forth through extensive interaction. Such a commitment makes a researcher accountable for the ethical and personal consequences of any particular instance of advocacy. For this reason, my research is meant to inform fluid perceptions of sport for development, participant agency, and create questions, not to entrench them.

In conclusion, I cannot speak with complete certainty for my participants. Although I believe I am well suited to study the subjectivity and identity (Smith, 2010) of East African cyclists, I learned to treat my findings with a degree of caution and cynicism, believing them to be points of departure for further questions and investigation (Smith & Sparks, 2005), not solely fact. This chapter has described and

27 Participants are typically portrayed and spoken about as passive entities within the established global development hierarchy.
justified the processes and contexts in which I conducted my field research in Rwanda. I detailed the approaches I employed to gain the trust of my participants, and the struggles that I physically, emotionally, and culturally endured to gain access to their lives. This established a methodological frame to describe the humane approach I employed in establishing a written representational account of the particular social processes, origins, and meanings of Rwandan cyclists everyday life.

Although I will never be quite sure how much of their trust I earned and the motives for why they welcomed me into their everyday lives, I was, methodologically, able to navigate through a complex subcultural web using various ethnographic techniques to triangulate and produce data that looks “to see how people make sense of the situations they encounter in their daily routines and how they deal with these situations on an ongoing basis” (Dietz, Prus, & Shaffir, 1994). By moving through their homes, communities, roads, and life worlds, I did not identically reconstruct the actual experience of everyday life, yet I encountered and embodied the sensoriality (Pink, 2009) of these places, the red clay surfaces of the roads, the smells of the market, the tartness of burning grasses in the evening, and textures of foods, clothing, and homes. These experiences created a context for me as a researcher that invoked valuable illustrations, fieldnotes, photographs, video, commentaries, discussion and stories from the cyclists about memories, experiences, values and practices. To ignore any of the preceding features of group life – perspectives, reflectivity, negotiability, relationships, and processes – would be to violate the central qualities of their everyday life, making my efforts incomplete. In trying to be true to my subject matter of everyday life, I have been attentive to all these aspects, to the best of my abilities, while simultaneously adhering to the concerns and confidences of the cyclists, their family members, and broader community.
Chapter Three:
Rwanda by Bicycle

I push myself, many days until I almost drop dead. There is nothing to be complacent about. We [Rwandans] are poor, and being poor is bad. If being pushed hurts, it cannot hurt as much as poverty, as much as being hungry and sick. I make no apologies about pushing people hard. I wish I had even more energy that I have to push them. It hurts them, but they come up in the end as winners. (President Paul Kagame, in Lewis, 2013, p. 158)

Introduction

Without context, President Kagame’s voice reflects a “no pain, no gain” mentality. Hard, unapologetic, and sacrificial. Yet Kagame’s voice also reflects the sentiments of a nation in mourning, a nation transforming, adapting, and evolving to the ebbs and flows of the contemporary global markets and various forces of development imposed upon the (re)imagining of this post-conflict African state. His vision of leadership for the progress of his small, land-locked nation fills the influential radio airwaves and deconstructs the divisive ethnic politics of its recent past, which culminated in the 1994 Rwandan genocide. The genocide was the climax of a century of ethnic division and violence between three main groups in Rwanda: the majority Hutu, minority Tutsi, and subgroup Twa. Kagame employs a series of modernizing policies that seek to collectively galvanize Rwandans to look forward, to forgive, and to forget what Anderson describes as ethnically “imagined communities” (1991), and in the process, promote a sense of national identity as unilaterally Rwandan.

With peace in Rwanda, Kagame’s rapid achievements in (re)development, sustainability and progress in areas of education, democracy, and the economy have been celebrated within a still conflict-prone, debt-ridden, East African region. Yet far away from the International Monetary Fund’s Structural Adjustment Programs, or the Rwandan Government National Development Policy (Vision 2020), Kagame’s ethos of work for change has materialized on the dusty roads and lush green hills of Rwanda’s countryside. Small businesses, tractors, motorcycles, gas stations, and reliable electricity are becoming commonplace in the largely rural state. These symbols – images – of modernity and technology serve as tangible markers of success and progress for Rwandans. They are material reminders of what the sacrifices articulated by Kagame yield in everyday life.
The bicycle, from within this rapidly transforming space, is faced with obsolescence and pressures to conform to the modernizing policies of Kagame’s RPF government. In this chapter, therefore, I examine the bicycle as a floating signifier, which helps articulate the evolving identity of a Rwandan cyclist in Kagame’s post-genocide Rwanda. Interwoven within the understanding of the bicycle’s cultural genesis and its use in the landlocked East African nation, I unpack shifts in Rwandan history and begin to paint the social and structural backdrop that everyday life is enacted within, by cyclists. Therefore, from such a backdrop, this chapter becomes concerned with the identity transformation cyclists experience as a result of the external structural and cultural forces of history and modernization in Rwanda. Through a cyclist’s evolving identity, and the changes taking place within their everyday, I underscore the ways in which the development of a cycling career manifests in Rwanda, and the minded, self-reflective, and often lethal sacrifices these young men are willing to take on a bicycle. Keenly aware of how their identities, actions, and reactions permit (or limit) opportunities for ‘success’ and a ‘better life,’ cyclists unpack the decisions, discomforts, and sacrifices required to bring home a paycheck through pedaling. Thus, as I argue here, the bicycle becomes the metaphor for how agency is enabled and constrained by external forces and conditions.

Grounded in, and narrated through my ethnographic study within the Rwandan countryside, I begin the chapter with a chronological history of the bicycle in Rwanda and its influence and characterization as a complex symbol of mobility, culture, and identity. By excavating the bicycle’s historical context, we can better understand its various symbolic meanings for Rwandans (and Rwandan cyclists) within everyday life. What develops is an investigation of how Rwandan youth adopt the bicycle as a means of expressing agency and ‘freedom’ within structurally constrained and culturally contoured circumstances.

In addition to the above, rather than strictly interpreting a cyclist’s involvement in a sport for development organization as a function of various forces acting upon them, I examine their behaviour as a minded, self-reflective, emergent aspect of an “occupational identity” (Becker, 1956) in a post-conflict nation. In recognizing fluid identities developed within such a competitive cycling subculture, I consider the kinds of careers that develop among Rwandan cyclists along the lines of what Simmons (1969) describes as the complex, ambiguous, shifting, processual and interactive nature of subcultural involvement. Specifically, this is done through the adoption of Becker and Carper’s (1956) concept of “occupational identities,” which interprets one’s social participation in work as involving the acquisition

28 A signifier that absorbs rather than emits meaning. Rather, it functions primarily as a vehicle for absorbing meaning that viewers want to impose on it.
29 Identity being the meaning that an individual cyclist attaches to the self (Reichers, 1987, p.280).
or maintenance of a particular occupational personality. Becker’s work with college students’ identity and documentation of instance(s) of personal change within post-secondary institutions parallels significantly the data collected on participants within their career transitions as Rwandan cyclists. The changes in institutional participation – career contingencies – and the contingencies on which these changes are predicated, are as relevant in Rwanda now as they were to Becker’s analysis of college students. Becker (1956) stressed that a worker’s career path was not prepatterned or bureaucratically determined. Rather, it was dependent on a host of local processes and meaning structures, such as personal motives and needs, job or work requirements, and formal and informal relations with those in positions of power and authority (Becker, 1956; Becker & Strauss, 1956). By emphasizing both the historical and local dimensions of “career contingency” (Becker, 1963; Hughes, 1937; Prus, 2010), I unearth understandings of occupational development and individual movement within the career of a cyclist in Rwanda. To uncover such forces of departure and movements permits us to examine lines of action established and mechanisms developed in relation to an evolving understanding of the “interpreting, planning, anticipating, doing, experiencing, assessing, and readjusting features of action” (Blumer, 1969) of everyday (cycling) life.

Although it may seem analytically parsimonious to simplify understandings of identity formation by removing the cyclists from the webs of interdependency, contextual complexities, and historical narratives in the country, it would be credulous to assume these webs, contexts, and histories form the crux of these understandings. Complex, interwoven understandings of occupational identity formation are thus necessary as they present deeper considerations around comprehending how identities are achieved, understood, and maintained by those involved. I do this by tracing the bicycle’s utility as a floating signifier historically, permitting us to observe the bicycle’s various manifestations as a tool of war, liberation, survival, refuge, mobility, freedom, employment, and redemption. The occupational identity of a small subgroup of Rwandans becomes clear with this historical narration.

In considering identity in this way, lines of action are established in relation to historical and contextual flows of the cyclist’s participation within both specific subcultural, as well as broader life-worlds. This association is reflective of Becker’s (1956) belief that the most compelling instances of personal change can be found in the development of an occupational personality. Thus, the development of career and

the subjective aspects of such movements are treated in terms of the concepts of self, identity, and transformation, which direct attention to the way situations present the person with experiences with objects and people out of which may come stabilization of self-conception into lasting identities, on the one hand, and their transformation into new identities, on the other. (Becker & Carper, 1956, p.289)
Rwanda by Bicycle

It is not difficult to understand the cultural and social importance of the single-speed cycling community in contemporary Rwanda within the context of its history. Single-speed taxis or ‘boda-boda’s’ (English translation border-border) first appeared in the 1960s and 1970s at key illegal Ugandan-Kenyan border crossings as a means to quickly cross the frontier without hassle from authorities. No longer illegal, bicycles have since proliferated throughout the sub-continent as an effective and relatively inexpensive way to offer a service of mobility and delivery to the lower-middle classes. In rural East African countries, remote areas which are often inaccessible by motorized vehicles, the bicycle serves as a critical vessel for transporting anything from people, goods, and medicines, to political developments and football scores. In Rwanda, due to the nature of the mountainous topography, the bicycle — known in Kinyarwanda as amagare, as either a traditional wooden bicycle, icugutu made from eucalyptus trees, or the modern steel frames from China and India — has been a means of transport for people, commodities, and information to the remoteness of sectors, cells, and villages. Today, bicycles are seen as instrumental in the facilitation of everyday cultural life for a large majority of Rwandans. As a tool and symbol of mobility, status and opportunity, the advent and widespread availability of the bicycle provides individuals with what Wellman describes as “liberated community” (1988), where contemporary social relationships, cultural connectivity and information flow. Further still, distinct communities arose from the advent of bicycles that facilitated the strengthening of local relationships and the discovering of larger social networks. For example, in the southern town of Butare in the 1960s, people commonly ventured in groups to the Burundian border and back after Sunday church — a previously unimaginable scene. The bicycle provides opportunities for those whose geographic communities, and shared kinship, overlooks other forms of identity that are increasingly important, such as health, status and appearance within their everyday Rwandan life.

Yet, we can acknowledge the bicycle’s current status as a communal mechanism of mobility and freedom, but we cannot ignore the deeply elitist and colonial history it may symbolize. The bicycle came to Rwanda with the Bazungu at the turn of the twentieth century. The Bazungu, a term used for white

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30 The southeast is the flattest part of the country while the remainder of the country’s geography is a result of its proximity to the Virunga Mountains.
31 Or igare in the singular.
32 Since the 1994 Genocide, President Kagame has banned icugutu’s from main roads and towns as a mechanism of promoting Rwanda’s ambitious World Bank and IMF Development strategy.
33 The cell is the basic administrative unit in Rwanda. There are 9,175 cells. A cell is composed of about 100 to 200 families who live on their land or, in the case of the imidugudu, nearby. The cell is the constituent unit of the sector. Sectors, of which there are 1,545, are the constituent units of the district. The country has 106 districts in its 12 provinces. Sectors are “communities” comprised of approximately 800 to 1,500 families. Each district serves as a local government for about a dozen sectors. Their origins go back to the sub-chiefdoms and chiefdoms of old Rwanda, which were retained during the colonial period, then subdivided when the country became independent. (NURC, 2004)
European colonizers, arrived in Rwanda approximately a hundred years ago, laying claim to territories that now encompass both Rwanda and Burundi. First were the Germans, led by Count Gustav Adolf von Gotzen in 1894, then King Leopold II of Belgium who acquired the territory in 1916. This was a ‘transaction’ in what is now historically referred to as the *Scramble for Africa* – the organized invasion, occupation, and annexation of African territories from 1881 to 1914 (Pakenham, 1992). The aim of this imperial conquest was overwhelmingly economic and geopolitical. The late 19th century industrialization throughout Central and Western Europe gave countries such as England, France, Spain, Italy, and Belgium the wealth, technology, and motivation to look beyond their borders for raw resources, cheap labour, and markets (Cleary, 2000). Furthermore, colonial monopolies provided an ideological space for “civilized” European culture to be imprinted on African societies – deemed “savage” and underdeveloped. In carving up Africa and trading territories like baseball cards, European nations avoided war amongst themselves and decided the fate of millions of Africans from the prism (and safety) of economic and political priorities drafted thousands of miles away. Pursuing such colonizing policies meant that Europeans not only “diplomatically conquered” the continent through divisive power sharing agreements with certain indigenous and ethnic groups they perceived as “more civilized,” but exploited local populations by forcing labour and a commodification of traditional resources and lands. For example, between 1885 to 1908 in neighbouring Congo, the West’s newly unquenchable demand for rubber (e.g., in the advent of the inflatable bicycle tire) grew, creating an industry that forced enslavement, torture, and death on millions of Congolese men and women. Over two thirds of the region’s people are said to have perished during that time (Jackson, 2009). In Rwanda, through an agreement with Tutsi aristocracy, the Belgian colonizers were able to indirectly rule through the “incorporations of native authorities into a state-enforced customary order” (Uvin, 1998, p.16). In doing so, the Bazungus created and systematically enforced a strict system of ethnic classification, making ethnically-specific identity cards mandatory. Identity cards were used by the authorities in the provision/exclusion of social services, access to land claims, and freedom of movement. This would be one of the many unequal, exploitative, and hierarchical policies transformed into practice, establishing and solidifying a power hierarchy of four main ethnic groups: the Bazungu, the Tutsi, the Hutu, and the Twa.

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34 Gaining the territory of Rwanda from Germany after WW1 – then known as Ruanda-Urundi, which included both modern day Rwanda and Burundi – the Belgians were famously able to indirectly rule Rwanda through a combination of force and diplomacy.

35 Many estimate between 12-15 million Congolese were killed during this period.

36 Rwandans were issued identity cards after being formally “assessed” by the authorities. This assessment was famously documented through film of Belgian authorities measuring noses and skulls of citizens, as well as counting cattle. This has drawn comparisons to the datafication of identity by the Nazi’s during WWII.
The Bazungus seized the largest share of purchasing power, vehicles, status symbols and possessions in the country by creating an official stratified society. The remaining minority share was managed and distributed by the Tutsi rulers. During the German and early Belgian colonial period of Rwanda, little governmental effort was devoted into developing Rwanda’s infrastructure, largely because Rwanda was not a major exporter of goods to the West. Roadways were unsuitable for most vehicles or bicycles, whose tires now bore rubber inflatable tires rather than their predecessors, the aptly named “boneshakers” (Jackson, 2009). Roman Catholic missionaries who, during this period, convincingly converted the local Rwandan population to Christianity (and became Rwanda’s largest and most influential religious denomination today) used boneshaker bicycles to reach remote communities. Their mobility was critical to establishing networks of faith throughout the countryside. This era of colonialism, Christianity, and resource exploitation began the process of ethnic segregation that, through the Bazungu backing of the Tutsi minority elites, would intensify divisions in the decades leading to independence.

By the 1920s, bicycles were a luxury, as “there were few signs of prosperity in Rwanda during colonial times” (Lewis, 2013, p.17). Belgian Bazungus rode and raced these bicycles in the districts and city centres, while the European newspapers from that era discussed cycling’s increasing popularity as a spectator sport and a recreation fashion across western society (Smethurst, 2015). Cycling, leisure and sport was then taken up by elite Rwandan families, largely of Tutsi aristocracy, who saw the bicycle as a mechanism of status and superiority. With symbols of class and status – such as a modern bicycle – now available to the Rwandan elite, many were able to distinguish themselves further, creating increased separation, animosity, and resentment between ethnic groups, tribes, and regions. Modern symbols such as the bicycle or shortwave radio further divided Rwandan society into classes, establishing those with such novelties – such freedoms – as being more Bazungu than African. This further stratified an ever-growing hierarchical society.

In the 1960s and 1970s, wealthy Rwandans and expatriate workers, teachers, and missionaries rode bicycles in the town centres, near the national university and hillsides of more affluent Rwandan neighbourhoods. In East and North Africa more broadly, competitive racing formed and flourished, especially in French and Italian colonies such as Algeria, Eritrea, and Burkina Faso. Where European cultural influence was prominent and the expatriate passion for sport was eccentric to the local people, competitive bicycle racing transmitted well to the spirited and athletic nature of the colonized

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37 As opposed to the diamond and rubber rich neighbours such as Congo, Uganda, and Burundi.

38 Rwanda is the most Christianized country in Africa with Roman Catholic 49.5%, Protestant 39.4% (includes Adventist 12.2% and other Protestant 27.2%), other Christian 4.5%, Muslim 1.8%, animist 0.1%, other 0.6%, none 3.6% (2001), unspecified 0.5% (CIA Factbook: Rwanda, 2002).
populations (Herlihy, 2004). In Rwanda, such enthusiasm for cycle sports occurred quietly largely because of class and culture. Bicycles progressively made their way into the hands of middle class Rwandans prior to independence through benefactors39 who sponsored promising young men to train and race. Lower classes were not given such privileges, particularly the majority Hutu population. It was rare to see a Hutu riding, but this would change after independence. Hutus would soon be favoured on the national team due to their rise in political power, stripping Tutsis of their places in any representative competition (Lewis, 2013). These demonstrative acts of ethnic superiority enflamed conflicts as people began classifying themselves the “established” and the “outsiders” within Rwandan society (Elias & Scotson, 1965). Similar to Elias and Scotson’s research on generational residents (the “established”) compared to newly relocated residences (the “outsiders”) in the fictional town of Winston Parva, the underling cause for the historical hostilities between Hutus and Tutsis is their dual claim to “the established” status in Rwandan society. An Eliasian approach to the study of Rwandans volatile power relations and identity constructions is formidable as it takes into account the overlapping nature of configurations; emphasizes that individuals are simultaneously embedded in a large number of configurations; recognizes that different spatial contexts are not merely external resources to be manipulated by (local) actors, but intimately involved in the very construction of those actors in the first place; and refuses to treat conflicts that play out in local contexts as purely local phenomena (Nieguth & Lacassagne, 2012, p.51). In considering such claims, the bicycle and the freedom to compete, for example, was coopted by Hutu and Tutsi political forces and used as a symbol to demonstrate ethnic superiority, control, and suppression. “ Outsider” status would be thus be solidified, through acts such as the barring of Tutsi cyclists for the 1991 All-Africa games in Egypt and the cancelling of the Tour du Rwanda in the early 1990s (Lewis, 2013, p.43).

Successive waves of social and ethnic violence – which were hoped to cease with the advent of democracy, development, and a democratic process – continued between Hutus and Tutsis (and the Twa) following formal independence from the Bazungus in 1962. Having endured years of “torturous rule” (Braekman, 1994), the Hutu majority took revenge, purging Rwanda of Tutsis through manipulative media, promotion of localized ethnic violence, and segregational policies. They did this while entrenching a Hutu counter-elite under a mantra of “demographic majority and democracy” (Prunier, 2009). Rwanda’s first democratically elected president, Gregoire Kayibanda (a Hutu), implemented a policy of “systematic discrimination” (Uvin, 1998) against Tutsis, particularly in areas of direct political involvement and vertical mobility. The government employed deeply seeded ethnic prejudice – the

39 Rich Rwandans, or Buzungus who could afford bicycles and source them. This is ongoing today with cycling clubs in Gisenyi, Kigali, and Rhamagana.
reduction of people’s identity to their ethnicity with disregard for their other features, and the attribution of moral judgements to these identities – to incite periodic and indiscriminate massacres of Tutsi populations by their neighbours, colleagues, and associates as a method of control and fear.

Furthermore, the institutionalization of certain political texts, such as the 1957 Hutu Manifesto written by a small group of Hutu intellectuals, including Kayibanda himself, further harnessed real social forces embedded within the structure of Rwandan society, and in the perception of many of its members (Kuper, 1977). Prus (2003) argues that when unpacking a policy or other modes of influence – such as the Hutu Manifesto – one must contend that group life is contingent on cooperation (see Simmel 1950; Prus, 1999). Leaders such as Kayibanda and his group of Hutu intellectuals were reliant on followers (or other supporters) for acknowledgement and implementation of the matters referenced by such divisive policies. Uvin (1997) aptly depicts it as “a reversal in that the moral and social privilege associated with the Tutsi – the natural-born rulers, the chosen people – was turned on its head, with the Tutsi now in the position of alien, inferior outsiders to be constrained” (p.33). A dynamic reversal of the established and the outsider dynamic (Elias & Scotson, 1991) would prove fatal as hundreds of thousands of Tutsi, and Tutsi sympathisers, were brutally killed by coordinated extermination – a “clearing of the bush” – by Rwandan Hutus. This insecurity created a refugee population of almost two million Rwandese people, creating a diaspora that lasting well over four decades (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2015).

In neighbouring countries, such as Uganda, Tanzania, and Congo, young Tutsi’s mobilized, calling for the fulfillment of their “international legal right to return to Rwanda” (United Nations, 2015). President Habyarimana, citing economic and population pressures, denied their repatriation. His decision fed the racist prejudices between groups in Rwanda based on myths and images of inferiority and superiority that predated colonization. These established/outsider constructions only incited further violence as the social relations between Hutu and Tutsi groups continued to erode (Elias & Scotson, 1965). Organized groups of refugees began assembling and staging brief incursions to Hutu targets across the border in Rwanda. The UN (2015) confirms ten such attacks occurred between 1962 and 1967, each leading to the justification of the disproportionate retaliatory killings of Tutsi civilians in Rwanda, further entrenching divisions well into the 1990s with significant loss of life by Hutu and Tutsi populations.

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40 The Hutu Manifesto was a political document that called for Hutu ethnic and political solidarity, as well as the political disenfranchisement of the Tutsi people. It served as the political pretext for the Rwandan Genocide of 1994. The document’s content underscored the need for Hutu self-preservation amid decades of discrimination by Tutsis, and denounced the privileged status afforded to the Tutsi minority by the colonizers.

41 Although divisions were entrenched long before the Bazungus, all three major ethnic groups actually shared a number of cultural similarities such as religion, language, and hierarchal system. Divisions were greatly strengthened and modified during the colonial period that saw physical, religious, and political affiliations exacerbate divisions.
During these cycles of violence, the bicycle was a tool of liberation for Rwandans, allowing family members to quickly mobilize and flee warring tensions. Those with bicycles often took advantage of their mobility and fled prior to a massacre. On the contrary, armed diaspora groups such as the Rwandese Alliance for National Unity (RANU)\footnote{Almost a decade later, in 1987, RANU became the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF), whose objectives were: to promote national unity and reconciliation; to establish genuine democracy; to provide security for all Rwandese; to build an integrated and self-sustaining economy; to eradicate corruption in all forms; to repatriate and resettle Rwandese refugees; to devise and implement policies that promote the social welfare of all Rwandese and; to pursue a foreign policy based on equality, peaceful coexistence and mutual benefit between Rwanda and other countries (Rwandan High Commission, 2015).} frequently made quick and steadfast military incursions into Rwandan territory with bicycles (Mamdani, 2002). Thus, the bicycle was understood as a tool for war and peace, liberty and death.

Borrowing from Elias and Scotson, Atkinson (2003) demonstrates how social groups – such as Rwanda’s ethnic groups that I am describing – are “mutually oriented and interdependent, they articulated how both established and outsider groups coalesce around shared WE images of identification. WE images are partly formed in relation to common social positions, roles, attributes, and intersubjectively held belief systems, but also include shared tastes or preferences for specific outward forms of collective representation such as bodily comportment and style” (p.162). Therefore, as reflected in Elias and Scotson’s (1965) analysis of Winston Parva, exclusionary discourse and policy – as exemplified in Rwanda – are not exclusively locally fabricated but, manifests through historical, economic, cultural, political, religious, and administrative aspects of everyday Rwandan life. The bicycle’s utility as a symbol of difference sheds light on issues of exclusion/inclusion – WE vs. THEY (Elias 1987, 1991, 1994) – and discourses of marginalisation present in both Rwanda’s contemporary moment and past.

100 Days

The bicycle’s ability to provide freedom was not lost for those from April to July, 1994 – the most infamous “100 days” in Rwandan history. Violence ignited on April 6, 1994, when the Presidential plane, carrying Hutu moderate President Juvenal Habyarimana and Burundi’s president Cyprien Ntaryamira, was shot down as it approached Kigali national airport.\footnote{It was never revealed who was to blame for the plane’s destruction. Both sides of the conflict blame one another.} Within an hour of the plane’s destruction, barricades were erected across the capital by members of the Presidential Guard, members of the Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR) and the notorious Hutu militia groups known as the Interhamwe (“Those who work together”) and Impuzamugambi (“Those with the same goal”). These groups then began systematically slaughtering Tutsis and moderate Hutus without mercy in plain sight of the international...
press, humanitarian organizations, and the United Nations peacekeeping force, UNAMIR. Militia leaders
carried lists of names of people deemed worthy of extermination. It was coordinated killing on a massive
scale. Rather than reacting to credible evidence being provided on the ground by the UN, foreign
intelligence officers, and international organizations, global leaders stalled. Many critics blame the US’s
recent failure in Somalia for hesitation to put ‘boots on the ground’ even when calls for assistance
from international organizations on the ground were factual, frequent, and filled with horrific accounts
of human injustice (Orbinski, 2009). Some believed the catalyst was when ten Belgian peacekeepers
from the UNAMIR force were brutally killed by genocidaires in Kigali; the global community reacted in
retreat rather than bolstering the peacekeeping force who had made significant efforts at a cessation of
violence. The already powerless UNAMIR force under a United Nations Chapter VI mandate was
reduced to a bystander role. The UNAMIR Force Commander, Canadian General Romeo Dallaire,
would later go on to call this a “systemic failure” on the part of the United Nations (Dallaire, 2003).

The 1994 Rwandan genocide created unimaginable suffering within a country normalized to incidents
of violent retribution. It is estimated that over 800,000 Rwandans lost their lives in the immediate conflict
(Thompson, 2013). Alongside the genocide, a civil war raged with RANU – now the Rwandan Patriotic
Front (RPF) – led by then commander Paul Kagame. RPF forces fought their way from various points of
entry towards Kigali, in the hopes of ending the war and genocide. By early July, the RPF forces gained
control of large swaths of the country: “In response, more than 2 million people, nearly all Hutus, fled
Rwanda, crowding into refugee camps in the Congo (then called Zaire) and other neighbouring
countries” (The Rwandan Genocide, 2009), creating one of the largest, most complex, humanitarian
emergencies of the 20th century. In many cases, cyclists and their families escaped the violence on two-
wheels, making the bicycle a tool for survival and refuge. Félicien, a young successful Tutsi cyclist
recounts:

When I was only three we made it [on the back of his fathers bicycle] to the Congo through the mountains
[sitting next to an old single-speed bicycle that is his father's]. We stayed with family in Congo and I remember
enjoying it there. The time we returned here [Rwanda], it was very bad because the Tutsi started killing Hutu

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44 From December 1992 to May of 1993, the United States of America (US) led a United Nations-sanctioned task force,
UNITAF, instructed to carry out United Nations Security Resolution 794, which was to create humanitarian safe zones so
that humanitarian operations (primarily food and medicine) could be conducted in the heavily militarized southern half
of the country. In conjunction – and some would say in contrast – with UNITAF’s mission (code-named Operation Restore
Hope), the US conducted operations with the primary objective of capturing the militant faction leader Mohamed Farrah
Aidid. On October 3, 1993, in the hunt for Aidid, Aidid militiamen held down US Special Forces trapped in central
Mogadishu. The ensuing battle cost the lives of 18 US soldiers, resulting in US President Clinton’s withdrawal of all US
troops from the horn of Africa, effectively ending both the humanitarian operations, and the search for Aidid.

45 Chapter VI deals with the “Pacific Settlement of Disputes”. UN peacekeeping operations have traditionally been
associated with Chapter. However, the Security Council need not refer to a specific Chapter of the Charter when passing a
resolution authorizing the deployment of a UN peacekeeping operation and has never invoked Chapter VI (United
Nations, 2015).

46 Most of the cyclists were infants and young children in 1994.
because they [other Hutu] had killed their families, you know? When I was growing up I knew the people [Hutu and Tutsi] do not like each other, they would say “these people did bad things, kill your family and that…” We had to be ready to go. It was a bad time. Not like now. (Félicien)

Through the 1994 genocide’s subsequent years of ethnic clashes and conflict, the bicycle continued to be used for a litany of tasks, both constructive and destructive. Bicycles were now also used by Hutus and Tutsis during the multiple, and less documented, reprisal killings of the following decade between various Hutu extremist groups, the RPF, and regional terrorist factions (e.g., Hutu militias such as the M-23 in Goma) both inside and outside of Rwanda. This forced large populations to flee, once again, to neighbouring countries or seek asylum abroad. Today, nearly one million Rwandans claim refugee status in developed countries (CIA, 2015).

The bicycle is not actively discussed in literature on the Rwandan genocide, despite it having been an indispensable part of Rwanda’s historical, social and cultural construction as a symbol of freedom, division, hope, revolution and life. The cyclists themselves, when speaking about their upbringings and experiences, do not explicitly describe the bicycle as a tool or symbol of freedom, but rather speak about it as if it was a part of their everyday, an essential (technological) extension of their identity. References to the bicycle’s symbolism and cultural importance were unearthed largely anecdotally through interviews, discussions, and readings of Rwandan history. The bicycle’s use was mentioned repeatedly in the life narratives of the team cyclists and their families, particularly in times of migration and conflict. Yet, bicycles were not the primary focus. For example, Aimable describes his experience in 1994:

When we heard on the radio the president’s plane went down, we knew there was problems…we took important things [valuables] and met at our neighbours homes down the road. Sisters, brothers, mama, my grandmother, neighbours. Papa went down towards Gihara [a city towards Kigali] with some men from the village. I never see him again. He died sometime during the fighting. When the fighting came near us we run into the bush to hide. My uncle had a home in a village that was far away. We wanted to go there but it was difficult as the roads were very bad. [I ask if they could use bicycles or motorcycles to get there by road] We couldn’t use the bicycles, as it was too dangerous. We would sleep in the forest, fearing. I was separated many times with my family…My friend [he grabs my hand], look at this [shows me markings on his hip and chest]. The bugs [assuming ants] were biting but we couldn’t do anything, we could not move, people were killing everyday. We eat, sleep, and drink water in the forest. We reached the home for my uncle, but it takes many days. Many people don’t survive. My friend, it was a bad time for us. (Aimable)

Unlike Aimable, the majority of the cyclists I met during my fieldwork do not remember the events of 1994 – mostly because of their young age at the time. However, all of them described the fear they felt growing up in the subsequent years of turmoil and reconciliation inflicted upon them by the government in power. This is a significant distinction in the cyclists’ life narratives. They were witness to reprisal
killings, the *Gacaca* courts, and the “dominant narrative of national unity and reconciliation as crafted and forcibly maintained by the RPF-led government” (Thompson, 2013, p.29). However, although the majority of cyclists do not remember the genocide, they live with the residual histories, stories, material effects and impacts it created. Numerous cyclists attribute the death of their family members to the lack of mobility in the community at that time. Some cyclists’ narratives evoke that they believe that if they had had the means – e.g., a bicycle or a means of mobility – their outcomes would be different. This imagined/idolized potential of the bicycle was a painful reminder of their family’s status in years leading to, and after, 1994. Many people they loved and cared about were physically trapped, and could not escape the violence, creating painful images of their childhood and youth. What was also detailed to me in my interviews was the resulting grief and responsibilities taken on by cyclists due to family members’ deaths and the changes in place, space, and obligation, resulting from the devastation of the genocide. Rwandan history, with its ethnic tensions, violent reprisals, political dogmatism, reconciliatory image, and culture of hard work, contributes to the contextual makeup and backdrop of these intimate life-narrative histories of the cyclists that do not “ignore the politics of narratives and the extent to which they support or contest social structures and practices” (Jackson, 1998, p.62). In those life-narrative histories, a return to cycling and the bicycle is an inevitable part of the story. It is through unpacking initial involvements – symbols, motives, identities, skills, and strengths – that an understanding of the multifaceted contexts these cyclists navigate is developed. From these initial involvements, the remainder of the chapter emphasizes the career contingency model – the processes, meanings, and negotiable aspects of group life (Prus, 1987). In doing so, narratives of cycling as a means of satisfying the economic, social, and cultural realities of Rwandan everyday life reveal the multifaceted context(s) in which these cyclist navigate.

**Initial Involvements**

Cyclists typically begin cycling in their local communities on single-speed bicycles – like those of the Ugandan-Kenyan border – as a means of employment. Financial gain is the primary reason the cyclists I

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47 *Gacaca*, meaning “Justice of the grass”, was a modified traditional means of reconciliatory justice implemented in post-genocide Rwanda as a means of dealing with perpetrators of the genocide. The Gacaca process has five goals: to establish the truth about what happened, to accelerate the legal proceedings for those accused of genocide crimes, to eradicate the culture of impunity, to reconcile Rwandans and reinforce their unity, and to use the capacities of the Rwandan society to deal with its problems through a justice based on Rwandan custom. Controversial in both its application and execution, Gacaca aims for a “communal version of the path” by having neighbours, victims and perpetrators collectively search for truth by hearing and working through each other’s version of events. (Inglaere, 2008)

48 All but two team cyclists identified their careers originating explicitly from single-speed bicycles. The other two members became involved in racing through family affiliations and not through single-speed work.
lived with decided to take up single-speed work and eventually racing. The cyclists I lived with were born into families that have minimal opportunities to advance beyond their economic and social bracket. They come largely from small agrarian communities in the valleys and collines of Rwanda’s countryside that live a subsistence lifestyle. Poverty trends in Rwanda are said to remain high due to “the existence and systematic enforcement of a multitude of limitations on people’s mobility and initiative” (Uvin, 1998, p.115). Strict administration of residence permits, land procurement, zoning regulations, vendor licences, taxes, and state surveillance discourages those assiduous Rwandans from seeking social advancement. As such, like many young Rwandans with large families and little income, cyclists are forced to, or willingly, abandon educational opportunities in search of employment in the informal sectors of the economy to supplement household income.49 For young men who have exhausted the Rwandan government’s universal access to primary education,50 the physicality of cycling is a draw that allows them to exploit and the develop their physical bodies, if not their minds. Many cyclists expressed forgoing secondary school as a means to allow younger siblings to explore educational opportunities that required expensive tuitions. Ephrem, an ex-racer, echoed the everyday realities restricting opportunities on many Rwandan youth:

Many people in Rwanda don’t go to school [because of the financial needs at home], in that regard you need get a good job to help pay for others. Like my sister [points to sister], she is in secondary. We help her pay school fees and books. That’s why if you are a cyclist in Rwanda it is good than other people, because of the money…I am always looking for [a] job that can bring money to me and my family. If you have choice, you can choose [a] nice job but if you don’t have a choice you keep going with the job you are given to keep life going; for me it is cycling you know?

With an absence of options, young men are forced to choose between “hustles” in the informal economies such as street vending, construction, informal transportation, or illegal endeavors such as bootlegging of movies, pickpocketing or even drug dealing. These are understood as deviant professions in Rwanda. Deviance, as described by Becker (1963), is not a quality of the act, but rather “a consequence of the application by others of the rules and sanctions to an ‘offender.’ The deviant is one to whom the label has been successfully applied: deviant behaviour is behaviour that people so label” (Becker, 1963, p.9). Within contemporary Rwanda, one can witness these deviant hustles on the streets of Rwanda with idle youth – called mayibobo. They are mostly young men searching for work or occupying the roadsides, looking for opportunities to earn income. Becker (1963) argues that such displays of deviance by mayibobos are best understood in terms of career-like developments – career contingencies. Career contingencies therefore include the motives, desires, and sentiments of individuals

49 The gross national income (GNI) per capita of Rwanda in 2014 was $700 USD (World Bank, 2015).
50 Rwanda has the highest primary school enrolment rates in Africa (73%). Contrastingly, secondary school net enrolment rates drop to 28% when costs are involved. (UNICEF, 2015)
as well as the objective facts of social structure (Herman, 1995, p.94). For young, physically-fit, uneducated Rwandan males, the consideration of a cycling-based occupation conveys a very specific narrative of the cultural/social, institutional and individual factors facing these young men. Cyclist were asked to explain why they chose single-speed cycling over other jobs, three main reasons were foregrounded. First, single-speed bicycles are themselves an affordable (approx. 100 USD/per bicycle) entry point into the service economy without carrying tremendous debt as you would with a motorcycle taxi or, even worse, a taxi car. Motorcycles or taxis require loans and lengthy payback schemes, not favoured by the cyclists. Cycling maximizes the physical enthusiasm these young men have for an occupation and the amount of money brought home with minimal financial risks. Second, single-speed work gives Rwandan youth a degree of freedom that is not possible in other jobs such as farming. Although there is organization and routine, a cyclist is the “master of his domain” and is afforded the comforts and freedom of flexible hours, riding in manageable conditions, charging his own price, etc. These factors, of course, determine how much he makes, his respect amongst peers, and his “ranking” within the informal hierarchy. Third, cyclists understood very well that employment after a formal education would yield better paying jobs. Cyclists cited age, education, and social status as major barriers to advancement within a public sector job, and saw this as unreachable within the current cultural context. Many would compare their decision to work as cyclists to other deviant hustles – work that does not require formal education or training – and generally agreed that cycling, as single-speed cyclists, was more respectable than other jobs within the informal economy. For Becker (1963) such progression is seen as the major career contingency, the admittance and labeling as deviant. Such acceptance begins the process leading to the change of self-images and identities: “treating a person as though he were generally rather than specifically deviant produces a self-fulfilling prophecy. It sets in motion several mechanisms which conspire to shape the person in the image people have of him” (Becker, 1963, p.34). In becoming a single-speed cyclist, the label and social and cultural status that accompanies it serves to structure all social interaction hereafter.

Single-speed cycling provided cyclists with a sense of independence and control. The bicycle provided the stability and credibility that other jobs could simply not offer. Cycling was treated as a ‘profession’, umwuga, rather than simply a ‘job,’ akazi, and much better than the temporary odd-jobs, ibiraka, that were offered to the majority of youth in post-conflict Rwanda. That cyclists believed such a career was respectable and fulfilled their personal needs.

51 Women are culturally not encouraged to ride single-speed as a means of income. I have never, in all my years living in Africa, seen a female work as a cyclist. Although Rwanda has some of the most progressive equality laws in East Africa, with over 60% of its government representatives are women, in rural societal life, women are generally underrepresented in other political institutions (GMO, 2011) and traditional patriarchal attitudes continue to prevail. Rates of domestic violence are, for example, very high and there continues to be a high level of tolerance for domestic violence by both men and women (NISR et al, 2011).
offered them opportunities for both social and financial advancement made a bicycle-centered occupation ideal. The physicality and skills involved permits its recruits to seek employment wherever one can find work, while the individual agency to change one’s condition provides a sense of upward-mobility severely lacking for Rwanda’s mayibobos.

**One gear, One Reality**

Movement into single-speed bicycling occurs through the investment in a single-speed bicycle. Most cyclists own one heavy, steel constructed single-speed “roadster.” These bicycles are made to carry heavy loads, with an upfront geometry that has the cyclist sitting upright and a single gear for simplicity and ease of maintenance. Roadsters are imported from China or India and are considered of low quality. Locally Ugandan-made *Roadmasters* were said to be of better quality, and supporting locally produced goods gave these bicycles greater symbolic capital. The bicycles that carry the most symbolic capital are “western” bikes. These are frequently the highest quality bicycles and are typically either imported by wealthy expatriates or Rwandans who have lived abroad, or are donated bicycles imported by local and international NGOs for a variety of programs.

Throughout Rwanda and East Africa, numerous bicycle programs are present with diverse socio-economic goals and various levels of effectiveness, reach, and resources. For example, World Bicycle Relief52 is one of the largest global organizations, describing their work as “providing bicycles that help people prosper” through increased mobility. Many organizations such as World Bicycle Relief offer low interest loans for higher quality cargo bicycles, which are specifically designed for heavy loads such as coffee, potatoes, or locally made brick. The opportunity for such a bicycle is often serendipitous or contingent on one knowing someone who is “connected” to the organization and their program. This connection may acquire a better bicycle, but often comes with complicated commitments such as a stringent loan repayment plan, volunteer commitments, and limitations of the freedom that is a fundamental element of cyclist identity. As a result, most cyclists purchase Chinese or Indian Roadsters that sell for approximately 70,000fr (under $100 USD) brand new or can be purchased used. Alternatively, some cyclists rent or seek small interest loans, often from other cyclists, a single-speed taxi driver association, or a community co-op that has invested in bicycles. When doing so, repayment is normally made on a bi-weekly basis with a cyclist’s objective to pay off his bicycle as soon as possible through various forms of single-speed work.

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Becker and Carper (1956) describe the movement into this cultural space as “setting the investment mechanism going” (p.296). This fiscal and physical commitment of acquiring a bicycle is the first indication of a cyclist’s full pledge to himself as a cyclist. To not follow that career after such a substantial investment of resources means a loss of investment to the cyclist and falling behind the competition. Furthermore, it is often a first step in identity formation amongst these athletes – getting the equipment. With a bicycle, however one decides to acquire it, begins the embodied process of career identity (Becker & Strauss, 1956). With a bicycle in tow, one now must define himself and his profession in front of his family, colleagues and the community.

Typically, there are two main types of riding for a single-speed cyclist. One can either carry passengers from one place to another, or one can be hired to carry loads of goods from farms and factories to market or anywhere the contractor desires. Although a cyclist does not have to be exclusively one or the other, there are some distinct differences in the nature and execution of each, which are discussed below. I quickly learned in Rwanda that one chooses predominantly one type of cycling as their primary focus, but is not strictly bounded to either subgroup. The cyclists I interviewed considered this a means of establishing one’s reputation within the area or community through a physical demonstration of aptitude. Becker (1956) explains that “since [the cyclist’s] future depends in part on how others identify him, he is pushed in the direction of assuming the identity that goes along with his new interests and skills in order that he may satisfactorily meet the expectations of others in the work world” (p.297). Trésor, a former single-speed taxi cyclist, explained that when he began understanding cycling as an occupation, he adjusted his lifestyle to accommodate work and his clientele. He would eat differently, wake up early, and ensure he was presentable and pleasant for customers. Career Contingency theorists would describe this as the beginning of the identification process within the development of a career identity.

Prus (1997) says that if we are interested in the ways these associations are experienced and sustained, we need to attend to the generic social processes around which such subcultures develop. In doing so we begin to “appreciate the centrality of perspectives, identities, activities, relationships, emotional experiences, and communication styles” (Prus, 1997, p.63) necessary for their integration, and involvement in the Rwandan single-speed subculture. For instance, in speaking with locals regarding team cyclists who had worked as single-speed taxis, remarks such as “he was always the smoothest cyclists” or “X cyclist was so strong!” or “X cyclist was the best single-speed taxi in the village, the region, the country” were abundant. These encouragements – emotional exchanges – I would later discover
through multiple interviews, established two significant observations for cyclists: (1) they allowed cyclists
to acquire stocks of knowledge, “rules of thumb,” on correct cultural behaviour and “how to express
and manage their own particular emotional themes and states” in relation to others as a means of being
successful single-speed cyclists; (2) they strengthened cyclists’ resolve to become successful – further
entrenching a cyclist’s perspectives, identity, activity, and relationships within the Rwandan cycling
culture (Prus, 1984, 1996, 1997). Cyclists would build reputations, client bases, and in some cases
legendary status as reliable, hardworking, young men among the community. Lewis (2013) remarked that
legendary Rwandan cyclists such as Abraham Ruhumuriza – four time winner of the Tour of Rwanda –
would have queues waiting for his services, as he was revered for being not only the speediest single-
speed taxi in Butare, but also a dedicated and committed friend and worker. For lesser-known cyclists,
like Trésor, a conscious focus on acquiring a high degree of skill, coupled with changes in perspective,
activity, identity, relationships, and communication, was required to his everyday. A cyclist like Trésor
could put away the pain of cycling every day and “think about [my] future by investing in rest, recovery,
and nutrition [bodily generic social processes]. To think about what [I] needs to be. Cycling is a hard
job, David. We all come from these single-speed bicycles. It’s not easy. If you don’t focus on your future,
it will disappear.”

**Carrying the Load**

Single-speed cyclists are almost exclusively young males between the ages of 14-26 years old. The
physical demands of the job require a body that is culturally suitable, fit, functional, and fearless. A single-
speed cyclist, who traditionally delivers loads in Rwanda, is someone with strength, determination, and
gusto. Cyclists from this subgroup are known to be tough, strong, and tenacious. Many have lean
muscular builds and large upper bodies from having to push the loaded bicycles up the mountainsides
when the gearing does not permit them to pedal. Many of the team cyclists from the northwestern part
of Rwanda – in the mountainous agricultural region – describe this as their foray into cycling. This type
of cycling requires an attitude of bravado and machismo, masking any hesitations one might have about a
task being offered.

*While riding my motorbike to Javier’s I rode past a group of single-speed cyclists pushing huge bags of potatoes
up the approach to Shashwara town. The gradient must be 10-14% easy at some points. As I sped past in my
lowest gear they all paused to watch, some smiling, others waving. Although I had an understanding of how
difficult the task of carrying such loads would be I only realized it when I saw the same three boys, hours later,
icresting the top of the hills near a teashop Félicien and I were seated. Beads of sweat pouring down their face, I
bought them bottled juices as they prepared themselves for their descent towards Gisenyi. (Fieldnotes)*
It is of utmost importance that a cyclist maintains an occupational identity of competentancy, reliabilities, and hireability. Eric, a large muscular cyclist from Shashwara explained, “If my bicycle is strong [looking good], and I am strong and confident then the work will come.” This reflection emphasizes the bicycle-body connection that cyclists begin to discern. Glassner (1990) explains that a “fit body can be counted upon to perform competently and reliably; it bespeaks a contemporary version of what Goffman called ‘bureaucratization of the spirit,’ not merely a well-oiled machine, the fit body-cum-self is an information-processing machine, a machine that can correct and guide itself by means of an internal expert system” (p.224). Eric understood how his physical presence as an able-bodied cyclist on the roads in his community served as a mechanism of success within his chosen profession. This very public display of physicality while on the bicycle was an active demonstration, a performance, of his potential to others (Goffman, 1953). Potential employers, clientele, and competition witness and judge your performance while on the road. This public audience is an important factor/mechanism of occupational identity. Although in private Eric described to me the dangers and his fears of cycling as an occupation, he was proud of being employed and known as a strong, confident and reliable worker in his community. It was this strong identity he communicated while on the bike.

Cycling with heavy loads up and down the steep collines of Rwanda’s countryside is extremely dangerous work and requires a cyclist to not only perform – to “look the part for the benefit of other people” (Goffman, 1959, p.17) as Eric describes – but to also perform through his understandings of the profession’s typical modes of behaviour. Such modes are acquired through informal apprenticeships with experienced cyclists who confer advice on the behaviour norms of successful cyclists. It was not uncommon to see older cyclists, aided by younger apprentices, pushing loads up the mountainsides and helping mount goods onto the rear of bicycles. Through advice and observation, for example, new cyclists discover the weight imposed on the rear of the bicycle by the uneven loads makes balancing, steering and stopping incredibly challenging. Small crashes are typical, if not expected, as a full day of work may consist of an 8-14 hour shift, leaving cyclists progressively more tired with loads typically 3-4 times their body weight.\footnote{Typical loads can be between of 80-200kilos of produce on one bicycle at a time. Coffee, bananas, potatoes, carrots, tea, and vegetables were staple loads for the cyclists, although I was witness to more interesting fastenings of goats, scrap metal, milk jugs, lemongrass are typically being hauled as well.} A single lapse in judgment during a shift can potentially cost a cyclist his life. Crashes are often described as exceptional, and stories of injuries and deaths of friends are described with reserved contempt, while still empathetic to the reality within this line of work. Therefore, modifications are made to bicycles to help cyclists stay safe while carrying large loads. Locally designed, built and soldered carriers improve safety to the rear of the bicycle by allowing cyclists to fasten their goods without crushing the bicycle’s frame. These improve handling while under weight but are
expensive additions, costing upwards of $30 USD. Additionally, cyclists improve riding safety by wearing shoe(s)\textsuperscript{54} that have been specially fastened with reinforced rubber soles. These reinforced soles – cobbled with an old car tire – are used as secondary brakes when descending mountain roads with extremely heavy loads of produce, equipment, or livestock. Cyclists can then mitigate turns in the road through applying pressure on the sole while at high speeds. In doing so, the cyclists relieve some of the force on the bicycle components and frame during a descent by bearing some of the force and weight with their body while the bicycle slows down. As a result of these forces, many load-bearing bicycles look abused and neglected, miss critical parts, or have rudimentary repairs due to distorted frames warped from excessive weight. When asked about such dangers in their line of work, cyclists seem to care less about their appearance or the appearance of these bicycles and more about the bicycles’ ability to function when called upon. Aimable pointed out that “when I was doing [single-speed] it was about money. If I can fix bike, I fix bike. But if not, I work with broken bike…Yes, it is dangerous but what can I tell you my friend, we must work to make life!” For Aimable, the risk of injury or death was worth the financial and social rewards associated with a job as a cyclist. Such constructed characteristics of these particular cyclists are derived from career contingencies and elements that combine to produce (in these cyclists) an identification with hauling loads and to lessen identification with other possible work statuses (Becker & Carper, 1956, p.292). Therefore, cyclists’ work identity in this particular line of single-speed is largely based around function, not fashion.

Looking for a Taxi?

Single-speed cyclists who primarily lift passengers – referred to as bicycle taxis – have noticeable differences in their appearance, and maintained their bicycle differently than the load-bearing cyclists described above. Particular pride is taken in the maintenance of a single-speed taxi’s bicycle, as it is a symbol of his hard work and success. Although the expensive rear additions are also installed, emphasis is put on comfort and style rather than solely the structural integrity of the addition. Adjustments and accompaniments of brightly-coloured, locally-made cushions and welded stabilizer handlebars create a rear-end of the bicycle that is now a comfortable seat for multiple passengers to straddle or side mount. Particular pride is taken in the way the bicycle is painted and decorated, each adorned with its particular style, colours and accents afforded to the cyclist. Quotes from holy books, pictures of sports celebrities or the cyclist’s favourite (English) Premier League Football Club are found painted on the frame, venders or spokes as adornment. Stickers of NGOs, football clubs, and/or political parties highlight affiliations

\textsuperscript{54} Many cyclists, to save on costs, would only have rubber-enforced soles on one of their shoes. Typically the right foot as was the technique I was shown.
and conveys to passengers the cyclist’s beliefs and views. Grégoire, a young participant, shared that “when I was [single-speed], I would always take my bike up to the river to clean my bike by hand. It was very important that your bike was cleaned, and had oil [on the chain]. Sometimes, when I had extra money I would pay to have someone wash it with soap in town. If not, I would do it myself because people don’t want to ride on a dirty bicycle.” Therefore, such maintenance – washing the bicycle, replacing and greasing of parts, and oiling of the chain – was part of a good single-speed taxi’s occupational identity as it demonstrated attention to detail and a genuine care for one’s product.

Symbols and affiliations personalizing bicycles

The important facet underpinning these single-speed activities is that “the emphasis on performing activity puts the focus squarely on the enterprise (successful and otherwise) that undergirds the practical accomplishment of human group life” (Prus, 1997, p.65). Unlike my discussions with heavy load cyclists, these bicycles become symbols of identity and one’s personal brand. Cyclists described their single-speed bicycles as prized possessions, their vested tools for potential social mobility within a highly-stratified Rwandan state. Team Rwanda cyclists proudly exclaimed their love for their single-speed bicycles, which many still possess.

Therefore, these mechanisms – pride in appearance, investment in upkeep, sponsorship and association – consist of ways the acceptance and participation in this cycling subcommunity affects one’s everyday life experience and, through this, self-image (Becker & Carper, p.296). As one single-speed taxi exclaimed, “If you see the Rasta bicycle [the cyclist’s bicycle was painted red, yellow, green], you see Marley [has a painting of Bob Marley on his fender], you know it’s me, you know I can carry you down
to the city centre real nice…if not you will take a moto, or another bicycle. We are friends, you need to see my bicycle!"

The personalizing of bicycles by cyclists

This perception of the bicycle as a tool for progress and status symbol is critical to the ongoing development and understanding of how participants' identities evolve and are developed by the various cultural forces and influences, and the subgroups residing within and around every day life (Mueller & Mamo, 2000).

(Co)operating

The matter of forming or generating associations with others is fundamental to the notion of social life-worlds (Prus, 1997). Whatever type of cycling one does – either carrying goods or bicycle-taxi – a cyclist and his bicycle can be found at 'stands' within villages or city centres, major arteries on paved roadways or at known bus, car taxis, and motorcycle taxi drop-off locations. Demarcating territories and jurisdictions (Prus, 1996, p.162) of frequented spots makes such places, spaces of organization and socialization. They are also spaces of ideological acquisition, where a cyclist learns, raises questions, or has them raised for him, about the worth of the activity he is currently engaged in (Becker & Carper, p.297). Information about riding conditions, potential clientele, and news is passed amongst 'coworkers' while establishing a central location where potential passengers can expect cyclists to gather. Armed with this knowledge and the symbolic understandings of the bicycle as social/economic capital, a cyclist
can say why one should be interested in cycling rather than other deviant professions and why it is the best possible opportunity (or lack thereof). Moreover, cyclists with similar ideologies frequently form worker cooperatives that businesses and passengers have come to rely on. Cooperatives are employed for various reasons. Firstly, they help determine territory of work for groups of cyclists. Groups of cyclists work particular areas, villages, or roads. As mainstays of those territories they are able to build reputations and rapport with community members. Secondly, cooperatives help organize and register bicycle-taxi cyclists as a profession, ascribing them a degree of legitimacy while providing government officials with a degree of control. The profession’s legitimization and institutionalization is a mechanism of identity change, giving cyclists within cooperatives a further social and political ‘validity’ within the rungs of the informal economy. Within cooperatives, cyclists practically pool resources and invest in their sustainability as cyclists. Lastly, a cyclist working in a cooperative enjoys a variety of freedoms – such as choice, stability, income, and status – that is difficult to obtain if working alone. Cyclists pool all money earned on a given shift or day and evenly distribute it amongst those in the collective. All cooperatives organize and distribute their pay differently, depending on the formal structure of the organization, but generally, a cyclist’s fair portion of the day’s earnings is given depending on hours worked. This method equitably distributes income while promoting collaboration and teamwork within a community of cyclist. The social and cultural functions of the communal network described above are important to unpack in relation to the process of change and development of occupational identity of cyclists. When in a cooperative, one is responsible to others within the cooperative. The performance of one of the cyclists is reflective of the group, thus creating cyclists who are obligated to act as true members of the cooperative and to remain with it. Becker and Carper describe that “the creation of this obligation solidifies occupational attitudes and loyalties – the individual feels that he must remain what he has become in order not to let down his [cooperative] – and thus strengthens the identification with occupational title and ideology” (p.298). Although bicycle-taxi cooperatives are not exclusive to Rwanda, it is worth noting that the teamwork, organization, and insider-community apparent between taxi-workers are omnipresent in the team subcommunity (see Chapter 5). It is clear that such cultural characteristics embodied during their days as bicycle-taxi cyclists were transposed to the elite cycling community for the benefit of collective voice and, if needed, action.

**Hard Knock (Everyday) Life**

While in Rwanda, I saw many single-speed cyclists carrying heavy loads of produce careening down mountainsides on bicycles with no protective gearing, such as a helmet, simply using their reinforced shoes as brakes. When a cyclist would misjudge a turn or a bank, they would have to violently
“abandon” their bicycles mid-descent to avoid injury (and sometimes death), as happened in the case of one cyclist’s friend.

A dramatic incident occurred tonight while driving home on my motorcycle from playing pool with a couple of the cyclists in the village. As I followed Félicien up the meandering hillside to his home on our motos, all of a sudden I heard the sound of a whizzing bicycle going flying by me towards the steeper sections of the decent which we had just summited. “Oh no…,” I thought to myself. The cyclist was clearly out of control headed towards the steep section of the descent. He was going too fast for that turn for sure, I said.

Félicien must have thought the same thing because before I could stop he had already whipped his motorbike around and was gone chasing after him into the night. As the clouds were coming in, the road was enveloped in fog making the scene ghost-like. I lost Félicien, in hot pursuit, instantly in the fog. When I finally caught up Félicien’s moto light had the emergency blinkers on and was shining off the edge of the cliff. A couple bystanders were helping him retrieve the young man, face bloodied, clearly in and out of consciousness, up the side of the steep embankment. “He is lucky David,” says Félicien. “Many have died from this sort of thing.”

As the others attended to their friend, another bystander and I pulled his bicycle back onto the road; it was in two pieces. I’m told it will be fixed. The cyclist, still bloody and semi-conscious, is pulled up and plonked on the back of Félicien’s bicycle, arms wrapped around Félicien and his black Louis Garneau winter parka. I’ll never forget the kindness Félicien showed this guy as he bled everywhere on his prized jacket. It was completely red, glistening from the light of the moon. We drove him to the nearest hospital, which was a clinic midway down the mountain. We then drove his bicycle home to his family, where the bloodied cassava plants would eventually make it to their final destination. (Fieldnotes)

The drawbacks of this work are largely physical. The abuse taken on the body and muscles of the cyclists and on the bicycle frames become major hurdles for Rwandans seeking to stay within this occupation. Pushing loads of the excess of 150 kilos uphill and descending with 250 kilos downhill, takes a toll on the bicycle’s rudimentary components not built specifically for such use. A cyclist’s body is also beaten down by the slow, heavy, monotonous cadence of the low gear ratios, which fatigues the fast twitch muscles critical for reacting to sudden changes of direction or shifting of weight. Injuries are common when carrying such loads and cyclists who crash and suffer debilitating injuries do not have insurance or readily accessible health services that are affordable. I heard stories of such cyclists when at local single-speed bicycle repair shops or hangouts. Although the stories of crashes and injury were communicated with passion and courage, the grave reality of this work was that it resulted in the loss of friends, family members and colleagues. This is occupational reality is often considered when cyclists select single-speed riding as work. The bodies of the cyclists, objects of pride for their form and prowess on the bicycle, showed marks of wear and sacrifice.
Road rash is a symbol of pride and perseverance
This sacrifice, noticeable on their chiselled bodies, was emblematic of the risk taken by those who lack the agency to not do such work. Cyclists would laughingly display to me scars, broken bones (that had healed incorrectly) and various degrees of road rash\textsuperscript{55} endured on the job. Such manifested symbols demonstrate to one's self, one's subcommunity and the broader society, one's commitment, status, identity, and association to one's career as a cyclist. Much like the pride of hockey players missing teeth, or the roughened hands of a fisherman, these occupational realities derive from generic social processes – the abstracted, transcontextual formulations of social behaviour – “that focus on the activities involved in the ‘doing’ or accomplishing of human group life” (Prus, 1996, p.142). These mechanisms of occupational identification consist of ways in which the cyclists’ participation in cycling affects experience, and through this, a self-image (Becker & Carper, 1956, p. 296). These accounts of survival coupled with the physical proof of their resilience have established the single-speed cyclist's identity as one of courage, tenaciousness, and dependability and highlight the way such subcultures are written on the body.

\textbf{A Slow, Contemporary Expulsion}

Can the image displayed of a single-speed bicycle reverse a nation’s determination, modern policies, and “progress”? Most likely not. Profits for bicycle-taxis have seen a steady decline in recent years due to various economic and political factors being put forth by President Kagame’s \textit{Rwanda Vision 2020} – a plan that seeks to “support a clear Rwandan identity, whilst showing ambition and imagination in overcoming poverty and division” (Kagame, 2000, p.3). Vision 2020 has subtly put tremendous pressure on Rwanda’s informal economies, including the bicycle-taxi community, through a modernizing strategy that seeks dramatic developments in transport, agriculture, and the economy. Government land seizures and redistribution since the 1994 genocide is an early illustration of a change affecting cycling-based occupations. Legislation from the 2003 Constitution, to the 2004 National Land Policy, to the 2005 Organic Land Law, effectively abolished customary land tenures in the country (Sagashya & English, 2005). This redistribution eliminated many farmers and businesses operating in more remote locations that utilized and required bicycle transport as a means of getting goods to market. Félicien, whose family was evicted from their lands when he was a child, comments on how these changes affected his previous occupation as single-speed:

\footnote{\textsuperscript{55}Road rash is the result of falling off a bicycle on a identifiable road resulting in abrasions to the skin. These painful markings are often seen and interpreted as badges of honour and passage to road cyclists and it is not uncommon for cyclists to show or display their road rash scars to other fellow cyclists.}
We would make about 100,000 fr a month. Some small times 20,000fr [per day], some days 10,000fr [per day], many days 5,000fr [per day]. But now not so much because that time we go [worked] with people that have large farms. We would move the potatoes or carrots from the farm to the town. The government then took the one piece of land [the farm] and gives you other some small plot somewhere. Many people move, many people lose farms. My family we have big farm, many cows, but now we are here with very little. (Félicien)

As small farmer’s consistent demand for cheap transport in the form of single-speed bicycles decreased, so did the price due to the influx of available cyclists. A good day of work would yield between 1,500-2,000 fr, about $2.75 USD. Abraham revealed the most he ever earned in one day cycling single-speed was 4,500 fr, about $6.90 USD (Lewis, 2013, p.126). Remember, Abraham Ruhumuriza was a revered, trusted, and a sought after local legend. He was the gold standard of bicycle-taxis.

Coupled with the motari boom (motorcycle taxis), which came with the liberalization of Rwanda’s economy, there is a significant drop in demand for bicycle-taxis in urban areas. Furthermore, the ‘visionary’ aspect of Rwanda’s current politics (Rollason, 2013) operates through intimate forms of authoritarian control and strict methods of presentation of success and development. Rwandan scholars Goodfellow and Smith (2013) note that: “Its [Rwanda’s] status as a successful post-conflict development story is itself a political resource that the government draws on for legitimacy and credibility at home and abroad”(p. 20). Thus, Rwanda’s image is tightly controlled by its government to demonstrate that the positive qualities of the country, the regime and its people make it a safe investment destination. Images that do not adhere to such modern perceptions are pushed to the fringes, seen as hoary representations and reminders of the third world. Those who resist the prescribed narrative are met with political opposition, and moreover, suppression. A prime example, in relation to the bicycle, of modern day Rwanda attempting to shed its “prehistoric” traditions is the outlawing of its wooden bicycles, the icugutu. Seen as unbecoming of a modern nation state, the government implemented a policy banning icugutu’s – this affordable and technologically ancient form of transport – from all paved roads in the country. This largely aesthetic policy was implemented in hopes of disguising Rwanda’s underdevelopment to global audiences that visit the country, to the physical detriment, fiscal burden, and ineffectiveness of an alternative vehicle upon which many depended on for affordable labor/transport. Bicycle taxis, like the icugutus, are discouraged within Rwanda’s increasingly urbanized

56 After the genocide and with the election of President Paul Kagame in 2000 the development, democratization and liberalization of Rwanda created an influx of goods and services from around the world. Motorcycles largely from India have made a serious headway into the Rwandan economy and have changed and affected the transportation landscape as ‘motari’ or motorcycle taxis. These licensed vehicles provide a transport service that is fast and more expensive then traditional buses (cheaper) or bicycle taxis (slower).
57 These local bicycles are made from eucalyptus trees and look more like scooters with small wooden wheels. They are used for transporting kilos of bananas, tea, coffee, potatoes or other products around.
environments, albeit not banned. The question, which was beyond the scope of my current research is: will single-speed taxis meet the same fate as the icugutus for the sake of a “modern” image?

With such political/cultural realities a part of contemporary life in Rwanda, opportunities to maximize chances of employment are at a premium as cyclists are pushed to work at the boundaries of city limits or in the rural areas. This suspended flow of capital related to cycling economies in urbanized areas accentuates the change mechanisms described throughout this chapter, made up of vicissitudes of participation in organized groups, transformations of various aspects of one’s self-image and occupational identity, and the evolution of the bicycles meaning as a floating signifier (Becker, 1963; Prus, 1984; Prus & Irini, 1989). Like Prus (1987) By drawing comparisons and contrasts across settings, not only is a richer understanding of each space realized, but also of the processes and contingencies – choices – individuals face. Such insight leads to the developing of a “theory of action” that reflects group life, as it is accomplished in the everyday. As this chapter explicates, the career contingencies that cyclists make depend largely on economic factors, such as the cost of a bicycle, its modifications, and upkeep. Yet, it is also contingent on the skills cyclists acquire, the present opportunities and the contexts the cyclists situate themselves in. Cycling requires self-motivation and discipline everyday. This is a physical reality of cycling as work. This motivation (whether fiscal, physical, or emotional) has become a significant mechanism of a cyclist’s identity (Becker & Strauss, 1967). Additionally, it also depends on individual factors and on social factors, such as a cyclist’s aptitude for their careers, how their peers and community perceive them, and how confident they are in their abilities as cyclists. Such career processes not only signify key elements of people’s involvements and occupational identities within shifting situations, but also define the essence of community life in Rwanda. For the Rwandans interviewed, their career contingencies are driven and directed by their particular overwrought history and contemporary context combined. For example, as the single-speed taxi becomes the exception, bicycle racing is seen by many single-speed taxis as a logical career contingency – a means of exploiting the mechanisms and skills developed through riding single-speed while continuing to express the agency and freedom through the physical culture of cycling. With an increasing amount of geared bicycles now in Rwanda, and in the hands of cyclists, the racing scene has grown in participants and support. Through small races – both single-speed and geared bicycles – across the country, the cyclists and their bicycles, with the mechanisms outlined in this chapter, have retained and morphed their significance from within a very conservative contemporary Rwanda that is placing emphasis on modernizing images and symbols. In adhering to such symbolism, racing has also provided a potential outlet to supplement the diminishing incomes of cyclists as a result of the “modernizing” practices of the post-genocide government. Therefore, the bicycle’s identity in Rwanda – like that of the cyclist’s occupation – is slowly transforming.
Recognizing this, single-speed cyclists sit within a unique cultural niche, providing a service that is both desired and needed, while being seen as a visible and emblematic sign of underdevelopment.

This chapter has uncovered, albeit briefly, the cultural complexities and historical turmoil from which a cyclist’s occupational identity has been forged, the current context in which they are embedded, and the future context which they are entering as cyclists. These are initial moments in the careers of my participants, where the acquisition of skill, development of ideologies, and occupational identity are accomplished through raw physical strength, organizational association, and internalization of motives for employing cycling as work (Becker & Strauss, 1956, p. 263). The financial, physical, social, cultural, emotional and individual psychological sacrifices made to get one’s abilities to the point of a successful delivery – whether a sack of coffee beans, or a family of three to school – takes a cyclist’s complete commitment to the reformulation of their everyday life. Cyclists’ bodies physically, literally and figuratively, transform into symbols of hope and strength that others can see, touch, and feel.

In conclusion, this chapter established the bicycle’s shifting role as a symbol of both mobility and freedom, but also, earlier, death and oppression, in addressing a variety of political, social, economic, and cultural needs facing everyday Rwandans. The bicycle’s ability to address those various social needs makes it a central tool used to overcome the current hardships compounded due to Rwanda’s turbulent past. Cyclists largely came to the bicycle through economic or social realities present in their everyday lives. Examples ranged from: lack of family income, parent’s inability to pay school fees, or a means of suppressing traumatic thoughts. Self-sufficiency, through any occupation is understood as a tremendous achievement in post-conflict Rwanda. The cyclists often described the freedom and independence afforded to them through cycling as a ‘blessing.’ From such ‘blessed’ realities, the cyclists expressed desires to go further through racing as a means of exploiting the mechanisms, skills, and identities established through single-speed work. It became clear in all the narratives of my participants that racing would soon become the fascination and priority of their everyday life. Moving beyond the tea fields and farms of rural Rwanda, Chapter 4 thus begin to unpack this fascination with racing and the serendipitous opportunities bicycle racing exposed.
Chapter Four:
The Imihigo (Performance) of Development

Introduction

This chapter investigates the process of how people become involved in development activities, in this case bicycle racing, and how they navigate, negotiate, and narrate their activities as individuals and as a team, through the development ideology as applied to contemporary Rwanda. Using a bicycle race as an analogy, latent understandings that dominate the players involved – the cyclists, the organizations, the government, and the Rwandan people – are discovered.

This chapter also continues to describe the cyclists’ advancement into the world of sport for development, unveiling how cyclists critically and reflexively take advantage of the way their stories are retold and framed by the development organization, government, and media. By going to “where the action is” (Goffman, 1967), I consider the multiple social roles and relationships the cyclists embody in forming their identities as professional cyclist as part of their every day performances, including their role as cyclists, providers, brothers, commuters and fathers. Such roles are simultaneously embraced, exploited, and resisted. By not asking the participants directly why they have come to live the way they do, but rather examining the processes taking place as a participant myself, I unearth the complexities of their experiences from within, and outside, a sport for development organization.

I deconstruct the evolution of bicycle racing in Rwanda and its emerging interconnections with development – another form of social change – by extrapolating from such intimate involvements. ‘Development’ – its language, its agents, its infrastructures, and its methods – is a central aspect of contemporary Africa. Heeding Olivier de Sardan’s (2005) caution to not analyze development (re)actions in isolation, the study of local dynamics, of endogenous processes, and of ‘informal’ processes of change is undertaken while simultaneously reflecting on Rwanda’s, and the African continent’s, various characteristics. The presence and potent influence of ‘development aid’ and ‘development projects’ in Africa, whether large or small, foreign or domestic, North or South, should not be underestimated. In Rwanda, contemporary development ideology accompanies a post-genocide dogma that consists of the argument that the State’s sole objective is the pursuit of economic development for the underdeveloped masses; as a result, all the ‘living forces’ in the country, and all those abroad who are interested in promoting development, should work with the state to make that
possible. This ideology serves to legitimize the government’s intrusive presence in all aspects of social life and diverts attention from the real differences that exist between the various classes and social groups (Eyoh, 1996, p.68).

Yet Rwanda is a place of immense social and political contradictions. Notable Rwandan scholars such as Pottier (2002), Ingelaere (2012) and Rollason (2013) believe that Rwanda’s public policy is less concerned with poverty reduction and the material realities of its population’s everyday, and more concerned with the projection of particular kinds of nationalistic imagery. Whitson and Macintosh (1993) point out that sport is one of a number of cultural practices that have a powerful ability in “representing nations to the outside world” and also in “mobilizing national sentiments” among citizens within particular nations (p.1). This imagery of the Rwandan cyclists – an invoked reality of a modern, strong, healthy, well-off individual – serves Rwanda’s development interests as a place of imagined redemption, success, and investment. Rollason (2013) believes that “development [in Rwanda] is constituted by those images, and not, in fact, by the materiality of raising people out of poverty or, given that poverty reduction and development are not co-extensive, any other ‘development activity’” (p.24).

The importance of the individual subject emerges and is reaffirmed from within this chapter. This classical humanist position centres the analysis of social life on the thinking, reflective subject, who has the capacity for creating a social world that is meaningful to herself/himself. Whereas the previous chapter centred on the bicycle’s images intertwined within Rwandan history, and its formation as a pathway for labour and mobility, this chapter expands inquiry into the body culture of Rwandan cyclists and their progression into symbols of Rwanda’s (re)development. The Rwandan national cyclist is not only understood as an elite emblem of sport (for) development, but is also systematically projected by those in power as an image at odds with everyday reality for most of the country’s residents. The sport of cycling in Rwanda’s development has restructured an idea of freedom – of agency – for those cyclists affiliated with the sport for development organization that guides it. The cyclists’ experiences, from within and outside the organization’s gates, parallels understandings of materiality and imagery exhibited by the contemporary revolutionary purpose of the ruling RPF party of President Kagame. Therefore, the development of bicycle racing in Rwanda is interpreted by participants as a vehicle for performing development; that is, bicycle racing is an enactment that does not proceed from a prior ‘reality,’ but through the imagery it projects – nationally and globally, invoking a reality.

Team Rwanda as an organization, and its cyclists as ambassadors of a “revived Rwanda,” project a tightly scripted image of Rwandans as athletic, resilient, and recovered; that “is itself a political resource that the government [and the organization] can draw on for legitimacy and credibility at home and abroad.”
This chapter suggests that the cyclists’ recognition of this imagery, their adaptation from within the seemingly rigid confines of a sport for development organization, and the Rwandan state, can account for agency as the key behavioural process in social change. I, therefore, begin with a brief overview of development and its manifestations, internationally and within the contemporary Rwandan context. I then present an evolution of Rwandan cycling, demonstrating the freedom, or agency, it projects, postulates, and provides for a select few. Opportunities, mobility, routine, risk, and vulnerability are revealed and narrated through cyclists’ experiences as occasions for change, growth, and betterment are presented to them. This chapter manoeuvres between meta-understandings of development, the Rwandan government’s contemporary constructions of image, an organization’s coopting of such image in the name of sport, and the magnified micrological everyday interpretations of such constraints as opportunities for the cyclists themselves. In doing so I shed light on the processes of adaptation and resistance of development ideologies by participants themselves. The evolution of professional cycling for Rwandans thus stems from employment and develops, for some, to professional racing and beyond. If this is the case, then social change takes many forms, both for better or for worse.

**Describing ‘Development’**

“By using uncritically such a loaded word, and one doomed to extinction, they are transforming its agony into a chronic condition. From the unburied corpse of development, every kind of pest has started to spread.” (Esteva, 2010, p.1)

‘Development’ defies simplistic definition. It was between 1759 (Wolff) and 1859 (Darwin) that development evolved from a conception of transformation that moves towards the appropriate form of being to a conception of transformation that moves towards an ever more perfect form. Sachs (2010) states that “during this period, evolution and development began to be used as interchangeable terms by scientists” (p. 4). Since then, the term development has been used and coopted in many ways; it is a term that arguably prefers ambiguity. Development has been applied to ideologies of freedom (Sen, 1999), trusteeship (Cowen & Shenton, 1996), imagination (Darnell, 2013) and transformation/Westernization (Stiglitz, 1998), as well as practical functions such as evaluation (Cronin, 2011), sustainability (One World Trust, 2005), and transparency (Punyaratabandhu, 2004). Gilbert Rist captured the essence of development, stating that “the strength of ‘development’ discourse comes of its
power to seduce, to charm, to please, to fascinate, to set dreaming, but also to abuse, to turn away from truth, to deceive” (Rist, 1997, p.1).

Development discourses, and the early iterations of the development enterprise, came to the forefront in the aftermath of World War II. International institutions were established in an effort to avoid repeating the horrors of the Great Depression and the mistakes of the punitive Versailles Treaty that concluded World War I. In 1944, the Conference at Bretton Woods would establish the two most notable Bretton Wood Institutions (BWIs): the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. The IMF and World Bank were tasked with responding to the growing financial insecurities by: (1) ensuring a stable international currency system to facilitate trade, and (2) recycling monies from wealthy countries, first to war-torn Europe and Japan, and then to poorer nations (Griesgraber & Gunter, 1996). Politically, the creation of the United Nations at the San Francisco conference of 1945 would incorporate nearly all the world’s sovereign nations under one banner. The Cold War (1947-1991) alienated or rendered these institutions ineffective as the world was divided into two blocs – east and west, led by the Soviet Union and the United States respectively. Development, as understood through the BWIs, during the period of the Cold War, was largely sidelined or used as tools by Western governments to (re)assure countries who were being enticed by the Communist ‘threat.’ The Soviet Union used similar tactics of development aid to encourage support from governments around the world. As the Cold War wound down in the late 1980s, the IMF and World Bank in cooperation with the World Trade Organization (WTO) and non-state actors such as NGOs would become the dominant global actors of development, directing its agenda and discourse forward.

Escobar (1995) claims that the emergence of this contemporary development enterprise and development discourse actually manufactured the “Third World” (p.4). The manufacturing of a development enterprise, as Escobar describes, occurred as Western “experts” and politicians looked at the worsening conditions in the global south (what they perceived and described as countries that showed elements of poverty, famine, corruption, and “backwardness”) and sought to establish a new domain of thought and experience – “a new strategy for dealing with alleged problems” (p.6). This highly hierarchical – and some would say neo-colonial– notion of development further instituted divisive understandings of “us/them,” “North/South,” “colonized/savage,” “developed/underdeveloped” that are still debated, discussed, interpreted, and exploited today (see Darnell, 2013; Razack, 2003, 2004).

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58 BWIs are largely seen as Western tools for intervention.
59 A topographical term used to delineate most countries south of the equator.
Two fundamental assumptions underpin the current development enterprise. First, “they,” someone else, are underdeveloped and, “we” are not. Second, “we” as developed individuals have the skills, knowledge, context, and general “stuff” that will help “them,” the underdeveloped, become more developed; developed being a mirror image of “us” in the West. Both assumptions, albeit simplified, are required for development projects, policies, and programs to exist. These understandings and assumptions make it practically and structurally difficult for those “underdeveloped” persons or populations to have a voice; to express their knowledge, attributes, and strengths within the current development context. My research sheds light on the processes of adaptation and resistance of these development assumptions through the various contexts of NGO participants’ everyday life. With such an emphasis, colonial underlining and politics are acknowledged yet put aside, allowing us to advance with an understanding that development – as a term, ideology and technique – emerged from a time when international politics, global security and a growing sense of duty towards the “Third World” had gained momentum.

There has been a corresponding proliferation and growth of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) at the local, national, and international levels. NGOs vary in structure, mission and size, with the strengthening of global civil society in recent decades and the entitled sense of duty discussed above. They also encompass a wide range of organizations – from international charities (e.g., Oxfam), humanitarian organizations (e.g., Doctors Without Borders), research institutes, churches, community-based organizations, lobby groups, and professional associations. Barnett (2011) attributes the increased influence, evolution and growth of the NGO sector to the neoliberal discourses of the 1980s that sought the reduction of the state’s role in the delivery of public services (p.218). Hardt and Negri (2000) describe NGOs as “the ‘community face’ of neoliberalism, functioning as a parallel strategy from below while global capital sought to attack it from above” (p.313). Many would argue that the global development enterprise is becoming increasingly organized to preserve, protect, and promote human life, “reflecting an ethics of care and impulse to intervene for the greater good” (Barnett, 2012, p.485). This ‘impulse’ has NGOs frequently acting without consulting their recipients, a neglect that is usually justified on the grounds of time, budget or resource limitations.

Although NGOs may claim they do not violate anyone’s liberty because they do not carry weapons or use the force of law, “they arrive in highly-deprived environments with various privileges and resources that make any notion of consent inherently problematic” (Barnett, 2011, p.35). This is perceived as compassion involving politics and privileges of the powerful, and contributes to inequality. This clumsy ideology gives way to thinking that developing countries (or populations, communities, regions) are places that need, and want, exactly the kind of expertise and knowledge that NGOs have accumulated.
When done without consent, communication, or against the will of the proposed recipients, it amounts to paternalism. Peter Uvin (1998, 2007, 2010) emphasizes the international development enterprise as being an entity that directly and actively contributes to inequality and humiliation of its recipients. His fieldwork in Rwanda uncovered that

the spending patterns of most development projects are disproportionately in favour of the smallest groups in society, that is, the richest 1 percent or so, composed of technical assistants and their ‘homologues,’ plus merchants and high-level government officials. The more one moves down the social ladder, the fewer the resources that projects provide to people. This is the case for almost all projects [in Rwanda], even the relatively successful ones, and it helps explain the popularity of donor-funded development projects with the powers that be. (1998, p.148)

Extrapolating from Uvin’s conclusions, scholars such as Pottier (2002) and Rollason (2013) highlight the significance of images and performances of development in a context such as Rwanda, “whose government is widely seen to attend to the rhetorical presentation of policy than to the realities of its implementation” (Rollason, 2013, p.2). Such image and performance by NGOs and the state ensures, as Neocosmos (2010) believes, that there can be no meaningful development by NGOs as “genuine political independence from the state is impossible under such conditions as this sort of politics [and performance] amounts to a form of corporatism” (p.543). Moving forward, thinking of these NGOs and projects as corporate brands bodes well for understanding that the development enterprise has more to do with the appearance of the development of the underdeveloped, rather than the betterment of their livelihoods.

Ambitious Social Engineering

It is nearly impossible to separate the development aid system from the state system in Rwanda. Bugingo and Ntampaka (1991) explain that prior to the genocide, over 80 per cent of development aid went directly to the government, with the remainder tightly controlled and subject to approval by state

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60 Paternalism is a term that Gerald Dworkin defined in 1972 (not to be confused with patriarchy). It is “the interference with a person’s liberty of action justified by reasons referring exclusively to the welfare good, happiness, needs, interests or values of the person being coerced” (Dworkin, 1972, p. 73). Paternalism is the concept that best captures the nature of power in the ethics of care and is not rare in occurrence, often sited and present wherever global compassion has become institutionalized. Dworkin (1972) identifies two critical characteristics of paternalism’s identity: Interference justified explicitly with reference to another’s interest, and the violation of the principle of consent. These characteristics combined are then measured on a continuum of paternalism with weak paternalism at one extreme, and strong paternalism on the other. A historical analysis of paternalism allows us to draw an evolutionary line between the eras of colonialism to the era of sovereign-states where strong paternalism – the use of force, imposition and indifference to the views of the local populations – has gradually been replaced by a weaker paternalism, characterized by the institutionalization and internationalization of large international and non-governmental organizations operating under the banner of humanity.
authorities (p.1). In post-genocide Rwanda, under the ruling RPF party of President Kagame, the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission – in line with policies directed at national unity and reconciliation – was created in March of 1999 by parliamentary law (NURC, 2014). This ambitious social engineering project seeks to promote a unified Rwandan identity through a variety of measures between victims and perpetrators of the genocide. This stems from the idea that the combination of a submissive and obedient population, authoritarian government, and colonial policies of ethnic divisionism caused the 1994 genocide (Clark, 2010).

Outspoken scholars on Rwanda (Reyntjens, 2004; Prunier, 2009; Thomson, 2013) tell us “the power of the policy of national unity and reconciliation lies in its ability to not only orchestrate obedience but to also shape discussion about everyday life before, during, and after the genocide” (Thomson, 2013, p.185). Political obedience is widely known to be mandatory in Rwanda, and stepping outside of the government’s tightly-scripted image and prescribed roles is deemed an attack on the policy of national unity and reconciliation, and is a criticism of the government itself. Amnesty International reported numerous human rights violations against persons who spoke or acted outside the official truths, including disappearance, intimidation, imprisonment, and death (Amnesty International, 2010). Chi Mgbako says the policies fail to strike “an equitable balance between safeguarding freedom of speech while protecting citizens against incitement to violence and discrimination” (Mgbako, 2010). Rather, such examples solidify power through oppression under the pretence of advancing national unity and reconciliation. However, Verwimp’s (2003) examination of Rwandans – in contrast to the policy’s oppressive reported reality – discloses that Rwandans are aware of state surveillance and seek ways to restore personal dignity through silence and conformity while attempting to live their own truths (both past and present) privately. The importance of imagery and enforcement by state powers and the agency and adaptation by Rwandans themselves are key points to remember while reading the narratives of Rwandan cyclists.

In 2001, the Rwandan government passed the Law on Non-Profit Associations, which granted it the power to control projects, budgets, and the hiring of new staff (if needed). Various policies require local and international NGOs to obtain a renewable certificate of registration biannually, established on the basis of the NGO’s mission statement and annual reports. Such requirements allow government authorities to do much of what they have done with the policy of national unity and reconciliation – monitor and control the activities, publications, images, and performances of any organization within its borders. Many organizations have been deterred, intimidated, or shut down due to the government’s pressure to conform. Nonetheless, state restraints have not deterred the 37,000 informal groups and 319 registered NGOs from establishing themselves thoroughly within Rwanda’s development sector.
(ICNL, 2015) and government ministries. Today, the budgets of many projects supplement significant portions, if not the entirety, of ministry or sectors budgets.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, a registered American sport for development NGO is at the centre of the research participants’ everyday lives. Sport and physical activity has been used in an ad hoc way of reaching development-related objectives as early on as the 1920s, as “an innovative, low-cost and effective method to contribute significantly to health, education, development and peace while addressing a litany of social and economic challenges” (Inter-Agency Task Force on SDP, 2003, p.24). The idealistic perceptions around sport are often said to be immune to serious scrutiny because of the intrinsic benefits many of us have experienced or derived from sport and physical activity. However, creating a simplified and idealistic perception of a sport for development program as an “apolitical, neutral and inherently integrative set of social practices that can deliver a wide range of positive outcomes” (Coalter, 2010, p.296) masks the potential harm a sports program can inflict if not considerate of the diverse contexts, communities, and cultures it is enmeshed in. At best, sport for development programs live on a spectrum – where at one end a sport is implemented as the intentional mechanism for positive behaviour change, and where on the other end the development of elite sports persons, facilities, and skills are at the epicenter of a programs ethos.

The narrated image controlled by the sport for development organization in this research is one of black, post-genocide Rwandan youth on bicycles, which fails to acknowledge the intimately complex histories of these young Rwandan men. Such images play neatly into sport for development’s largely apolitical research agenda – where sport for development organizations overwhelmingly arrive in communities (mostly in Africa, Asia, and Latin America) with limited knowledge of context, yet with a specialization in a form of sport which overrides more complex and agential understandings of sport for development’s utility in everyday life. Broad buzzwords like “reconciliation,” “redemption,” and “empowerment” are employed alongside contradicting images of expensive, high-end bicycles ridden by Rwandans. Such images portray a mythical narrative of the bicycle as a tool for salvation to supporters and casual bystanders. This myth is legitimized as it is affiliated with Rwanda’s notorious past and its government’s vision for the future. This mythic image invokes a reality that: (1) the government can support as it is in line with its policy of national unity and reconciliation, (2) the organization can proudly endorse it (and defend it) as its brand of “doing good,” (3) and the largely foreign supporters funding the project can sleep well believing that they have contributed to the betterment of a Rwandan cyclist’s life. In Anderson’s (2006) ‘imagined community,’ sport contributes to the idea that members of nations (or groups, communities, subcultures) are bound together through shared cultural imaginings of same-ness, one-ness, and we-ness. Rwandan supporters of cycling cut across all class, ethnic, and gender differences
– significant divisions in this particular post-conflict community – creating a “deep horizontal comradeship” (Anderson, 2006, p.7) of the imagined community that transcends all other loyalties and attachments. Therefore, the bicycle – as a tool – has been coopted and repositioned by the organization, and now the government, from its modest common beginnings as described in Chapter 3 to now, an emblem of reconciliation, recovery, and development. Yet what is not clear is: how are the cyclists/participants benefiting? Many people acknowledge that serious problems exist within development projects in Rwanda, or have a strong suspicion, as there are only a select group of individuals who are being developed. They do not, however, do anything to jeopardize or question the opportunities they witness in fear of “rocking the boat.” This affirms Kate Manzo’s (2012) suspicion that development through sport is a site of struggle about development and not a new model of development.

The relationship between the sport for development organization, the Rwandan government and the agential processes of everyday performance exhibited by cyclists is symbiotic. Existing within this Rwandan development enterprise, each relationship legitimizes one another, through the others, and the resulting outcomes of their relationships. The result, as Uvin (1998) asserts, is a muddling of development that is purposeful to all involved.

The above section has provided contemporary context to the environments that infuse cyclists’ everyday life and bicycle racing in Rwanda – specifically as an image of development. Returning to the Rwandan roadside, I concern myself with the processes of how people become involved in such development activities such as bicycle racing – its evolution, sacrifices, commitments, and routines from the micrological perspective of the participants. Unpacking the images of development from the “bottom-up,” I contend that understanding cycling as a method of freedom and agency is more difficult than previously understood.

**Agency through Experience**

As explained in the previous chapter, a single-speed cyclist’s success develops with accrued income. Thus, cyclists associate success through the accomplishment of hard work, physical prowess, mental stamina and the groups they associate with. For example, as a single-speed cyclist if you run with an established cooperative, you will have access to more clients. If you take care of your bike through
maintenance, you will be reliable. If you ease off alcohol\textsuperscript{61} and eat properly, your body will recover. These are mechanisms of successful identity traits that help determine a cyclist’s place within the informal cycling hierarchy. Becker (1963) explains this informal ranking, where actions such as hours worked, and relationships building and identity establishment bear influence. Yet, apart from establishing oneself as an employable single-speed cyclist; one can further distinguish himself through racing.

Racing – the act of competing against others – provides a logical pathway for cyclists seeking to advance beyond the confines of single-speed work and advance their career. Cyclists can transform from an employee, or self-employed bicycle-taxi, to competitive athletes who are recognized by their hard work, physical strength and mental stamina, but also their status, defined by apparel, bicycle and exposure to expertise. This is done through a combination of learning: (1) to bridge the gap, (2) to have racing sense, (3) to draft opportunities, and (4) to attack.

**Bridging the Gap**

*Bridging the gap* is a cycling term used to describe efforts made by a lone cyclist or small group of cyclists when they close the distance between them and the peloton. This term can be applied to the actions Rwandan cyclists take to transform, or “bridge” themselves, to be like other racers; to emulate others and make one’s body and equipment as competitive as possible with the rest of the peloton. For example, a cyclist may remove components of his bicycle to make it as light as possible when racing. The cyclist is then presumably faster, as the equipment required for daily single-speed work is removed. Geared bicycles are, in some cases, given to skilled cyclists on loan to train and race with. In this case, one would attempt to get the newest and/or best parts (e.g., new tires, handlebars) to gain as much of a technological advantage as possible.

These borrowed bicycles come from Bazungus or wealthier Rwandans, who either serendipitously notice a cyclist on the roadside exerting himself through work, or are introduced to them through more established cyclists in the cycling community. A few affluent Rwandans and Bazungus who admire cycling, support small local teams under the names of their own businesses or organizations (Lewis, 2013). Although old by modern cycling standards, these geared bicycles are prized possessions in Rwanda and help talented cyclists establish themselves as competitive athletes both locally and regionally. Those cyclists with the means of acquiring such racing bicycles would traditionally “pass down” these bicycles

\textsuperscript{61} Drinking in Rwanda is significant. The World Health Organization reports that alcohol consumption (above the age of 15) in Rwanda is over twice as much as other WHO African Region countries (15.1 liters of pure alcohol compared to 6.0 for the rest of the region) (WHO, 2014).
to younger up-and-coming racers from their village. This was a means of encouraging and inspiring the youth of the community to pursue racing early on.

Single-speed cyclists also narrow the distance between themselves and racers through dress and appearance. Cyclists described being incredibly resourceful in acquiring cycling bib shorts, jerseys, helmets, and shoes from local markets, and vendors in every part of Rwanda. They described small networks of vendors that look for, and hold, pieces of cycling clothing that pass through the large second hand clothing industry present in Rwanda. In exploiting such networks, cyclists looking to race acquired the appropriate aesthetic appearance of a competitive cyclist:

*Long sleeve jerseys, caps, gloves, booties, and winter jackets were seen worn by cyclists, regardless of the temperature. I distinctly remember riding in 40 degree Celsius temperatures with a group of Rwandans up a long steep winding climb such as you find in Rwanda’s northwest. I was hardly wearing anything, sweating profusely, while my Rwandan friends were wearing brightly washed, zipped up, winter cycling apparel. It was an impressively intimidating sight. It was clear that apparel played a part in the professionalization of a cyclist’s career, as it signified their establishment as a contender in Rwandan cycling. The way a cyclist wore a cap on his head with no helmet, or refused a particular size jersey because it was too baggy, or prided themselves on wearing national team kit, were changes in behaviour that signified an evolution of their self-identification as racers. I barely noticed as I was gasping for air trying to keep up. (Fieldnotes)*

The prized apparel was emblematic of their past, their current successes, and their ability to suffer through their everyday – to *bridge the gap*.

Structured training also incorporates itself into the narratives of the cyclists. Théogène, a cyclist on Team Rwanda, described how role models, and their successes in the sport of cycling, influence his behaviour and training. Théogène understood the sacrifices necessary to bring prestige, honour and opportunities to himself and his family by witnessing this success in others:

*When I was really young I saw my uncle who was a very good cyclist, one of the best in Rwanda. He told me to start training, so I did. I wanted to be like him. I go for training for single speed in the morning and then after we put fenders on [the rear seat for passengers] and go to find money, ya. I meet some guys who were cyclist [racers] also and they said I was fast after seeing me training for single speed in the hills there and they told me to come to go with them the club team. I went there with my single speed. My uncle he went and told the club patron [President] that he wants me to train with the club. “If you see him, he will get better,” he told them. If he had a better bike he would have given me a better bike so I can train, but they don’t have… I went training with the club for like a month and then the club president gave me a geared bike and I started training full time. Cycling, for me, was not something fun; it was like my dream. (Théogène)*

Becker (1956) explains that “since his [the cyclist’s] future depends in part on how others identify him, he is pushed in the direction of assuming the identity that goes along with his new interests and skills in order that he may satisfactorily meet the expectations of others in the work world” (p.297). By witnessing the experiences of others, such as his uncle – a successful cyclist, mentor, and teacher –
Théogène kept focused on improvement through replicating the useful behaviour of others. Professional cycling requires a high degree of specialized skills. The knowledge transferred from an experienced cyclist to a new cyclist is important to Théogène’s racing success. In a sport where seemingly insignificant actions, such as eating while riding, could cost a cyclist a victory (and a significant amount of financial, social, political gain), Théogène’s success – and identity as a racer – requires him to be cognizant and mindful of such details. This requires conscious, and difficult, social changes to his everyday – both in thought and in action. While interviewing Théogène, his youthful bravado and positive demeanour disguised the truth of the efforts and sacrifices he makes for his cycling career. When I asked him about how he dealt with pain in those early years of training, Théogène replied:

*T*: Before riding [single-speed work] was easy David! Riding [racing] was very painful. The training is very very hard and you must be disciplined. When you are racing you have to train hard because if you need to be the best to win a race, you need to train very hard.

*DM*: Ok. What would you think about when you were training really hard? When you are climbing and it’s so painful, what are you thinking about?

*T*: You think about your future. You think about what you need to be. If you do single speed racing, like today, and you finish 10th, you think you need to be 8th tomorrow. Ya, so you need to keep training very hard. You know like before when I was training and racing I can tell you that I could go to Musanze for training with 200fr [Approx. $.30 USD]. I didn’t have money but I went because I needed to help my future. My long [training] day was like 200km on a single speed. Yes, with 200fr only.

*DM*: Really? That’s huge mileage and elevation! What about water, food, rest?

*T*: Water? No, water you can find anywhere. Where there are big stones there is water. Or kids and people come and give you water on the roadside. If they see you training, they respect your work, they encourage you. You buy small bananas, you manage. Cycling is a hard job, David. We all come from this racing. Training is not easy.

Théogène’s recognition and acceptance of the process of bridging the gap – understandings of what it takes to act and look the part of a racer in Rwanda – demonstrates a cyclist’s agency and competence within this process. As agential beings, cyclists constantly recognize and act in the interest of their success on the bicycle. This development is what I come to call “racing sense.”

**Racing Sense**

Racing involves riding a predesigned course for a set distance with other competitors from different regions, ethnicities, and skill-levels, regardless of the type of bicycle the cyclist may have or the training
they have received. A cyclist is said to have a racing sense when he exhibits a level of comfort, knowledge and laissez-faire while racing, making him savvy. In Rwanda, there are two principal styles of road racecourses one can participate in, similar to professional road racing: either a point-to-point race where cyclists race from town A to town B; or a looped course that starts and ends in the same location but navigates its roads, often called a criterium. These races are popular spectator sports, often conducted as an aspect of a community, city, or national holiday celebration. Many races are said to pack the town centres and roadsides with Rwandans seeking to watch and cheer these cyclists. They were in their height of their popularity in the early 2000s and have recently regained popularity with the recent resurgence of cycling nationally.

Part of racing sense is the acute skill – attained through experience – of understanding one’s environment and actors, and reacting appropriately. During a race this could mean attacking an opponent when he is suffering, or taking in food early so as not to require nutrition late in the race. Oftentimes race sense is needed most under immense pressure and under the surveillance of crowds, officials, and fellow racers. Vianney, an experienced cyclist, describes how

early when I was racing, things were difficult. I was powerful, but not smart, so I made little money. This made me lose many races in the beginning. I remember I finished 24th in a 3 [day] stage race when I raced the first time. It was a small tour but it was the first time I make money through the bike. From that time I knew I must think when I race so I can make big money. After that, I trained in South Africa for two months and learn a lot. I came home and won. I was happy to win and make some small money for me and my family. (Vianney)

Racing sense becomes an important part of a cyclist’s identity. Cyclists who have race sense reap the benefits of physical strength and good health through tactical know-how. Félicien describes how “after winning [a single speed race] in Bhutari, I won but kept going [working single speed]. I kept training hard. I would train in the morning then do single speed in the afternoon, or just relax. On the weekends I would help my mother and go to the market to sell sorghum drinks.”

Government administrations, at the sector and district levels, have also learned the benefits of supporting local races – locally conceived sport for development – for three major reasons: (1) it is a way to keep idle youth moving and motivated, (2) it gathers a large portion of the population and is a useful site to disseminate information (e.g., health information, political messages, community updates), and (3) it promotes cell, village, or national spirit and pride through the image of the strong, brave, Rwandan. Sector and district administration, small business, traditional community leaders, police and local government officials have largely positive interpretations of cycling and racing in regards to the development of their respective communities. Curious if what I was being told was an exaggeration, I organized my own local race, as a means of partaking in the cycling scene on a more structural level. In
helping organize this race, I was taken aback at the cooperation of officials, police, and public. People were cooperative, enthusiastic, and respectful of our ideas, offering their own insight and knowledge from past races in the region. Local businesses supported openly with donations and small gifts, and those who could support financially, did so unquestioningly. In speaking to a district chairwoman about her feelings towards this organized bicycle race in her district, she described how,

drafting success

to draft, while bicycle racing, is to place yourself directly behind someone, or a group of people, to effectively hide yourself from the elements – most notably the wind. energy conservation is critical in bicycle racing. the competitor who can best draft and work with others is not only exerting less energy, but also giving himself the best chance at crossing the line first. a thoughtful understanding of the techniques, contexts and dynamic conditions of racing defines the skill of drafting, and can often determine a podium finish – a psychological, social and monetary compensation – for racers. in everyday life, as in racing, cyclists seeking success must learn how to navigate and adapt to new ideas, opportunities, and uncertainties. understanding when to lead, or when to draft, becomes a key part of success as a cyclist, both on and off the bike.

Finding opportunities to race can be expensive, time consuming, and often unrealistic for many young cyclists eager to demonstrate their skill and talent. aside from national competitions, smaller province,
district, and even cell competitions are organized and held throughout the year with small purses for the winners and local glory for cyclists with aspirations of racing success. New racers, to make an impression and develop their racing sense, target these smaller, local races. If they do well, then aspirations of competing – rather than simply racing – nationally are evaluated.

District Chairwoman addressing competitors
The cyclists’ narratives emphasized these initial races as being the most influential in their progression as cyclists. They felt initial races are often the most memorable due to the nervousness they experienced in trying to perform and impress local teams and cyclists. The establishment of their identities within the Rwandan peloton often outweighed the importance of placing or victory in those early racing days. For example, Léon, a Team Rwanda cyclist, describes his most memorable race, where he remembers national team members watching him and riding along side him: “I wanted to impress them, show them I am deserving to have a bike to train and to test with them. I wanted to be like them so they needed to see my power on the bike.” Putting yourself at risk of failure is part of bicycle racing. By telling national team cyclists to watch out for him, Léon was taking himself out of draft and into a potentially life changing moment. Drafting, calculating risk, that has paid off for many of my research participants with spots on the national team. Drafting, in this sense, is about strategy - being cognizant of when you make your efforts shown, when to exhibit all those hours of training, the suffering, and sacrifices.
A new racer makes many sacrifices. Friends and family are often forcibly abandoned as the cyclist acquires new skills, creates an identity, and develops racer sense. In this light, racers drafted onto opportunities they found themselves as a means of pursuing racing success. Gaston describes that

at the time [when he started racing], Grégoire, Vianney, and I stayed with Aimable’s uncle who had more money. Not very rich, but smaller and he has good heart to help us. He tells us Ephrem, Vianney, Aimable and me to stay with him in Kigali to train so we get more strong. We would stay there like two days, three days in the week to sleep and train. Now he lives in Zambia and he calls Aimable to ask about us, about young cyclists. I have a friend working for the government from my village, he also helped us for training, and he gave us money for the training and to buy food and water like that. This is how we survive in those times. (Gaston)

This opportunistic resourcefulness describes cyclists who have taken advantage of the draft in gaining opportunities to train and learn. Cyclists told stories about how they had to sleep in undesirable places or at a friend-of-a-friend’s home with multiple cyclists when racing abroad, had to ride long distances to race that same day, borrow money for bus fare and water, take loans to pay for family school fees so they could train without the burden of work, and beg for food while riding.

Local races are a site of knowledge transfer and opportunity for young racers
**Going Beyond: The Attack**

There is a clear trait that distinguishes the participants of my research – members of Team Rwanda – from the domestic racers in Rwanda – the desire to attack, to go beyond. This is made clear examining the transformation of the cyclist’s everyday life through the progression of being materially and physically competitive (*bridging the gap*), establishing comfort and knowledge of the racing culture (*racing sense*), and achieving thoughtful understandings of the techniques, contexts and dynamic conditions of racing (*drafting*).

The cyclists all exhibited and described their progression and passion as cyclists to *move beyond*. My time with the cyclists yielded generalizable understandings of this desire as the foundation of many life narratives. These parallels exemplified the mirrored progression many of them described as their formation into racing:

*Largely undereducated and without the ability to go to school ($$ or age) they [the cyclists] decided to look back upon their bodies to find success and meaning in life. Through the single-speed they were then afforded, albeit small, a means of income, and showing pride and ability in this work, they applied their skills to dream bigger. The organization and the sport of cycling provided that “NEXT LEVEL” for them to aspire to do so. This is something incredibly important to consider as it demonstrates the impact of even the simple notion of ‘SOMETHING BETTER.’ These guys aren’t chasing particularly cycling because they love it; they love it because it provides them the ability to go beyond. I will explore this in the months to come. (Fieldnotes)*

Their personalized life narratives further enlightened my research to the varying motivations and approaches to cycling, despite the cyclists having similar pasts. Although racers drew on narratives of socio-economic constraints in regards to their career choice as cyclists, ambitious thoughts of racing closely followed descriptions of the cultural and structural limitations. Cyclists passionately described their first thoughts of racing instead of reflecting on the single-speed riding they do at home, in their communities. Younger team cyclists, like Léon, described how taking up a job as a single-speed cyclist was done with the strategic intent of ‘progressing’ through the cycling ranks to race and compete:

*I used to walk to school, its like 1 or 2 kilometers from here [we are at his home]. I would walk with a radio that my father bought me. I would hear about guys like Hassan, Aimable, and Martin on the radio because they raced many years ago. I would go with an old bike and watch them on the road. Tour of Rwanda, Tour of Kigali, local races like this. That’s when I knew I needed to start riding. I loved bikes so much and learning at school was hard for me so I asked my parents saying “please school is hard me, can you change my life? Can I buy a single-speed and use it for taxi single speed?” They accepted, and this is how I began to ride and make money. (Léon)*

Other cyclists, such as Jonathan, described how his desire to improve his cycling skills and to gain the attention of the team and their foreign coaches consumed every element of his life. Interviewed by Lewis (2013), Jonathan described that
Jonathan’s story isn’t unique. Many of the cyclists I interviewed got their chance at change through such bold determination. This is what often defines an attack in road cycling – a burst of energy or speed, meant to separate oneself from the rest of the peloton. Attacks are strategic but their success is often serendipitous. One requires the ability to judge the risks associated with an attack, yet a degree of perseverance to go beyond is essential in launching such attack. Their legs, their lungs, and their minds are active tools that they transform and frame as tools for (cycling) development. My primary research participants had a mental and embodied understanding of what it takes to ‘go beyond’ – to attack – when the opportunity felt right.

Rwandan Cycling Goes Global

To understand how the race mechanisms acquired and desired by Rwandan single-speed cyclists have translated into the mythopic imagery of a professional African racer, a modern picture of racing in Rwanda is required. Through brief sketches of the spaces, situations, and actors who become engaged and interested in Rwandan cycling, I reveal the conception of a framework for a performance and image driven sport for development project, Team Rwanda. Such a contemporary overview, in the remainder of this chapter, provides a starting point in building an understanding of the cyclists’ agency and processes within their everyday life.

Rwanda’s central road system, a “network of proper two-lane tarmac that spokes out from Kigali, stitching a tidy web among nine of the country’s ten provincial capitals” (Gorevitch, 1999, p.32) was an ideal location for road racing. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, cycling events attracted cyclists from around East Africa and beyond to compete. The inaugural Tour du Rwanda (French being the preferred language in those days), held in 1989, had three select teams from Rwanda (which have been re-established in the current iteration of the race) and national squads from around the region – Kenya, Uganda, Burundi, Tanzania, and DRC. Organized by the Rwandan Cycling Federation (FERWACY) the

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FERWACY is the national governing cycling body in Rwanda. A registered Rwandan non-for-profit organization, they are the official voice of cycling in Rwanda (FERWACY, 2015). FERWACY’s main purpose is to promote cycling in Rwanda at all levels, yet was hard pressed in the 2000s due to cutbacks in funding and support from both donors and government.
1990 Tour encountered significant logistical issues with the increasing political instability caused by growing ethnic tensions in the country. Several stages of the Tour were disrupted or abandoned due to cyclists competing for road space not with fellow competitors but with military convoys and internally displaced Rwandans. The tour would be disbanded for several years following the 1990 race.

It would take two ambitious American cyclists to redefine the role and relationship of both cycling and Rwandan cyclists for Rwandan society. Tom Ritchey, a famed bicycle builder, was initially invited to Rwanda to take part in establishing Project Rwanda, a microfinance organization that sought to help farmers become more effective at transporting their crops to market. Project Rwanda would do this mostly through a customized “cargo” bicycle built by Mr. Ritchey – with an elongated frame, reinforced rack area on the back, gearing, and pegs on the rear axle so that a person can sit on the back and stabilize the bags of goods during transport. They believed that this was an advancement, ironically, to the cumbersome single-speed bicycles seen across Rwanda’s countryside. Project Rwanda saw the single-speed bicycles as feeble, unsafe, and unreliable. They believed their newly-designed bicycles would increase productivity and quality of crop-return for farmers in the country by increasing the amounts safely carried to the markets and processing plants of Rwanda’s agricultural sector.

As a means of promoting the project, Ritchey sought to involve famed ex-professional cyclist Jock Boyer as Director of Team Rwanda – a racing team that would help with publicity and awareness for Project Rwanda. Team Rwanda would search for, and develop, cycling talent in the country alongside the social enterprise of Project Rwanda. The goals were initially modest for Boyer; he “would take a handful of cyclists, test them, train them, and see if they had the potential to be cycling’s answer to Kenya’s runners” (Lewis, 2013, p.89). This was in 2006. With the arrival of Boyer as coach/director, and Ritchey as the financial backer, the original objective of “identifying the talent” (as quoted in Rising from Ashes, 2012) soon expanded into creating a cycling team that could be competitive in continental and international competitions. From his temporary home in Butare in early 2007, Boyer tested some of the best cyclists in Rwanda and was impressed by the numbers they displayed on his CompuTrainer. Even more than the data generated, he was fascinated by the cyclists’ “innate resilience” to suffer – a desirable trait for a cycling professional. From this initial foray into Rwandan cycling, he was committed to developing a team of cyclists in Rwanda, and soon described his ultimate goal of having a Rwandan

Their Rwandan staff – between 3-6 people – are in charge of organizing road races, managing cycling clubs, establishing and lobbying for bicycle safety, ensuring racer registration around the country, and supervising the Rwandan national cycling team. These are significant responsibilities for a limited capacity organization.

64 A CompuTrainer is a racing training device that uses data coming from a computer attached to the rear wheel of a bicycle. It measures the cyclist’s power output and his anaerobic threshold (AT), important markers of fitness for endurance athletes.
team compete in the Tour de France – cycling’s most celebrated event – within four to six years. These goals were ambitious with the budget, infrastructure, and team (himself) he had in place, but Boyer believed in the cyclists’ natural abilities as cyclists.

Boyer can largely be credited with the resurgence and professionalization of road racing in Rwanda. His work with FERWACY and government officials to promote and advocate for the formalization of races and opportunities for Rwandan cyclists, while establishing a testing system and training camp for Rwanda’s elite cyclists, transformed the landscape of the sport in the country. Boyer’s accomplishments, most notably Team Rwanda, have added a new level to Rwanda’s cycling hierarchy for cyclists to aspire to. This next level of cycling evolution in Rwanda – and the international publicity and media portrayal of cycling in Rwanda “as a means of redemption and reconciliation” – has garnered the attention of not only international donors but also President Kagame’s government. Moreover, Boyer’s advocacy with the UCI on behalf of FERWACY has opened opportunities for the coaching and training of Rwandans.
abroad, and has transformed events such as the Tour of Rwanda from an amateur regional event to a now UCI 2.2 World Tour event. International teams come to compete against Rwandan cyclists at the Tour of Rwanda, which brings millions of Rwandans to the country’s roadsides to watch their national heroes challenge the world. During those weeks of the Tour of Rwanda, cyclists become emblematic images of Rwanda’s current incarnation globally, as an emerging African middle power. For example, when in 2014, Valens Ndayisenga was the first Rwandan to win the Tour of Rwanda since its UCI status in 2008 the country rejoiced and “celebrated its victory over the world” (Gebrehiwot, 2014). This legitimized Rwandans’ success on the bicycle, increasing the amount of support FERWACY receives from corporate donors and government departments within Rwanda and abroad. It has pushed the organization to loftier goals – an all-black African Team at the Tour de France – and to further establish bicycle racing within the culture, creating a new image for post-genocide Rwanda. FERWACY President Aimable Bayingana points out that

Since 2014, our [FERWACY] goal was to be in the top five [cycling teams] in Africa and now that it has been achieved, the new target is to be in the top three by 2017. We will achieve it by organizing races on the UCI calendar not only the Tour of Rwanda… but by advocating for some of the Rwanda Cycling Cup races to be included on the UCI Africa Tour calendar. (Komugisha, 2015)

This push for performance and development (e.g., the establishment of the Rwanda Cycling Cup) is a clear sign that the current groundswell of support for cycling from Rwandans has resonated with the governing political party. The RPF government noted, like Beacom (1998), that a sport such as cycling could play an important role in regards to national identity through what Beacom describes as an elevation of national status in the international arena through success in sport, either by individuals or groups. The 2014 (and now 2015) victories galvanized the population, albeit briefly, and caught the eye of the highest government officials, including President Kagame, a pragmatic supporter of cycling in his country. With Rwanda's global reputation top of mind for Kagame’s government, the success and notoriety around its elite cycling team has offered the RPF government another platform to declare Rwanda’s rebirth, quite literally, from the ashes of the genocide and onto the world stage. In exchange for these reconciliatory ambassadors of Rwanda, the President has in recent years supported cycling

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65 Numerous FERWACY staff have been to coaching and director sportive trainings at UCI accredited trainings in Europe and South Africa. Furthermore, many of Rwanda’s elite cyclists have trained at UCI training facilities in South Africa and Switzerland for numerous months.

66 In the latest iteration of Rwandan cycling – the Rwanda Cycling Cup – the event had 11 races that commenced in April and ended in October, and saw tremendous success in the press. In conversation with cyclists, they describe these new races as providing a platform for younger cyclists and national team cyclists to get used to regular competition, provide opportunities to earn for their families, and allow them to develop an identity from within the Rwandan peloton to the broader community.

67 During the writing of this dissertation, Team Rwanda won its second Tour of Rwanda, with three Rwandans in the top 3 general classification positions.
financially and politically. These changes in policy (or/and perception of cycling) would have profound changes on the trajectory of the organizations involved – FERWACY and Team Rwanda – as well as the Rwandan cyclists and their everyday life. Most notably, Kagame publicized his purchase of 26 first-class racing bicycles, painted in Rwandan colours (below), for the team, with a price tag of over $250,000 USD of public funds so that “everyone will know the Team Rwanda bike” (Komugisha, 2015). Moreover, Kagame has noted the value of Team Rwanda’s cyclists as ambassadors for the country and the annual Tour of Rwanda as a way of helping the country’s identity shed its overwhelming association with the genocide of 1994. His appearances on national and local TV and Radio, offering Presidential messages of praise for the cyclists and encouraging Rwandans to support and encourage their young heroes, has created a groundswell of support for the organization and its cyclists.

The ‘Presidential’ Pinarello Dogma’s with Rwandan colours

**The Myth of Success**

In *Mythologies* (1972), Ronald Barthes deconstructs the functioning of certain insidious myths, their construction, their consumption, and their interpretation. Barthes defines a myth as a second-order semiotic system that takes an already constituted sign (e.g., a black, African youth) and turns it into a signifier (e.g., a strong, modern athlete). Robinson (2011) explains that
Myths differ from other kinds of signifiers. For one thing, they are never arbitrary. They always contain some kind of analogy which motivates them. In contrast to ideas of false consciousness, myths don’t hide anything. Instead, myths inflect or distort particular images or signs to carry a particular meaning. Myth doesn’t hide things, it distorts them. It alienates the history of the sign. (Online)

The romanticized myth of Team Rwanda – much like Barthes’ examples – that has been constructed through the sport for development organization depicts development, redemption, and reconciliation as key components of Rwanda’s resurgence as a nation post-genocide, and the bicycle as its tool. Boyer and Team Rwanda have garnered significant attention due to the unconventional athletic nature of their “rags to riches” narrative, both in Rwanda and abroad. Such a well-documented good-news story “depicting the potential of the bicycle to do good” (Gourevitch, 2012) plays nicely to western audiences whose generalized understandings of altruism, philanthropy, and the savageness of Africa allow for consumable oversimplifications that pull at the heart strings. The growth and notoriety of the team’s success – notably that of Adrien Niyonshuti who participated in the 2012 Olympics and rides for a professional cycling team – have come at the expense and exploitation of the cyclists’ personal life, physical bodies, and individual aspirations outside of cycling – both willingly and forcibly. Cyclists are put in the unfortunate positions of creating narratives of their own lives that demand the sympathy of others to fit the image created by the organization and show their dedication to the team. As one of Team Rwanda’s mechanics told me, “no one wants to hear the good things about their [the cyclists] lives. Would you donate if things are going not great, but just O.K.?” Team Rwanda’s capitalization of Rwanda’s history – intentionally or not – and the world’s simplification of it, has allowed the organization to build an image of Rwandan cyclists that supporters – and more importantly, donors – can buy into. Albeit elements of truth exist within their narratives, cyclists were explicit when describing instances where they felt offended by how their stories, and their family’s stories, were used to raise donations. Hassan, a senior cyclist, clearly frustrated, describes how “I can’t [couldn’t] show my reaction, for the things they are saying. They used my history, they lie and now they don’t care about my life. How could someone say something like that?” While many cyclists like Hassan felt exploited in this sense, most kept their feelings to themselves, electing to remain on the team and not challenge the authorities, fearing retaliation. A number of cyclists I interviewed were removed for insubordination. A particularly bad cyclists insubordination was referred to frequently as an example of what can happen to cyclists who resist conformity with the image set by the authorities. Cyclists therefore weigh the seriousness of their actions prior to (re)acting to any organization or outsider agitation. “I don’t trust them. We [the cyclists] don’t trust them. They call as ask us about X cyclist or Y cyclist but we understand they are calling about their future, not the future for us, so we stay quiet. How can we trust them when they call us liars? Imagine…” (Aimable)
Raising the Bar

Boyer and Ritchey's forward-thinking approach in applying various aspects of cycling and racing to a post-conflict development context reoriented Rwandan cyclists and racers towards a new understanding of what is desirable for the bearer of a Rwandan cycling identity. Previously, the local single-speed cycling culture influenced the changes a cyclist had to make to their appearance and character to become a racer. Now, a formal, and well-established, American organization and FERWACY were in place to direct what was demanded of a professional cyclist. With the arrival of a mission-driven sport for development organization, headed by a former professional cycling champion, the Rwandan cyclists' behavioural identity transformed to be in line with Boyer's new goals as coach and director of this cycling organization (Becker, 1956). Cyclists had to quickly conform to a new identity first to qualify and then to maintain a position within Boyer's Team Rwanda. These bodily demands bear significant cultural ramifications. Henning Eichberg (1998, 2008) proposes that the body is "primarily cultural, which is to say, as socially constructed and historically variable" (1998, p.4). Such a cycling body culture, Gilley (2006) believes, "is bound up within class aspirations, nationalist missions, religious causes, and societal attitudes. Social movements, industrialization, and political reforms all endorse forms of bodily movement that inevitably come to shape sporting cultures"(p.53). Rwandan cyclists have developed an innate comprehension of what to say, how to say it, and when; understanding the identity required to emit the image required of them within this highly regimented body culture. Félicien describes how “[he] can't do anything. When I win, I smile, I thank the President, the country, and the organization. I cannot explain how little we make, or other things [experiences in camp]. Maybe when senior riders speak, they listen, but for me, no. So I must stay quiet.”

The cyclists’ success now depended on their ability to perform, through bodily movements, this new image of an elite Rwandan cyclist. With these understandings of body culture and bodily movement, cyclists’ agency and freedom are crafted through the tactics of suppression, resistance, and negotiation that personify attitudes as racers and cyclists. They not only carve out their social identity as cyclists, national heroes, fathers, sons, commuters, but also establish spaces of freedom from within the overarching confines of the state and Team Rwanda as a means of enacting moments of agency within a totalizing institution.

The above sections establish an understanding of how a Rwandan cyclists end up at the gates of the Center. This focus on the interconnections of their identities, their career transitions and roles as
cyclists and caretakers take us across narratives scattered across the hilltops of Rwanda. Each cyclist holds an intertwined relationship with the contemporary development of Rwanda, his place within it, and the relevant cultural and historical nuances that apply.

Now, when invited to the Center, a cyclist has made it to the pinnacle of bicycle racing in Rwanda. They will now navigate back and forth between two drastically different worlds: family and community, and the world of cycling and the organization. To capture generalized understandings, I orient my perspective on how “behaviour is now reoriented in terms of what is proper and desirable for the bearer of such identities, in terms of the motives they consider appropriate for the kind of persons they have become” (Becker, 1956, p.292). Additionally, as Palmer alludes, “the body culture of contemporary professional cyclists is immediately apparent in the appearance of the cyclists in the same way one can evaluate the body culture of a weight lifter or high fashion model. The values in these microcultures are marked on the bodily aesthetic of individuals” (1996, p.114). Listening to the cyclists speak in places and spaces such as their homes, on the roads, in the market, I expose myself to glimpses of understanding of life as process and the modes of resistance and negotiation that are employed within this particular body culture (Eichberg, 1998). I thus look at the everyday life of cyclists and ask, “Are there any systematic processual regularities? Is there any way of looking across at the things that people do at different times at different places, different settings, and different contexts and seeing if there are some commonalities?”(Becker, 1956, p.244). In doing so, the voices of the cyclists’ paint the picture of their lives and reveal to us the nuances of negotiation from within these complex spaces.

Commuting Rituals

Departing with Aimable at 5:51am this morning was a bit of anti-climax. The morose feeling of him tip-toeing around at 4:55am when I was already wide awake, waiting for him made for funny company as Diana was falling asleep while him and I quietly shared a coffee. She packed his bags with a change of clothes and some bananas, filled his bottles, I heated milk for the coffee press I gave him, a Christmas gift. Aimable had all of his clothes, helmet, shoes, sunglasses, bicycle, bottles and equipment neatly placed the night before so that he could easily get dressed without thinking after washing his face and brushing his teeth. That particular morning he was given another job [as a guide] with two Algerian tourists. Through a contact he had made with a big hotel in Kigali, they would pay him to take them around on an early morning ride. The money he will make in 2 hours with these tourists is more than 4 weeks pay of training camp. He is happy [about this] and talks about how Diana needs a computer for school. He will ride with them, and then ride the 4 hours to Musanze to join the team. He knows his body will be tired but he doesn’t complain; rather, he smiles. “This is how it is David, we must take every chance to make money.”
Guys like Aimable, to me, are idols. Their work ethic is incredibly high. Félicien last night, nonchalantly just told me how he went for a 3-hour training ride after spending the morning dealing with the break-in of his house and helping his mother’s friend with issues at the local market. These guys are committed. Both to their work and their families. They are machines. They are professionals. (Fieldnotes)

A typical training camp for cyclists runs from Monday to Friday. Departure for camp, therefore, happens early Monday mornings with racers commuting the varied distances to the outskirts of Musanze, in the northwest, where the Center is located.

The cyclist and his entire family take great pride in the cyclist’s status as a Team Rwanda member, making preparation for training an important part of their routine. Even cyclists who are single or live alone have mothers, sisters, cousins who ensure they are ready for the week of work ahead. In leaving for camp, the cyclists are meticulous and particular about their preparation. Whether it is a particular dish enjoyed the night before, a beer with friends on Saturday night, or a reflexive walk in the mountains alone, time away from the Center is particular and significant to all the cyclists. In their individual ways, they are able to reconnect with familiar norms and traditions that are separate from the highly technical management systems of cycling body culture inside the Center. At home and in their communities, they are able to freely express their “Rwandan” identity, suppressing some of the more stringent “cyclist” traits for brief moments with family and friends.

On Sundays, clothes are cleaned for the week, the barber is visited, and if required, legs are shaved so as to adhere to bodily norms within the cycling fraternity. Religion is very much routinized for all cyclists on the weekends with cyclists attending the church or mosque. Upon returning from lengthy masses (which are around 2-4 hours in Rwanda), they tune their bicycles to their specifications, pack bags, bottles, and lay their Monday morning outfit out – pre-washed so that departures at dawn will not disturb the remaining household members. If they have to leave after sunrise, cyclists are often aided by their loved ones, who help them prepare to leave. These departures reflect a scene out of a Hollywood movie, where a warrior or soldier leaves for battle, and the family gathers around to wish the beloved patriarch one last good-bye.
Departure rituals were critically important to participants

The geographical commute differs for the various cyclists coming to camp. Their destination is in the northwest corner of Rwanda Musanze district and - a topographic series of spikes called the Virunga Mountains - and its capital city of Ruhengeri. Surrounded by seven extinct (and one active) volcanos, this mountain range kisses the borders of DRC and eastward into Uganda with the Volcanoes National Park - a large steward of this protected land. It is a beautiful and lush area known for its coffee, tea, and potato cultivation, as well as the famous Mountain Gorillas. Distances in the cyclist's commute range from a short 25km downhill from the mountaintops of Shashwara, to as far as Kibungo in the southeast of the country, almost 250km away. As most cyclists live in rural areas, getting to the main paved roadways requires a steadfast descent on rural dirt roads that, when in the dark or at dawn, is particularly dangerous.

For many, their commute is their training for that Monday, while those who live in closer proximity will train before camp prior to making their way to Musanze. Depending on the prescribed workout for the day (such as intervals or sprints), cyclists may do specific intervals during their commute to camp or opt to do a moderate tempo ride, sacrificing training for further recovery. All workouts not done in camp under the supervision of a coach are communicated to senior cyclists who receive instructions from coaches and staff who then disseminate the information to fellow cyclists via text message or phone. This is one of the markers that distinguish senior cyclists or trusted cyclists from the remainder of the team.
Commuting involved intimate interactions outside of camp life

Although many cyclists experience commuting alone, listening to music and thinking about their families or upcoming races, the majority of commutes to camp are done with teammates. This is a way of breaking up the monotony of a long ride to work. As such, commutes are very much social affairs between cyclists. Cyclists typically set a meeting point via text message or a quick phone call the Sunday before. With only one major paved road heading northwest, cyclists coordinate departure times depending on availability and physical well-being. Most cyclists meet on the outskirts of Kigali, where the paved road turns northwards towards Musanze and the Congolese/Ugandan borders. An immediate 7-kilometre climb of about 12-15 percent gradient forces cyclists into an early effort, eventually easing with approximately 40 kilometres of steady climbing and descending of ridgelines to a mid-way point where cyclists stop to sit, eat local fare and drink traditional milk tea without being bothered or harassed by travellers stopping at the busy bus station across the road.
Drawing from Lefebvre (1991), whose understanding of ‘representational spaces,’ refers to spaces that are “lived” through images and symbols (1991, p.39), it is clear that the cyclists claim to and repurposing of particular spaces as their own, both on the road – through competition – and during their commute as places of peace and community is an important consideration. Palmer (2010), building on Lefebvre’s work describes space and sport as where social relationships are expressed; that “space [in a sport sense] is nothing until it is made visible through the social relations that occur within sites, places, localities, borders and margins” (p.868). The strong relationship with this mid-way stop, for example, is symbolic of the bonds the cyclists have with a large cross-section of Rwandan society and plays into the important connection these two entities – the cyclists and non-cycling Rwandans – have with one another. Stories of families near the roadside taking cyclists in to rest, or giving them a lift when it was dark or raining reflect common ‘spatial practice’ (Lefebvre, 1991) – what people ‘do’ in these spaces and how people produce and consume such spaces (and identities). Rwandans have embraced Team Rwanda cyclists, knowing them by name and shouting at them from storefronts along the roads with encouragement and admiration. Mechanical problems with bikes on the roadside almost always led to rides back to Kigali by truck or bus, free of charge. Where bananas, water, or tea would be at a premium if a tourist (such as myself) rode by, it would almost certainly be free or in good faith if in the company of a team cyclist. This respect and admiration showed by the public is indicative of the subtle, yet significant cultural support this sport and these cyclists receive while on the road. The storeowner, over milk tea on one of my commutes by motorcycle, described his understanding of the reciprocal relationship Rwandans have with their cyclists:

*We appreciate the cyclist’s power [on the bike?] and success. These are young men that come from our communities. They look like us. They are like us, so we must be happy for them! I see them training here since 2007. They grow and grow and grow, and we are still here supporting. This place for them is a quiet place, safe for them to come and drink tea, have a beigne, continue riding. During Tour of Rwanda many people come to the road to see these cyclists and cheer. The names like Tharcisse, Hassan, Martin…many people know them. They are bringing people to our district and hope to many young Rwandans. For this I thank them. (Fieldnotes, Translated from French)*
Mid-way stops are a time to joke, share tea and fried treats with local supporters

Such a space, for Gaston, as a young up-and-coming racer, is representative of a socially produced and constructed space resulting from the professionalization of cycling in Rwanda and the identity and spatial norms established by the cyclists before him. Gaston explained, “this man [the shopowner] has supported us for many years! He always supports cyclists with food and water...when I don't have money, he gives me milk and tea and biscuits. That's why we come and eat with him always. He's a good man David, like family.”

The storeowner, like many Rwandans, can relate to the cyclist's upbringings, their histories, and publicized narratives. Vice-versa, the cyclists stealthily cling to their traditions (e.g., milk tea) and culture while being told to conform to the rigid bodily cultural standards of professional cyclists. Blain, Boyle, and O'Donnell (1993) note that “the media take aspects of sporting competition and reconstitute them into a wider cultural and ideological construction of national stability” (p.52). In the case of Team Rwanda – and events such as the Tour of Rwanda – their identities as symbols of national unity transform spaces from which the average Rwandan can coalesce and relate with. Through these young
men’s accomplishments on the snaking roads that connect Rwanda’s rural countryside to the urban skyline of Kigali, Team Rwanda provides an “arena in which individuals who have never met, can feel part of a wider community” (Blain et al., 1993, p.5). So as many Rwandans see parts of themselves through the cyclists, as symbols of their recovery and their potential success, the cyclists exploit this image to reacquire small spaces of Rwandan normalcy – like their midway tea break – where they remain connected and grounded to contemporary Rwandan life.

Cyclists are the sons of farmers, peasants, Hutus, and Tutsis - a representation of Rwanda’s spectrum of underprivileged. Therefore, people notice when the cyclists are on their bikes. Their bodies, acutely attuned to riding and racing, are noticeably defined in the lycra jerseys and fitted bib shorts of Team Rwanda. They ride machines that are in stark contrast to anything else found on Rwanda’s roads. They are a symbol of success. As one participant remarked, “who doesn’t know Aimable, or Hassan, or Martin? They are heroes in this country! What Rwandan hasn’t stood by the roadside to watch the cyclist’s race past? Who doesn’t know the Tour of Rwanda?”

This juxtaposing of developed versus underdeveloped, Rwanda versus the World, the “haves” vs. the “have not’s” is played out through the cyclists as they transcend the two spectrums this chapter has uncovered: the life as the image, or centre of, a development project, and the family and community life of the participant. The commitments and expectations derived from both groups are demanding and require a strategic negotiation – between the cyclists original identities and their newly adopted identities as professional cyclists – of everyday life in order to maintain daily equilibrium. Their personal success – that is their family’s financial stability, social status, and self-image – is dependent on how well the image (and reality) of Team Rwanda can be maintained and sustained. In turn, this image assists in defining, and representing Rwanda to the rest of the world. The cyclists recognize this and know their image, internally and externally, begins to define the country’s social and economic success. Their growing notoriety is part of the sacrifice they must make to remain on the team, but it is not a driving force of motivation for these young men. Thus, they strategically/cooperatively play their role, and navigate spatial relations desired by the state and the organization, so as to maximize professional opportunities.

The Arrival of Routine: Everyday Resistance (from Monday-Friday)

To get to the cycling Center, a cyclist must ride through Musanze town, the provincial capital of the northwest region, and make his way past the market, football stadium and various denominational
churches to a rare paved secondary road that leads upwards towards the peaks of the Virunga mountains. Following brightly marked Tourism Rwanda signage about wildlife and expensive safari lodges, you meander your way up towards the entrance of Volcanoes National Park. Halfway up this paved climb, about three kilometres from the main road, a brightly adorned organizational signpost for Team Rwanda in visible in front of a large compound on the left hand side of the road. Before breaching its walls and large steel gate – painted in Rwanda’s national colours – guests are greeted by a set of guards, local middle-aged men, residing in a small guards’ building to the left of the entrance. Signatures of guests to the Center are taken in a large guest book that reads like a reciting of the United Nations: “France, Uganda, Canada, Belgium, Switzerland…” Informally describing the compound to me, the cyclists noted the marked difference in “feel” and cultural construction of the space. Contrary to the incredibly compact nature of Rwanda, the world’s most densely populated country, the Center is expansive. Within its 10 acres were 15 buildings, a garage, a water tank and filtration system, generator, barbwire fence, a BMX bicycle track, and a paved garage. The manicured grass and the network of lit paved walkways, meandering neatly between tightly built huts – rooms and dormitories for cyclists and staff – is a stark contrast, even for Rwanda, to the homes, conveniences, and makeup of traditional community buildings and walkways.

Two full-time gardeners maintain a dense garden with rows of carrots, kale, lettuce, beets, and a variety of herbs. Next to the garden is an octagonal shaped building, like a small chapel with large windows and welcoming doors. This is the mess hall and kitchen, where yoga and stretching were obligatory from 6-7 p.m. for cyclists attending camp, with prayer and dinner to follow at 7 p.m. Cyclists have dinner there all together, cyclists eating first, then coaches, then staff, then volunteers, then cooks. A mechanic’s workshop, offices, classrooms, testing and storage facility occupy a complex of nicely built red brick buildings where, in many instances, cyclists would congregate. Cyclists have English class from 4-6 p.m. during the week to help them improve their ability to communicate with sponsors, donors, and potential professional teams. The mechanic’s shop is a pro-level bicycle shop - fully stocked and organized with parts and bikes neatly organized and hung, and a brand new washer/drier for the cyclists’ clothing to be washed immediately following training. Yet, of all the amenities at the Center, the cyclists explained that the filtered water tank and heaters – providing water with unfailing hotness and water pressure – were their favourite reasons for attending camp, aside from cycling.
The Center (pictured above) was celebrated as a victory for the organization and a milestone in their evolution. What is implicit is that the Center, as a physical space, is the product human of intervention and accomplishment (Palmer, 2010, p.867). This is significant as it is the product of meaningful cultural work by those producers/users of such spaces (the organization) seeking change within cycling in Rwanda.

A confirmation of such change was articulated by a staff member who pronounced the compound “Little America,” due to the stark dissimilarities between its regime and everyday life ‘outside.’ Previously, the organization’s facilities were situated on a smaller, typically ‘Rwandan’ compound. As described by the cyclists, it only had two houses, sporadic water, overcrowded sleeping areas, lack of natural light, and very little grass. It was also located directly within Musanze town. Cyclists felt this location was much more localized and integrated within community space, yet dysfunctional and distracting for training. This contrasts with the current Center, which is completely separated from the community, both literally and figuratively, away from town and walled, as a means of creating a privileged and guarded space for Rwandan cycling and its elite cyclists. As van Ingen (2003) tells us, sporting spaces,
such as the Center, are “inexorably linked to the social construction of dominant ideologies and the politics of identity” (pp.209-210). Establishing such a space only propagates the imagery of the Rwandan cyclist desired by the organization and government while, amongst the cyclists, stresses the stark material, financial, and social differences between their everyday life and camp. Like Palmer (2010), I believe “space is nothing until it is made visible through the social relations that occur within sites, places, localities, borders and margins” (pp.867-868). The Center as a space – admittedly aesthetically stunning and ‘Western’ functional\(^{68}\) – only reinforced to the cyclists the spatial and bodily cultural practices required to maintain the continuity and coherence of the social order, message, and image of Team Rwanda’s cyclists both at home and abroad. The Center was a privileged space; as the volunteer noted, it was proclaimed “little America” by some of the staff. If cyclists were going to succeed in their quest at professionalization, their negotiation of this ‘little America’ would be critical.

**Camp Privilege**

*These guys are really privileged. I was trying to tell them that what they have as cyclists is unique. No American professional has the same luxuries. American professionals live and train alone, unless it’s with friends, that go out and train and usually they are from different teams. They go home and make their own food, and acquire their own water on rides. If they go out on a 5-hour ride, they bring 5 water bottles, and pack their pockets full of food…. The guys here have it made. Nobody is making me rice cakes for my races and rides while supporting me with a motorcycle. (Volunteer)*

For a new member of Team Rwanda, the privileges afforded at the Center are a dramatic and drastic change from the everyday life they are used to outside the Center. At home, cyclists are responsible for things such as fetching water to cook, clean, and bathe, acquiring and preparing food, as well as various domestic and daily responsibilities due to the household composition of many Rwandan families post-genocide.\(^{69}\) At the Center, cyclists are afforded the ability to focus their energy solely on performance. Outside distractions are minimized through the organization’s strict enforcement of routine and structure. Routine is desired in many professions, but in cycling it is both a necessity and a labour of love. Their lives are structured on and off the road as a means of regulating their bodies through lack of distraction, and maintaining strict focus on riding as a means of maximizing skill adoption. This is drilled into cyclists immediately upon joining the team and entering the Center through the organization's constructed normalities such as eating, datafication, and appearance – key mechanisms of change for aspiring professional cyclists. A typical training camp day for cyclists would look as follows:

\(^{68}\) For example, the Center had a fibre optic cable Internet connection, a privilege normally allotted only to government departments, which had a price tag of approximately $700 USD a month. Cyclists were not allowed access or given the code although many acquired it through various means.

\(^{69}\) Many of the cyclists’ families are single parent households (often mothers) because of the genocide.
6:30am wake up, shower
7:00 am weigh-in and breakfast
8:00-8:30am prepare for day’s training
8:30-9:00am departure for training
Training (between 2-5hours)
12:00-2:00pm (prayer, Lunch served)
2:00-4:30pm (Massage/Rest)
4:30-6:00pm (English Class)
6:00pm-7:00pm Stretching and Core
7:00pm Prayer/Dinner
8:30-9:00pm Room/bed/lights out.

At the Center, three meals are cooked by professional chefs every day; water is filtered, carried, and displayed in the mess hall for cyclists to consume (coaches believe local water has parasites that are detrimental to cyclist performance); bikes are cleaned and serviced by mechanics and then laid out before every ride; and cyclists’ dirty clothes are picked up and washed every day while the cyclists take hot showers from taps with running water. Cyclists are expected to rest after riding to aid the recovery process. Each cyclist receives a massage in the afternoon/evening before their daily English class, where they are taught basic phrases and understandings if, for example, they are asked questions in an interview or publicly thank sponsors or the government. The dorm rooms – approximately 4 self-contained huts that house 6-10 cyclists comfortably – are the spaces where supervision is at a minimum, and is where cyclists feel most relaxed. This “rest time” is largely spent listening to music, chatting about girls, races or team politics, and waiting for their massages, class or food. The cyclists describe the dorm rooms as providing a source of privacy and a space where they are able to exert confidence and independence free from scrutiny or observation. I found this innocent atmosphere to be comparable to my time spent with them in the saddle, on the road, or in the communities without Center supervision – where the image required of them was reduced.

On occasion, cyclists are shuttled into town to get haircuts or to go to church, and invariably find themselves walking around the streets speaking to friends, fans, and old classmates. Many take this opportunity to eat a local beignet or milk tea, plan to meet up with a girlfriend, or purchase some products in the market that they are not allowed at the Center. These are small actions of resistance that bear significant meaning to the cyclists themselves as they demonstrate that they still retain a degree of agency within the imposed systems of corporeal management (White, Young, & Gillet, 1995).

This “Center life” is a complete revolution to many cyclists who have lived in houses solely with dirt floors, without running water or three meals a day or any sort of formal education. To deconstruct the cycling discourse within the confines of Team Rwanda’s routine is to reveal the mechanisms of an unquestioned set of values governing the sport of cycling in Rwanda and their individual bodies.
Ironically, many junior cyclists describe enjoying the lack of responsibilities imposed on them by this regimented lifestyle and the bodily transformations resulting from such specified bodily movements. Many described enjoying camp routine, and saw it as the pinnacle of work life in Rwandan cycling culture: “For me, I enjoy going to camp. Monday we leave, we come [to camp], we eat good foods, train hard, get power, and get monies for my family. These are good things. On Friday we can go home and relax, be with friends… enjoy… other times we travel, maybe I can help others win, make more monies. This helps my family. I like this about cycling [with Team Rwanda].” (Grégoire). While not all were as enthusiastic as Grégoire, what was clear was that when a cyclist is “called to camp,” he understands that the comforts (and discomforts) of family life are abandoned and their focus becomes their job as a member of Team Rwanda. Cyclists relinquish their personal responsibilities, such as being a father, a caregiver, or community leader, and become subservient to the coaches and staff of the organization. Within this highly regimented structure of space and bodily movement they are free to forget about the daily stresses waiting for them outside the walls of the Center and focus exclusively on their identities as elite Rwandan cyclists. This becomes their new normal. It is routine. It is work. Yet, for all the cyclists I interviewed, they believed it – the perfection of cycling’s bodily movements – is their best immediate option at providing for themselves and their families. Through their involvement and adherence to the Center’s strict systems of corporeal management, many hoped for future opportunities that will continue this accumulation of social and other forms of capital.

**Negotiating Camp**

Senior team members pass down understandings of training camp to new cyclists. The cyclists recognize any conflict or mistreatment of cyclists made by Center staff as a sacrifice they must endure for their own personal gain. To avoid confrontation, cyclists suppress thoughts and feelings they may have at the Center. Rather, they confer on issues amongst themselves, so that all reactions are discussed and mitigated through the cyclists’ community (expanded upon in Chapter 5). Therefore, while at the Center, the realities of camp life – training, nutrition and dealing with coaches, staff, and sponsors – take precedent over all else. Félicien describes to me his understandings of work and the organization in relation to his broader everyday life:

*DM*: What do you think of the Center?

*F*: I love being there because it’s my job. I make money there. I go there for training, I ride hard. I eat well. But I love my home. I go there [the Center] so I can have a life outside Team Rwanda. You understand? I can have what I have at home because I am there, so I love there. You understand?
DM: Yes, I get it. How has it changed living at the Center since you arrived?

F: Now at the new Center we have to tell Thomas thank you for cooking. They [American staff] tell us that. Yet they don’t tell us about Celestine [old chef who was fired]. Now there are 3 people working in the kitchen, making good food. Before there was one in a small house. Now it is a big compound. There must be a lot money as the Team is growing and we have many people helping [local staff, chefs, gardeners…). Things are easier but they are also more difficult. They take the phones; they give little pay to new cyclists. They continue to pay older cyclists very little. So we like it better now at the big Center, of course, but we go there for work, not for life!

This recognition from Félicien is novel. Like Prus (2007), Félicien and other cyclists have developed a sense of self-awareness through a process of interacting with others at the Center. Their acute understanding of their situations, this reflexivity, has created a degree of initiative (human agency, enterprise, intentionality) that has allowed them to maximize opportunities for themselves through cycling while staying true to their personal goals and ambitions. Their tactful language and gratitude for training was unmistakeable but there was a limit to a cyclist’s compromise. When their goals and ambitions could not be met, or the pressures of achieving those goals were too grave, cyclists would quit or force themselves off the team through progressive disobedience or lackluster performances. An example of this was Ephrem, the younger brother of a senior cyclist. Ephrem was an early addition to Team Rwanda and considered a formidable racing force after his testing numbers proved incredibly high. He travelled globally with the team and was poised to become a professional. Ephrem, unfortunately, was banished from cycling in Rwanda because – in his narrative – he stood up to team management and FERWACY publicly. Ephrem demanded compensation after his image was used in a sponsor’s advertisements. It was a beer company, and Ephrem, who was a teetotaller, was incredibly offended that his image and reputation was being used to promote alcohol. His public insubordination was unbecoming of the image required and desired by the organization and he was quickly silenced through a banishing from the sport entirely. He now works illegally as a motorcycle cyclist to make ends meet for his family.

Current cyclists were acutely cognisant of stories such as Ephrem’s. This played greatly into the way current cyclists crafted and maintained the desired image of success. Cyclists understood that the current state of work conditions, salary, and current team structure came on the backs of many senior cyclists and the hardships they endured. When discussing their life histories from within the organization, senior cyclists frequently mentioned this, not in an aggrieved manner, but as a demonstration of their everyday evolution:

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70 While I was with the cyclists, first year Team Rwanda cyclists made no monthly salary. Since then, the cyclist meta-community has protested and salaries for all cyclists (including new cyclists) were increased modestly.

71 The practice or promotion of complete personal abstinence from alcoholic beverages.
In the beginning, it was a bad life, but it’s been slowly (getting) better. Training before this centre was bad. Sleeping in a small house. All cyclists, one house. We were 7 cyclists, 15 cyclists, one house. Sleeping on the floor, close together, it was not good. Imagine, when you start shower you get hot water for one person, by the third person you get cold because tank is very small. One chef for 20-25 people. That’s why Celestine [the chef] he left. He asked for more money because he was working so hard but they said no and got rid of him. She don’t like him, so she get him to leave. Now all the cyclists must wash the plates, do the laundry, many things.

(Félicien)

If you saw [us back then], I may say, when I was racing I was with coach always but I mean we were doing mixed jobs, we were racing, we were cleaning, fixing bikes making other things happen, you know? Foods, clothes, everything. To survive as a team. It was crazy. This now is very relaxing, because before we had to take care of ourselves and we had to help him [Jock], to see all this happen [pointing to around the mechanics shop].

(Tharcisse)

These guys [the new cyclists] think it’s always been this way [everything given to them]… it’s bad. Coach comes and gives to me nice salary, nice bike, nice shoes and that. He think that, ok, bike changed my life very quickly. For me 2006, no pocket money, no mechanic, nothing, 2007…same, 2008…same, 2009…same [laughing]. Which is why I respect many things, because I know it wasn’t easy to get where it [the team] is now, it has taken much time. I remember going to Morroc, South Africa, take…I don’t know how you call it in English, carton…you know what you do to put two bicycles inside [describing a bike box]. Then we had no box, we would put frame back, and then a tire back, and you make like a small protection with plastic so it don’t spoil [destroy] the bike. Small protection, no box. We would have small backpack and bicycle. We would ride from my home to Airport, then take the bike apart to go on plane. Jock would call us and tell us to come to airport and we would meet there, if flight was in the morning we would go early, take apart bike, and wait in the Airport for one, two, three hours…. Many bikes, no boxes. So for my mind, I know, I know everything, so I respect. New cyclists, they come … one year, two year, three years, no salary, that money from the federation…. no. No pocket money. (Aimable)

These understandings of respect and appreciation are driven into cyclists through the regimented and controlled environment in which they live. They are constantly reminded of where they came from and how far both they, and the organization, have come. This forces cyclists to accept the opportunities they receive without question. This results in established mechanisms and identity traits, which a cyclist ascertains in order to succeed in racing for Team Rwanda. Their ability to compartmentalize their lives becomes a mechanism identified by most successful cyclists on the team. Many young cyclists idolize and emulate senior cyclists who have been able to establish themselves as mainstays on the team –and within Rwandan cycling – through their physical success on the bicycle, and intuitiveness off it. Most notably Hassan, whose success as the only professional cyclist from Rwanda has garnered national celebration.

In having such accessible role models from similar backgrounds only cements young cyclists ambition. By doing so, commitments to family and community are forced aside (as much as possible) while training to permit for such skill adoption and knowledge absorption to take place. This often creates further tensions between cyclists’ life-worlds that are suppressed achieve the desired success – or image.
The saying “one hand feeds the other” is pertinent here. Cyclists who become physically strong at cycling and living within camp are then able to focus on navigating and defining their identity within their families and communities. If a cyclist struggled with one identity, the other would be affected. This is starkly real as they pass through the gates on Mondays. Their phones, which connect them to their realities outside of camp, and their dignities are put on hold as they assume an identity as cyclist, distinctively different than that of father, son, brother, or head of household.

**Weighing Options**

The cyclists selected for Team Rwanda possess skills and attitudes that are recognized and celebrated as mechanisms in fulfilling the desired image – and identity – of an elite Rwandan cyclist. In order to ensure their adherence to official forms of bodily movement, many riders discipline themselves through forms of weight maintenance and training regiments – through systems of corporeal management.

The organization, with its coaching, mentorship and routine, offers a refined system of attaining and adhering to the proper image through disciplining the body, mind, and spirit.

Body culture, as understood by Palmer (1996), is more than simply individual appearance, but is also bodily movement. Such movements are made apparent in the characteristics and behaviours of the cyclists. The most evident is the physical transformation and the dramatic change in diet required to become an elite cyclist. Rwandan cyclists, newcomers to elite cycling, described food and nutrition as the most dramatic change (and hurdle). Changing the traditional nutritional and eating habits of the cyclists is a key feature of the organization’s mission and is advocated for through staff discussions or taught in their daily English class, and is regulated and regimented in the kitchen through specific meal preparation, such as gardening. Cyclists described being fed clean healthy carbohydrates, protein, and fats with a variety of gardened vegetables that they are not used to such as lettuce, spinach, and kale. For example, a salad as we know it in North America, is not common in East African cooking. At the Center, the cyclists eat salad at least once a day. Soups are a staple of the Center, often with coconut milk and other foreign ingredients not common to Rwandan diets. Salt and sugars (staple in Rwandan culture) are minimized or eliminated altogether during training as they contribute to performance decline if taken in abundance. Corn, maize, potato and flour, also staples of Rwandan dishes, are eliminated or minimized due to the lack of nutritional content. They are replaced with lentils, beans, and oats (which are foreign and expensive). Lastly, milk, a cultural staple for Rwandans (and the
pride/livelihood\textsuperscript{72} of Tutsis), is eliminated during training due to its perceived lack of health contents. This is the discipline expected for success. Gilly (2006) explains that such bodily movements/changes are endorsed by a particular body culture such as professional cycling and, therefore, must be internalized in the intentionality of the individual (p.57). Leading up to races or competitions, some restrictions are lessened and cyclists are offered treats such as banana bread, popcorn, and peanut butter but there is always an expectation of moderation and discipline.

Adapting to this new diet is both a cultural and bodily transformation that involves a definite period of resistance and adjustment for a cyclist whose bodies and minds are not habituated and regimented to such a restrictive behaviour. Many of the more seasoned cyclists enjoyed the food provided at the Center and the nutritional guidance they received. Vianney describes that “before we would be eating small food. Local food but there was no power. Now here [at the Center] we have good foods and things are going up, up, up…” He directly relates his nutrition to his success on the bike. Other cyclists, many of them newer additions to the team, resent the restrictions of salt, milk, traditional breads, or meals that contain red meats or oils (palm oil was explicitly restricted) but understand that this is part of the process. Food is viewed by cyclists as an organizational method of control and was oftentimes challenged by cyclists who brought in foods from the outside, hoarded specific foods in their room, or negotiated with the chefs in Kinyarwanda. Cyclists justified this behaviour as they did not feel the food in the Center was sufficient or filling enough for them during heavy training periods.

Closely related to nutrition is the awareness of weight. When initiated onto the team, cyclists undergo a medical examination to set a base-line of data to track their physical progress as cyclist. Weight, height, body mass index (BMI), and skin folds are taken. For these indicators, other than height, the lower the number – weight, body fat, etc. – the better and more ideal one’s body is for racing. Hematocrit levels are also measured, which is a key indicator of the volume percentage of red blood cells in a person’s blood. Contrary to the latter indicators, hematocrit, in laymen’s terms, indicates that the higher the percentage the harder and longer a cyclist can go. Although measurements are done intermittently, weight is monitored daily with a scale positioned in the mess hall – in front of the food counter – so that cyclists can weigh themselves prior to a meal. During certain camps, their weights are often posted in the mess hall for the cyclists to see and compare. The lower the weight, the better. Staff and coaches often reprimand cyclists who are overweight and produce less than ideal power on the bike in front of others. They are restricted from particular foods or self-limit themselves to attain a particular desired weight. Fellow cyclists unofficially monitor their teammates’ numbers, creating competition through

\textsuperscript{72}Tutsi are mostly nomadic pastoralists with a long tradition of cow herding and milk being a central part of Tutsi culture.
comparison. Purposefully done, cyclists self-regulate throughout training and create an environment of shaming and praising. Personal eating habits are also joked about openly between teammates, abdominal skinfolds are pointed out, and cyclists who seem absurdly thin leave food – a social change induced by normative behaviour at the Center. This is especially ironic, considering the historically symbolic nature of weight as associated with wealth and success within East African cultures. In contrast, adulatory remarks were made to, and about, cyclists (by staff and fellow cyclists) who were looking particularly lean or “thin in the face” and scored well on both power/weight ratio and Functional Threshold Power (FTP) tests – arguably the numbers in cycling. A cyclist I stayed with was particularly proud of the fact that his cheekbones, for the first time since childhood, were defined on his face. A cyclist with low body fat, defined abdominals, or vascular legs would be praised for attaining a level of fitness associated with professional cycling. So engrained is this concern and competitiveness about their weight, staff members often remove the scale so that the cyclists feed themselves the proper amount of food based on hunger for training, rather than forgoing for the sake of lowering their personal numbers.

The importance of weight transcends camp and into their everyday life where social, economic, and cultural choices (e.g., to buy a scale or to eat better quality foods) are now made for the maintenance of image and betterment of performance. Most evident was in the cyclists’ homes. Where cyclists’ homes lacked running water, consistent electricity, and concrete floors, almost all of the homes had digital scales to monitor themselves. Many cyclists have tracking sheets where they write down their weight. A cyclist described how his weight, even when he was exhausted from racing the Tour of Rwanda, disturbed him: “I didn’t train for a week and my weight is 4 kilos more than before when I coming into training [camp]. I have to take care of my body if I am not at camp…I must train.” Cyclists described losing weight differently. Some indicated weight loss metaphorically, such as being 50 meters up the road from their opponent on a climb during a race, or beating someone in a sprint. Others described it as part of the process to demonstrate their dedication and power to the coaches; hoping that they would then be selected to race and travel overseas. Other cyclists simply saw the difference in weight as equating to winnings; with those winnings enabling them to provide for their families who greatly depend on their income as breadwinners. I concluded that, despite their different iterations of weight loss, cyclists understood their identities as directly related to their bodies. They understood what their bodies needed to maintain balance and slight differences in culture, preparation, eating habits, and manners, all played into their own unique interpretations of food culture for cyclists. Nonetheless, they all share a generalized understanding of its importance as fuel for success.
The purpose of this chapter was to show the ways sport for development, along with its culture, politics
and industry, creates what Foucault (1979) describes as disciplined bodies. Alike to Gill’s (2003) analysis
of dance education, the organization in Rwanda used cycling as a disciplinary power that through the
legitimization of highly specific athletic bodily movements trained participants to be docile subject. This
chapter was also intended to highlight an absent area of research in sport for development: an
exploration into the everyday rigors of professional cycling as a form of subjectivity. Detailing weight and
nutrition as mechanisms of cycling which cyclists must navigate further demonstrates the significant
power wielded by those in charge of that change. The intent is not to detract from the cyclists’ love of
sport and its potential utility in development, or the bicycle as a tool, but it is to understand how cycling
discourses and imagery in Rwanda, as well as the political economy of sport for development and its

techniques of corporeal management become marked on the individual cyclist’s body. I chose weight and
nutrition to exemplify the direct and complete physical, mental, social, and economic transformations a
cyclist must commit to and endure if he desires to remain a racer for Team Rwanda. Although there is a
degree of esthetic satisfaction expressed by the cyclist’s appearance and pride in their image, the vast
majority see the physical modifications for cycling as a method to attain, achieve, and prolong
opportunities within the highest ranks of the sport. Appearance and notoriety are residual effects of an
intensive commitment to their identity change and transformation into cyclists – images of Rwanda’s
contemporary development.

**Outside the Gates**

Many stark economic, cultural, and social realities to maintaining the image of a Team Rwanda cyclist
extended beyond the spatial boundaries of the Center. Economically, for example, the cost of making
“Center” food simply surpassed the financial means of the cyclists. Many cyclists expressed the difficult
financial strain put on them and their families to “eat better” while outside the Center. This cultural
divide was not only a fiscal burden but also a social one. Cyclists’ salaries were distributed widely to
family members, and not solely used for a cyclist’s nutritional consumption. Although many meals made
at the Center are cooked from local produce, they are prepared for western palettes and prepared with
expensive, western ingredients simply not affordable or realistically available for cyclists on the salaries
currently provided. Although their knowledge of nutrition is developed and elevated through
organizational guidance, maintaining such a diet is simply fiscally impossible. Culturally, many cyclists face
issues in the home where family members (such as wives) were a) unable/unwilling to learn to cook
Western-style food, and b) not keen to prepare and eat such meals. Staple meals in Rwanda are often
starch heavy (potatoes or rice) and contain significant amounts of sodium. In many instances cyclists
would cook their own meals separately or forced family members to eat “Center style” dishes. Other times family members cooked for themselves, preferring traditional dishes while cyclists declined eating them. Therefore, a cyclist’s prescribed nutrition created cultural and economic tension between cyclists and their families in the home, further complicating the image and behaviour a cyclist was to maintain.

Another prominent challenge facing cyclists was that of social and communal interpretations of a cyclist’s success and status within the community. Cyclists, current and past, as well as cyclists spoken to by Lewis (2013), detail the jealousy, financial strain, and cultural responsibilities levelled on the cyclists by simply being on ‘the team’, travelling, or by their success as Rwandan cyclists in Rwanda. This is where the images exploited by the government and organization have direct consequences on the cyclists’ everyday. Harassment by and of family members for money, goods, or employment was frequently discussed with their evolving status as racers for Team Rwanda. Aimable describes that as

The people they are looking at us and seeing our level going up, they [the Rwandan people] are getting jealous. Even our neighbors they are looking at us and they think that cyclists from Team Rwanda have big money, and even you coming to visit me, people think that “ahhh this big Busungu must be giving you something, big money, so give some to me.” This is my home, I know this is the story. People here they think that since I have money I should get people to do things here so I can give them money [housekeeping, grass cutting etc.]. It’s hard for my wife too because she is here and people are telling her to give them money “hey you give me money, I am hungry. These white people they give you money”. But you know how little money we get from the team and from coach. Think about Léon, the Rwandan people think he get $10,000 USD. After everything he get $500USD!!!! But that’s bad news for him in his home. They think we have so much money and people will ask for much of it. (Aimable)

This demonstrates how the rhetoric and imagery produced around the team are consumed and interpreted by Rwandans. Team Rwanda’s local publicity (radio, newspaper, rumours) centered on their achievements, and lacked information that described the realities of how the team operates. For example, these mythical narratives shaped by the media misconstrued the public’s understanding of how much the cyclists made financially. As a result, cyclists, and their families have endured torment from community members. Adrien, the team’s most accomplished cyclist, describes his everyday difficulties with living in the community as a Team Rwanda cyclist:

For me, it’s very difficult for cyclists to stay in Rwanda and do proper training because there’s a lot of problems with my family, and sometimes neighbours will come and say, ‘Adrien, I have problem, you have to help me…” … For me, when I come here [Rwanda], people think I’m rich, that I have a lot of money and that it’s [cycling] is easy. They ask me for money – 5,000 francs, 10,000 francs – or they say, ‘Hassan, you have lots of bikes. You must give me a bike. I want a tire; I want an inner tube.” He sighed a deep, world-weary sigh. “I have to give them, but actually it’s not easy to get money.” (Adrien in Lewis, 2013, p.220)
Adrien displays the internal struggle the cyclists face in adopting the image and identity of a Team Rwanda member. As projected Rwandan success stories, they were now culturally accountable to their families and communities in sharing said success. Yet, as we know, this imagery does not reflect the reality of the cyclists, like Daniel’s, whose salaries and winnings are modest, at best:

A greater concern to Daniel back then was that he was still not being paid to ride with Team Rwanda. He had a wife and young baby, and he was broke. He had been training with the team for more than a year by that point, and the money he had saved was disappearing. He had begun to think that maybe was better off with Emmanuel Mayaka’s Cine Elmay Team, when at least he could rely on a regular 5,000 francs each week. “Whatever we do is to raise our families,” Daniel said. “What’s the point of a lavish hotel if I came home empty-handed, facing my family with nothing? It doesn’t attract me. It was just some momentary pleasures.” … That was where the fear of flying story came from. He couldn’t face the humiliation of going on an airplane all the time anymore. “People in my village thought I was famous, and when I came back, I couldn’t even buy them a drink!...There has to be a cutoff point,” he said. “If I’d continued like that, digging into my savings, I’d be dead now.” (in Lewis, 2013, pp.192-194)

Financial debt was not uncommon for many cyclists. Late pay, or no pay at all (as explained by Daniel) forced cyclists to borrow from friends, vendors, and farmers so they could cover their expenses until next pay or a racing win. This put added pressure on the cyclist’s ability to perform, and conform to organizational norms.

This cultural continuity – the pressure felt to comply and conform – demanded of the cyclists from two dramatically different environs in which cyclists existed, created instances were cyclists needed to release tension:

As I was walking around Musanze trying out local shops and delicacies, honey, tea, fruits, breads, we ran into two cyclists at a local pastry shop eating little cakes furiously. These were TINY cakes. Once they saw me smiling at them, both looked incredibly nervous and shocked that I had caught them in the bakery. They were supposed to be getting hair cuts! As I ordered my own cakes and asked what they were eating (in the interest of having what they were eating) the boys slowly retreated behind us and walked out the shop. One of the boys then came back and asked if he could speak to me. Outside the shop the two boys looked distressed and tried to explain that they are sorry sorry sorry sorry and pleaded not to tell the camp staff. I laughed and told them that we didn’t care at all. They wouldn’t believe that I didn’t care…(Fieldnotes)

This interaction is relevant to demonstrating how a cyclist reverts to everyday life outside of cycling as a mechanism of reducing cycling-related burdens. Small pleasures – such as treating themselves to cake – are mechanisms internalized by cyclists as legitimate ways of balancing starkly different life worlds. Many cyclists described home life as a release of stress. “Staying in the village” or visiting and returning to “village life” involved starkly different degrees of autonomy, agency, and freedom, where cyclists – although now bearing roles of fathers, son, providers, and village leaders – were not faced with the same
degree of penetrating supervision and pressures faced during their time at the Center. Félicien explains how he balances these pressures through reflecting on his past and desired future:

*I know I have to take care of my body so that I don’t gain more weight but there is so much I can do. I will do this by training my body on the bike and resting. When I’m at home I eat my own foods. Sometimes potato, sometimes tea with milk. I enjoy milk tea with sugar because this is how we make it. When I was young we would spend time in the mountains with the cows. We eat only milk and potatoes every day. Sometimes I will take some tea and motorbike into the mountains and just walk. No train. Walk and sleep. I like quiet places. I ride so that I can come here and live here [in the mountains] again, like when I was young. This is where I am best. This is where I am myself.* (Félicien)

For Félicien, like all other cyclists, home life bore responsibilities, but they were lessened as their success on Team Rwanda developed.

Some cyclists sought release through actions that contradicted the image they assumed as Team Rwanda cyclists. In many cases, their notoriety and success permitted them the ability to engage in excesses, and violence, activities previously unavailable to them. Reciting some of the most extreme scenarios, a few cyclists drank, smoked (cigarettes and cannabis), were promiscuous, and/or partook in domestic abuse. Less damming actions such as eating red meat, fried breads, potatoes, and milk – culturally accepted habitual norms obtained outside the gates – and “infractions” at the Center, were employed as inadvertent ways for cyclists to regain a degree of agency, albeit brief, when at home, outside the Center’s gaze. Such actions highlighted the physical, mental and emotional pressures imposed upon cyclists during the process of professionalization.

**Chapter Conclusion**

In his book on French aid to Africa, Louvel (1994) articulates the overarching message of this chapter, that “common imagery [is] in certain ways a co-illusion synonymous with collusion” (p.21). This chapter exposes the intricate nature of such co-illusion – social change – through a sport based development organization within the dynamic post-conflict context of Rwanda. Through insightful and mature perspectives of the processes from within which they become involved and enveloped, the cyclists offered a glimpse into the contradictions and controversies facing their everyday life as participants of this sports organization. Like the deep inhales and exhales they exert on a challenging climb, the nature of their work is described through the ebbs and flows of life from within the insular Center walls and the exposed Rwandan roads. Through such description, the contracting nature of their social milieus are
unveiled, and the tactics used from within this peloton of Rwandan cyclists – this subcommunity – to wrest bits of freedom from a mutually-exploitative relationship are laid bare.

Consequently, collusion, as described by Louvel – and further deduced within the Rwandan context by Uvin (1998) – is both ideological, related to the organization’s foreigners’ need to create a place that requires their skillset and their presence; as well as political, related to the organization’s need to accommodate the ruling RPF party who, within this rapidly globalized world system based on sovereignty, is eager to (re)establish its image as one of progress, modernity, and peace. Yet, as described throughout this chapter, this type of collusion has proved difficult for its participants. Team Rwanda cyclists have willingly subjected themselves to this experiential segregation and separation of traditional culture for the potential to compete and earn on the world stage. This submersion into a westernized ideology of development for the benefit of athletic performance has undoubtedly shaped a group of disciplined, athletic, and determined bodies – but at what cost? My observations have determined that the organization’s, and in turn the state’s, focus is not squarely on the well-being and development of the program participants; rather, the priority is given to the image and athletic success at the cost of the cyclist’s collective development.

Thomson (2013) states that “people obey for one of three reasons: (1) because they believe in the values, norms, and standards by which a particular regime operates; (2) because they believe it is in their best material interest to do so; or (3) because they fear the coercive threats and sanctions they will face for non compliance” (p.189). In Rwanda, and for the cyclists, all three must apply. From within the constraints of government policies and organizational mandates, the cyclists have intuitively navigated their multiple roles and responsibilities while ascertaining a degree of balance in their everyday life. It is not ideal for cyclists, but it is better than the imagined alternative. As cyclists for Team Rwanda, they have achieved the pinnacle of Rwandan cycling. Through the development of a cycling identity, and the mechanisms required to race and be successful, they entered the gates of the Center with dreams of racing, winning, and providing for their families. To them racing is just another step in that direction. What they are largely unaware of when they first enter are the sacrifices, challenges, and changes that are required of them. Now, as established cyclists – *images of development* – they understand their position and power within this constellation of development. This knowledge has created a community of individuals who can now begin to negotiate and exploit this identity, not only within Rwanda’s tightly controlled setting, but globally to safeguard their relevance.
Chapter Five: Community through Racing

Introduction

Racing is a communal event. It serves as communion – a break from the everyday – and allows both cyclists and spectators to, albeit briefly, set aside the harsher realities of life and focus on an athletic pursuit. Segrave (2000) describes the social communion available in sports like cycling. It is compelling for both the cyclists and the spectators. Cyclists experience the emotional support and benefits of a team, as it delivers them from isolation and provides them with a “flight from loneliness…and the principle of individuation” (Segrave, 2000, p. 67). On the other hand, sport delivers spectators “from the shackles of the self to union with the corporate ego of the home team” (Heinegg, 1976, p. 155). This dual benefit to participant and spectator has been a tactic employed by governments, organizations, and businesses to assist disparate groups in (re)establishing contact, reducing and resolving conflict and building inter-community bridges globally (Sugden, 2006; Dyck, 2011; Schulenkorf et al., 2013). Rwanda and cycling are no different. With the Tour of Rwanda now a sanctioned professional race, cycling’s popularity has surpassed sports such as football and basketball, with over one million spectators on the roads of Rwanda in 2015 (Kamasa, 2015).

Sports for development organizations – such as the cycling organization in question – tend to materialize in communities which have undergone or experienced various forms of disadvantage and/or exclusion resulting from various social conflicts, natural disasters and war (Giulianotti, 2011). Kelly (1996) argues that beyond the need for shelter, food, and the survival needs of protection and nurture, humans also need freedom and community (p.68). This could be why, although freedom and community may appear to contradict, racing for Team Rwanda provides cyclists an opportunity to pursue these intrinsic human needs simultaneously through sport. The cyclists’ collective identities (as racers), extended social ties (beyond the home and onto the road), and a sense of common purpose (riding for a ‘better life’) create for them a “community of choice” (Brint, 2001) from which they are symbols of change and progress. This notion of community thus balances well with the degree of individual freedom experienced (and often desired) from being on a bicycle.

Chapter Three outlined the cultural complexities and historical context from which the cyclists’ occupational identities and mechanisms have been established. Insight into the initial moments of participants’ foray into cycling, and the various motivations and intentions leading one to cycle, are
outlined. In Chapter Four, a picture of contemporary development in Rwanda is painted through the perspectives of the structural processes from within which cyclists become involved and enveloped in as voluntary participants in development. The RPF’s policy of national unity and reconciliation in conjunction with the state’s enforcement mechanism, has created a superficial image of grassroots support that has shaped perception amongst Westerners and Rwandan elites that ordinary Rwandans believe in, and voluntarily comply with, the demands of that policy. Correspondingly, Team Rwanda participants mirror the superficial appearance of support and compliance required to survive and maintain status within this elite sport for development organization. My conclusions confirm my embodied hypothesis, that although participants in sport for development programs clasp the tangible benefits of participation, it is at a cost that is often incredibly difficult to measure socially, culturally, financially, and politically. Furthermore, with organizational direction and control formulated in the Global North by northern “experts,” wielding life-changing power for the cyclists I interviewed, the potential for new forms of dependency, rather than promoting sustainable community ownership of cycling in Rwanda, is created through this top-down model.

In doing so, communities – referring to places and spaces where solidarity, participation and coherence can be found (Taylor, 2011), as well as the importance of belonging as much as meaning (Delanty, 2010) – emerged as critical sites of investigation to comprehend the degrees of agency afforded and exploited by the cyclists in their roles as Team Rwanda cyclists. Exemplifying Giulianotti’s (2011) critical reflexive approach of sport for development – positioning local communities as the best equipped to identify their own needs, clarify the nature and sources of conflicts, and choose appropriate strategies and responses – this chapter details the complex notion of community, its various manifestations within my participants’ perspectives, and its importance in constructing thorough and mindful understandings of development contexts.

**Looking at Community Ethnographically**

The dialectic (not linear), dynamic (not rigid) understanding of my research process as an everyday ethnographer, gave me the freedom to embark on an embodied exploration into the phenomenological meanings – the symbolic construction – of cycling on the everyday lives of Rwandan youth. This was at the core of my analysis and drove my method and analysis forward. Yet, a major difference in my approach as a field researcher is my scope and how it demanded that I consider the influences and effects of larger transnational processes, and connections, to the local peoples, communities, and everyday life practices. Where “the model of ethnography in the old days trained us to look away from
the personal politics of the ethnographer and community, and the broader politics of community and the
world,” (Agar, 1996, p.7) my methodology drew its strength from a rejection of this understanding. Rather, I recognized the complexities (potentials/limitations) facing both myself, as the researcher, and participants, and the pressing need for a critical theory of society that combines historical, sociological, cultural, political, and economic analysis (Harms & Kellner, 1991, p. 43).

Through this embodied approach and through skeptical investigation that challenges convenient conceptual havens from which researchers can safely hang analysis, I developed expressions of community (Amit & Rapport, 2002). In simple terms, ‘stepping back,’ ‘looking around,’ and ‘engaging with’ these symbolic communities is the first step in a deeper analysis from outside a researcher’s immediate participants. Doing so allows a deconstruction of misconceptions and builds a deeper understanding of the everyday life of sport for development participants. From outside the gates of a Rwandan cycling academy, I began to unpack the various potential cultures and customs of the ‘outer community’ through this embodied practice of ethnography. From within these geographical spaces, I uncovered symbolic communities of meaning. This level of reflection is complex, as Delanty (2010) believes community “is as much an ideal to be achieved as a reality that concretely exists” (p.10). I therefore examine two communities that the cyclists permitted me intimate access and knowledge to: their local communities and the meta-community of Team Rwanda cyclists.

**Communities**

Schulenkorf (2012) describes functioning communities as networks of social relations marked by mutuality and emotional bonds amongst their members. In the case of Rwanda, the everyday life dynamics presented outside the Center were intimately complex; alike to its complexities as a landlocked post-conflict state whose cultural dynamics and innovative applications of reconciliation, development, and democracy have created significant transformations. From within these reimagined spaces, I required a degree of negotiation and resistance on behalf of myself and the new families and communities with whom I lived (Uvin, 1998). As charted throughout the previous chapters, Rwanda is not without deep historic divisions – ethnically, politically, and culturally – which required a degree of tact and understanding that emphasized respecting the various levels of community I was traversing. Bauman (2001) describes the (re)creation and (re)development of communities and identities as flexible and amendable processes; at the same time the creation of inclusive communities and common identities depends largely on the activity, creativity and will of different social actors. I therefore became intimately engaged in the everyday life of the families and communities I lived with to better understand the
mechanisms and wilfulness of community actors. From fetching water from the local well, to cooking dinner with the family matriarchs, to 4-hour church sessions and *Umuganda*,73 every day I experienced my participants’ lives and developed not only a much more thorough understanding of what communities are to Rwandans, but created a degree of trust, association, and respect not afforded to less rigorously personal methods. In doing so, I heeded Cohen’s (1985) advice:

> We try to understand ‘community’ by seeking to capture members’ experience of it. Instead of asking, ‘What does it look like to us? What are its theoretical implications?, we ask, ‘What does it appear to mean to its members?’ Rather than describing analytically the form of the structure from an external vantage point, we are attempting to penetrate the structure, to look outwards from its core. (p.20)

This building of understanding through respect comes not only from Blumer’s (1969) understanding of “intimate familiarity” through human lived experience “in action,” but also in the recognition of the conflicts and compromises (internal and external) that are made from within these lived spaces by the cyclists themselves. From within the villages, roads, gardens, kitchens, and homes of participants, the major hurdle was the familiarizing and negotiation of the various foreign symbols and objects present within these diverse communities. The participants, their families, and the communities I lived amongst had hierarchies, identities, and histories that were complex, and foreign to me as a western field researcher. Many stood starkly against the typical African ‘myth of community spirit’ understood and described by Jean-Pierre Oliver de Sardan (2005):

> Africa, seen from its villages, is supposed to be the continent where community is the order of the day, and consensus a general rule. The individual is believed to melt or dissolve into the community. This persistent and prevailing myth of ‘traditional community spirit’, which supposedly continues in today’s day and age, and on which, presumably, development actions can lean, is well illustrated. (p.73)

However, underneath the ideal of collective homogeny lies an arena for disconnected people battling for personal gain, status and opportunity. Berger (1988) states:

> the dark side of community is the eternal internal power struggle over always limited resources and over the authority to interpret the ultimately ambiguous, shared culture in a way that ensures optimal conformity and continuity of members… community actually hides the internal conflicts within each of these groups behind an implied rhetoric of shared culture (p. 326).

Engaging in the multiple spaces occupied by my participants, I was able to deconstruct the various

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73 A monthly community day in Rwanda on the last Saturday of each month. Translated as “coming together in common purpose to achieve an outcome,” Umuganda is an effort to reconstruct Rwanda and nurture a shared national identity through communal service.
meanings that the status of cycling signified within the broader communities inhabited by my participants. In living within Félicien’s village, for example, it was clear that cycling had elevated both his personal status and social mobility within the community, as well as the reputation of his community within Rwandan society more broadly:

[Walking with Félicien from his home through his community out to a small internally displaced persons camp at the far end of the village. I am commenting on all the greetings Félicien has received on our walk]

DM: Félicien, many people know you around here!

F: For me now, in Rwanda, many people because of cycling know me. They see me race, they hear my name on the radio. They are proud that I am from their village. We have many good cyclists from Shashwara, so many people fear us as cyclists. That’s why many people if I pass from Gesenyi to Kigali they call my name “Félicien! Félicien!” Rich people they know me and speak to me of my success. Small people [referring to poorer people], young guys on single-speed they know me and they need me to help them. They need me to help them with this and that, because they think this man [him] has money. Me I don’t like because before I started cycling I nothing they didn’t know me at all but now they ask.

F: But now Félicien come anything you need I will help I need.

DM: But you are not super rich.

F: Yes I’m not rich but because they know.

DM: You are like a celebrity here in Rwanda.

F: Yeah but the places I go rich people can’t go, like in the districts I can go and people make things I need very easily. Also, I can go where poor people can’t go, like the rich homes in Kigali to people who support us, or to see the President.

DM: So you are in the middle…

F: Yeah, like if my motorbike has some problem, in few minutes someone will repair it, no problem. If I need passport it will take me one week, but for others like my family, ones take very long, so I help them. This is because of cycling. That is why I can’t buy something like for 5000 francs and I see you don’t have anything to eat. I need to share with you. It’s my obligation.

Félicien’s observations provided insights into why cyclists are compelled to develop a collective cohesiveness amongst themselves, and how they exert individual agency within these collective spaces. The majority of the cyclists demonstrated profound understanding of the social positioning they occupied as images of development within their communities and the various cultural dilemmas that these positions may encounter. Another significant example was the financial importance of cycling to the participants.
I get money only from races. If you win, you get money. If I help a friend win I get small money. It is hard because you must decide, do I help a teammate or do I try and help only myself? Nowhere can we get money like minister’s [government salaries] money, coaches’ money [NGO salaries], so it is tough to decide what is more important. Win now, or help the team and continue. This makes cycling a hard job. Coach was very poor before and now he is rich, he got rich from us [his pay vs. their pay]…You race, you race, you race, we continue to make small money but we are tired and we think, “What are we doing?” If there is no money [in racing], nothing in my future, what will happen? If god gave me the chance to be here [racing]…that’s why I keep going, but I need to help my family, to help myself. We need a future to race towards. (Aimable)

Aimable’s apprehension is emblematic of many cyclists’ concerns. The social, cultural, and economic pressures imposed on Rwandan cyclists to become providers for their families from outside the cycling community directly affects the nature and behaviour, mechanisms, and identities of those within it. This complex, yet stagnant, process saw many of the organization’s participants hustle in their free time to pursue moneymaking opportunities that would yield them further security. Cyclists recurrently described various ways they sought to accumulate wealth outside of cycling as a means of reaffirming their (and their families) newly found status within the broader community. The purchasing of motorcycle-taxis’, land, and businesses are an indication of the cyclists’ cognizance of cycling’s capricious status within their everyday lives. Such activities confirmed cyclists’ understandings of their status as dichotomous – on one hand, as emblematic and envious images of Rwanda’s resurgence; on the other hand, as insecure employees, managing a volatile occupation while “hustling” to further provide social and economic stability through what Roitman (2006) describes as “work for the marginalised” (p.258). The consequence of such precarious employment for Rwandan cyclists was jealousy, tension, conflict and mistrust among residents. As detailed in Chapter 4, cyclists were often harassed for money or opportunities to make money; for example, Hassan explained how “[community members] would ask to cut my grass, paint my wall, or help with my garden. These are things I can do by myself. I have done these things my whole life. Now that I have some money, they want some small money because they think the Bazungus give me big money for racing.” In severe cases, cyclists’ family homes have been burglarized, family members poisoned (purportedly) and threatened with violence due to the cyclist’s notoriety. Within these termed communities opportunities such as participating within a development program created a chaotic environment for those who got the opportunity.

As a researcher, both the uncommon – the jealousy and threats – and the mundane – the washing of clothes, the cooking of a meal, or bathing rituals – often involve complex ideological norms. For example, in Rwanda, female members of the household will avoid holding eye contact during conversation, preferring to look downwards or away as a show of respect. Also, holding hands with
persons of the same sex while in public is a sign of friendship and respect, not homosexuality.\textsuperscript{74} While critically reflecting on norms I was unaccustomed to, I was able to unearth deeper understandings of hierarchy, responsibility, and self-sacrifice in discussing such community customs with sport for development participants. Furthermore, from within such rich sites of community understanding – outside of the sport for development organization – insights into aspects of culture and community were gained and deeper moral questions ultimately breeched. This questioning of cultural symbols,\textsuperscript{75} mindful challenges in front of community members, demonstrated tact and poise as a means of gaining respect and access to these life-worlds.

Studying these broader communities and contexts is a complex and multifaceted undertaking. One must understand that these communities do not have edges; they are parts of larger worlds and they change continuously – often in a struggle with forces well beyond their control. Yet if the objective is a nuanced understanding of our “cycling meta-community,” a confident understanding of its surrounding context is paramount.

The Cycling Meta-Community

As one becomes more in-tune with the local politics, social patterns and pace of life in a particular location such as Rwanda, the scope of consideration given to the more specialized areas of research can develop. In Rwanda, my methodological approach enabled the adoption of a form of outsider-insider identity and membership within spaces identified by the organization and locals as communities. This proved to provide a solid foundation to consider sport for development from within both the actual site of implementation and its effects upon participants in their everyday lives – post participation. I mirrored the cyclists’ daily routines and physical mobility between the space where they lived and the space where they became athletes and the recipients of development. This dual approach of a lived experience and participation within sport for development became far more intertwined and simultaneously relevant than initially envisaged. Caillois (1961) claims that play is a reflection of society and mirrors its

\textsuperscript{74} Homosexuality in Rwanda is still taboo, although it is the only East African country (Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya, Burundi, Eritrea, Tanzania, Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia) that does not make homosexuality illegal.

\textsuperscript{75} Two distinct examples of this to me are the genocide and the French language and culture. Although I never meant to broach the topic of the genocide with participants, Aimable brought it up after hearing me speak to an elderly woman seated in front of a local shop in his village. She enjoyed speaking French to me and I obliged. As we walked home he explained that the genocide was a separating piece of cultural life in Rwanda with the RPF government instituting English as the country’s other first language. People believed this was due to France and Belgium’s involvement in the colonizing of Rwandan territory and subsequent inaction during the years of violence prior and during the genocide.
nature, environment and culture. This came to be highly appropriate in the case of community and sport for development in Rwanda.

My routine of traveling and training was sustained for a number of months. Through this level of engagement, the reflection and interpretation processes began to construct a complex dual framework for the notion of community. This theorisation led me to consider community as a symbolic space of residence, as well as a construct through sport for development – in simple terms, a community within a community or meta-community (see Wagner, 1986).

Through participation and sustained social contact, the patterns and rules in which sport for development was internally organized and managed by the participants became clearer. Was it possible that the targeted marginal populations of sport for development were constructing their own communities in which they could self-govern and control? If so, was this reflective of the social and local structures outside of sport for development? This drove me to consider the notion and construction of community as a fluid and flexible entity that formed and evolved within specific spaces and aligned with development intervention, opportunity and sport.

**Team Rwanda: Community with Borders?**

In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson (2006) claims that communities are shaped by cognitive and symbolic structures that are underpinned by ‘lived’ spaces and immediate forms of social intimacy. By advancing this statement, I propose that multiple community-like structures are able to operate within a single space. This type of structure will be termed meta-communities (Wagner, 1986). Development interventions provide the opportunity, space and loose structure for these to form and operate but it is the participants who construct, self-govern, manage and organise this meta-community internally:

*Undereducated and without the ability to go to school – due to finances, or age, or disinterest – they decided to look back onto their bodies to find success and meaning in everyday life. Through cycling they were afforded a, albeit small, means of income. Showing pride and ability in this work, they applied their skills to dream bigger. The organization, federation, and the sport of cycling provided that “next level” for cyclists to aspire to yet it was the cyclists, as a collective community that made this possible. This materialized dream pushed this community of cyclists physically, mentally, and emotionally to transform, conform, and adhere to a new identity; that of a professional cyclist. Dressed in their prized lycra’s, they formed a community with rules of engagement and obligations that were meant to preserve the opportunities they understood as privileged. In East Africa, communication and community is key. The Rwandan cycling community has gradually evolved and understood its position within this development hierarchy that has evolved around their country’s recent troubled past, and their personal family tales of survival. They understand the opportunity they’ve been provided through the organization*
and the community of cyclists’ works together to maintain each other’s collective prosperity. They believe that if their community is not united, then there will be problems down the line. (Fieldnotes)

Victor Turner’s work on ritual processes provides an important theoretical framework to demonstrate the social construction of meta-communities through the participation of development through sport. Turner (1969) regards community as best understood through the term Communitas, which acknowledges a kind of social relationship that cannot be referred to in the sense of a fixed and spatially-specific grouping. Turner (1969) predominantly applies this concept to the social phase of liminality:

> the attributes of liminality or of liminal personae are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial. (p.95)

Arguably many who become the targets for post-conflict development interventions are experiencing some form of liminality. This common collective state of being marginal, vulnerable or socially disengaged lays the foundation for constructing an ‘anti-structure’ or meta-community within a ‘structure’ or community (Turner 1969).

**Creating Separation**

From the confines of the road, within the broader community space, the cyclists created a meta-community based on their social status as marginalised bicycle cyclists and their desire to turn a development programme into a self-governed activity. Through their participation in this sports organization, supported by international funders, faith-focused management, and a government fuelled on the reconciliatory image of Rwanda, they replicated the political and power structures demonstrated within the communities in which they lived.

This balance of self-interest, community, and prosperity draws connections to two notable theoretical paradigms. First, Allan Fiske’s (1992) rich ethnography of the Moose people in Burkina Faso animates findings that maintain people as fundamentally sociable and in general, prefer sharing to self-interest; duty and desire are not inherently opposed, rather they tend to coincide. His theory postulates that people construct complex and varied social forms – or communities – using combinations of four relational models – communal sharing, authority ranking, equality matching, and market pricing – according to diverse cultural rules. From this, most kinds of social interaction are generated. In the cyclists’ case, the meta-community was a network of informal interlocking cliques that worked
cohesively through an integrated system of primarily communal sharing and authority ranking to ensure the success and survival of its current and future members. Second, Michel de Certeau’s (1984, 1998) work on the practices of everyday life has allowed me to frame how sport for development participants, who traditionally have been seen as passive and guided by established rules, operate. For de Certeau, the importance of studying individuals is that they come from groups/communities, and groups/communities are always reducible to individual actions. The everyday practices of individuals, for de Certeau, are meant to be foregrounded and articulated as a means of better understanding meta-community culture as “systems of organizational combination” (p.xi). The purpose of the remainder of this chapter is to make these systems of operational combination explicit and demonstrate how practices of everyday life from within this cycling meta-community (re)invent themselves by poaching in countless ways on the property of others. In doing so, the construction of rules and organizational routines and freedom for personal expression from within this meta-community are made explicit.

**Communal Sharing**

Fiske (1992) describes communal sharing relationships as based on the conception of a bounded group of individuals who treat each other as all the same, “focusing on commonalities and disregarding distinct individual identities” (p.690). People in such relationships typically see a part of themselves in one another and there is a tendency to be relatively kind and altruistic to individuals from the same group. Within the cycling meta-community there was a clear distinction of acceptance and knowledge transfer once a cyclist was incorporated into the community. Cyclists within the meta-community thus saw value in communal development as part of both growing individual freedoms and a cyclist’s learning of meta-community customs and culture. When the propinquity of knowledge transfer was not close enough, senior cyclists understood the value and importance of nurturing and supporting one another for the overall benefit of the meta-community:

*In 2011, Gaston and Vianney come to me from my village to ride…[pause]…At that time I stayed with my uncle who had more money (in Kigali), not like Felix rich, but smaller and he has good heart to help us. He tells us Ephrem, Vianney, Gaston, Trésor and me to stay with him in Kigali to train so we get stronger. [We] stay there like two days, three days in the week. Now he lives in Zambia and he calls me asking about young cyclists. I have some friends from my village riding, so he also helps them for training, he gives them money for training and to buy food and water like that…they train single speed like us before. So like Vianney, he looked [at] me, and saw that I rode single speed and I have more experience. He is looking at me and he comes to me [to ride]. Many people saw us on the road and began asking me, began asking Martin, and Tharcisse, to bring them to test. If they do well coach gives them things to keep going, a bike, or shoes, something like that. You know guys like Jonathan or Eric, we saw them on the road they had power so I offered to begin training them, to prepare them for when they are on the team. (Aimable)*
I rode single speed for four years from 2001 and I stopped in 2004 and I went to another place called Wigicera to drive boats in the river and bringing people from the other side of the river to the other. The money was not so good and every month they would pay me 50,000fr, which is more than I would have made doing single-speed but I was not using my power. I was bored. Then I came back home and stayed there for 1 year doing no job, just living with mama and papa. It was a bad time because I was not doing anything.

In 2010, my friend Ephrem (a team cyclist) took me to a single-speed race in Kigali. I borrowed a bike, I went to the race, and finished second out of 70 something cyclists. It was a big field. So coach and the federation told Ephrem to tell me come to camp and do some tests. I went to camp and I won that test and the coach they give me Bianche bike [a road bike] and they told me to go back to get things like shoes, bike, helmet, all the things to ride a bicycle. Then we came back to the village where many people were excited to see me with a bike. After I got my bike coach told me to come back to my village and told him that since Aimable is your neighbor, he will train you because at that time Ephrem was in Swiss, like Léon is now for 5 months at UCI.

I trained with Aimable and I learned very quickly. We were eating good food because Aimable tell me it will give me good power. He told me about life as a cyclist with the team and things I should think about as a cyclist for Team Rwanda [like money, saving, sleep etc…]. Then I started racing for a cycling tour company here in Rwanda that helped naming new babies for Gorillas.76 It was a big part of the naming ceremony and we would make good money as there was many Basungus there. I finished 24th in the two day/three stage race when I raced it the first time. It’s like a small tour; many people come from Kenya, Ethiopia, and Algeria. It’s like a Tour of Rwanda but small small. For me, I was very happy for a job that I love. (Vianney)

Aimable and Vianney’s narratives are exemplary of the communal sharing established within these interlocking cliques of the cycling meta-community. Recruitment occurred overwhelmingly from friendships and family networks from the broader community – cyclists from the same ethnicity, village, or family – yet once made a member of Team Rwanda, the cyclist was given formal instruction on training, nutrition, behaviour, dress, and equipment from those within the meta-community. This indoctrination also introduced cyclists to the rules and structure of the meta-community and the way in which behaviour was regimented from within. Cyclists described a democracy by committee, with decision-making taking place through discussion and deliberation with all members of the meta-community. During my time with the cyclists, I was privy to a variety of decision-making conversations, although they were largely in Kinyarwanda and were translated by a cyclist. Responsibilities were also allocated to cyclists by committee, in a flexible, fluid manner depending on the jobs that needed doing, and a cyclist’s skill-set and availability to accomplish tasks. Tasks could be as diverse as helping pay for a fellow cyclist’s sister’s school fee, to helping them set up a Facebook account, to picking up a teammate in jail for public intoxication, or dealing with domestic abuse issues privately so the organization does not find out. These tasks would be done, unquestioningly, by cyclists with an understanding that what is for the good of their community, is good for them. Aimable states it explicitly when he says that, “For

76 Cycling was becoming integrated into many of the important tourist attractions in Rwanda with races organized around naming ceremonies of baby gorillas in the northwestern region of the country.
cyclists, team is team [the organization’s motto], but they [coach and staff] are not team, this we can never forget.” The perception of stability and unity among the cyclists is thus understood as paramount to their collective survival as a meta-community and their strength as individual cyclists. Therefore, to remain collectively in unison, cyclists share, embody, and believe their meta-community’s position vis-a-vis the organization and other forms of authoritative entities (e.g., FERWACY, foreign coaches and staff, donors). Subtle tactics are then used as a means of exerting agency within the space of the “other” as a means of intelligently realizing meta-community aims and/or decisions.

The tactic, as explained by de Certeau (1984), does not destroy or take over the entirety of that which it is entering. It claims no space for itself; rather, relying on time, "[it is] always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized 'on the wing'” (p.xix). For instance, Team Rwanda cyclists understood that maintaining the development and growth of local races—a critical piece of their success as developing cyclists—was important not only for the younger generation of Rwandan cyclists, but for their place within the cycling meta-community. Cyclists therefore pooled money together to host a series of local races, without organization or FERWACY approval, after the 2014 edition of the Tour of Rwanda. By creating and promoting opportunities, they were subverting FERWACY regulations, yet were developing youth cyclists and aiding in the growth and popularity of the sport following their historic win in front of their fellow Rwandans. Such tactics indirectly help secure their social status within the cycling meta-community, creating opportunities for themselves both immediately and in the future, once they can no longer race.

In uncovering such seemingly trivial strategies, actions, and procedures people use every day, I am able to consider the micro-politics of everyday tactics as a means of disrupting, for brief moments, the broader disciplining powers. Like de Certeau (1984), I was interested in the mechanisms employed by this particular cycling meta-community in resisting social norms (e.g., authoritative foreign NGOs) and weakening the strength of these institutions through forms of ‘anti-discipline.’ A major strategy that transcended the meta-community members is the use of silence. Although Rwandan demeanour is well-known as shy, quiet, and observant by East African standards, it was striking to be privy to an unpacking of the use of silence in relation to this cycling meta-community. Cyclists described silence as another mode of empowerment—agency—as a way to learn and understand those who are around them within the cycling culture. Cyclists described silence as action through inaction:

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77 Because the organization had established its elite cycling facility there was a notable decline in local racing with FERWACY citing a lack of funds.
78 Strategies require a subject (and enterprise or a city and so on) separated from an environment. They also require a ‘proper’ place from which to generate relations with an exterior (their competitors or clients and so on). Strategies lie behind political and economic rationality.
They [Center staff] want you to react when they scream and yell so they have a reason to be that way, a reason to be correct. But we stay silent. As a group [cyclist meta-community] we believe it is better to say nothing if you can and we can discuss together as a team. So you have to speak kindly [when they are yelling], calmly and if they scream you let them scream. When we arrived to Team Rwanda we were told to respect, so we do what they want. Many cyclists want to say things. But then we realized we were playing with [our] livelihood. And they know that there is no good work here in Rwanda at the moment so they do what they want, they make the rules. So if you don't agree, they hire someone else to ride…(Tharcisse)

Silence as a tactic was enforced between cyclists to establish agency for themselves individually and collectively as a whole. It was common knowledge that their position was privileged within Rwandan contemporary society so, as a community, they felt and understood how the misuse of their history, verbal abuse, and/or being taken advantage of from outside forces was penance for the potential betterment and gain to be had through cycling:

The bike, it started to change my life, it opened my mind. It gave me friends. It gave me money. God gives you chance, you have to follow the line you get because you get money, and you get the opportunity, so you can’t miss! You need to be smart. You know when I can get money, that’s why I can tell you that many people in my neighborhood they learn many things about me. So in 2012, after building the house and going to driving school to get more category [driving license], I think when I stop cycling I think “what am I gonna do”? I didn’t follow school, I followed the bike. Bike was using power, if I don’t have power what will I do? That’s why I respect my body…I respect the job even if they don’t respect me because they make life for me. [Now] I can buy potatoes, chapati goat meat, if no money, no future for my family or me. It [money] keeps my life going up. That’s why I am opening my mind on where to get money next. More money. I am telling you, Raffiki he makes $300 USD a month, that’s enough money in Rwanda. You spend $150 USD a month, put $150 USD in bank, after a year you would have almost 1 million Rwandan francs, imagine. Imagine, I don’t get even that much money and I have a good life. A better life than Tharcisse. Why do you think that? How do I have a better life? He goes and buys the ganja, beer, and girls. No money left but we can’t say anything to coach, he is brother [teammate] and we don’t want to upset [his opportunities with the team]. (Aimable)

In more impassioned cases, cyclists felt they used silence as a mechanism of agency towards outsiders, understanding the utility of one’s exploitation but retaining agency through this silencing of one’s true feelings towards the other:

They don’t know [describing Center staff and their understanding of the cyclists pasts], this is the thing I tell you. The Rwandan people, the hard situation we passed through like the genocide, bad things. It has made us to keep things in our mouths; bad things, hard things. One thing we learned is that you never show anyone that you are angry. It’s a culture of silence. This is why you see us quiet when they [Center staff] are upset with us. We never say a lot, but we remember. …The good thing is I know them and they will never know me. This is why I can’t show my reaction for the things they are saying. They used my history and now they don’t care about my life. How could someone say something like that? [Discussing how Rwandan cyclists were told not to help a former teammate during a competition or risk losing their job] (Hassan)

Unpacking the meta-community’s position in relation to contemporary Rwandan history, understandings of whiteness, foreign aid, and the realities of everyday life, uncovered a community of incredibly well-informed and savvy young men whose understandings of their position within a global development aid
framework enabled them to tailor identities in ways that are most beneficial for themselves, their families, and their meta-community. This communal identity transformation was cognisant and purposeful; not only for individual cyclists, but as a meta-community of cyclists who recognized their collective success was reliant – for better or for worse – on the image and identities created, permeated, and promoted through the organization and Rwanda’s cycling identity globally. As such, cyclists regulated themselves, between themselves, to maintain stability within the camp. Issues of disobedience or conflict were dealt with swiftly among the community of cyclists to avoid 'outside' interference or change. In doing so, they created for themselves a niche within one of the most elitist sports in the world.

This group of cyclists, who embody the traits and mechanisms of professional cyclists, are also cognizant of their position as tools within the bigger cog of an international sport for development organization. In understanding this position and doing so with poise and tact, the cyclists have developed mechanisms – their bodies, their bikes, their attitudes, their voices, their appearances and their silences – to provide the necessary platform to continue developing, evolving, and providing financial opportunities for those within its meta-community. Although it may be marvellous to travel by plane, stay in modern Western cities, dine with celebrities, and enjoy life-altering experiences, these are largely Western aspirations conceived and imposed upon the meta-community cyclists. Although appreciated, the cyclists have not conceived these benefits; rather, they tolerate them as passive ways of balancing identity attainment (professional cyclist) with financial stability (income earner) for their everyday life in Rwanda:

*When I was seven years old I saw what happened in genocide, I saw a lot of stuff, a lot of experiences I will never forget. But if I came back to Rwanda [to cycle], what am I going to be? If I came back, there wouldn't be anyone to give money to my mum, or the 500,000 or 600,000 francs – around $750 – to pay for school fees for one year for my niece. (Hassan in Lewis, 2003, p. 176)*

Most cyclists I spoke with would forgo such foreign experiences if they could continue providing for their families domestically. Their large, extended families surpassed in importance their desires for success on the bicycle. Being both an elite athlete and a symbolic image of reconciliation was often difficult to balance. For this reason, a meta-community with rules and knowledge sharing was a formidable instrument in guiding and nurturing a cyclist into his role as a Team Rwanda cyclist. Even the most physically-gifted young Rwandan cyclists cannot escape the realities of everyday life, no matter how much they may try. In Rwanda, this would require a complete severing of everyday life as they know it, and no cyclist I spent time with was devoid of responsibilities outside of the meta-community. Even Hassan, the most successful Rwandan cyclist in history, who lives abroad and is a role model to the
younger meta-community members, cannot escape everyday life. This is important knowledge for a Rwandan cyclist to share.

**Authority Ranking**

Authority ranking, as it sounds, is linear in nature. Relationships are based among individuals who are linearly ordered along some hierarchical social dimension with oftentimes benefits, prestige, and privileges offered to those higher in rank (Fiske, 1992, p.691). Yet, authority ranking, albeit sounding militant in nature, can be a subtle and respectful relationship between individuals within a community. Through observation and participation within the cycling meta-community, it was made clear that elite Rwandan cyclists are extremely tightknit. The unconditional commitment of its members is beautiful, rational and dynamic nature. Cyclists mimicked each other’s style. They would stay in the same rooms when traveling. They would get the same haircut and buy the same clothes. During my time with these cyclists, I found it difficult to interview or speak to them individually as they remained side-by-side. In living with the cyclists, I was able to experience both the impactful and subtle ways cyclists influenced each other’s everyday. Much of everyday life, in relation to the cycling, was directed at the meta-community. In doing so, all cyclists committed to the communal sharing of responsibilities of image maintenance, opportunity creation, and career contingency of the meta-community. This required cyclists to trust one another above anyone else: “If you need [to/a] win you have to work with the team; people have to work hard that's why when was the captain I would teach guys not to think about the coach. Because sometimes he is not inside the race, we must think together for us as a team, not as individuals” (Félicien).

Mead (1934) describes the formation of groups on the basis of emulation and identification with a leader or leaders. The cyclists who were able to navigate the uncertainties, successes, discipline, (in)difference, and opportunities of his career was seen as someone with respect for himself and the meta-community. This strategic leadership differed dramatically from traditional East African cultures whose age-based system offers little movement, advancement, or voice for those of a younger generation. My experiences in Uganda, Kenya and Ethiopia were indicative of this rigid hierarchy, where heads of

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79 Interview data and anecdotes from within my journal and fieldnotes pointed to this broadly mutual reciprocation of respect for other similar cycling communities and I was curious as to how other cycling communities perceived my Rwandan participants. As such, I visited clubs in Uganda to get an understanding of community, commitment, and cycling from a different East African perspective: I had come to visit a bunch of cyclists, a few whom I’d known for years but the majority were new, who had ridden competitively against the Rwandan cyclists in the early years. They had raced in the Tour of Rwanda many times and were trying to ‘get back in form’ for a local 3 day race here in the Eastern Ugandan
households and groupings of elders or advisors strictly dealt with issues of social standing, finances, and conflict. Within the Rwanda cycling meta-community leaders are established after, not by age, by for their knowledge, deportment and understanding of career mechanisms and contingencies within the elite cyclist community. Cyclists such as Hassan, whose seven-year success as a professional cyclist and one of seven Rwandan athletes at the London 2012 Olympics,80 provide valuable experience, knowledge and solutions to issues that arise within the meta-community. For instance, Tharcisse, a senior cyclist, describes the importance of coaching continuity for cyclists at the Center. The meta-community agreed that the influx in foreign coaches creates tremendous impediments to the cyclists’ progress as professionals, as well as issues of trust and language. Tharcisse explains that when coaches come and go, cyclists are left confused and unsure of where they are left with their training. Many cyclists feel they are then supposed to reject what was previously taught and adopt whatever philosophy the newest coach brings: “If we think you are here (uses his left hand to demonstrate a step) as a coach, then you leave, we must believe that the new coach is here (uses his right to show that he is better than the current coach). If we don’t believe him that he is better (whether its true or not) then we will not benefit. This is a problem” (Tharcisse). As a solution, cyclists from within the community have tactfully and clandestinely coached many of Rwanda’s top cyclists. With professional programs and philosophies from their experiences abroad – but with the added understandings of local customs, identities, and culture – cyclists have transformed themselves into coaches and mentors to solve an organizational problem without causing “problems”. Whenever it is possible to train without supervision, cyclists adhere to the instructions of their meta-community’s leader’s training plans. This internalization of major issues is a mechanism in which the cyclists have developed as a meta-community tactic, “making use of the use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers. It poaches in them. It creates surprises in them. It can be where it is least expected. It is a guileful ruse” (de Certeau, 1984, p.37). Rather than simply projecting the issue outward, the cyclists work and negotiate issues and situations from within in order to reduce tensions, resolve conflicts and maintain beneficial working conditions for all. This adaptation is the meta-community’s way of “keeping the respect,” while in turn “respecting our futures by continuing on” (Trésor).

80 He was flag bearer.
Understandings about money, family, business, and travel were often driven by experience and were seen as cultural currency within the cycling meta-community. What Mead describes as kind of dominance of leadership through force of personality, we can see played out in a coy and intelligent manner by a number of respected cyclists, characteristic of Rwandan culture. A rich example of such a cyclist, who demonstrates fiscal leadership through history, personality, dominance, and charismatic authority both on and off the bike, is Aimable:

N: David, when I get money, I don’t spend too much money, I try and save it. You know that’s why I need/want to be a good man. If you are a good man, your neighbor, your friends, many people trust you. They trust you because you are doing good things. You aren’t hitting your wife; you aren’t talking bad with other people you know. Many times you can go to meetings with your wife and they show you respect. Because even with a wife you need to plan together.

DM: Has it been the travelling and cycling that made you think about these things?

N: When I was young, after the genocide, I had a bad life and I had to take a chance to get money. I never had the chance to buy a nice phone and many, many, many things like iPad, cellphone etc.… they [the war] took my money and my home. I had to get my money through hard work. So when I was using single-speed…look at these guys [pointing to some single-speed cyclists collected on the road], I got no rest. They have to walk/work so they can make some money. Maybe they make like 100,000Rwf (in a year) but they need to use [the money]! So, before, when I was working single-speed in my village I saw many people, like soldiers who come with 500,000 Rwf or 300,000Rwf in like one week just drinking and eating, buying nice clothes and phones like that. And then after they never send any money back home, you know? The family is suffering with no money. No building houses like that, no car, no nothing. Now they have bad life and before they had a chance to make a better life. I know many people like this. That time with the single speed, they were drinking in the Center, spending their money on bad things and then ya, bad. And I think of me, if I have a chance I don’t spend that money because that money is from hard work. [when] I get the chance to make money for the first time, when I went from here to Nairobi. They give me $200 USD and I come here and I open an account and I put 70,000Rwf inside. I pay for the rented bike, I buy some food and some trousers and pillows that I have for 2006 and then I gave the rest to Mama to go buy things. We bought one goat, two chickens. It was good. Any time I say I need to build a bigger house, like Grégoire’s house [his brother, a fellow cyclist], then I say “Ok, when I have this house that’s great!” So I worked this job, I worked that job…. so when I make 10,000Rwf, I only spend 4,000-5,000Rwf then I put the rest away in the bank. Even today before we passed by the bank I went to check because my home has many problems. So what do you think I can do? I can’t go out to buy brochettes, to buy new shoes, buy beer etc.… this isn’t possible.

When I get money on my hands, I go straight to the bank, that’s why I have money to use to build a house and all those things. And in 2009, my uncle asked “how much money do you have I need to make a project for you.” So I trust him, I tell him I have 6 million in my account from 2006, then he say “wow, wow you are rich, I will make a project for you”. So I buy 7 motorbikes for 6 million on credit with the idea of paying him back later. And then after, my money is coming back b/c one motorbike I get 5-6 million for each one of the bikes. So in one year I make 1.65million francs in the first year. I have 7 people driving my motorbikes so I am making money there as well.

DM: How much are they charging a week?

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81 During my time in Rwanda many of the cyclists were spending a lot of their salaries on technologies such as phones and laptops to play movies and games. This was a source of concern to some older cyclists who were of the belief that doing such things was fiscally irresponsible.
N: Around 30-40,000 francs a week. So the idea is that if I have someone working on it for one year, then that motorbike is free. My uncle give me credit for one motorbike…every Monday when the people they give me the money I would go to the bank. If you don’t pay the money, we have a contract with the police and I can take it back.

DM: How much was your house?

N: My house was around 20-30 million francs for my house. I make, I make, I make, I make [money] and then I sell my bikes to buy my house. If you have like 2 million, I’m telling you this is good. Some cyclists they are doing the same. Félicien has a good future; he saved for 2 years and bought a motorbike. If he saves he will have 3 motorbikes in 1 year, then he can buy a car. In 2013 my house was almost finished, no paint, only small bedroom. I lived with my mom before, than I lived with my uncle in Kigali, then I came back here to stay in my house with Dusabe in my house. In 2013, no paint, no beds, you understand what I’m saying. Cycling did this. That’s why for me I respect cycling. Before I get money to build my house, you know my house, cycling bought that. That’s why I stay here. That’s why I don’t complain. Job is job. Team is team. Job is job.

Aimable’s description of finances and financial literacy demonstrates his understanding of everyday life and the privilege and agency one holds as a member of this cycling meta-community. Other team members repeated this story in various forms as a form of meta-community story telling – demonstrating their understanding of financial agency, created through their opportunities within sport for development, but also as a cautionary tale for younger cyclists. I believe that in providing their narratives to me as an insider/outsider, the cyclists were describing their understanding of the privilege and identity in becoming, and being a member of, the cycling meta-community. This narrative itself is a form of mentoring young cyclists and the symbolism of Aimable’s words manifested in the material possessions he was afforded through the sport of cycling: “David, Tour of Rwanda 2012 bought me my kitchen, this [pointing to his floor] was from Tour of Marroc last year, I raced mountain bike in South Africa for the gate of my property. That door is from Brazil…etc…” made it that much more palpable. His willingness to share historical knowledge of his experiences affords him respect within the ranks of the meta-community and broader society as someone of influence that understands how to translate athletic success into communal success. Aimable’s leadership most definitely allows him those privileges.

In contrast to such subtle or covert tactics, portrayals of cyclists with bravado and tact who could represent others with integrity, have garnered admiration and leadership approval. This exhibits the dynamic nature of this meta-community, where individual cyclists, depending on the crisis or situation at hand, can react and resolve issues. For example, Félicien recounted a significant dispute between himself and the organization on the issue of a bicycle gifted to him by a sponsor while racing abroad. The organization wanted to reclaim the bicycle for organizational use, while Félicien understood the bicycle to have been a personal gift. His bravado in standing up to the organization on this issue brought about significant changes in his identity as a leader within the meta-community, as well as structural changes to the way cyclists dealt and voiced opposition to organizational regulations:
I asked coach do you need my bike [the bicycle he was given by a sponsor] or do you need me? If you need my bike I will go away. I was very mad that they speak to me like this. Coach said “Félicien we don’t need your bike, we only need to take good care of it so that it doesn’t get broken.” I said okay, I will never let someone use my bike. It is mine and they cannot just take it. Garneau [the sponsor] gave it to me. I have to take my wheels also, they are Shimano, and they are mine. (Félicien)

Félicien’s understanding of the value of his body and his identity within the organization, paired with the established mechanisms developed as a professional cyclist under their development, gave him the confidence to stand up and protest his opposition to the organizational request. His recognition as a young, successful cyclist permitted him to stand up for himself and protest and advocate better work practices for the entire meta-community. This is significant. Emulation and identification of identity play huge factors within this cyclist meta-community. An event like this had reverberations for the meta-community as a whole.

The cyclists’ meta-community provided an opportunity for performance, the construction of rules and organizational routines, and the freedom for personal expression. This meta-community symbolized their shared marginal position in Rwandan society while demonstrating the collective ideals, identity and roles that they were capable of assuming. Cycling, provided through the sport for development organization, was the outlet and lens to deconstruct Rwandan cyclists and contextualise their culture, post-conflict social position, character and interpretation of the world around them. Turner (1974) claims that, “Communitas exists more in contrast than in active opposition to social structure, as an alternative and more ‘liberated’ way of being socially human, away both from being detached from social structure and also of a ‘distanced’ or ‘marginal’ person” (as cited in Harris & Park, 1983, p.154). For some, cycling and their position within the sport for development organization’s structure represented liberation and a space to claim. Such spaces were determined and maintained through the construction of complex and varied social forms, as described above. Tactics such as silence, mentorship, and knowledge transfer were mechanisms that allowed participants to divert time away from organizational requirements and reallocate it to activities that are "free, creative, and precisely not directed toward profit" (de Certeau, 1984, p.25). Everyday life within this meta-community is made up of such degrees of agency, tactics, and knowledge – what de Certeau (1984) appropriately defines as a 'hunter’s cunning' (p.xix).
Chapter Conclusion

This notion of dual communities within shared spaces suggests boundary, tension and opposition. Barthes (1969) proposed that community is aligned with boundary construction and suggests that communities are modelled by what separates people rather than what they have in common. Goffman’s theories of game play suggest tension reflects social alienation and identifies a player’s perception of discrepancy between the world one embraces and ‘the world one is obliged to dwell in’ (1961, pp.41-45). Turner (1969) aligns being marginal with experiencing liminality and this has a direct effect on the creation of symbolic groups, “Communitas breaks in through the interstices of structure, in liminality; at the edges of structure, in marginality; and from beneath structure, in inferiority” (p.128).

It can be argued that Rwandan participants of sport for development experienced a form of tension; this can be explained through their low social status, limited opportunities for economic mobility and the lack of personal agency over their own futures. Potentially then, sport for development highlighted this boundary and tension through their targeted approach to recruitment and the specific spaces they operate, either within established and locally-known communities or removed from their place of residence. Tension was observed through the pressure cyclists found themselves experiencing to perform and maintain their position on the team. Team Rwanda represents a sport for development program hoping to create economic mobility but is provided on the premise of performance. This also created a threat to the cyclist’s meta-community that provided much more than economic opportunity.

Whilst training with, or observing the cyclists, there were often moments of resistance to each other as they competed for power over one another to establish hierarchy amongst the group. In the various communities in which they lived, power and hierarchy was managed and negotiated on a daily basis, the team dynamics and organization was a clear reflection of this. The fear of experiencing social alienation amongst the group, as well as in everyday life, meant that performance, leadership and asserting dominance was part of the meta-community culture.

In conclusion, the symbolic nature of community can be found both in shared residential spaces known as communities and in meta-communities formed through sport for development. My methodology enabled observations and lived experiences in both of these socially-constructed entities. Development agendas and discourse strongly engage with the notion of community and facilitate conditions that aid the formation of participant groups whom collectively relate culturally and socially, and in terms of agency and power. I have seen such groups establish rules, governance, bonds and behaviour patterns that not only reflect outside norms, but demonstrate the challenges that marginal populations present to
development objectives. The claim here is that sport can create community and can be a powerful tool for researchers to consider wider socio-cultural and political environments. Moreover, sport for development funders and practitioners have the opportunity to develop their practices and learn from such rich ethnographic commentary.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

“I think the bicycle in Rwanda and in many African societies is a big thing, everyone knows about this. When I was growing up, if I wanted to go back to my village where I grew up I would save my money to buy or hire a bicycle. To us, it was a symbol of mobility, and status. But now [with Team Rwanda], to take it to the professional level, to take it to the global level and have acknowledgement on the international scene … there’s a major difference, a change [in scope]. We may have the potential [internationally] but to make it there, that’s a whole different thing. Where I took my bicycle to the village, we are taking it to the world.” (Matthew, reporter)

This dissertation has been a dialectic ethnographic tale, from the perspectives of the cyclists themselves, of the shifting meaning structures of cycling and the bicycle in post-conflict Rwanda. Through a chronicling of the bicycle from within the historical confines, cultural stratifications, and political divisions of Rwanda and its people, a symbolic incarnation from within the contemporary neoliberal moment is reached. The result of this dissertation, then, is a novel understanding of sports position and (in)efficacy within the social development of individuals and communities. Through an ethnographic endeavour that sought to observe, embody, and record the repetitious processes of everyday life, not merely haphazard customs or traditions, I uncovered underlying structures of community and agency previously unknown to the field of sport for development. The cyclists in my study do not simply consent to this incarnation of sport development; rather participants employ sport for particular purposes in ways organization do not imagine. Such tactile attuning to the conventional yielded fundamental understandings of how the modern Rwandan bicycle and its cyclists are illustrative of the transactionary nature of sport for development in particular, and international development more broadly. Moreover, through the normalization of this body culture I underscored the repurposing of the bicycle, through a sport for development organization, as a mechanism for, not simply, the development of its participants, but as a symbol of transformation and reconciliation of a violently divided, post-conflict nation.

While development practitioners such as Briggs and McArthur (2015) debate ‘international development’ as an outdated outlook and practice in light of the world’s concurrent forces of economic globalization, human hyper-connectivity and environmental degradation, a universalizing of societal challenges around the world has created remarkable examples of market opportunities and forces for social change being consistently generated inside countries that have been the beneficiaries of Western ‘generosity’. Pushing the boundaries of inquiry, this dissertation sought an alternate vantage point from which to observe the agential choices taken by sport for development participants themselves in
creating market opportunities and forces for social change through the sport of cycling. As I have
signposted throughout my chapters, participants (myself included) within Team Rwanda’s cycling
program have traded and entrusted their bodies, stories, and histories to outspoken, intentioned
foreigners with sport-specific knowledges, whose motives promise change. In turn, their [Rwandan
participants] bodies and minds have been trained, moulded, and marketed heavily through the media for
a global audience increasingly famished for altruistic, relatable, high-definition accounts of redemption
and achievement in exchange for contributions – in-kind and financial. Lastly, over time these
transformed bodies, full of individual potential and international visibility are coopted and now embraced
by an authoritarian, state-governed, nation that sees the strong and united bodies of the cyclists as
symbols worth backing on the world stage, and also in mobilizing national sentiments amongst its
citizens (as Whiston & Macintosh, 1993, p.1 have suggested in their analysis of sport).

To borrow from Lefebvre, who refers to spaces that are “lived” directly through their associated images
and symbols (1991, p.39), Rwanda’s use of its cyclists, their bicycles, and races such as the Tour of
Rwanda has signified a concerted shift in how Rwanda’s government and its populace want to see
themselves, both at home and on the world stage. Through an expansive contextual understanding of
the Rwandan government’s contemporary position within the global development constellation, this
dissertation allows us to trace the connections between the sport of cycling as a political and cultural
rallying point, and the co-illusion, or collusion required to maintain and perpetuate this established
position. The visibility of Rwanda through the organizational publicity – online, in print, and in movies –
as well as the cyclist’s success internationally, leads to useful support for those seeking to reinforce the
image of Rwanda’s contemporary global recovery. Moreover, sport for development advocates, in
particular, trade on the global nature and understanding of sport, making such images ever more potent.
Yet, such imagery and understanding detract attention from the overall lack of evidence-based theory.
They also evoke belief in the unproven assumption that sport is an appropriate tool in curing serious
social ills. Such images, whether a media photograph or a film for international broadcasters, do not
depict the realities of the cyclists I lived with. The images, as Collison (2015) points out, are not used
with the intention of proving impact, effect or sustainability; instead, they provide an emotional
justification rather than a questioning of sport’s true utility (p.281).

In considering the social relations and interactions detailed throughout this dissertation between various
development actors, the national and global shifts in capitalism, colonial relations, as well as the critical
traditions of organizing for social change, I have developed personalized understandings of how
participants within highly hierarchical structures manoeuvre and organize themselves, on the ground, in
a specific context and geo-historical processes. Such agential limitations and possibilities have been the glue that has bonded these processes of interdependence and cooperation, and has transformed the bodily practice of cycling within this East African country. Demonstrating this participant engagement with sport while pursuing personal social development is a significant contribution to sport for development literature.

Road cycling, to borrow from Jutel (2002) “embody a unique form of competition, one which sees individuals give away their own chances of victory in the interests of the collective goal” (p.203). In cycling, as in international development, the commitment to the organizational structure underpins the willingness of the participants to adhere to a format and process in which their bodies, images, and identities are coopted and employed by others. Gilley (2006) aptly discusses such underpinning – worth including in full form – on the ‘choice’ that has befallen many cyclists today:

It is in tactics where we can see the totalization of the cycling subject. That is, bodies are located within the cycling industry and subjected to activities that are oblique under the guise of fitness, victory, and heroism. Uncooperative bodies’ performances are relegated to illegitimate forms of cycling subjectivity. However, the bodily movements deemed illegitimate remain docile; for those bodies associated with the cycling industry continually fall under surveillance and discipline. As long as one attempts to reproduce the bodily movements of the contemporary cycling industry, they will continue to be judged in comparison to endorsed (normalized) forms of corporeality. (p.63)

In the case of Team Rwanda’s cyclists, much like Gilley’s conclusions, participants’ identities and bodies are bound up in the shared expectations, processes, and values established through a historicized process of development and professionalization of cycling in Rwanda. In confronting issues of occupational identity, of everyday processes, of belonging and of group legitimization, cyclists’ narratives proffer a window into a particular version of the everyday issues facing people in highly vulnerable, post-conflict communities. The strong ethic of honour, discipline and self-sacrifice present in the Rwandan cycling meta-community, for example, is not there necessarily because of the structurally hegemonic limitations imposed on cyclists, but rather because of a clear understanding of what is required of them to gain recognition in terms of both career advancement and social integration. Such agential formulation and modification of their occupational identity through various mechanisms of skill attainment and ideological commitment, bodily image and performance, demonstrates the cyclists’ innate understanding of their place within this fluid development hierarchy. This recognition, also, serves to initiate processes of change, mutual assistance, and career contingency as this interdependence is actively negotiated, resisted, and agreed upon by those involved, creating a highly symbiotic relationship. What is left bare is a process of mutual assistance, of interdependent cooperation – constitutive of the
sport of cycling itself – between all actors involved. Therefore, one of the foremost conclusions of this dissertation is that the sport for development organization in question did not gain the loyalty and teamwork of the cyclists, but “through inducements that transform the employment relationship into a productive interdependence” (Jutel, 2002, p.204) managed an association that included both coercion and cooperation. Nevertheless, through my relationship with Rwandan cyclists, I came to understand, like Uvin (1998), that the way international development – and sport for development as an extension – is defined and implemented, interacts with the reproduction of social differentiation, political exclusion, and cultural change, for better or for worse. Ultimately foreign development assistance – in particular sport for development – is not, and cannot be, a substitute for the presence of positive internal forces in favour of pluralism, moderation, and tolerance.

Contributions

This dissertation’s objective has not been to pass judgement, but to bring to light and demonstrate the realities of how sport for development processes from the ‘bottom-up’ are manifested, embodied, and internalized by those individuals and communities at the bottom of the hierarchy – the participants themselves. Concurrently corroborated career narratives of cyclists and their everyday lives exposed profound, mundane conclusions about what it means to be a participant within a sport for development program. Such insight, from the spaces, voices, and perspectives of the participants themselves, is a rare contribution to the sport for development literature. This dissertation, then, serves as a riposte to the trivializing of sport for development as a social space of everyday life and a remedy to the developing world’s social ills. It has modestly endeavoured from the outset to bring forth alternative vantage points of both the macro and micro politics of what it means to be a sport for development participant – a cyclist for Team Rwanda – in this contemporary moment. Whereas in the West there are many reasons people might ride a bicycle – for fitness, enjoyment, or self-improvement, or just to experience temporary discomfort in an otherwise comfortable, modern life – in Rwanda I was given, generally, the same reply: to provide for his family. When unmasked from the complex and muddled iterations of cyclists’ narratives through prolonged embedded ethnographic enquiry, such an ingenuous answer is novel, refreshing, and an important revelation. Therefore, Segrave’s (2000, p.61) portrayal of sport as a “symbolic refuge from the quotidian drudgery” – although a significant insight for sport for development and sports studies – was not the underlying perspective conveyed by the cyclists whose everyday life they shared with me. Although cyclists were unrelentingly committed to their craft, meta-community, and occupational identity, a far greater number described racing not as a ‘symbolic refuge,’ but as a specific mechanism (Becker, 1956) employed to elevate themselves and their families out of the
quotidian drudgery prevalent for the vast majority of Rwandans. For cyclists who identified racing as work, the cycling meta-community became the “community of choice” as it “provides a focus of interest and support unavailable to many people of communities defined purely by physical propinquity” (Brint, 2001, p.6). Echoing this sentiment, Hassan, one of Rwanda’s emblematic cycling heroes, affirms that: “[when I’m racing hard] I am in a lot of pain, but I think about my past, I think about my family. After this pain, I may get some money. It may change my life. The life of my family. This is how we [as a community of racers] must think. For us it is this.” The main contribution of this dissertation, then, has been to amplify the participant’s understandings of sport for development as a specific social space of their everyday lives.

This emplaced and embodied ethnography sought to answer some of the methodologically inchoate issues within the production of sport for development knowledge through the outlining of a useful framework that broadens the social boundaries of engagement, allows for culturally accurate observations, minimizes power divisions, and operates in multiple settings that extend beyond social and operational structures. It was such ethnographic strategies, explained in Chapter 2, which accommodated these multiple capacities for reflexivity that permitted me access to the orbit of social relations that my participants rarely disclose. Such cultural immersion served to highlight the multiple vantage points from which an ostensibly universally similar experience can be appreciated, interpreted and reflected on (Palmer, 1996, p.33). My reflexivity has produced a triangulated relationship that now includes the African cycling communities I engaged with, my role as an ethnographic researcher, and my position as a Canadian amateur cyclist. Unlike previous experiences of reintegration (from time abroad), the distinct perspectives of social life that I experienced as both a cyclist and ethnographer in Rwanda have been amplified by virtue of having now performed as both in two dramatically varied cultural climates. Similar to Palmer’s (1998) experiences in France, where “the legacy of [her] fieldwork proves inescapable” (p.37), I have not ceased to engage in cycling life upon my return home to Canada. Rather, I have continued to train, and began racing, with a local cycling club. Encouraged by Rwandan participants with whom I still communicate, these embodied performances, albeit back in Canada, have furthered my particular bodily understandings with respect to elements of identity alluded to by Rwandan cyclists. Cycling for me, like my participants, has become an all-encompassing reflexive exercise of MY everyday life. It offers me the corporeal capacity to recognize cycling’s universal characteristics, while acknowledging the starkly distinct ways that the sport is embodied, experienced, and employed by the various cycling sub community’s. It was only when I stepped back from the confines of the Rwandan cyclist’s subcultural mosaic that the flows of images, ambitions, and approaches were strikingly different.
Like my participants, I cannot ride or race without now situating my Canadian cycling experiences within the broader contemporary global moment.

While the focus of my dissertation has been primarily on the everyday culture of participants within this particular sport for development organization, it is important to reiterate that a participant’s ‘cycling life’ is just one dimension of a more general social world in which people go to work, go to school, and have families and non-cycling friends. The commodities, ideologies, and sentiments that are (re)produced and disseminated through sport for development programs like Team Rwanda – what originally brought me to this research site – highlight not only the range of specific subjectivities that exist across the globe, but also the agential utility, by participants, of the universal, apolitical, and mythopic understandings of sport for development programs within such complex and divided societies. As the extensive narrations of Chapter 4 demonstrate, the current stratified structures and processes from within which cyclists become involved and enveloped offer a view of the costs, controversies, and contradictions they encounter as participants of this particular sport for development organization. Rather than docile ‘development targets’ (Smillie, 1995), the sum of this dissertation portrays sport for development participants as thinking, reflective subjects whose exploitation of organizational disconnect is notable. Such disparity in identity and understanding between the organization – which is nearing a decade in Rwanda – and the realities of Rwandan cyclists should be, at a minimum, a cause for pause, but chiefly, a cause for concern.

In the same moment, Kagame’s authoritarian drive towards reconciliation and global modernity has established an environment largely of fear, subservience, surveillance and service in contemporary Rwanda. Local communities, unpacked in Chapter 5, have adapted to such covert subservience by establishing mechanisms, identities, and contingencies as a means to appease those in power, while growing individual freedoms from within the structures of everyday life. The cyclist’s active negotiation and reflexivity from within this increasingly problematized and globally interconnected cultural life is not only well documented throughout the chapters, but is highlighted in the formation and realization of a tight-knit meta-community. Through this meta-community cyclists allow themselves to compete and achieve the bodily movements required by those in power. They do this while not undermining the fragile social standing, reputation, and family commitments engrained within everyday Rwandan life. The entirety of this dissertation sought to present the dramatic processual complexities of ‘choice,’ or lack of choice, for participants in sport for development programs. In using their bodies, cyclists choose to subject themselves to the structures, ambitions, and processes of those in power, uncertain if such aims
align with personal aspirations. This dissertation, then, has contributed to an understanding of this exploration of ‘choice’ from within a sport for development organization.

As Uvin (1998) concludes in his seminal piece on development and the genocide, “in Rwanda [in 1994] there were many people, at all levels of society, who would have preferred harmony over hatred, increased popular participation over authoritarian government, peace over war. It is only when their voices are strengthened and organized, when their weight is felt in the political process, that sustainable changes will take place” (p.238). In closing this dissertation, the intent is not to detract from the love of cycling as developed by the cyclists, or of the bicycle as a historically fluid mechanism for change in a country mired in violence, but it is to understand how cycling discourses, much like development discourses, have similar historical trajectories and circulate in similar ways to other totalizing systems (Gilley, 2006). The system of sport for development and its techniques of mythopic imagery and corporeal management have ultimately become imprinted upon the cyclists themselves, their identities, and their everyday life. Such processes of change have transformed them from young, ambitious single-speed taxis into digitally formatted images of development and progress, coopted by powerful structural forces such as Kagame’s RPF government, while developing agency from a growing meta-community of cyclists. On the surface – masking the cultural realities/struggles – the cyclists’ everyday life seems almost idyllic, a “rise from the ashes” storyline, and underscores the fundamental theme present throughout this research: the ability for various cultural communities and individuals to co-exist within multiple world systems.

By beginning with Mussa’s Instagram photo and continuing with the visually narrative ethnographic dissertation, my intention was to display – visually and through narrative – the major disparities between the imagery imposed through a sport for development organization and the everyday lived experiences of such a program’s participants. I believe such visual and ethnographic knowledges provides us “a route into the more complex multisensoriality of the experiences, activities and events we might be investigating” (Pink, 2009, p.101). Through this ethnically guided ethnographic journey, I always attempted to remove the degrees of separation between the organizational imagery pushed to smartphones, computers, or movie screens and to provide an unscripted, unedited voice and visual representation of the cyclists themselves, with the cyclists themselves.

If there is genuine will for change, for deeper understandings of the messy cultural matters and complex sustainable solutions to concerns of development participants, then, like Uvin (1998), the voices of Team Rwandan cyclists need to be heard, understood, and internalized into the broader political processes,
orientations and operationalizations of sport for development organizations themselves. This would require a fundamental shift in cultural ideology, both in sport for development and Rwandan cycling. It would, ultimately, have to compel those from within Team Rwanda, to stop spinning and think: What are we racing for? Does sport matter?
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