A Hobby or a Job?:
A Multi-sited Examination of Gender and Labour Relations in Professional Women's Road Cycling

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Abstract

Women's road cycling is one of the oldest professional sports for women, yet current professional cyclists experience precarious labour conditions that relate to sexism, and lack of respect, recognition, and inclusion. Issues and challenges for women cyclists are often overshadowed by the sport's much-celebrated progress of professionalism, for example, their inclusion in elite men's races and a mandated minimum wage. My research questions are about how professional women cyclists and their labour are shaped and constrained by gender relations. This feminist ethnography includes two and a half years of fieldwork. The collected data consists of fieldnotes of participation in the local Melbourne, Australia road racing scene, and seven months of observations at the highest level of competition in elite road cycling in Europe – the Women's World Tour. The voices of 15 elite and professional cyclists are included via the presentation of interview data. This data forms the backbone of this explicitly feminist study on professional women cyclists' lived experiences. The methods and analysis were shaped by critical feminist theory and Raewyn Connell's (1987, 2021) social constructionist gender framework. My findings show how the power of gender relations in the different sites of women's cycling socialises women into a dominant masculine structure and culture that leads to the internalisation of socio-cultural norms that reinforce the current gender order. Women's participation – even their progress in professional cycling – does not challenge the superior position of men in the field of cycling. This thesis explores the gender regimes of local and professional road cycling, women cyclists' construction of labour, their suffering in the sport, and progress narratives that dominate the field. While resistance agency of women is also identified, gender and labour relations continue to be dominated by masculinity which constrains the impact of such practices. This research offers in-depth analysis of complex gender and labour relations that underlie the socio-cultural conditions that professional women cyclists are constantly exposed to.

Declaration of Authenticity

I, Suzanne Elize Ryder, declare that the PhD thesis entitled, A Hobby or a Job? A Multi-sited Examination of Gender and Labour Relations in Professional Women's Road Cycling, is no more than 100,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

I have conducted my research in alignment with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and Victoria University's Higher Degree by Research Policy and Procedures.

Signature: Date:

Acknowledgements

Before 2016, I had never heard of the term ‘PhD’ or that someone could be a ‘Doctor of Philosophy’. I come from a working-now-comfortably-middle-class family who encouraged me to do well in school and continue into tertiary education. A doctorate was on no-one’s periphery. Because of my supportive and encouraging family, I graduated from two universities: first the Hogeschool van Amsterdam and later University Utrecht. I was the first person in my family to earn a master’s degree. While studying in these programs, I met wonderful and supportive people who showed me the opportunities of different pathways. During my bachelor’s, I had not considered a master’s program, until my dear friend Jora Broerse and several faculty members introduced me to what could be. During my master’s, I had no clue about the academic opportunities beyond that, until a supervisor and a teacher planted a seed to do a PhD project and explore more of my potential. I am forever grateful to these people for guiding me into a path that was beyond my perspective, and I want to acknowledge that this thesis would not exist without them.

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While I have done research on and written over 80.000 words about gender and labour relations in professional women's road cycling, I acknowledge that this achievement is a product of all the support, privilege, and love I have and receive.

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Glossary

Term	Definition
Break away	Sole rider or group of riders that accelerate from the peloton and are 'breaking away' from the main group of riders to create a lead.
Bunch	A group of cyclists riding together. In recreational cycling, a bunch is usually a group of cyclists that organised to ride and/or train together. In competitive cycling, the bunch is the main group of cyclists in a race. Also known as the peloton.
Broom wagon	Last vehicle in the convoy that picks up riders who are too far behind.
Chamois	Padding inside cycling shorts to mitigate pressure on the genital area.
Club team	Usually a local team. These teams mainly aim to develop riders and function as a way for cyclists to gain experience in riding in and for a team.
Commissaire	An official during a race, comparative to an umpire or referee in other sports. The role includes supervising pre- and post-race formalities, briefing riders and race officials, checking compliance of equipment, monitoring compliance with the rules and maintaining safety during racing, resolving disputes and judging results.
Convoy	Line of team and jury cars behind the peloton.
CPA (Women)	Cyclists Professionnels Associés or International Riders Association. An international non-profit association of active pro riders. The women's side was launched in 2017.
Criterium	Mass-start race covering numerous laps of a course that is normally about one or two kilometres
Cyclo-cross	A discipline of cycling where riders run through sand and lift their bikes to run over obstacles.
Director Sportif (DS)	Or sports director in English. This is the person who leads or manages the team during a race. The DS usually sits in the car following the peloton during a race, talks to the riders over the radio and hands out bottles and energy gels.
Dropped (*being dropped*)	Not able to keep up with the peloton or bunch anymore. The dropped rider is not able to stay with the main group of riders and is left behind.
Entryboss	Software used in many Australian states and territories to sign up for bicycle racing events.
Grand Tour	A three-week stage race. There are three: Tour de France, Vuelta Espana, and Giro d'Italia. These are old races that are the pinnacles of professional road cycling.
Groupetto	A group of cyclists dropped from the peloton.
Handicap race	Racers grouped into similar abilities prior to the race. All participants are let off in their respective groups onto the same course at different intervals. The slowest group will start first and the fastest group will start last.

Kermesse	A race with a set distance or number of laps on a circuit.
National Road Series (NRS)	The national competition of road cycling in Australia organised by Cycling Australia (AUScycling).
Peloton	At the start of the race, all riders bunched together are referred to as the peloton. Once the race is underway, and riders either break away or get dropped, the main group of riders are then called the peloton. Also called a bunch or the pack.
Protected rider	Also known as team leader or the captain of the team
Rolling turns	Riders smoothly rotate through riders taking turns at the front. The rider at the front will not be there for more than a few seconds before the next rider smoothly rolls through and pulls off in front of the rider they just passed. Once the rider rolling through pulls in front of the lead rider, they become the lead rider and should back off the pace slightly so that the next rider pulling through can come around.
Soigneur	Someone who gives massages, hands out water bottles and food during the race and other assistance to the team.
Tacx	A brand name for bicycle trainer or rollers. This is stationary equipment for riders to place their bikes on and warm-up or do indoor training.
Team leader	The protected rider in a team during a race. Teammates will help this rider to victory by protecting her from the wind or performing other team tactics.
The Cyclists' Alliance	Women's cyclists union.
Time trial	A discipline in cycling where the cyclist races against the clock.
Tour de France	Cycling event that is an annual men's stage race, consisting of 21 stages, mainly races in France. Most argue it is the biggest and most prestige race in (men's) road cycling.
UCI	Union Cycliste Internationale. The international governing body of cycling.
UCI teams	Short for Continental and World Tour teams.
UCI Women's Continental teams	These teams are registered with their national federation and have less obligations compared to WWT teams. The teams comprise between eight and 16 riders.
UCI Women's World Teams	These teams comprise between nine and 16 riders. Their license is appointed by the License Commission of the UCI and teams need to go through the license process every season. The license is awarded based on sporting, ethical, financial and administrative criteria. There is a maximum of 15 WWT teams, but in 2021 there were only nine. These teams need to be invited to WWT races and need to pay their riders a minimum salary and other benefits.
World Tour	The highest men's elite competition.
Women's World Tour (WWT)	The women's elite competition consisting of 23 races a season. Riders earn points and at the end of the season, the rider with the most points is the WWT champion, winning the purple jersey.

Chapter 1 – Professional Women's Cycling is a Feminist Issue

Professional women's road cycling is a sport in which even the most accomplished athletes go without claiming the status of full-time professional. Marianne Vos is one of the most decorated cyclists of all-time. She is the winner of conceivably every professional race, and she has put multiple national, European, world, and Olympic titles to her name. Yet, this champion describes herself as a 'fulltime-hobby-cyclist' instead of a professional cyclist (Vos, n.d.).

Figure 1.1 - 'Fulltime-hobby-cyclist'

When even such a successful athlete considers her full-time occupation as a hobby, the labour conditions in the professional sport demand questioning. The questioning of the conditions in professional women's road cycling is especially relevant because, while Vos is known to make a decent living from her 'hobby' (she was able to build her own house), most women cyclists deliver their labour un- or barely paid. Besides this lack of pay, professional women cyclists struggle with financial exploitation, sexual harassment and abuse, and a lack of respect, recognition, legitimisation, money, support, and social mobility.

This thesis explores under what conditions professional women cyclists have to perform. These conditions include societal norms (gender, sexism, labour), sport norms (masculinity, competition, sport-media-commercial nexus), and cycling culture and practices. In this chapter, I introduce gendered struggles of professional women cyclists as my research problem, and I demonstrate that professional women's road cycling is indeed a feminist issue. After this explanation, I state the aims and scope of my research. I conclude the introduction with an explanation of the structure of the thesis with an overview of main chapters and the particular feminist writing style adopted.

Women's cycling is a feminist issue

Feminist issues can be considered as very broad, such as poverty, gun violence, health care, career advancement, financial and economic opportunities, body hair, and name changes (Kendall, 2020). Historically and culturally, there is a feminist discourse around the bicycle as a 'freedom machine' for women. In the 1800's, the bicycle allowed women to easily leave

their private spaces and go out in public to socialise with others; women used the bicycle to rally together for political means, and riding a bicycle became an acceptable form of exercise for women (McLachlan, 2016). Furthermore, women used bicycles to test their physical limits as they participated in endurances events, distance contests, and some even cycled around the world (McLachlan, 2016). However, the enabling and empowering factor of the bicycle was limited and obstructed when it came to this competitive approach to riding bikes, and after the initial bicycle craze for both women and men, cycling as a competitive sport became to be the realm of men.

Women's sport has been analysed and studied from feminist perspectives for many decades. Feminist topics in women's sport include, but are not limited to, body image problems and eating disorders (Neves et al., 2017), objectification of women's sporting bodies in the media (Fink, 2015; Godoy-Pressland, 2015), emphasised femininity (Halbert, 1997; Krane, 2001; Krane, Choi, Baird, Aimar, & Kauer, 2004), under-representation of women in sport leadership (Burton, 2015), sexual harassment and abuse (Fasting, Brackenridge, & Sundgot-Borgen, 2003; Fasting, Brackenridge, & Walseth, 2002), and lack of publicity and sponsorship (Parris, Troilo, Bouchet, & Peachey, 2014), working conditions (Culvin, 2019), gratitude and positivity (Pavlidis, 2020), sport labour migration (Agergaard & Ronglan, 2015), and progress narratives (Bowes, Lomax, & Piasecki, 2021; McLachlan, 2019).

Professional women's cycling signals similar issues, problems, and questions. In recent years, journalists and women's cycling advocates have been asking: how do we make women's cycling better? How can women's cycling become more professional? How do we stop abuse by men in powerful positions? How can women in professional cycling become economically and financially sustainable? The precarious and dire conditions of women cyclists remained under the radar while their increased inclusion and visibility was celebrated (i.e. more women's events organised by historically men-only races and more TV coverage). Year after year, women's cycling experienced 'watershed' moments (Treloar, 2019). However, media stories and official reports sporadically reported on the misconduct within the sport. In 2015, the Cycling Independent Reform Commission (CIRC) published a report to the international federation of cycling (UCI) on admittedly doping in cycling. The Commission had too little time to examine all cycling disciplines, but in their 228-page document, the Commission disclosed the following 83 words on women's road cycling:

> The Commission was told that women's cycling had been poorly supported in past years and was given examples where riders in the sport had been

> exploited financially and even allegedly sexually. The Commission was told that the managers were often from male cycling, and were not of a quality to get a job in men's road cycling, and that glaring opportunities to recognise women's cycling for its potential were tainted by a male-dominated sport that failed to realise the potential of women's cycling (CIRC, 2015, p. 70).

It is unclear if the UCI followed up with further investigation. In the meantime, former and current riders have spoken out about sexual abuse (O'Donnell, 2017; Rook, 2016; Shilton, 2017), harassment (Frattini, 2020a), sexism (Rook, 2017), bullying and fat shaming (O'Shea & Frattini, 2018), poor managing of teams and races (Maxwell & Harris, 2018; Merkens, 2018), eating disorders (Weaver, 2020b), loss of contracts over pregnancy (Pidd, 2018; The Cyclists' Alliance, 2018), lack of pay (Weaver, 2020a), and more. In 2021, the UCI banned two different team managers from the sport for three years for sexual misconduct and harassment (UCI, 2021a, 2021b). The Dutch cycling federation (KNWU) commissioned internal research about abuse in the sport and found that unwanted behaviour is prevalent, especially among elite cyclists and women (van Wijk, van Esseveldt, Hardeman, & Olfers, 2018). British Cycling, the national federation in the United Kingdom, agreed that there had been gendered discrimination levelled towards a female athlete (Ingle, 2017; Watson & Scraton, 2017). Teams suddenly fold despite sponsor contracts for several years (Pretot, 2020) leaving riders without a team and contract. At times, riders desperately looking for a new contract are victims of fraudulent teams and management (The Cyclists' Alliance, 2020a, p. 7), while highly successful and wealthy men's teams refuse to start a women's team (Fotheringham, 2021). Prize money in professional cycling is a contested topic, as women notoriously are awarded fractions of men's prizes (Falkingham & Oxley, 2021). Cyclists barely earn enough money from their 'professional' cycling labour, and the percentage of riders making no salary has increased from 17% in 2018 to 25% in 2020 (The Cyclists' Alliance, 2020). When there is no money to earn, is professional women's road cycling a hobby or a job?

The abovementioned misconduct in women's cycling cannot be explained nor justified by a mere biological difference between female and male cyclists. The sport is heavily male dominated. While none of the many different stakeholders (i.e. teams, sponsors, federations, race organisers, different unions and media) have decisive power in the field of road cycling, the commonality between these organisations is that they are dominated by men. Despite being a sport for women athletes, professional women's cycling remains overwhelmingly a

space for men. This male dominance in combination with current postfeminist and neoliberal times leads to a hegemonic masculine discourse in which road cycling is synonymous with men's road cycling. It is safe to assume that most people are familiar with the Tour de France. Most people who are unfamiliar with professional cycling will not realise that this annual bike race, the pinnacle of road racing, is only for men.[1] Women are not only held back by the exclusionary power move by the ASO (organisers of Tour de France), but the sport faces more restrictions from 'within'. The UCI has been accused of sexism in many instances (Batty, 2018; Bertine, 2019, 2021; Cooke, 2014), and the organisational body mandates regulations that construct women as inferior (Lucas, 2012). The lack of decisive power to change the outdated formats of racing and add long stage races to the racing calendar even led a frustrated fan to design a Grand Tour for women in the United Kingdom (Frattini, 2020b).

Competitive Australian cycling

The main context of this study is professional women's road cycling with a focus on Australian cycling and cyclists. My geographical location in Australia and my ties to Victoria University largely explain this consideration. In addition, elite and professional road cycling predominantly takes place on the European continent, which makes being an elite cyclist considerably more challenging for Australian cyclists. Before riders make it to the European competition, they go through the Australian competitive road cycling pipeline. Road cycling is considered a small sport in Australia. In 2019, pre-pandemic, 14,458 people had a racing license with Cycling Australia (CA, national cycling federation), considering them as competitive cyclists. 2,295 of these licenses were held by women (15.9%). In comparison, Australian Rules Football had 1,057,572 registered club memberships in 2019, with 14,006 memberships (1.3%) held by women (AFL, 2019) and Rugby Australia reported 85,059 club memberships for rugby fifteens, of which 7,058 were women (8.3%) (Rugby AU, 2019). The different competition options for competitive cyclists include club racing, local racing, regional/state racing and national racing. The highest national competition is the National Road Series (NRS) which is organised by the national federation. The number of events in the series varies, live streams are limited, and TV coverage is even less. Before COVID-19 sent the country into lockdowns, Australia hosted four UCI accredited races (Tour Down Under, Cadel Evans Great Ocean Road Race, Race Torquay, and Herald Sun Tour), of which

[1] A new eight-day Tour des Femmes avec Zwift organised by ASO is confirmed for 2022.

one (Cadel Evans) is of WorldTour status, the highest international competition. During the 2019 season, there were 43 UCI women's teams registered on procyclingstats.com, a renowned statistical website about elite and professional road cycling. Of these 43 teams, eight were Italian, six were American, five were Dutch and one was Australian. Commutatively, the teams accounted for 527 riders of which 15 were Australian. In comparison, there were 62 Dutch riders. In 2021, there were 11 Australian women and 31 men registered as professional cyclists in the WorldTour.

Structure of the study

This thesis explores the conditions of professional women's cycling by examining gender and labour relations. With this examination, I explore societal norms (gender, sexism, labour), sport norms (masculinity, competition, sport-media-commercial nexus), and cycling culture and practices. Notably, while men's cycling might have troublesome labour conditions as well (van Reeth & Larson, 2016), I argue that women face gendered struggles that uniquely shape their labour conditions in the field of professional road cycling. This study did not set out to compare women's cycling to men's. However, women's cycling obviously does not exist in a vacuum, and to understand the sport, I make connections to men's cycling. This consideration is especially important since men's cycling and the cycling industry more broadly suffer from a dominant masculine culture that is misogynistic and sexist (see for example Clemitson, 2019; Gutowsky, 2019; Kelner, 2018; Kosecki, 2016). To analyse the culture, structure, and lived experiences in professional women's road cycling, I adopt a critical feminist stance. Feminist work has helped to challenge and change everyday sexist culture in elite sport (Mansfield, Wheaton, Caudwell, & Watson, 2017).

Aim and scope

The aim of this feminist study is to listen to and amplify women's voices in cycling, and create a deeper understanding of gender and labour relations in professional women's road cycling as underlying gender inequality in professional cycling. The nine chapters of this thesis intend to fulfil that aim by answering the following main research questions and several associated sub questions:

- How are women's lived experiences shaped by cultural and structural settings related to gender and labour relations in professional women's road cycling?
    - What are the conditions that women are exposed to in road cycling?

- What does labour of professional women road cyclists look like and how is their labour gendered?
- To what extent do cyclists justify or resist their conditions?
- What possibilities for transformation in cycling and women's sport more broadly can be formulated?

To explore the gendered nature and trajectory of professional women cyclists' careers, I conducted a feminist ethnographic study in the world of road racing. I participated, observed and interviewed in the field to gather empirical data. To support my analysis of professional women's road cycling, I used feminist theory and, in particular, Raewyn Connell's (1987, 2021) gender framework to answer my research questions. While analysing and discussing professional women's cycling in general, Australian women and the Australian cycling context were the main foci of this study. Therefore, the scope of the research includes the local, regional, and national Australian road cycling scene, and the international road cycling field in Europe.

Contribution

As many sport sociologists argue, sport is a microcosm of larger society (LaVoi, Baeth, & Calhoun, 2019). Professional women's road cycling is therefore no exception. In popular postfeminist discourse, women and men can participate in society equally as legislation determines sex discrimination to be illegal, resulting in women gaining positions in the public realm such as the labour market, politics, and sport. Upon closer analysis, this belief grossly misrepresents a more nuanced reality (see for example Connell, 2021). Central to critical feminist scholarship is the examination of gendered relationships of power to expose systemic inequality, under-representation, exploitation, and marginalisation of women in sport which is and remains a male domain (LaVoi et al., 2019). Women's cycling is a social phenomenon where gender inequality, sexism, and other social problems are very prominent; and to have a greater understanding of how and why these problems exist, the better we can understand women's cycling, women's sport, and larger society.

The existing body of academic work on cycling pays little attention to professional women's road cycling or cyclists. Most studies on women and cycling focus on women's participation in commuting, recreational cycling or the difference between women's and men's cycling behaviour (e.g. Beecham & Wood, 2013; Bonham & Johnson, 2015; Bonham & Wilson, 2012; Daley, Rissel, & Lloyd, 2007; Debnath, Haworth, & Heesch, 2021; Shaw et al., 2020).

Studies that involve elite women cyclists are from a physiological or bio-mechanical perspective (e.g. Barreto et al., 2020; Ebert, Martin, Stephens, McDonald, & Withers, 2007; Martin et al., 2001; Menaspà, Sias, Bates, & La Torre, 2017; Peiffer, Abbiss, Haakonssen, & Menaspà, 2018; Sanders, van Erp, & de Koning, 2019). Studies on professional cycling have been limited to economics, structural change, and culture and ideologies in men's cycling (e.g. Albert, 1991; Candelon & Dupuy, 2015; Morrow & Idle, 2008; van Reeth & Larson, 2016; Williams, 1989). No prior studies have focused on bringing together these different focus points: a social study on women's participation in professional road cycling. This feminist ethnography on professional women's road cycling redresses this gap.

Feminist writing

'Feminist researchers are at the forefront of changing academic writing conventions and have advanced current trends to produce good writing' (Charmaz, 2014, p. 2). For ethnographic writing, feminist writers push the edges and boundaries of what it is, looks like, and yields (Pillow & Mayo, 2012). As will be apparent in Chapter 2, the epistemological stance of feminist scholars on scientific roles and the representation of participants has impacted the writing in feminist research (Charmaz, 2014). More researchers choose to include themselves in texts as thinking, acting and feeling beings, presenting an inclusive participatory role of the researcher in the study rather than a 'disembodied reporter of collected facts' (Charmaz, 2014, p. 2). In this thesis, I include myself in the text by writing about my actions, feelings, and thoughts. While reading and writing, and shaping information to answer my research questions, more questions would arise to make sense of the material I was working with. In the thesis, these questions and comments are incorporated in the text.

Thesis road map

This thesis unfolds as follows. In **Chapter 2**, I explain my theoretical framework. This study is explicitly feminist to create a deep and contextualised understanding of the gendered struggles in professional women's road cycling. I show how I interpret critical feminist theory and how I use it to approach this study and analyse and present my findings. A large part of my theoretical framework is Raewyn Connell's social constructionist gender framework that recognises gender as a complex social structure with more than one dimension. I present tables that outline the four dimensions of Connell's framework (i.e. power, economic, emotional and symbolic), and its application to the larger gender order plus

a more specific interpretation of the micro level of sport. I apply these tables in Chapters 4 and 5 to analyse the gender regime of local and professional women's road cycling.

In **Chapter 3**, I explain how this theoretical approach influenced my methodology and methods. This feminist ethnography signals how my theoretical approach and methodology are strongly connected. In this way, my methodology is attuned to how my feminist approach questions both power relations in the field, and of the fieldwork. I used feminist ethnography to centralise women's lived experiences which allowed for emphatic methods that I used flexible and creatively. The chapter focuses on my two-and-a-half-year long fieldwork in which I embedded myself in the field of local and professional road cycling. I elaborate on my own participation in the local Melbourne road cycling scene as a novice racing cyclist. I explain my fieldwork in Europe where I followed the professional women's peloton in a campervan. I describe how I used ethnographic and semi-structured interviews to capture elite and professional women cyclists' life histories. In addition to these three main methods, I discuss my ethnographic approach to (social) media, documents, and photography. The chapter concludes with my approach to data analysis and ethical considerations. Together, this methodology and chosen methods allowed me to focus on gender and labour relations in professional women's road cycling.

Chapter 4 presents my research findings. This chapter introduces the sport of road cycling and my lived experiences as a woman making my way into the field of road racing in Melbourne, Australia. I detail my ethnographic approach and the actions I undertook in the field. I joined two cycling clubs and 'suffered' my way through to finding my inner competitive cyclist. I analysed the data from my fieldnotes using Connell's framework in order to present a conclusion that discusses gender regime. It shows how women are exposed to an inherently male dominated space which advantages men as a group, and disadvantages women, as they are socially constructed as different and therefore inferior. For women to move and succeed in this space, they tolerate and internalise these ideologies.

Chapter 5 provides a comprehensive picture of the field of professional women's road cycling. I examine gender and labour relations in this site by using Connell's gender framework and I also included a table of gender regime. I present this analysis in a 'data-up approach' that centralises the cyclists' narrative rather than centralising the framework as I did in Chapter 4. The four dimensions of the gender framework are clearly analysed in the discussion, and I conclude with how the relations are similar to the local gender regime as

men dominate the production of professional women's road cycling, and how this shapes a space where masculinity is valued over femininity, except when it suits male desire related to heteronormativity.

Chapter 6 focuses on labour in women's road cycling. I detail the social construction of labour by elite women cyclists and how these notions are gendered. I specifically use the economic dimension of Connell's gender framework. By using this dimension, that focuses on unpaid and gender-typed labour, I show the complexity of professional women's labour that is typed as masculine in the public realm but often un(der)paid. To maintain the inferiority of women's cycling, women's cycling labour is situated in a culture of secrecy and of tolerance and acceptance to the minimal conditions that are offered under the guise of gratefulness.

Chapter 7 drills down into the dominant theme of suffering in professional women's cycling. Throughout my fieldwork, women's suffering was explicit although not fully comprehended and/or criticised. I explore the question of how women's suffering is related to gender and labour. Road cycling is a dangerous sport, but the risk of danger is accepted as part of the job, and suffering and crashing are events celebrated and glorified. I explicitly use the power dimension of Connell's framework to understand gendered meanings that associate hegemonic masculinity to risk and danger. My findings show how women tolerate and accept this construction and how they consider this as the legitimate form of athleticism.

Chapter 8 focuses on the progress narratives in women's cycling, a trend noticeable in most women's sports (McLachlan, 2019). I present an analysis of these narratives at micro, meso and macro levels, respectively the local Melbourne road racing scene, the elite national level in Australia, and the international level of the Women's World Tour in Europe. These narratives include how women's cycling is growing, which means that people observe an increase in women's participation in the sport, considered to positively impact the quality of women's performances and the quality of their races. Furthermore, the progress of women's cycling is connected to an increase in television broadcasting and a look at the close history which constructs the developments of women's cycling as progress. The progress of women's cycling is strongly situated in neoliberal and postfeminist construction that constructs women's participation as inherently empowering, which neither criticises nor alters the dominant gender regime.

In **Chapter 9**, I summarise how the gender and labour relations in professional women's road cycling can be understood based on the findings I presented in this thesis. Finally, I conclude by considering future research and implications.

Now, let's get rolling.

Chapter 2 – Feminist Theory and Connell

As previously mentioned, this research project is explicitly feminist. Specifically, I have drawn from feminist theories and conducted a feminist ethnography to understand professional women's cycling as a feminist struggle. In this chapter I discuss how feminist theory enabled me to generate a deep and contextualised understanding of professional women's road cycling. The theoretical lens and methodology are strongly intertwined, and I demonstrate connections throughout both this chapter and the next. My theoretical framework is inspired by critical feminist theories and the gender framework of Raewyn Connell, and relevant elements of these theories are outlined. I also situate my project within the broader field of feminist sport studies.

Feminism

I acknowledge and understand that feminism is broad, diverse, and multidimensional. Firstly, feminism is socio-political movements aiming to end sexism, sexual exploitation and sexual oppression with the goal to centre the lives and knowledge of females as important and valid (hooks, 2000). Secondly, feminism is the theories through which gender-based inequality and oppression are explained, analysed and interpreted. Thirdly, feminism is praxis as it aims to transform society and its patriarchal culture with feminist research, knowledge and action (Cooky, 2016). Collectively, feminism is a way of thinking, being, and acting in the world (Valtchanov & Parry, 2017). It provides a framework that focuses on understanding the social world in terms of gendered and other forms of social divisions (Maynard, 2011). Feminists challenge maleness as the norm and the 'neutrality' and 'objectivity' of the male perspective (Beal, 2018).

To do explicitly feminist research on professional women's road cycling means that I, as a feminist, have approached my research, my questions, my selection of theories, methods and analysis, and the presentation of my findings from a feminist stance. My questions focus on documenting and critically examining the lives, experiences and concerns of women in cycling in an attempt to unravel and make sense of structural systems of power that build oppressive conditions. My methods focus on taking the lives and experiences of women cyclists into account and through this, valuing these women's life stories as knowledge. My analysis focuses on identifying constructed meanings of lived experiences embedded in my collected data. How and where my findings are presented is influenced by the aim of representing women's voices and experiences, and 'breaking down the boundaries between

academia and activism, between theory and practice' (Brooks, 2013, p. 77). Doing feminist research also means being guided by feminist theories, because these theories acknowledge the interaction of gender and power. More specifically, my theoretical framework takes on a critical feminist perspective.

The critical feminist

I studied gender and labour relations in professional women's road cycling, which is grounded in relational analysis. With this type of analysis, I assume that practices in women's road racing are historically produced, socially constructed, and culturally defined to serve the interests and needs of powerful groups in society (Hall, 1996). I view cycling, and sport, more broadly, as a cultural representation of social relations.[2] To support this analysis, I find it useful to apply a critical feminist framework. Critical theory provides a commitment to emancipation as it uses discourses of equity, inclusion, and social justice, which are familiar and compatible with feminist agendas (Gannon & Davies, 2014). The foundation of feminist theory is the analysis of personal experience and, crucial in this analysis, is 'to overcome one's focus on the purely personal so that one is able to understand one's personal bad luck or misfortune as a small incident in a greater pattern of oppression experienced to some extent by all those who share the same life situation' (Birrell, 2000, p. 62). Bringing these theories together, a critical feminist theoretical lens is to analyse lived experiences and recognise power in gender relations to create understanding and knowledge to emancipate women.

In my adoption of the critical feminist framework, I assume that power is distributed inequitably, generally along the lines of gender, race and class, throughout society and consequently, throughout sport and cycling.[3] However, I realise that these power relations are not fixed, but operate differently in different places and times so I cannot conclude which relation of power is always and everywhere most important (Birrell, 2000). The upholding of this power usually happens through subtle forms of ideological dominance, not by force or coercion (Birrell, 2000). This means that, as a critical feminist studying women's cycling, I

[2] In this study, I focus on gender and labour relations, but I acknowledge how gender and labour are related to many more identities, e.g. race, ethnicity, age, (dis)ability, sexuality. The complexity of all the relations in women cyclists' daily lives, their complete intersectionality, is beyond the scope of this study. However, I aim to touch upon these relations where appropriate throughout the thesis.

[3] Along with Marxist scholars, critical race scholars, queer theory scholars and others, feminist scholars insist that relations of power are central to all aspects of cultural life and that any analysis ignoring these elements is intellectually suspect (McDonald & Birrell, 1999, p.286).

need to identify the ideologies of gender (ideally in relation to race, class, sexuality, age, ability, and nationality) and how these ideologies are produced around particular incidents in a particular place and at a particular moment in time in the field of cycling (McDonald & Birrell, 1999).

In using critical theory, I rely on the binaries and categories of social life: the divisions that hold great political power, such as the categories of women and men. Further, critical theorising views power as oppressive and unilinear, mobilising the binaries of dominated and oppressor, considering power as being enacted by certain groups upon other groups. By creating an understanding of how these hierarchal power relations operate, it opens up opportunities to overturn these relations which in turn create opportunities for emancipation (Gannon & Davies, 2014). In constructing that understanding and taking action within the social world of cycling and affect powerful positionalities, I need to adopt a deep scepticism towards assumed truths and taken-for-granted knowledges while maintaining a pragmatic understanding of the power of those same categories (Gannon & Davies, 2014).

I choose to adopt the critical feminist framework to expose and draw attention to the constitutive power of gender relations in professional women's cycling. Critical theorists work towards an interpretation and potential transformation of social life, to emancipate. This transformation is dependent on a notion of subjectivity that includes some agency and possibilities for choice and for freedom to act in the world (Gannon & Davies, 2014). Critical theorists pursuing social justice try to create a pedagogy of resistance and to empower 'the marginalized, the poor, the nameless, the voiceless' (Lincoln & Denzin, 2003, pp. 625-626). Though, as I will elaborate in my discussion of feminist ethnography, women are not voiceless. Critical theory should function as a framework to analyse the unheard voices of marginalised groups, of women cyclists in my case, to expose the power relations that oppress and influence these voices and create a space for them to be heard.

Critical feminism in sport

Over the years, sport feminisms have become an established subject field within critical sport studies (Caudwell, 2011). The main purpose of feminist theory within the sociology of sport is to theorise about gender relations within our patriarchal society as evidenced by, played out in, and reproduced through sport and other body practices (Birrell, 2000). Sport feminisms have been linked to anti-discriminatory work regarding subordinated women, in particular their sense of reality of dislocation, marginalization and disenfranchisement in sport

(Hargreaves, 2004). In other words, sport feminisms recognise that sport is a gendered activity: a male preserve where boys and men are welcomed more than girls and women and serves as a site for celebrating skills and values that are signified as 'masculine' (Birrell, 2000). This means that in taking on a critical feminist perspective to analyse gender relations in women's cycling, I consider the space of cycling to be a male preserve where women face gendered obstacles and are valued and measured against male norms.

By using feminist theory to critically examine the gendered reality of the social world of cycling, I aim to contribute to the body of knowledge that can assist in social change. Gender justice commonly holds both an implicit and explicit assumption that equality means having equality with men (Watson & Scraton, 2017). However, feminist critique of sport includes the examination of the unchallenged common-sense. I examine the construction of 'equality' and analyse whether it does not merely consist of being free to do whatever male cyclists have done. Thus, I need to question the moral and human consequences of the structures and procedures which have been created by patriarchal society (Talbot, 1988). It is crucial to disentangle what is positive and what is negative about that which has been identified as masculine (Wedgwood, 2004).

In this research, I address the inequities in women's road cycling. A mere popular biological justification – women have a 'weaker' physiological makeup; women are slower [than men] – for the differences between men's and women's cycling is not sufficient. In critical theory, this type of reasoning can be viewed as power in the form of manipulation. 'Dominant groups are positioned in the socio-economic landscape to have more access to resources which, in turn, enables their knowledge claims to gain currency and "justify" inequities' (Beal, 2018, p. 230). Biological differences are not an explanation, nor justification for the inequalities that women face in professional road cycling. Instead, in my adoption of the critical feminist theoretical lens, I consider these inequities to be the effect of longstanding battles against social barriers that keep girls and women from sports participation in greater numbers (Womack & Suyemoto, 2010). These barriers or mechanisms of exclusion are a prime focus of this critical feminist research on women's road cycling. Once ideologies and practices are identified as barriers, policy can be created to eradicate these barriers (Beal, 2018).

I understand that by adopting a critical feminist perspective, I aim to challenge the power dynamics in women's cycling to expand women's choices and enhance their wellbeing (Beal, 2018). Francombe-Webb and Toffoletti (2018) argue that to understand the structured

relations of inequality, it is imperative to avoid one-sided explanations and instead provide critical accounts of relations between individual body processes and social processes. In this study, this means that I critically examine and describe relations between individual riders in the sport of cycling and the social processes they are exposed to. Along with this critical account is consideration of the complex relations between agency, and the possibilities and constraints of women in sports contexts. This approach requires a combination of socio-cultural and historical analyses with first person accounts, resulting in sophisticated arguments that emphasise gender relations as power relations that are maintained, negotiated and transformed over time (Francombe-Webb & Toffoletti, 2018). This research on professional women's road cyclists examines gender relations in their sport and questions the status quo with the aim to improve their conditions.

So far in this chapter, I have discussed how I understand feminism as the explicit approach to this research and my embracement of critical feminist theory. An important part of feminist theory is its self-reflexive theoretical practice. 'Those who produce and use the insights the theories offer are constantly unsatisfied with their scope, their focus or their limitations' (Birrell, 2000, p. 3). This practice leads to the conviction that a range of methodological and theoretical approaches is more appropriate for the study of gender, sport, power, and culture (Birrell, 2000). I have adopted this approach by bringing together critical feminist theoretical ideas, the gender regime framework by Raewyn Connell, and ethnographic methodology and its various methods. In the next section, I discuss Connell's framework which brings feminist theory and gender and labour relations together in a strong theoretical and analytical tool.

Connell

While using the critical feminist lens to study professional women's road cycling, I also adopt Raewyn Connell's (1987, 2014, 2021) social constructionist gender framework that recognises gender as a complex social structure with more than one dimension. The framework identifies large-scale patterns in relationships among people and groups, and the persistence of those patterns over time (Connell, 2021). These detectable patterns limit freedom and shape constraints in social organisations that usually operate in a complex interplay of power and appear in different social institutions. To use the framework as a tool to describe these patterns is to specify what it is that constrains practice in play (Connell, 1987). At the same time, people actively and creatively shape and transform situations (Connell, 2021). Practice can turn against constraints when free invention and reflexive human knowledge are involved. In other words, structure can be the deliberate object of

practice. Importantly though, people never act in a void; practice cannot escape structure; it cannot float free from its circumstance (Connell, 1987).

The arrangement of gender patterns is what Connell calls a *gender regime*. The gender regime may include arrangements about who does what work, what social divisions are recognised, how emotional relations are conducted, and how these institutions are related to others (Connell, 2021). 'Gender arrangements have been researched in different types of organisations, including sport contexts, and gender regimes are found in all such organisations, although differing and changing' (Connell, 2021, p. 74). Despite these changes, gender regimes are connected to wider patterns across a whole economy, which also endure over time. This pattern is what Connell calls the *gender order* of an industry, a country, a region. 'The gender regimes of particular institutions usually correspond to the broad gender order but may vary from it. Change often starts in one sector of society and takes time to seep through into others' (Connell, 2021, p. 73). Gender order is constructed by previous social processes, social actions and social actors over time (Connell, 2021). Thus, the gender regime of professional women's cycling may vary from the broader gender order in sport and society, but the two patterns do resemble and relate to one another.

Before turning to the four dimensions of Connell's gender framework, it is important to understand that bodies – especially sporting ones – are central to her theorising on gender (Lafferty & McKay, 2004). The physical sense of maleness and femaleness is central to the cultural interpretation of gender (Connell, 2005). She argues that social relationships connect to the co-construction of the biological and the social: 'Our bodies are connected through social practices, which are organized by structures including class, gender, racial division and the global economy' (Connell, 2021, p. 47). The historical process by which bodies are both agents and objects and how bodies are connected to social structure through time is what Connell (2021) describes as social embodiment or 'body-reflexive practice'. Social embodiment concerns personal conduct as well as groups, institutions and whole complexes of institutions (Connell, 2021). Key questions arise in relation to the women's cycling context; for example, what is the body-reflexive practice that goes into making a professional woman cyclist? Who and what groups are involved in the social practices of elite women cyclists? All of that work is based on, and refers back to, the bodily performances of women cyclists.

Gender is a specific form of social embodiment, distinctive in referring to bodily structures and processes of human reproduction (Connell, 2021). In sport, masculinity is a leading definer of mass culture and men's bodies are continuously displayed. Social relations, such as competition and hierarchy among men, and exclusion and domination of women, are embedded in the institutional organisation of sport, and bodily performances in sport realise and symbolise these relations. This becomes symbolic proof for men's superiority and right to rule (Connell, 2005) and further, is an example of the *reproductive arena* in social life. This arena is where bodily capacities and the practices that realise them become social. Arguably, it is where categories such as 'women' and 'men' are created (Connell, 2021).

Social embodiment helps us recognise how bodies are agents in social practice and thus construct the social world. Bodies shape social reality through a process of change, because these bodies have needs, desires and capacities. To understand the social world of professional women's cycling, where women's bodies are exposed to social structure throughout history while simultaneously actively shaping that history, is to realise that the social world is never simply reproduced; it is always reconstituted (Connell, 2021). However, in the larger gender order, conventional ideologies continue to define women primarily as wives and mothers belonging to the private sphere. Therefore, women claiming positions in the public domain (e.g. becoming professional cyclists), 'trying to exercise their rights as citizens, have an uphill battle to have their authority recognized' (Connell, 2021, p. 75).

Now I unpack the framework. The articulations between gender order and gender regime are underpinned by four intertwining relations: power, economic, emotional and symbolic relations (Connell, 2021). This framework has proven to create deep sociological understanding in previous empirical research in sport and gender (see for example Adriaanse and Schofield (2014); Boyle and McKay (1995); Lafferty and McKay (2004); Mennesson (2012)), and as becomes clear in the following chapters, has proven to be valuable for this study on women's cycling. These gender relations are explained below.

Four dimensions of gender relations

Power relations

Connell explains how power relations function as a social structure, as a pattern of constraints on social practice. This pattern involves control, authority and force exercised on gender lines, both at individual and collective levels (Adriaanse & Schofield, 2014; Connell, 1987). Power relations may be recognised as a balance of advantage or as inequality of resources in

a workplace, a household or larger institution (Connell, 1987). In a patriarchal gender order, men have power over women as a group. The power that husbands have over wives and fathers over daughters is an important aspect of gender structure (Connell & Pearse, 2014). The balance of advantage for men lies in their bureaucratic power: they are in charge of corporations, government and universities. Men assert hegemony through these institutions, which Connell (1987, p. 107) explains as 'the ability to impose a definition of the situation, to set the terms in which events are understood and issues discussed, to formulate ideals and define morality [as] an essential part of social power'. As a result, organisations dominated by men have the propensity to favour procedures that favour men, enforcing social order. This is called the mobilisation of masculine bias (Burton, 1987; Connell, 2021).

Besides the oppression of women, masculine power is maintained through a gender-based hierarchy among men. Hegemonic masculinity can only exist in contrast to men who are not hegemonically masculine, and the majority of men do not match the hegemonic image of masculinity. According to Connell (1987), the hierarchy consists of hegemonic masculinity, conservative masculinity (complicit in the collective project) and subordinated masculinities. This power relation explains violence and abuse by men against themselves, against women, and other men. The structure of the hierarchy also explains how men's power position is not a given and to reconstitute their power, they need to perform particular social practices (e.g. bargaining and negotiation).

Connell and Pearse (2014) explain that, naturally, power relations are contested: oppressive laws spark campaigns to reform; domestic patriarchy has softened quietly; discursive power is contested or transformed; colonising power has always been contested, and women continue to play an important part in liberation struggles. This contest makes it important to distinguish the global or macro relationship of power in which women are subordinated to men in society as a whole (i.e. the gender order), from the local or micro situation in particular settings (i.e. the gender regime) (Connell, 1987). In other words, in this study, it is important to differentiate between the larger gender order of society and specific gender relations of professional women's road cycling.

Economic relations

The economic relations of gender are very useful to understand the labour questions in this research. These relations focus on the total social division of labour. Firstly, they include the gender division of labour. This division of work done by women or by men is seen across

many societies, institutions and organisations. The effects of gender division of labour are beyond the workplace and correspond to the division in education systems. However, it is important to understand this division is not universal; there can be overlap in actual work done despite the fact that norms and divisions are not the same in different cultures or at different points in time. Secondly, economic gender relations include unpaid work undertaken outside paid work. These include but are not limited to childcare, housework, cooking, care of the sick and elderly, gardening, the voluntaryism that keeps clubs, churches and political parties running, and the learning that students do in schools and colleges. These divisions train and skill men and women differently, resulting in a powerful system of social constraint. 'The gendered division of labour must be been seen as a part of a larger pattern, a gender-structured system of production, consumption, and distribution' (Connell, 1987, p. 103). That is, the making of jobs that combine particular skills with a particular femininity, homosexual masculinity or hegemonic masculinity. Gender division is a deep-seated feature of production itself, a central feature of industrial organisation, so for Connell (1987), capitalism is run by, and mainly advantages men.

The public economy was culturally defined as a man's world while the domestic sphere was defined as a woman's world despite the presence of the other gender in those worlds. Connell (2021) refers to Norwegian sociologist Øystein Holter (2005), who argues that the structural differences between paid and unpaid work involve characteristically different experiences for men and women, and our ideas about the different natures of men and women. In the economy work is done for pay, labour-power is bought and sold, and the products of labour are placed in a market. In the home, housework, cooking, childcare, are done for love or mutual obligation. In consideration of how this division of labour characteristically impacts the experiences for women and men in society, and our ideas about the different natures of men and women, a key question that arises is what this division means for women who cycle professionally. As they move into the public realm of professional sports, they take with them the economic relations of their gender as a historically and structurally unpaid group. Is their professional cycling a hobby, unpaid labour for love and passion, or a job: paid labour by exchanging their labour-power in an economy?

More women have entered the paid workforce, for example, in professions such as medicine and law. Connell (1987) argues that this change, and the push to have men do more unpaid labour in the house, indicates that such structure is not only a constraint but also an object of practice. Yet large gaps in overall income reflect the fact that large numbers of women have

entered the wage economy as an insecure, unskilled labour force (Connell, 2021). This shows how, on a world scale, gender divisions of labour mean that women and men are differently located in a gendered accumulation process.

Emotional relations (cathexis) are the emotional attachments in human life, to images of other people, which are part of a larger whole: they are structured by gender (Connell, 2021). The emotional commitments of a person can be positive and negative, favourable or hostile towards the object. For example, misogyny and homophobia are negative emotional relations towards women and homosexuals. Emotional attachments can also be loving and hostile, a pattern called ambivalence which is a helpful idea for understanding the complexities of gender relations (Connell, 2021).

Sexuality is an important arena for emotional attachment. Sexuality is often organised on the basis of gender, but it is also governed by other structures such as class and racial divisions. In the global North, the assumed sexuality is heterosexuality which involves a woman and a man (Connell, 2021). This assumption results in a division between heterosexual and homosexual cathexis in society. Also, there is a modern expectation that households are to be formed on the basis of romantic love, which is an ideal not equally achievable. Two organising principles are dominant in heterosexual coupledom. First, objects of desire are generally defined by contrast and opposition to feminine and masculine, and second, sexual practice is mainly organised in couple relationships (Connell, 1987). The emotional relations of sexuality are not fully explained by mere sexual difference. Connell (1987) argues how, in hegemonic heterosexuality, erotic reciprocity is based on unequal exchange. 'The members of a heterosexual couple are not just different, they are specifically unequal. A heterosexual woman is sexualized as an object in a way that a heterosexual man is not' (Connell, 1987, p. 113). The structure of emotional relations is commonly the object of practice. An example is the erotic complexities of sexual fetishism. The symbolic markers of social categories, such as high-heeled shoes, or structural principles, like dominance, get detached from their contexts and themselves become primary objects of arousal (Connell, 1987). The advertising industry gladly captures this kind of practice for profit making or control.

Besides sexuality, emotional relations are also found in the workplace and in households with children. With the expanse of the service industry, many jobs require an emotional relationship with the client demanding emotional labour of the workers (Connell & Pearse, 2014). Connell and Pearse (2014) argue that alienated relations based on commercialised

feelings and gender stereotypes may be increasingly important in modern life. In most households, the emotional attachment between parent and child is another form of cathexis. Raising small children is more likely to produce both love and hostility on both sides. Relationships with mothers are prone to be vastly ambivalent, because the gender division of domestic labour leaves most of the parenting to women (Connell, 1987).

Symbolic relations are the structure of practice that involves the ways in which gender is represented and understood, including prevailing beliefs (Adriaanse & Schofield, 2014). Society is a world of meanings shaped over time and by place; they carry traces of social processes by which they were made (Connell & Pearse, 2014). The multiple meanings of 'woman' and 'man' are far richer than the biological categories of female and male. 'When an American football coach yells at his losing team that they are "a bunch of women", he does not mean they can now get pregnant' (Connell, 2021, p. 84). In the construction and reinforcement of gender differences, everyday language and images play a fundamental role (Lafferty & McKay, 2004). An incredibly complex system of understandings, implications, overtones and allusions that have accumulated over time through cultural history is called upon to understand gender meanings. In this system, masculine is considered the privileged subjectivity that holds authority (phallocentrism) (Connell & Pearse, 2014). To escape phallocentrism, the heteronormativity of society is critically called into question, leading to cultural disruption (Connell & Pearse, 2014): 'Gender symbolism can be found in language [speech and writing], dress, makeup, gesture, photography, film and electronic media and in more impersonal forms of culture such as the built environment' (Connell, 2021, p. 85). Such symbolism is often deployed in times of struggle. Moreover, symbolic expressions of gender and attitudes to gender equality change over time.

The tables below summarise the four dimensions based on Connell's (1987, 2014, 2021) work and the interpretation of this work by Boyle and McKay (1995). Table 2.1 shows the gender order at macrolevel and table 2.2 represents the gender regime at the microlevel of sports. These four types of relations of gender are not separate institutions and in real-life contexts they constantly interweave and condition each other. The concept of 'intersectionality', coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), helps us understand how, for example, gender and race separately cannot capture the struggles of certain groups of people in society. The concept is best used not as a fixed theory but as a broad approach to research and activism that emphasises there are always multiple social inequalities and social justice struggles. Connell (2021) stresses the importance of treating gender as a structure in its own

right while remembering that gender relations always work in context, always interact with other dynamics in social life.

Table 2.1 - Gender order of society

Gender Order of Society			
Power	**Economic**	**Emotional (cathexis)**	**Symbolic**
Patriarchy – men's power over women	Total social division of labour	Institutionalised heterosexual coupledom	System of meanings connected to gender
Institutionalised "triad of violence" by men against themselves, against women, and other men	Occupational segregation	Sexualisation and objectification of women	Phallocentric: place of authority and the privileged subjectivity is always masculine
Bureaucracy -- Men's control of most large-scale organisations, the police, the legal system, and the military	Women's disproportionate responsibility for childcare	Institutionalised homophobia	Heteronormative culture
Mobilisation of masculine bias	Exclusion of women from accumulating wealth or attaining a secure career position	Cathexis between parent and child: mothers have a strong emotional bond; fathers are distant	
Discourse of hierarchy of gender and sexuality	The economy as men's world and domestic sphere as women's world	Emotional workplace relations – emotion as work in service industries	
Articulation between hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity	Gaps in overall income between men and women		
	Maintenance of sexual demarcations through work practices that reinforce male solidarity (design of work)		

Table 2.2 - Gender regime at the microlevel of sport

Gender Regime at the Micro Level of Sport			
Power	**Economic**	**Emotional (cathexis)**	**Symbolic**
Sexual harassment of women athletes and reporters	Women's disproportionate share of ancillary sporting labour (e.g. providing food and transport, cleaning, fundraising)	Heterosexual coupling between male athletes and female cheerleaders	Gender marking of women's sport
Absence and underrepresentation of women in playing, coaching, officiating, administrative, reporting and ownership positions	Professional sport is viewed as men's sport	Intensely homophobic nature of sporting subcultures	Sexualising and objectifying images of female athletes in the media and promotions material
Glorification of sporting activities based on competition, strength, intimidation, and violence		Narrative that girls and women are not/less interested in sports	Girls/women *choose* sports; boys/men are *destined* for sports
'Symbolic annihilation' of women's sport in the mass media			Infantilisation of adult female athletes ('girls')

In Chapters 4 and 5, I use all four dimensions of this framework to analyse the gender regime of local road cycling and professional road cycling fields respectively. In Chapter 6, I use the economic dimension to analyse the labour of professional women cyclists, while in Chapter 7, I mostly use the power dimension to create an understanding of women cyclists' suffering. In Chapter 8, I focus on the gender politics of professional women's road cycling where these dimensions come together in order to understand how change in gender relations is possible.

In the next chapter, I present my methodology that is strongly connected to the theory and gender discussed in this theoretical framework. The chapter gives an overview of my research design, how I analysed my data, and my ethical considerations.

Chapter 3 – Feminist Ethnography

This chapter presents the methodology of this research on professional women's road cycling. I discuss how my methodology and feminist theoretical framework are connected, and how this shaped my research design. I briefly explain what ethnography is, how I interpreted the feminist components, and what it means to perform feminist research in the space of women's cycling. The research design of this study is explained thoroughly and elaborates my two-and-a-half-year fieldwork and data collection. This exploration of my methods shows how I examined gender and labour relations in multiple sites: the local grassroots Melbourne road racing site, the national Australian site, and the professional women's racing site in Europe. I reflect on my reflexivity and positionality in the field. Additionally, I illustrate my ethnographic feminist interviews with professional and elite women cyclists, the use of photography, and my approach to (social) media and formal documents. The chapter concludes with how I analysed my data and my ethical considerations.

Feminist theory, feminist methodology

Theory shapes my understanding of being (ontology), knowing (epistemology) and doing/behaving (ethics) which in turn shapes all aspects of this research, including my methodology. Part of critical scholarship is to question the nature of fieldwork and the nature of interpretation, generally referred to as 'the crisis in representation' (McDonald & Birrell, 1999, p. 288). Rather than objective analysis of distanced observers within a positivist framework, critical fieldwork asks for pluralistic and open-ended perspectives that call for 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973 in McDonald & Birrell, 1999). The critical feminist theoretical framework strongly influences feminist ethnography in sport and leisure. This theory raises crucial concerns about how inequitable gender relations are (re)produced and accompanying strategies of change (Beal, 2018).

My research questions are formulated to understand women's lived experiences in professional cycling and my theoretical framework supports those questions. It made sense to choose a feminist ethnographic methodology. Professor Wanda Pillow and professor Cris Mayo have used and written about feminist, ethnographic methodologies for at least two decades, covering topics as teen pregnancy, motherhood, queerness, intersectionality, and reflexivity. I find their explicit and unapologetic feminist approach and work inspiring and

valuable in the conversation about intersectional analyses, and I have chosen to rely on their work in my approach and understanding of feminist ethnography. They argue that feminist ethnographic work has both redressed the gaps and silences surrounding women's lives and experiences as well as challenging current conceptualisations and theories (Pillow & Mayo, 2012). In feminist literature, the moving body as a site for the attainment of knowledge has a strong foundation (Jeffrey, 2020). The interest in embodied analysis has also grown in the scholarship on sport and physical activity, which has brought recognition to how the senses play a crucial role in the experiences of sport and physical activity (Orr & Phoenix, 2015). These foundations and interests come together in my research and specifically my methodology.

The epistemology in feminist research accepts that there are women's ways of knowing (Hall, 1996). Feminist research places women at the centre, emphasising the 'personal is political', and it seeks to improve the situation of women by giving voice to women's experiences and focusing on women's own interpretations of their experiences (Pillow & Mayo, 2012). That said, it is important to emphasise that there is no one way of doing feminist research. Feminism, feminist theory, and feminist research are dynamic and involve individual creativity and variety. Therefore, it is argued that the study of gender and patriarchy in sport should definitely proceed from woman-centred questions, but also needs to be as much about men as about women (Dilorio, 1990, in Boyle & McKay, 1995). It would be impossible and unfavourable to exclude men from this study on professional women's road cycling, as it is clearly a field dominated by men.

In one of her 1996 essays on feminist research, Ann Hall suggests three distinguishing practices. These include the political nature and potential to change women's lives (emancipatory component), the guidance of feminist theory, and the modification of existing research methods. For the purpose here on my use of feminist ethnography, I focus on the last feature. The modifications of existing research techniques and methods see feminists using social research methods to their own end. Over the years, feminists have made extensive use of interviewing and ethnography while criticising hierarchical power relations between the researcher and researched (Hall, 1996). Additionally, a feminist researcher's personal experiences, either in the field or in their social life, have often been considered a feminist research modification. I have taken this on board in my ethnographic feminist research, as I did not position myself as a distant, objective, superior researcher (quite the opposite on which I reflect later) and my own experiences in the Melburnian road racing scene take

prominent place in this thesis. In other words, as a feminist researcher, I engaged in my research with attention to relationships, reciprocity, representation and voice (Pillow & Mayo, 2012). Below I explain further how this feminist approach helped me in understanding the interpretations and meanings from lived experiences in the field of professional women's road cycling.

Ethnography is used to examine social experiences of a particular group of people through an exploration of cultural meanings and interpretations that they themselves use to understand their lives (Beal, 2018; Grace, 1997). This methodology suits the goal of feminism as described by bell hooks (2000): to centre the lives and knowledge of females as important and valid. Vice versa, 'feminism provides a methodological and epistemological lens for *the doing* of research methods' (Pillow & Mayo, 2012, p. 189). This lens and the aim to critique gendered power shapes how I ask my questions, do my methods and analyse my data. Different from traditional ethnography, feminist ethnography starts from 'a place that questions the power, authority, and subjectivity of the researcher as it questions the purpose of the research' (Pillow and Mayo, 2012, p. 191). Feminist ethnography presents an opportunity to expose how gender and labour power relations operate through examining meanings and interpretations in professional women's road cycling.

This feminist ethnography on lived experiences in (professional) women's cycling is based in social constructionism. Social truths and relations in the field are constructed by people and meanings generated through research, co-created by the participants of this study and me as the researcher (Beal, 2018; McDonald & Birrell, 1999). I acknowledge that the information I present in this thesis is socially constructed and contextually bound. The co-creation of meanings in this study is very apparent in my choice of methods and I expand on these in my discussion on my positionality in the field here and in Chapter 4.

In ethnography, it is important to be attentive to intersectionality and processes of gender construction, while simultaneously realising that identity categories continue to have meaning for people (Pillow & Mayo, 2012). Pillow and Mayo (2012) explain how there are oppressive aspects of group ascribed identities, but there are other aspects of those identities that are useful to the groups themselves and may even oppose oppression. Women cyclists might experience oppression and exclusion based on their gender in the capitalistic patriarchal system of cycling; their womanhood could also give them a sense of pride. Similarly, working from 'the ruins of ethnography' means that we should no longer situate feminist

ethnography as 'innocent in its desire to give voice to the voiceless' (Lather, 1997, p. 286). Women are not voiceless and through this feminist ethnography, I have learned that women cyclists have a strong voice in and knowledge of their world. They articulate thoughts, ideas, opinions about their career, their sport, and the future of women's cycling.

Research design

This feminist ethnography had a relatively long-term data collection process as my fieldwork lasted about two and a half years. It started in late spring 2017 and ended in mid-summer 2020 in Australia. In feminist ethnography, using situations at hand is common and I understood it was crucial I made use of already existing situations (Fonow & Cook, 1991). These situations became the focus of my study and the way to collect data to create an understanding of professional women's road racing. Using given situations makes feminist ways of doing research certainly more creative, spontaneous and open to improvisation. Doing a feminist ethnography, I undeniably stumbled across unexpected interactions, stories and experiences and I was able to follow these unexpected leads to delve deeper into the field (Pillow & Mayo, 2012). (I will clarify this below in an explanation of my research methods of how, when and where my research took place and what data I collected.)

Methods

To come close to an understanding of what it means to be a (professional) road cyclist and how gender and labour relations shape cyclists' lived experiences, I needed to observe those existing fields, participate as closely as I could, and ask and talk about women's experiences in detail. This commitment resulted in a multi-sited and multi-method approach to analyse gender and labour relations in women's cycling. To include different sites created the opportunity to observe and experience the social worlds of cyclists and allowed for a comprehensive snapshot of the lived reality of women's road cycling. To work with multiple methods over a longer period of time is common in ethnography (Hammersley, 2017) and is carried out by many feminist researchers (see for example Donnelly, 2013; Jeffrey, 2020; Olive & Thorpe, 2011; Pavlidis & Olive, 2014; Theberge, 2005). The method centred on ethnography is participant observation and personal engagement more generally. In my research, this translated into using participation, observations, and interviews as my main methods.

Becoming a cyclist – participation

In my attempt to create an holistic approach to my feminist ethnography (Hammersley, 2017) and to understand gender and labour relations in-depth in professional women's cycling, I decided to become a participant in the local Melbourne cycling scene. Ethnographic methods impressively found their way into cycling studies. The examples I am familiar with include Brown and Spinney (2010); Cox (2015); Fincham (2006a, 2006b); Jungnickel and Aldred (2014); Larsen (2013); Spinney (2006); and Spinney (2011). Much of this research focused on cycling as commuting/transport, leisure or bike messaging. Nonetheless, in any shape or form, cycling has fleeting, short-lived, embodied and sensory aspects of movement which are fundamental to creating and reproducing meaning (Spinney, 2011), suited to ethnographic method. The few existing ethnographies on competitive road cycling are research undertaken by Albert (1991) and Rees, Gibbons, and Dixon (2014). These studies helped me shape my ideas on what I could expect of the structure and culture in the field, but since those participants and researchers were men, it was important to expect different lived experiences.

Between October 2017 and February 2020, I attempted to find my inner cyclist. My rationale to become a racing cyclist as a cis-gender woman was multi-layered. I expected to learn through being; to learn about cycling as a sport and its dominant gender and labour ideologies by being a cyclist exposed to the cycling structure and culture. The goal was not to implement a comparison between grassroots and elite cycling; rather, I wanted to have a feel and appreciation for the sport, how it operates, and to understand how cycling practices at entry level may or may not extend to the elite level. I wanted to know what space (Australian) elite women cyclists have come from and what they have been exposed to. Another reason for my own participation is the centrality of the body in feminism, feminist theory and feminist research, especially when it comes to sport (Birrell, 2000; Connell, 2005; Francombe-Webb & Toffoletti, 2018; Hall, 1996; McDonald & Birrell, 1999). I wanted to use and bring my body into the field and have embodied experiences of being a cyclist. This sensory approach to feminist ethnography enabled me to expand my observations from solely hearing and seeing, to feeling and absorbing (Jeffrey, 2020). Additionally, with feminist research ethics in mind, my participation contributed to creating trust and reciprocity with my research participants.

As a result, over a period of almost three years, I was a member of two cycling clubs and I competed in 1 kermesse race, a 3-day tour, 2 handicap races, 2 training sessions on an indoor

velodrome; 5 on an outdoor velodrome with an informally organised women's cycling group, 15 criteriums, and countless social and training rides in Melbourne and surrounds. When I joined my second club, I even took on a cycling coach who saw potential in my ability and would help me in my racing. This journey of becoming a cyclist and an interpretation of the data is further detailed in Chapter 4.

Women's WorldTour – observation and participation

I was not under the illusion of becoming a professional cyclist, so participation as a cyclist in the peloton was not an option to study the lived experiences of these professional athletes. Fortunately, it is possible to understand the sensory in the everyday lives of professional cyclists despite not literally seeing, hearing, touching or smelling everything they do (Orr & Phoenix, 2015). So, instead, I participated and observed in as many other ways as possible. Within the critical paradigm, observations are valuable to understand how power works in women's cycling as a sporting culture/context, or to identify the inequalities and injustices that actors in the sport may not be able or willing to acknowledge, or admit seeing or partaking in (Thorpe & Olive, 2016). Considering the high stakes surrounding elite sport, I realised it would be complicated to gain access to the high-performance settings I was after, given my outsider status (Purdy & Jones, 2013). This difficulty became very clear in my face-to-face interaction with the director sportif (DS) of the initial team I wanted to follow.[4] Although he was open to the idea, he suggested this team was 'too good, probably a bit too professional for what you're asking. Why don't you try a smaller team?' This was the beginning of my turbulent ethnographic fieldwork following the elite road race competition called the Women's World Tour (WWT).

To study the labour of professional women's cyclists, I needed to attend the races. During the 2019 season, the WWT calendar included 23 races worldwide.[5] However, road racing is predominantly European, thus most races took place on the European continent. My Dutch nationality was a big advantage in carrying out this method. A unique component to this

[4] My initial plan was to follow one team as a case-study and participate as a volunteer crewmember. This particular team, associated with a men's WorldTour team, has been highly successful in the Women's World Tour and has signed many Australian riders over the years. The team is known to have a relatively high budget, good sponsors, many resources and they pay their riders and crew, despite a lack of transparency on their finances. Team management denied my request to follow the team for the 2019 season.

[5] The last race I did fieldwork at was the Deakin University Elite Women's race on 1 February 2020 in Geelong, Australia. It was the opening race to the 2020 season. The race had existed before as a differently classed race. 2020 was the first year it was included in the WWT calendar. Above all, it was close to home and I missed professional cycling.

research was my travel and living situation. I needed a way to get around Europe to make it to the races and I needed flexible, reliable, and economical accommodation. The solution to this was to drive a campervan and camp at local campgrounds close to race locations. As a European citizen, I could travel through Europe without the need for visas. The van allowed for flexibility, which is in line with the ethnographic nature of this research. The van-life was a good conversation starter and it was perceived as dedication to my project by people in the field, although slightly out of the box.

In February 2019, I left Australia – where I was based – and landed on European shores. I observed 19 UCI races totalling 42 race days in 8 different countries: Australia, Basque Country (Spain), Belgium, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, and the Netherlands. For six months, I drove from race to race to follow the women's peloton. I devoted 160 days to travelling, observing, participating, processing fieldnotes, interviewing, transcribing, and reading about actualities in the field online and reciprocating teams. The driving days were long and far, the race days early and late. Despite making use of my family and friends' hospitality, I spent most days and nights at foreign campsites managing my accommodation, fuel and food. To manage the complexity of transnational spaces, that is, the opportunities and challenges of different fields (e.g. language, localism, pre-established contacts in the field, accommodation), 'suppleness of imagination' is key (Stoller, 1997 in Thorpe, 2012). Similar to Holly Thorpe and her study on snowboarding, I adopted a flexible attitude to the unique conditions of each field; each space; each race, and kept an open mind to the variety of interactions and relationships that presented themselves in different locations (e.g. in the VIP car, at the team zone, in hotels). Additionally, the use of my iPhone was similarly valuable to write down quick notes, record voice-memos and, importantly, take photographs (Thorpe & Olive, 2016).

Despite the denied request to follow the initial team, my research and travel schedule were based on the race schedule of the Australian team. In that way, I attended races with the most Australian riders represented. The DS of the team invited me to informally and casually chat with them before races and we built a relationship that way. Besides this reason, the travel order of these races made the most sense and allowed me to attend the most important and the highest number of races. The most important races for the research were the Spring Classics in Belgium, the longest race Giro Rosa in Italy, the highly praised OVO Energy Women's Tour in Great Britain, and La Course by le Tour de France, because of its history and controversy. Throughout the season, but mostly at the start, this schedule allowed me also to

observe other UCI classed races to get a feel for the field and ease myself into the world that I was studying. Additionally, this schedule gave me enough time to travel from country to country. Time and financial resources contributed to the decision-making process concerning the WWT competition. The research budget did not allow for airfares throughout Europe or to the USA and China, where three of the WWT races were held.

During the 2019 season, there were WWT races, and two other UCI ranked race categories, .1 and .2 classified races. The number before the dot indicates whether the race is a one-day or multiple day race. The table below shows the races I attended.

Table 3.1 - Observed races

Order	Race	Date 2019	Country	Class	# days
1	Omloop het Niewsblad	02 March	Belgium	1.1	1
2	Omloop van het Hageland	03 March	Belgium	1.1	1
3	Omloop van de Westhoek	10 March	Belgium	1.1	1
4	Drentse Acht van Westerveld	15 March	Netherlands	1.2	1
5	Ronde van Drenthe	17 March	Netherlands	1.WWT	1
6	Driedaagse Brugge-De Panne	28 March	Belgium	1.WWT	1
7	Gent-Wevelgem	31 March	Belgium	1.WWT	1
8	Dwars door Vlaanderen	03 April	Belgium	1.1	1
9	Ronde van Vlaanderen	07 April	Belgium	1.WWT	1
10	Healthy Ageing Tour	10 - 14 April	Netherlands (+ Germany)	2.1	5
11	Amstel Gold Ladies Tour	21 April	Netherlands	1.WWT	1
12	La Flèche Wallonne Féminine	24 April	Belgium	1.WWT	1
13	WWT Emakumeen XXXII.Bira	22-25 May	Basque country	2.WWT	4
14	OVO Energy Women's Tour	10-15 June	England	2.WWT	6
15	Giro Rosa Iccrea	05-14 July	Italy	2.WWT	10
16	La Course by Le Tour de France	19 July	France	1.WWT	1
17	Donostiako Klasikoa San Sebastian	03 August	Basque country	1.1	1
18	Boels Ladies Tour	03-08 Sept.	Netherlands	2.WWT	3

19	Deakin University Elite women's race/ Cadel Evans	01 Feb 2020	Australia	1.WWT	1
Total					42 race days

The map below visualises the fieldwork. I included pins of the race locations and most camp sites.

Figure 3.1 - Map of fieldwork

In their observations on sport and exercise settings, Thorpe and Olive (2016) discuss Brett Smith's (2013) work on men with a disability and their understanding of health. They conclude that observations allow the researcher insights into the mundane, the typical, and occasionally extraordinary features of everyday life. To grasp the mundane and extraordinary of women's cycling, I approached my observations as mostly descriptive and later, focused

on gender and labour.[6] This approach included travelling to race locations and observing (the lack of) promotions material, wandering around the start location and team zone, interacting with spectators, fans, riders, soigneurs, jury members, volunteers, members of the race organisation, mechanics, DS's, media folks, and local business owners. I observed team presentations prior to races, and announcements and comments about races and riders featured on social media (mostly Twitter). I joined jury cars, team cars, soigneur cars, and I followed volunteers, organisers and media people around during their duties. I watched the race on screen at the finish location, on my phone if a livestream was available (I decided to get unlimited data on my phone for this reason) or in real life along the course. I built relationships with several actors that I would see, interact with or help out at different races, exchanging phone numbers and being provided with race accreditations that gave me access to restricted areas or VIP spaces.

About a month and a half into my fieldwork, I had the opportunity to get very close to one of the UCI teams that allowed me access to their (de)briefings, preparations, hotels, dinners, breakfasts; they gave me rides, they included me in their logistics, I helped set up a birthday surprise for one their DS's, they let me use their washing machine, they borrowed my bike so a soigneur could move from one spot to another during a race to hand out water bottles to the racing riders. I was included in WhatsApp groups, one for the entire team and one specific for the team staff. In return, I wrote race reports they could publish on their website, assisted the riders in their preparations for races and I got the staff coffees when they set up the team zone. Overall, I participated in the field of professional women's road cycling as a jack of all trades, not really belonging anywhere but not having my presence constantly questioned either. At several race locations I was asked whether I was racing by stewards or people of the organisation as they seemed to not be able to place my presence other than that of other women my age: the cyclists. On one hand, I would argue my fieldwork entailed 'ethnographic visiting' (Sugden & Tomlinson, 2002); on the other hand, during those six months, I never left the field as I was travelling, following social media, reading roadbooks, contacting gatekeepers, writing my fieldnotes, and always preparing for the next race.

[6] Markula and Silk (2011a, p. 165) identify three observation stages in ethnography. First, descriptive observations, where the researcher aims to record all possible details. Second, focused observations entail more specific observations that concentrate on a more defined activity or location. Third, selective observations are even further specified observations of an aspect of an activity or location.

Reflexivity and positionality

In this explanation of my fieldwork, it is imperative to discuss the importance of reflexivity and positionality. To absent the researcher from the narrative is not only polite fiction, it is bad science. Stanley and Wise (2002, p. 200) explain that in a morally responsible feminist epistemology, the 'recognition of reflexivity of the feminist researcher in her research as an active and busily constructing agent' is essential. This means that in my research on women's cycling, it is essential to include myself into the narrative accounts I produce. Reflexivity is 'the tendency of feminists to reflect on, examine critically, and explore analytically the nature of the research process' (Fonow & Cook, 2005, p. 2218). Questions of who is researching who, why and how are integral to feminist ethnographic writing, especially the specificities of identity and power relations (Pillow & Mayo, 2012). In other words, reflexivity can be found in the description of the positionality of the researcher. In my case, my positionality is that of a 26-year-old, white, heterosexual, able-bodied, educated, middle-class, athletic, cis-gender Dutch woman. This identity is shaped and constructed by complex social processes before entering the field, but it is also shaped by the fieldwork. In turn, my identity influences the kind of fieldwork I have done.

In my fieldwork, I acknowledge my embodied presence because I cannot escape it nor can I take away my participant's reception of me (Jeffrey, 2020; Thorpe, 2012). As Thorpe (2012) outlines, my reflexivity on my positionality, and thus my approach to the research, is the key issue in ethnographic research. I have to be acutely aware of how my subjectivities influence my relationships with participants and the research process. To *do* reflexivity empowers both the researcher and the participants (Hesse-Biber, 2007). Reflecting on my access to the field, I realised how my characteristics privileged me in gaining access to different spaces in professional women's cycling, for example, during the Amstel Gold Race.

> [The head judge] said [on LinkedIn] to come looking for him before the start, he found someone I could join for observations. I went to the building of the organisation and there was a man looking like security standing in front of the stairs. I greeted him politely with a smile and asked if [first and last name of judge] was inside, but he had no idea. Me: 'Could I go look for him?' Him: 'Well, I am just going to slowly turn around and not see you go in, okay?' 'Thanks! [giggle]'. I quickly walked up the stairs to find the judge. (Fieldnote, April 2019)

My identity as a person who is white privileged me into this field dominated by white people, especially by older, white, heterosexual men who were not threatened by my presence. Being a young, heterosexual, cis-gender woman, I adopted the listen and learn mode (Gill & Mclean, 2002). Even though reflexivity allowed me to recognise those strategies, it is hard to differentiate my behaviour between research strategies or internalised social behaviour. Either way, using myself as the primary research tool, using the body and identity that I have, I was aware of how my persona asking questions could lead to access that I otherwise would not have gotten. Once I had access to the field, I used my humour, my knowledge and my ability to learn, remember, and network to actively keep that access. Based on this approach, I would argue that, besides acknowledging how my positionality shaped my particular social experiences, it is important to reflect on personality as well. People may fit into the same social categories, but they are not homogenous, including feminist ethnographers.

Occasionally, I used academic inspired language when interacting with people in the field. When I reflect on this, I realised I feared that my identity as a short, youthful looking woman with a casual style of dress and little-to-no make-up did not position me as an intellectual, academic and serious researcher, but more like the girl next door. I felt I was not taken seriously by many actors in the field. While this positionality created opportunities to gain access to several interactions (with men), it also impacted the way I behaved. The interaction below illustrates my concerns and frustrations that relate to my lack of mature capital.

> She [the DS] said she already had someone in the car, but she asked one of the soigneurs if I could join them for the day. I heard her say: 'ik heb hier een meisje die onderzoek doet naar vrouwenwielrennen = there's a girl here who does research on women's cycling. Can she join one of you today?' I am twenty-six years old. (Ronde van Drenthe, March 2019)

It took a long time before I gained a sense of insider knowledge. Most times, fieldwork was lonely, exhausting, and mentally challenging. Even after gaining great access to most of the spaces of a professional cycling team and being invited by people in the field to events and situations I wanted to be in, I felt lost at times as I did not belong in the end. After forcing myself to take up space and continuously asking actors for access, I was left behind when the race was over, and left alone to go back to life in the van.

Besides reflecting on how my positionality impacted my access to the field, it is important to consider how my positionality limits what I can know. The practice of reflexivity that I developed was to critically question my initial reactions to observations in the field. While

writing my fieldnotes, I would reflect on what I observed and critically examine my thoughts, feelings and emotions towards these observations. I would wonder why I had observed or experienced things in a particular way, reflecting on how my positionality could impact that. Would I have experienced this situation similarly or differently if I was a man? If so, why do I think that? I acknowledge that my reflexive practice is limited. For example, while I refer to whiteness throughout the thesis, it is a limited account of the racial formation of whiteness. I also did not include reflexive practices on being able bodied and the centrality of that in the sport.

After analysing data from fieldwork, the complex task of representing embodied, sensory and subjective knowledge is one not taken lightly by critical feminist scholars. Critical feminists account for what they choose to highlight in their research, which usually informs an agenda of challenging patriarchy and other structural forms of oppression (Beal, 2018). Reflexivity required me to examine my own subjectivities from which I can claim to represent or know those whom I have been researching. Therefore, in presenting my findings and claims to knowledge, I include my reflexivity throughout the thesis as I aim to answer questions such as how did my social position influence the fieldwork? How did this impact my representation of knowledge?

The explanation of my methods continues below. My observations allowed me to gather information both on what participants 'do' as they move throughout their daily lives, not just what they 'say they do', and expand on understandings of the field beyond interviews (Jeffrey, 2020; Smith, 2013; Thorpe & Olive, 2016). To find out what participants 'say they do', I conducted semi-structured interviews.

Interviews

To do feminist research is to listen to what women have to say. 'Making the invisible visible by allowing more and more women to talk about their oppressions is an important first step in understanding the structured relations of inequality in sport' (Hargreaves, 2004, p. 201). Since I want to understand more about structural and cultural inequalities in women's cycling, I needed to talk and listen to them. The feminist interview holds a unique perspective to semi-structured (or in-depth) ways of interviewing, because feminists are aware of issues of power and authority that might affect the research process (e.g. their own biases and values) (Hesse-Biber, 2007). In ethnographic research, interviewing is an essential method (Madden, 2010). Using this method, I was able to know the cyclists in a personal way and asking questions to gain deeper information than observations. I used the ethnographic

interview method, as Madden (2010) suggests, where early on I took an informal approach of asking questions at races or in other spaces, and later used semi-structured interviews. I also conducted explorative interviews with current and former professionals who actively advocate for women's cycling. I used a combination of face-to-face and phone interviews due to the different geographical locations and limited availability of these elite athletes. I set out to understand the significant experiences of cyclists in their (professional) sport, so my interviews were based on the life-history method with a semi-structured and open-ended format. The interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed verbatim.

Being a woman with newly gained experience in road racing plus my lived experiences and observations at the races, gave me an embodied understanding of the styles of communication and relevant and appropriate topics to discuss for this study. This understanding allowed me to affirm women's knowledge when discussing their lived experiences in their cycling journey during interviews while simultaneously taking a position of curious novice, seeking deeper exploration of their answers. Since qualitative research is not limited by objectivity, I could be an active participant and share my own experiences in the interviews (Markula & Silk, 2011b). When I shared my ambitions of becoming a racing cyclist, the women responded with excitement, interest and recognition of similarity.

In the table below is an overview of the 15 interview participants. My interview guide can be found in Appendix A. I approached the riders for an interview via e-mail, face-to-face interactions or Facebook messages. The interviews lasted between 45 minutes to two hours.

Table 3.2 - List of interview participants

Number	Pseudonym	Category	Nationality
1.	Giulia	National	Australian
2.	Maria	National	Australian
3.	Hannah	National	Australian
4.	Camille	Club rider in Europe	Australian
5.	Abigail	Professional	Australian
6.	Liza	Professional	Australian
7.	Ane	Professional	Dutch
8.	Christine	Professional	Australian
9.	Sammy	Professional	Dutch
10.	Sandra	Professional	Australian

11.	Jodie	Professional	Australian
12.	Kate	Professional	Australian
13.	Julie	Professional	Australian
14.	Violet	Professional	Australian
15.	Jennifer	Professional	Australian

Part of the feminist aim of this study is to listen to women's voices and create a space where they can be heard. Hence, I chose to interview 15 women about their journey in the world of cycling, covering both broad and narrow life-historic events, experiences, and insights. Drawing on feminist interviewing methods, I prioritised care through considered language choices and attentive, affirmative listening strategies with the aim to identify gender–power relations (Hesse-Biber, 2007; Jeffrey, 2020). Through purposefully sampling my participants I sought out information-rich cases (Markula & Silk, 2011b). Considering my holistic approach to this study (i.e. studying the trajectory of women cyclists and to gain insight into labour relations), I aimed to interview a range of elite or professional riders to explore the question of how the concept of professionalism was constructed at different levels of elite cycling. I interviewed three Australian elite cyclists who perform at the highest level nationally (National Road Series, NRS). One of the riders, Camille, was an Australian amateur signed, but not paid, by a club team overseas, hoping to one day make it professionally. The 'professional' category included riders with a contract with a team and who receive money for racing their bike. Importantly, this professionalism differs within this group. Most participants were Australian, two were Dutch. I translated the data used from the Dutch interviews. The participants' ages ranged from 19 to 38 years old. In addition to these interviews, I conducted explorative interviews with (ex)professionals who advocate for women's cycling.

I want to reiterate how feminist researchers view social reality as complex and shaped by different dimensions, which impacts the way we carry out research methods. Again, reflexivity on my positionality is important as it impacts my data collection, ultimate data analysis, interpretation, and writing up of my research findings (Hesse-Biber, 2007). For interviewing, I understood how I, the researcher, and the participants come together with potentially different backgrounds. However, many of my characteristics 'matched' my participants', which minimised the impact of differences on the interview process (Hesse-Biber, 2007). As a 26-year-old, white, heterosexual, able-bodied, educated, middle-class, cis-

gender woman, I had a lot in common with my participants. Below, I describe another strategy I used to minimise the gap between myself, the field and my participants.

Ethnographic approach to (social) media and documents

My interactions with media and official documents for this research should be viewed as inherent to my ethnography, rather than as a formal, systemic method. Personal engagement is crucial in the ethnographic method and thus, I attempted to immerse myself in the field of road cycling: to expose myself to and consume as much cycling as possible. The goal of this immersion was to support my main methods of participating as a cyclist, observing the WWT and interviewing athletes. I undertook several actions, mostly online, to achieve this engagement. I argue that this online approach is important because technological advancements have created a new media landscape in sport. Athletes and sport organisations use social media to engage and interact with fans. Especially in women's sport, this communication medium is notably a potential marketing tool (Allison, 2018; Bowes & Kitching, 2019).

Starting in 2017, my engagement with the online space involved requesting to become part of several women cycling groups on Facebook, and going to their events, on and off the bike. I started following Facebook accounts of Melbourne based cycling clubs, as well as Cycling Australia and Cycling Victoria. I created a Twitter account to follow the accounts of races (e.g. @LaCoursebyTDF), organisations (e.g. @UCI_WWT) teams (e.g. @CCCLivteam) and individual riders (e.g. @marianne_vos). I started following many of these accounts on Instagram as well. I paid for a subscription to a cycling outlet and received their daily news digest in my inbox and access to all their journalistic work. I signed up to specific newsletters on women's racing, such as *Voxwomen*. I visited every race's website to gather information about the race and help me prepare for fieldwork. I bought Nicole Cooke's autobiography *The breakaway* about her journey in professional women's road cycling, *Stand* by Katherine Bertine, and *Ride the revolution* edited by Suze Clemintson. Cycling became part of my daily rituals, scrolling through my feeds, and I became a fan of the sport and of the riders. The relation of gathering online information on different actors in the field prior to my fieldwork, and then experiencing cycling through real-life experiences and interactions was valuable because I had a sense of the conversation – the narrative of professional women's cycling. The discrepancy between online presentation and the reality I observed was fascinating and an important part of understanding the field I was studying.

In addition to my informal (online) exploration of the field, I consulted several official documents, ranging from annual reports by the UCI and Cycling Australia, a beginner's guide to racing by Cycling Victoria, UCI agendas, and best practice guide for women's cycling to competition regulations of the WWT and the National Road Series. Several athletes were willing to share their past and present contracts with me. Although a narrative analysis (Smith & Andrew, 2012) of these types of documents would be beneficial to a deeper understanding of gendered ideologies in professional women's road cycling (e.g. language used in the UCI documents strongly signals male as norm), it is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Photography

In an increasingly visual culture, with images saturating our environment through TV, newspapers, magazines and social media on our phones, photographs are underutilised in social science research (Holm, 2014). Although photographs have mostly been considered 'too subjective' in sociology, when used, it is mostly the researcher as photographer (Holm, 2014). While engaged in my fieldwork, I have taken photos and photographs have been taken of me. I have been asked to take photos of crashed riders by riders, to capture moments during elite races for official social media accounts, and my racing skills have been secured by photographers at races I participated in. In this thesis, the reader will find a collection of these different photos. In accordance with world leading anthropologist Sarah Pink (2007), I do not see photographs as superior to text, but I view text and photographs as complementary and working together. Sarah Pink's work is known for developing innovative digital, visual and sensory research and methodologies to engage with complex issues and challenges. While perhaps not explicitly feminist, Pink's approach and work includes a critical, ethical, and ethnographic perspective that I found useful for this study.

The decision to include photographs is informed by the power of the combination of word and image, because 'even when we can express what seem to be the same meanings in either image-form or writing or speech, they will be realized differently. […]. Expressing something verbally or visually makes a difference' (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2005, p. 2). To use photographs along with my textual data, it is important to acknowledge that photos are constructed, they are made (Holm, 2014). Additionally, the viewer of a photograph uses their own cultural, experienced-based knowledge and moral values to give meanings to the image (Pink, 2007). Both the decision on what to take photos of and which to include in the thesis

are informed by my specific reference to theories in a context of particular social relationships (Pink, 2007). Therefore, I adopted a reflexive approach, so I am aware of the theories that inform my own photographic practice; of my relationships to my photographic subjects; and of the theories that inform my subjects' approach to photography (Pink, 2007). From a feminist ethnographic perspective, I wanted to capture the surroundings I was exposed to while observing the elite road cycling space as a young, white woman. I took photos of both start and finish locations, material present (e.g. the stages, the prizes, the police motorcycles), promotions material (e.g. logos, cartoons, images), sponsor presence (e.g. banners, blow up arches), the crowds, riders, volunteers, and many other subjects that, from my perspective, related to gender, power and labour in the sport of road cycling. 'Ethnographers can have dual (or multiple) intentions when photographing during fieldwork' (Pink, 2007, p. 10). In my photography, I also wanted to capture the journey I was on, travelling solo through Europe in a van, and becoming a racing cyclist in local races. To understand the intersection of my personal and academic intentions of my photos, and how those intentions inform each other and thus combine the represented ethnographic knowledge visually, reflexivity is important and therefore concluded in the presentation of the photos (Pink, 2007).

The abovementioned methods led to a large bulk of data. In the next paragraph, I discuss how I approached analysis of these data.

Data analysis

The many different methods in this qualitative study, from becoming a cyclist, following the WWT, having an online presence and interviewing cyclists, resulted in many different kinds of data: observational and ethnographic material, photographs (reflexive), fieldnotes and interview transcripts. 'There is no single best way of approaching such material' (Maynard, 2011, p. 2). For feminist scholars, data analysis has been a contested point in their larger contextual debate about methodology in qualitative research. Maynard (2011) explains how early feminist work on research practice was highly critical of technique and textbook recipes for data analysis. Feminists view analysis and interpretation not as a separate stage in the research process, but rather as an ongoing aspect of the study. Feminists also tend to view research in holistic terms where the analysis and interpretation will very much depend on the design of the research project overall (Maynard, 2011). It is therefore important to understand that my data analysis is impacted by my feminist framework. This means that this study was not completely inductive. Although I initially allowed for more open coding and themes to

emerge inductively; from the outset, the data analysis has been influenced by my feminist theory and methodology. The repetitive reading, coding and organising of over 200,000 words of fieldnotes, 1363 photographs and 15 interview transcripts were analysed with a strong focus on power, gender, labour, sexism, and professionalism. As mentioned in my discussion of critical feminism in sport, Susan Birrell (2000) identified four themes in critical feminist sport studies. These themes (i.e. the production of an ideology of masculinity and male power through sport; the media practices through which dominant notions of women are reproduced; physicality, sexuality, the body as sites for defining gender relations; the resistance of women to dominant sport practices) have influenced the data analysis in this study on professional women's road cycling as well.

I used the interviews as a starting point for data analysis because those are the direct voices of women in the field. I printed all interviews and colour coded into three themes: labour, gender, and power. I paid attention to what was said and how things were said (e.g. hesitancy, laughter). A second analysis using NVivo 12 software helped me with thematic analysis and identifying patterns (Oxford, 2018). From the themes emerging from interviews, such as how the interviewees talked about the professionalisation of women's cycling, suffering and resistance, I turned to the fieldnotes of my ethnographic observations in Europe and participation at the cycling clubs. I coded the fieldnotes in relation to themes and paid attention to similarities and differences.

To reflect on my power position as a researcher analysing the collected data, my accounts and other women's experiences in (professional) road cycling, I recognise these are my interpretations of the data represented in this thesis. To guard against unwarranted meanings, Maynard (2011) suggests asking participants for feedback during the research process, for example, to read transcripts. Besides discussing hunches and experiences in the local racing scene and European observations with fellow club members (from the second club I joined) or with gatekeepers I kept in touch with via social media and WhatsApp, I did not include participants in the analysis process. Due to the athletic commitments of the cyclists, I did not attempt to invite them to invest more time in this study.

Ethical considerations

The ethical considerations of this research mostly relate to the confidentiality of participants. To secure this confidentiality, I took several measures. Generally, the reader can expect that the names of clubs, teams, groups, and individuals are anonymised through pseudonyms.

However, I do include the real names of teams and races occasionally for historical accuracy. For example, when I discuss my attendance at a race or observing participating teams, I use their names. There are instances where I choose to omit identifiable information. For example, when I quote a staff member I talked to during fieldwork, I do not include their name or their team's name.

For the interviews, I asked the participants to sign an informed consent form in accordance with university guidelines. During telephone interviews, after an introduction to the research and the interview, I asked for informed consent verbally. I included this introduction and the informed consent form in Appendix B. The audio recordings were deleted after transcribing.

For the clubs, I asked the president to sign an informed consent form and I introduced myself as a researcher on the clubs' social media or in their WhatsApp groups. This introduction is in line with my overt approach to the study. I openly discussed being a researcher and that taking notes was part of my presence. While the people I regularly interacted with knew of my study, it was difficult to inform all race participants that I was a researcher. I struggled with questions such as: how legitimate is it to announce before every race that I am a researcher? How can I ethically collect data while also becoming a cyclist? Was my researcher identity obstructing my quest to become a cyclist, which was essential to my research?

I had to balance my researcher and cyclist identities. When I was not actively collecting data, I would still ride my bike through Melbourne for errands, commuting and recreational leisure with friends. So, besides being a researcher studying cycling, I was also a person with a bike. Although I would sometimes include those experiences in my notes as well, the difference with showing up to a race was that I knew that afterwards, I would sit behind my laptop and write about my experiences, observations, feelings, and my interactions with other people, despite them not always knowing I was both a cyclist and a researcher. To ensure confidentiality in these instances, I do not include names or other identifiable information.

For the photographs, 'there is no confidentiality if the photograph includes a person's face' (Holm, 2014, p. 388). For that reason, I blacked out some faces in some photographs. The photographs taken of me included in this thesis are taken by other cyclists or club volunteers with the intent to be posted on social media, usually Facebook. This platform is where I collected most of those photographs. So, although the other people in the photographs were aware their photos were posted on social media, they did not necessarily consent to being

included in a doctoral thesis. For this reason, I used black circles to anonymise them. I had more control over the photographs I took as a researcher and thus I could rely on my ethical judgement in each situation. None of my photographs would potentially harm or compromise the participants in my research. Again, I used black circles to anonymise some people in photos, but the professional cyclists were recognisable. Their position as a professional athlete automatically enters them into a relationship with the media where they are expected to be photographed by official press, race organisers, and fans, and these photos make it out into the public domain. Nonetheless, I chose photographs that do not compromise the riders.

In general, ethical issues require sensitivity concerning ethics and politics involved in both the research process and in the production of written accounts and analyses (Wheatley, 1994, as cited in Maynard, 2011).

Conclusion

This third chapter explained the methodology of this study on professional women's road cycling. In my discussion of how my methodology and theoretical framework are connected, I explained that the explicit feminist approach to this study shaped both method and theory. From this perspective, I set out to adopt a methodology concerned with inequitable gendered relations, how these are (re)produced and ideally, offer accompanying strategies of change in women's cycling. The methods aimed to capture women's lived experiences in road cycling and listen to their voices. My chosen methods of participation, observation, interviews, and my ethnographic approach to media, documents and photography, allowed for flexibility and creativity to follow the flow of the field, and observe and engage where needed. As a feminist researcher, I engaged with relationships, reciprocity, representation, and voice, and I did so from a place that questions the power of gendered practices.

In the following chapter, I offer an analysis of my feminist ethnography in the local Melbourne road cycling scene using Connell's gender relations framework.

Chapter 4 – Sufferfest 1.0

> It had been raining for the past two kilometres, but since I was climbing a 6.3% gradient, I felt warm. I was on my own and every now and then I would turn my head to see if anyone was coming up. At times, I would get passed by some blokes and I would try to guess their grade based on the colour of their numbers, and how long they had started after me. "It doesn't fucking matter, Suus, keep pedalling. Where is the top of this mountain? Should I drink something? But my hands are so cold, I can't possibly grab my bottle. Is that the top?!" I spotted a vehicle parked on the side of the road and some people in ponchos. The ponchos cheered me on. That was a top, but not *the* top. The road was incredibly wet and now, I had to descend. "Don't crash, don't crash, don't crash. Too fast: break! But don't break too much. Don't lean into the bend, but don't resist it. Just go, just… whatever, just don't crash. Why am I doing this?" The cold was everywhere now, and I had never been so thankful to start a climb. I didn't think things could get worse, but then, when I saw the 1km sign, it started to snow! This last kilometre was still steep, and I was exhausted and all I knew was that I needed to get to the finish line to make it stop (Fieldnote, Tour of Bright, 2 December 2019).

This chapter is an introduction to the world of cycling based on my feminist ethnography in the local Melbourne road racing scene. It presents my experiences and interpretations of becoming a racing cyclist as a young woman. I explain my embodiment and how I was embedded in the social and symbolic structure of this field of road racing.

Figure 4.1 - Tour of Bright

I use Connell's framework as a tool to analyse the micro-level gender regime in this grassroots space of cycling. I look at how the gender regime of this space is underpinned by four dimensions: power, economic, emotional and symbolic relations. Specifically, I look at the ways people, groups, and organisations are connected and divided in cycling. These findings offer a starting point to a deeper understanding of the gendered struggles of professional women's road cycling. The chapter starts with ethnographic motivations to participate. I will then detail my introduction to the field and the two cycling clubs I joined. The remainder of the chapter concerns the analysis of the gender regime of the local Melbourne road racing scene.

From commuter to ethnographic racer

In ethnography, the researcher is the research instrument par excellence and thus an active participant in the research process (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007; Gill & Maclean, 2002). To actively perform the phenomenon subject to the study is called immersive fieldwork (Wacquant, 2015). This type of fieldwork is a rewarding path towards revealing the cognition, connected wishes, intentions or efforts, and the socialised skills, habits, and dispositions (habitus) behind practices in the field, and the system under investigation (Wacquant, 2015). Immersive fieldwork keeps the life in social life and brings a completer and more adequate grasp of the social. However, as Loïc Wacquant (2015) argues, 'it takes social spunk and persistence to burrow into a suitable position of "observant participation" and reap its rewards' (p. 2). Consequently, I decided to become a racing cyclist.

Unlike a growing number of critical scholars studying sport (Olive & Thorpe, 2011), I did not approach this research with previous experience: I was not a cyclist. As a Dutch woman, the bicycle is an unquestioned vehicle of transportation, but I never considered racing one. My limited leisurely use of a bicycle was to own a mountain bike, without ever making it to the mountains. In addition to my lack of participation, I had little prior interest in the elite side of cycling. I remember the men in my family watching the Tour de France during my childhood summers, and how extremely bored I was. However, watching Marianne Vos's victory in the 2012 Olympic road race was a significant experience of elite cycling for me. During my studies, I walked past a photo of this moment at Utrecht Central train station every day. Starting my research on women's road cycling in 2017, I was far removed from being a 'cultural insider' (Olive & Thorpe, 2011). Where Olive and Thorpe (2011) used their specific snowboarding and surfing capital 'to gain access to some cultural spaces, develop relationships with some participants and enable understandings of the multiple forms of

power operating on and through [their] own and others' bodies' (p. 425), I needed a different approach to achieve those crucial aspects of enactive ethnography. Rather than a seasoned practitioner, I was a naïve novice rider, yet experienced athlete.

As a feminist ethnographer, it is important to acknowledge how I can be in a position of power to claim I 'know the truth' about professional women's road cycling, and that my work is an accurate representation of the people and cultural dynamics in this sport (Beal, 2018). Through creating my own journey of becoming a racing cyclist, to have the bodily experience of riding a bicycle with drop bars, wearing Lycra and racing against a group of people, I created an opportunity to access 'insider' knowledge. Through practising reflexivity, I could examine how my own position might privilege certain types of explanations while omitting others (Beal, 2018).

'If you don't love the bike, you won't ride the bike' – My introduction to road cycling

Many women get into cycling through a male figure in their life (McLachlan & Trott, 2018). I got into cycling and racing because of my research and tried to find my own way into the sport. However, my positionality as a woman resulted in many similar experiences. In August 2017, without any knowledge of bikes or a network in cycling, I used different strategies to gain access to the field. This was a difficult and lengthy process. To be able to race, I needed to become a member of a cycling club and have a registered racing license with the national federation Cycling Australia (CA).[7] I found three cycling clubs with a strong women's presence, and I called and emailed them seeking advice. I called different volunteers (women) who talked me through the process of becoming a cyclist. They were happy to talk to me, although surprised I had contacted them, as they usually have new riders 'simply' show up at their rides. They advised me on what to look for in a bike – 'if you don't love the bike, you won't ride the bike' – is what one woman told me. Once I had a bike, the volunteers advised me to get used to it before joining a bunch ride. All of their bunch rides were incredibly early in the morning (05:45am) and on the other side of town. I felt discouraged to find a good bike and a group where I could learn how to ride and race. A university friend suggested I join a group of women that organised outdoor velodrome sessions for women to

[7] Cycling Australia became part of AusCycling in November 2020. AusCycling represents 19 cycling organisations, bringing together road, track, paracycling, BMX, BMX freestyle, E-Sport, mountain bike, cyclo-cross and lifestyle (commuter and recreational). Because of this joint venture, memberships have changed. Now, when cyclists purchase a racing license, they can race in all disciplines. At the time, CA offered one- or three-day race licenses as well. In 2021, they offer a one- or seven-day event license when one does not want to commit to full membership.

try out cycling at one of the cycling clubs. The track (velodrome) was intimidating and not knowing anyone contributed to that feeling. No one that I met during those sessions road raced. I would cycle 30 minutes there and back on my heavy commuter bike to ride laps on an old, uncomfortable, fixed gear track bike. The group was supported by a male coach and I explained to him how I wanted to get into road cycling. After a few sessions on the track, he identified my confidence and fitness as talent. He suggested I could do a women's criterium that Saturday and he offered to meet me there. These actions were the beginning of my continuous claim for social spunk and persistence. While it was the women's group that brought me to the velodrome, it was the male coach who ended up being my initial gatekeeper to racing.

I had the opportunity to take over a road bike for $800, which is relatively cheap for a road bike, but a big sum of money for me. I wanted to love my bike, but I did not. It caused me great discomfort and pain. This troubled sensation in sport was not new to me (I have done 'traditional' sports since I was a child), but the severity was. The advice I received consisted of notions such as 'you just need to keep riding, get used to the bike; you need to make k's [kilometres]; try different seats; get a bike fit'. Cycling is an expensive sport and my financial situation did not allow me to buy different seats to try or have an expert tune to the bike dimensions of my body. It took almost a year before I could find my way in the cycling world: to go to the right shop (women's seats were limited in stock at most shops), to make friends that let me try and borrow their spare seats, to get referred to a person who does cheap bike fits, to find the cheap deals on jerseys. It took time to accumulate knowledge and relationships.

I often felt lost trying to get into cycling. Part of this stemmed from the way clubs are organised. Most clubs serve people who know how to cycle in bunches and how to race. Besides clubs, there are many self-organised groups that provide an easier entry level into cycling and aim to be a less intimidating space. In this enactive ethnography, I undertook actions that were daunting and uncomfortable, by adopting a research persona. As an academic, I have a high sense of curiosity, and as a lifelong athlete, I am generally keen to take on new athletic challenges. However, I needed to push myself to become a person who wanted to learn how to race bikes and feel a sense of belonging in the cycling community. At times, I did not want to be there: I did not want to be a cyclist. The passion, dedication and enjoyment I saw in other cyclists towards their leisurely activity or sport, contributed to my perseverance to gain any understanding of their world. I also felt envious of their ability to

enjoy what caused me much distress. To better understand those subjects I am studying from their point of view, I needed to include the dynamic roles I play as a researcher to ensure my access and acceptance in the field (Purdy & Jones, 2013). I needed the role of researcher to persevere, to gain access to the field I wanted to study. When my personal identity did not want to cycle, I called upon my roles as researcher, scholarship recipient, and international PhD candidate to create the will to cycle.

In addition, reflecting on the activism part of this feminist work, I continued to show up to count as a racing woman. I wanted to take up space in the field and be an example of a woman who has an interest in racing and who has a right to this space and practice. If I kept showing up and add to the numbers, then my presence would count for something. To be present in the space of bicycle racing as a woman would count towards normalising that presence and hopefully ease the access to and continuation in the field for other girls and women. I found the activist part of feminist research very challenging. Through reflecting on my positionality and socialisation into a 'nice', 'polite' white woman, I found it difficult to verbally challenge the gender practices I was critical of, both in the moment and afterwards. My ability to build relationships in the field is strongly connected to my identity as a 'nice' woman (or girl). However, once relationships were built, I found more confidence to carefully question status quo gender practices and ask critical questions.

The Melbourne road racing scene

It took until September 2018 before I officially joined a cycling club. Although I continued to cycle and attend racing events to observe and build my network, it took meeting the right person at a SheRace meeting to make the decision.[8] In practice, to race, it does not matter much which club you join, because anyone with a racing license can sign up for races. However, the most frequent road races in Melbourne are club races which mean the clubs can decide which races are for members only and which races are for anyone with a license. For my research, I wanted to join a club that geographically made sense and was racing oriented. When I met Amanda from South Side Cycling Club (SSCC) and told her I did research and was considering joining her club, she said they were always looking for more women to join. When we met a week later, she talked me into doing a handicap race (80km) that Saturday

[8] SheRace is a group of volunteers that aims to create a fun, friendly and inclusive community in Melbourne where women can support women to race bikes. They are mostly active on Facebook and at the start of their journey, they organised several in person meetings for women to come together and create a strategy to get more women into racing. I went to two of their meetings, which helped me gain access to the field.

and called her husband to reopen registration so I could sign up (the race was a disaster as I got dropped after eight minutes and only did 40km). Her encouragement, support, and enthusiasm enabled me to feel confident about joining the club as I now had someone who was willing to push me in the right direction, answer my million questions and make the world of cycling less intimidating.[9] I signed up for a $339.95 annual racing license, I contacted the president of SSCC for informed consent, and I introduced myself on the club's Facebook page with the photo below. By this time, I had purchased a more comfortable seat, a proper helmet, new water bottles, and new jerseys with matching socks. I started to look, and therefore feel, more like a cyclist.

Figure 4.2 - Introduction to the club photo

When I returned to Melbourne from my fieldwork in Europe, I joined a different club, X cycling club (XCC). The reason I joined the second club stemmed from my experiences right before leaving for Europe. At the end of 2018, I crashed in a race which left me and my bike quite traumatized. Due to the long repairs, I had not gotten back on my bike and definitely not back to racing before going to Europe.

The crash left me with a deep fear of returning to riding and racing. Despite this fear, I wanted to remain involved in the cycling field and posted a message on the SheRace Facebook page, asking for help to get back into riding and racing. I received 21 comments with advice and offers to ride with me. Clara of XCC invited me to come to their Thursday morning women's training ride. This ride was not as early (06:30am) and, after having lived in Melbourne for about a year and a half, I knew how to get to their location (about a 30min ride). I took up her offer, loved the ride, was inspired by the group's and especially Clara's enthusiasm, and signed up to join the club.

[9] This struggle of becoming a cyclist, but eventually meeting Amanda who helped me into the field, is similar to many women's struggle getting into cycling. In their study on women cyclists, Rowe et al. (2016) explain how the journey of getting back into or commencing cycling for the first time was seen to be best supported by others. The difficulty for these women was to find a suitable option for their level of competence and fitness in their local area.

Although my cycling experiences in the Melbourne road racing scene were not limited to my membership and participation in SSCC and XCC, they strongly shaped what I was exposed to, offered various lived experiences and has taken a prominent place in my analysis of the gender regime in Melburnian cycling.

The old club

I consider SSCC a traditional cycling club. They are one of the oldest clubs in Melbourne (1895) and their origin lies in 'professional' cycling.[10] In the past, they had a velodrome where they organised races but for the past few decades, they have organised road races and crits (criteriums) in and around Melbourne. The club is predominantly male, both in their membership and their committee. Their numbers fluctuate between 100 and 200 members and they don't have junior members. In my time at the club, I have met and raced with five other women members and I have seen about the same number of women that were non-members racing as a visitor. All members are required to do marshalling duties three times a season. The 12 committee posts are filled by 13 individuals, including one woman, Sharon, as their women's officer. Most of the committee members race themselves or are involved as commissaires. Both Amanda and Sharon's husbands were also involved in the club as members and volunteers. Although SSCC's club committee meetings are open to all members, when I attended in November 2018, Sharon and I were the only women present in a group of about 16 people. SSCC's year is divided into two seasons: road season from April to October (Australian winter) and criterium season from October to March (Australian summer). The club is race oriented, meaning they organise races but no social bunch rides. As a beginner, I considered the crits were more suitable because I could learn the basics of racing while not having to ride 80–125km. Once the crit season starts, the club puts on one weekday and one weekend-day race at two different locations: a 1km or 2km loop. The 1km track is secluded and cut off from traffic, which makes for (relative) safe racing conditions. The 2km loop is located in an industrial area that is mostly quiet during the weekend but

[10] During cycling's constituting days, around the late 1800s, the sport was influenced by the tension between amateurism, a British-inspired ideal which disapproved of making money through sport, and professionalism (Knuts & Delheye, 2015). Generally, amateur races were for trophies only and open races for cash or cash and trophies. However, amateur races adopted commercial features as well, such as entrance fees, which proved to be problematic to those wishing to maintain "pure" amateurism in bicycling racing (Toohey, 2010). Although the term amateur has meant to not pursue a sport or art as a profession, amateurs were still able to win money from stakes and wagers, indicating the flexibility of the term and how it bore a rather social than economic meaning (Toohey, 2010). Where the initial clubs were organised for socialising purposes, the lobbying of cyclists' interests, and later for organising amateur races to set records or bicycle tours; professional clubs organised races where participants could win money and offered support to racers by providing material help, training facilities and financial aid (Knuts & Delheye, 2015; Oosterhuis, 2016).

requires marshals for traffic control. Before the crits, volunteers walk around with brooms and leaf blowers to clean the tracks.

The grading system used in the Melbourne road racing scene is also used by SSCC. Their races are divided into A, B, C, D and (sometimes) E grades and last respectively 60, 50, 40, 45 and 30 minutes. These grades are generally described as 'open' grades, meaning that anyone, woman or man, who thinks they are good enough, can enter the race. These grades are dominated by men. Some clubs have dedicated women's grades, i.e. women only races. SSCC does not run standard separate women's grades. I raced in D grade with SSCC and C/D grade at other races. At those races, some experienced and strong women racers would do an open grade prior to racing in the women's A grade. Entryboss, a race entry system, was used for cyclists to sign up and pay their entry fee ($15 for members, $20 for visitors). I was able to do volunteer work for SSCC (registering racers prior to the race) in exchange for entries (I still paid entry fees to races I participated in organised by other clubs).

The young club

I consider XCC a modern club. The club was founded in June 2019, only four months before I joined them. Most members and club leaders came from a cycling group that was run by one of the leaders who owned a sport coaching business. The decision to become a registered club was for insurance purposes and the ability to apply for grants, since a club is a not-for-profit organisation. The leaders had to submit a four-page document to Cycling Victoria (CV, the state cycling federation) explaining what type of club they would be and list at least 10 current members. Clara is a main force behind the organisation of XCC and is responsible for memberships. The role of president and vice-president are filled by a couple that also lead rides, but Clara emphasised these positions were mostly symbolic. Throughout my fieldwork, sarcastic jokes were made with Tom, the president, about his almighty 'power' and his 'authoritarian' leadership.

XCC's main goal was to get more people, and especially women, into cycling. The club does not organise races, but they support and encourage people to do racing events. They organise training and social rides or cycling weekends outside of Melbourne. These initiatives were incredibly helpful for me as a young woman without a car and little cycling experience. It took a lot of following up from the leaders with CV to find out that the club was official. Consequently, the leaders were able to apply for grants, and they received a grant to purchase bikes for women to borrow and try out cycling. They also received a grant to train their experienced members to become ride leaders. Because the club's aim was to get more people

into riding, they decided to work with a low club fee, because cycling, and specifically racing, is already too expensive.

The club organised two training rides during the week under the guidance of a race leader: one for faster riders (more men came to this ride) and one for mid-pace riders (more women showed up for this ride). On Saturdays, the club organised training rides of different distances, about 40km, 80km and 100km. The race leaders were both men and women. During these rides, we were often celebrated by bystanders due to how many women were part of our group. The club aimed to organise beginners and family rides once a month (slow pace and children in bike seats or trailers were welcome). After all rides, the group would have coffee and/or brunch at a local café. The club also organised skills sessions in combination with social events like barbeques. Jim, one of the founding members and Clara's husband, would do groceries for the barbeque and look after their children, while Clara ran the sessions. In March 2021, the club had 83 members, 52 women (63%) and 31 men (37%).

The table below offers an overview of my activities with the cycling clubs (I did not keep count of my social and training rides).

Table 4.1 - Club activities

Type	Frequency	Club
Criteriums	15	SSCC
Kermesse	1	XCC
Handicap	2	SSCC, XCC
Tour of Bright	1	XCC
Meetings	1	SSCC
Crashes	4	SSCC, XCC
Social events	3	XCC
Track sessions	7	Women's group; Cycling Victoria; XCC
Handicap skills session	1	XCC

In the previous sections, I detailed my introduction to the road cycling scene in Melbourne and the background of the two clubs where I did fieldwork. In the remainder of the chapter I use Connell's gender relations framework to analyse the gender regime of this space. I briefly reiterate the framework by presenting my version of the gender regime table for Melbourne before turning to the findings.

Gender regime of road racing in Melbourne

The gender relations framework by Raewyn Connell (1987, 2021) is detailed in Chapter 2. I used her framework to analyse the power, economic, emotional, and symbolic relations in the road racing scene in Melbourne, Australia. I considered the gender division of (paid and unpaid) labour (economic). I looked at the gender pattern that involves control, authority, and force exercised on gender lines, both at individual and collective levels (power). I analysed the emotional attachments in human life structured by gender, which mostly concerns sexuality, and is dominated by heterosexuality (emotional). I also examined the gendered meanings constructed through everyday language and images in the space of Melbourne road racing (symbolic). My findings are summarised in the table below. The findings are mostly examples of reproducing gender relations, however, there are also examples of challenging and changed examples. In the table, these relations are signalled in bold. Beginning with the economic relations, I expand on the findings in the following sections.

Table 4.2 - Gender regime of Melbourne road racing

Empirical examples of the Gender Regime in the Melbourne Road Racing Scene			
Economic	**Power**	**Emotional (cathexis)**	**Symbolic**
Women take care of registration of races; men take on leading roles such as commissaire	SSCC old, traditional club is male dominated; **XCC young, modern club has more women**	Both husband and wife are involved in club If women involved, husband also involved	Cycling is called a 'man's thinking game'
SSCC volunteers all happy to do registration table, clean circuit under name of safe racing	Bureaucratic control of clubs in hands of men: overrepresentation of men in leadership positions	Popularity of criteriums because men can be home by noon to wife and kids	Gender marking events
Overrepresentation of men in club committees	Cycling Australia's and Cycling Victoria's tokenistic gender equality policies	Sexualised jokes and relationship status check	Infantilization of women by referring to them as girls
The only committee member that is a woman is the women's officer	The social practice of glorifying crashing and suffering (violence) to construct masculinity and the 'true' cyclist identity	Social practices that emphasise heteronormativity (shaking hands; kisses on cheek)	Men's accomplishments are mythologised and celebrated
The structure of	Control of the	Internalised sexism	Dominant cyclist

winning money in the sport	marshals and the related construction of masculinity in the name of safety	through sporting ideologies	look is masculine
Women aiming to win money to buy new equipment	Male figures as gatekeepers to racing	Hostility to women's participation = the emotional attachment to women's participation	Emphasis on men and male bodies in cycling products and shops
Equal prize money for male and female riders is mandatory, but fewer races for women means fewer prizes	**Grants for women's cycling**	Women peeing; the need for facilities	**Spaces outside of competitive road cycling adopt resisting practices against masculine dress code**
Cycling as the new business networking tool to maintain old boys network			
Road cycling is expensive excluding those with lower incomes (often women)			

Economic relations

The division of labour and the distinction between paid and unpaid work is central to economic relations in Connell's framework. Cycling clubs are not-for-profit organisations and there are no paid positions in the club (although some SSCC volunteers are 'rewarded' by not having to pay entry fees to races). The jobs necessary at a race (i.e. registration table, commissaire and marshal) are all done by volunteers. In general, I observed women handling the registration table and men functioning as the commissaire or marshal at races. The women I did see marshalling were active at women's races. At SSCC, several members would assist in registering riders even when they were not scheduled to do so. Because the club had few women members, most jobs were done by men, from taking on a committee role to cleaning the track with a broom. It is noticeable that the only woman on the committee is responsible for the women's side of the club. During a SSCC committee meeting, Sharon was asked and heard about her responsibilities, but she also needed to make sure women were included in particular practices:

> Sharon, drinking bubbles while most men had beer, was asked by Chris whether the opening of the coffee shop at their Sunday race location would

> attract more women. She affirmed. She was also asked to report on the race that was organised for novice women riders. She said it was a success with 12 riders showing up. They had not charged entry fees, nor was there prize money awarded to prevent experienced riders from participating and taking the win. The prizes included chocolate in different sizes, which made a few men laugh through their nose. Later, Sharon needed to remind another committee member that for club teams to be registered to a particular race, there can only be one team manager that is allowed to submit an application so she would ask if there were women at SSCC that wanted to be part of the team before the application should be submitted. He was unaware of this. (Fieldnote, 12 November 2018)

While women's cycling was an afterthought for some of the board members, the club's board had made decisions in favour of women cyclists such as offering equal prize money and organising novice racer sessions. However, the responsibility for women's inclusion seemed to be principally with the woman's officer, allowing others to not be too concerned.

XCC had a strong foundation and representation of both women and men in their committee and membership base. In October 2020, during the annual general meeting, the attending members discussed the rotation of committee roles and decided to have a female president. The vice president was happy to step up for one year and then let someone else take on the role. The president was happy to be the VP that year. Nonetheless, even at this 'modern' club, the committee had an overrepresentation of men (four out of six committee positions are filled by men) despite a 62% women membership.

A 191 BPM heartbeat for 50 bucks

> I heard the bell: last lap. I wanted to keep cool until the hill. I was behind the junior boy, the old grumpy man and Lisa. I looked back once and saw the other women. Three-quarters onto the hill, I just went for it. I went to the right, passing the three in front of me and I went as hard as I could. I didn't look back. When I passed the finish line, I was so nauseous I almost puked. My heart rate was 191bpm! The other riders passed me, and no one said anything. There were no congratulations. 'Are we still racing?!' I couldn't possibly continue after that effort. The other riders pulled into the registration area, and that confirmed that I had won! It wasn't the great victory I had

> hoped for. I played it out right, but the reward – the recognition from fellow riders – wasn't there. I actually had to tell them I won. I got first place and won $50. (Fieldnote, 23 November 2019)

Race duration and entry fees vary per race and club. Many clubs have cheaper fees for their own members and higher rates for non-members. I did most of my races with SSCC which lasted on average between 40-45 minutes. At other clubs, the racing time was much shorter. Twice, I paid $16 for an 18-minute women's grade race. Racing cyclists pay for a license with AUScycling ($250), club membership ($0--$145) and fees for every race you enter. Bigger races charge higher fees (e.g. the three-day Tour of Bright cost $150). The entry fees are used to run races and pay out winners.[11] I was surprised to learn you could win money at bike races.

> Socks were displayed as prizes on the registration table and I asked in a surprised tone: 'You can win stuff?' The woman behind the registration table said: 'Yeah, you win money. They are not here for fun, they're here for the money!' I laughed and was still surprised. I've played competitive field hockey, and no one paid me or my team to take part in a competition. It was interesting to see that even at this level, which to me is at very amateur level, there is money involved. Prize money must be a big part of the sport. (Fieldnote, 21 October 2017)

Ever since the first cycling races in the 1860s, cycling has been a commercial sport. Newspaper companies organised races to promote their papers and increase sales, and riders were able to win money for crossing the finish line first (Brewer, 2002; Mignot, 2016). This history has shaped current racing practices, because prize money is still on the line throughout all levels of competition. For some women riders, this money plays a significant role. They use their wins to enter more races to gain the skills and experience necessary to become a better rider.

> After the race, I talked to a girl who did B-grade and she told me how she wants to participate in these crits a lot so she can purchase a new bike (and use that bike to race more and earn more money, etc.). I asked her how much she had won: $50 for coming second in women's B-grade. She will have to

[11] AUScycling writes in their general technical regulations that, wherever possible, they guarantee male and female equity in competition prize money (AUScycling, 2021b). Cycling Victoria's specific women's racing policy states that prize money for male and female riders in congruent categories should be of equal value for equal placing (Cycling Victoria, n.d.). It is explicitly noted that different prize money for male and female competition is sex discrimination.

win many races before she can afford a new bike… (Fieldnote, 21 October 2017)

There are examples of clubs handling higher prize money for higher grades. For example, I won $50 getting first in women's C-grade while the girl in the fieldnote above won $50 for getting second in women's B-grade (i.e. first place in B-grade would have gotten more than $50). Since most club races are open grades dominated by men, women's chances of winning higher prizes are smaller. Additionally, even though many clubs manage equal prize money for open and women's grades, there are fewer races for women in the season. For example, of the four Melbourne clubs that listed women crits on Entryboss in 2020, one had 9 women and 18 open races, another 14/23, a third 3/43 (although they pay out women separately if there are more than two women in a grade) and a fourth ran crits once a week for six weeks, including three separate grades for women.

Figure 4.3 - Winning prize money

Crashing hurts the wallet

Lars was telling the men around us how he couldn't do the chicken dance or chicken wing anymore, which really upset him. Lars: 'Because you know me! I want to do the chicken wing/dance'. My guess is that he was referring to his new injury due to the crash at the last road race. Also, it cost him a grand to have his bike back on the road. I thought: 'Fuck, I really don't want to crash because I don't have the money to fix my bike'. (Fieldnote, 13 October 2018)

One of the crashed guys, older man with a beard, his spokes broke, and he got into the car with us. This was his first race back from a previous crash. He was pretty pissed [off] about crashing, blaming it on riders from other clubs: 'They were really riding reckless and then stuff like this happens, spent four grands to get the bike back on the road'. (Fieldnote, 8 September 2018)

Cycling is an expensive sport and it can be a means through which members of the late-modern, middle and upper classes project economic and social power (Falcous, 2017; Lamont & Ross, 2020; O'Connor & Brown, 2007). Ferrero-Regis (2018) mentions how road cycling is the new business networking tool. Cycling is about seeing and being seen. Cyclists meet up for coffee after rides at their favourite cafes and some organised rides include meals, visits to wineries, and personal masseurs onsite. These practices result in strong bonds among wealthy corporate managers, lawyers, and other industry executives that dominate the field, especially in 'casual' riding on beach road (Ferrero-Regis, 2018; O'Connor & Brown, 2007). An example of these practices is apparent in my interview with elite Australian cyclist, Camille. She said she trains with her father's bunch ride, which consists of about 30 middle-aged men.

> Camille: They're all super supportive, really encouraging, and we've got very strict rules about: You don't go out with a kit… we've got different kits for different days. You don't have a kit? You can't roll turns and that just stops other people from interfering, because there's sooooo many people on beach road, it's so dangerous. So, everyone just knows us as a really safe group, which is nice to be a part of.
>
> Me: So, there's different kits for different days?
>
> Camille: That's just because, we've got too many, haha, too many people in the group who own their own company and want it on there, their own kit to wear, haha.

From an economic relation's perspective, these practices impact the economical position of women as they are mostly excluded from the sport, and with that, the important spaces for business deals. Consequently, these practices serve as another example of maintaining the old boys network.

It is expensive to start road cycling, because the equipment has a high price tag. Road bikes can cost up to $10,000. A sum of $1000 to $2000 is considered a reasonable amount for a beginner's bike. For me, that is still a big sum of money and I was very lucky with my $800 bike. The costs do not stop with the bike, but include the proper shoes, cleats, special clothing (Lycra), a helmet, accessories, subscriptions and maintenance, like new tires and tubes, a bike check, new chain, etc. As described above, the numerous costs of participating (license, membership fees, etc.) add to the expenses of racing bikes. At the end of 2019, I had the opportunity to work with a cycling coach and focus on training and preparing for actual road

races in 2020. (Unfortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic obstructed these plans.) I became ‘serious’ about cycling.

Figure 4.4 - My damaged bike

The coach cost about $700 for one year but I could pay it in terms. I started booking massage therapy and also needed physiotherapy for a hamstring injury. I bought gels and other supplements. Despite my hope not to crash, I did; and I did have to repair my bike. It is, however, cheaper to repair a cheap bike.

When I bought my bike, the previous owner also donated some of her old cycling jerseys, like the long-sleeve Sky one I am wearing in the photos below. Nothing fitted quite right. I ordered my cycling shoes from the internet and the male track coach assisted me with putting on the cleats. The bike seat was a men’s time trial seat, and the helmet was a hand-me-down mountain bike helmet from a housemate. My drink bottle was from a goodie bag and I did not have gloves or glasses. To be able to do my first race and start my journey was an assembly of various people’s efforts.

Figure 4.5 - First race

Figure 4.6 - Racing in donated gear

In total, I spent about $4200 on cycling over two years, which is 8.2% of my income while my housing expenses were 41.5%.[12] These high costs are a barrier to the sport, especially for women. According to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (2021), Australian women earn 13.4% less than men in full-time positions. However, only 37% of full-time positions are filled by women and they make up 68.7% of part-time employees which impacts their overall income even more (Dawson, Kovac, & Lewis, 2020). Also, the numbers of WGEA do not include a breakdown of numbers by ethnicity and/or race. From my observations of the sport, it was straightforward to conclude how white cycling is. At SSCC, I predominantly perceived members as white with the exception of one East-Asian man and two Black men. XCC had some international riders (British, Columbian) and was also predominantly white. Studies and reports from the US show how intersecting identities can affect the experience of the gender pay gap. In 2018, for example, Asian women earned 93.5% of what white men earned, white women earned 81.5%, Black women 65.3%, and Hispanic women 61.6% (Hegewisch & Hartmann, 2019). The cost of cycling impacts (marginalised) women significantly.

Power relations

The division of labour discussed above in economic relations also resembles power relations in the field of road cycling in Melbourne. The majority of power positions in clubs,

[12] In comparison, if I had played netball for two seasons, it would have cost me $156 for a Victoria Netball membership. If I had included shoes and a uniform, it would have cost around $250-$300, which is 0.48% – 0.57% of my income.

federations, and at races (e.g. commissaires) are held by men.[13] This means that as a group, men have bureaucratic control and determine what and how sport and races are run. However, from that bureaucratic point of view, change is occurring. When Cycling Australia (CA) and other cycling federations joined to become AUScycling, Marne Fecher was appointed as CEO by the board of directors (11 positions of which six are women).[14] Most board members are passionate cyclists.[15] Fecher is the former CEO of Netball Australia and she rides a bike, which suggests she does not have a significant racing history and with that, little cycling capital. Considering the masculine bias, where organisations run by men favour procedures that favour men, AUScycling seems to have looked past the lack of cycling capital and appointed a woman to a powerful position. (She has doubled Netball Australia's revenue during her leadership there.) The state federation, Cycling Victoria (CV), reports 40% representation of women on their board and aims to achieve 50/50 in 2021. They created a 'toolkit for attracting and retaining women and girls', written policy specific to women's racing structure, employed a gender equity officer in 2018 and increased their social media coverage of female cyclists in the cycling community (Cycling Victoria, 2020).

While the policies look good on paper, AUScycling recently announced the nominated council members for the State Advisory Councils, the committees that support AUScycling in the delivery of AUScycling strategic and operational plan in the community. The list shows a large gender imbalance (see AUScycling, 2021a). Specifically, Victoria has two women in a Council of nine members which is not the 50% representation they claim to have achieved in 2021. According to a Facebook post by a SheRace member, the nomination was based on an expression of interest process, but the positions were not promoted in the community (Fitton, 2021). This process implies that only the people within the close network of AUScycling

[13] In their gender equity action plan, Cycling Victoria reports that of the 41 clubs that responded to their Club Review Questionnaire, 15 clubs had an all-male committee. One club had an all-female committee (a women only club), two clubs have more than 50% female committee members and two clubs had a 50/50 gender balance. 'Of those clubs who have women on their committees, the majority of them are in the role of treasurer, secretary or women and girls. Of the 41 clubs who responded, only three clubs have a female president and two a female vice-president' (Cycling Victoria, 2020, p. 10).

[14] The CEO of AUScycling is responsible for the day-to-day management and control of business and affairs. This includes a) develop business plans, budgets, strategies, policies, processes and codes of conduct; (b) manage the financial and other reporting mechanisms; (c) approve and incur expenditure subject to specified expenditure limits; (d) sub-delegate her powers and responsibilities to employees or internal management committees; and (e) any other powers and responsibilities which the Directors consider appropriate to delegate to the CEO (AUScycling, 2020, p. 37). Despite the accountability of the CEO to the board of directors, this is a significantly powerful position.

[15] Based on their biographical notes on the AUScycling website on 3 March 2021: https://www.auscycling.org.au/page/about/board

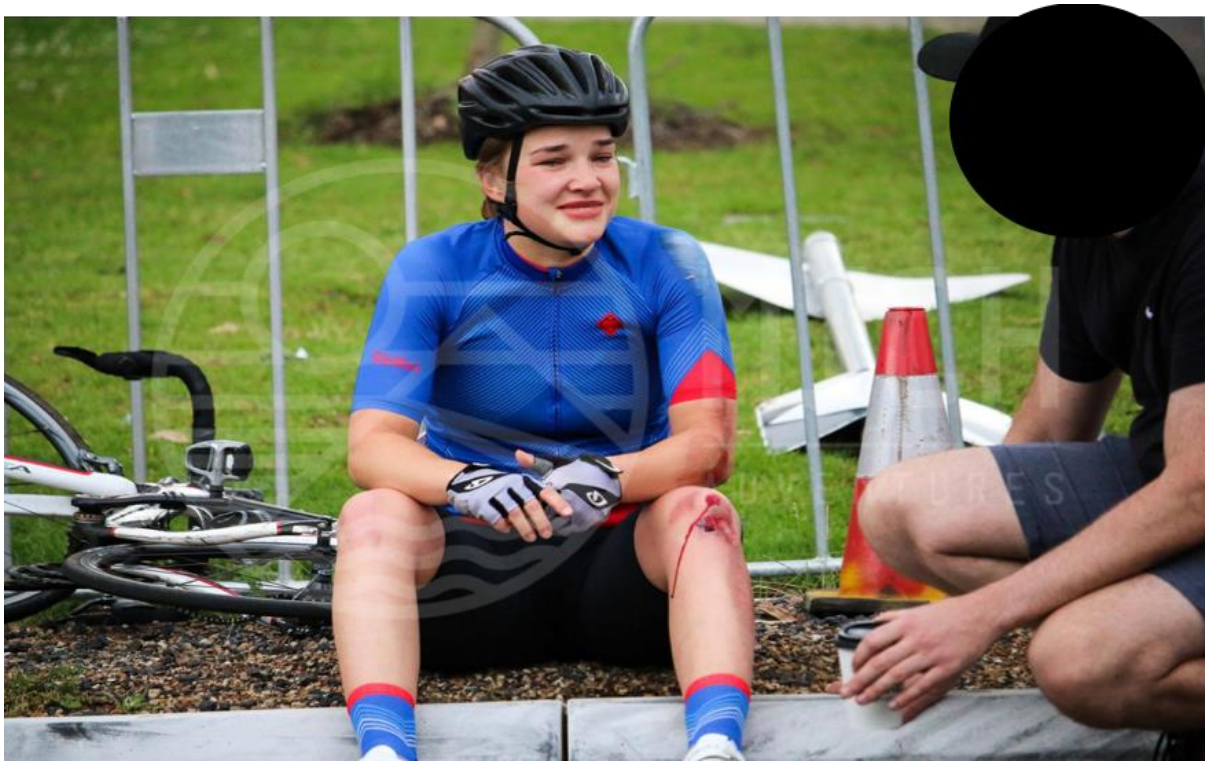
were aware of the process and were able to express their interest. A process that maintains the 'old boys network' in sport (Hoffman, 2011).

In my fieldwork, I was able to identify more forms of power relations that apply to the discourse of the hierarchy of gender and sexuality and the formulation of hegemonic masculinity.

Concrete therapy

> I lined up for women's C-grade on Saturday at 07:30am. After three chaotic laps, my bike disappeared out from under me. My bike slipped sideways in the corner and my body crashed onto the ground. My bike kept sliding and a rider behind me, trying to avoid me, hit the bike. I saw her fly over me, hit the ground, and just lay there. Not moving. I heard the second bunch yell: 'Crash, crash! Keep left!' I got up as quick as I could, grabbed my bike, and got off the circuit onto a little elevated curb. A spectator got the other woman's bike and put it to the side. Another guy went to the woman, and another asked if I was okay. I was in shock: 'I took her down, I took her down'. He said: 'She will be alright, sit down'. I sat down and cried. I couldn't believe what had happened. It all went so quick. I was trying to get my breathing under control and comprehend what the hell just happened. I felt so guilty towards the woman who crashed over me into the pavement. While the race continued, two more crashes happened in the same corner, right in front of me. I will never forget the sound of bikes and bodies colliding with the concrete. (Fieldnote, 16 December 2018)

Figure 4.7 - Crashed



Cycling is a dangerous sport. Knowing cycling is a dangerous sport is different from realising cycling is a dangerous sport. To catch embodied practical knowledge, it is important to acknowledge that cognition is a situated activity growing out of a tangled dance of body, mind, activity, and world (Wacquant, 2015). To understand cycling (i.e. to have the informal appreciation of experience) (Stake, 2010), I needed to be exposed to and immersed in that tangled dance. My body needed to be on a bike with drop handlebars, my shoes clipped in, wearing a heart rate monitor, racing laps on hot summer days or climbing mountains in the snow. My mind needed to be prepared for the interaction with other cyclists and to endure the physicality of the sport. I needed to experience the activity and the meaning I would derive from it as a cyclist and be exposed to the meaning other cyclists give and get from bicycle races. I needed to be in that world where those meanings have value and capital. Then, I can 'begin to retrieve the tacit knowledge enfolded in cultural and social practices, and thereby enrich our descriptions and deepen our explanations of them' (Wacquant, 2015, p. 3). Nonetheless, I did not expect to dance like this.

Suffering is taken for granted and common sense in cycling. The dominant narrative of 'anticipating the inevitable' means that every cyclist will crash and there is no space for alternative formulations (Albert, 1999, p. 163). From the moment the bicycle was invented, cycling has been associated with risk, courage, heroism, bravery and masculinity, especially

in the organisation of Grand Tours, such as the Tour de France, or the Classics, like Paris-Roubaix (Oosterhuis, 2016; Ritchie, 1999; Thompson, 2006). In the latter half of the 20th century, systemisation of the cycling movement by the cycling industry shaped the narrative around suffering considerably (Gilley, 2006). According to Gilley (2006), the cycling industry considers two forms of suffering in cycling: legitimate and illegitimate suffering. Legitimate suffering is heroic and inevitably tied to questions of honour, fitness and ability.[16] Those connections are made by the cycling industry to downplay the risk factor of cycling that might otherwise discourage those on whose participation the income of the industry depends (Albert, 1999; Gilley, 2006).

Images of suffering in professional (men's) cycling are primarily distributed through the cycling media (Gilley, 2006). As you can see under the fieldnote of my crash in December 2018, an official race photographer took a photo of my devastated response. The online published photo album of the grade I raced in was filled with photos of crashed and hurt riders. Even at amateur level, images of suffering are prevalent.

Risk and injury talk, as a form of membership talk, establishes participants' authenticity and represents an ideal version of the community of cyclists (Albert, 1999). Cyclists 'reconstruct dangerous and/or injury-producing events in ways that serve to show and re-establish one's bona fides' (Albert, 1999, p. 169). The industry that upholds the narrative benefits from this behaviour because it serves as a mechanism to keep members in the community. Additionally, I would argue that this membership talk is situated in the articulation of hegemonic masculinity in cycling.

> A man walked towards me, looked at me and asked: "Are you alright?"
> I teared up and said: "Nah, I've been better. I crashed".
> Him: "Ah that sucks. But it is probably not your first crash and it won't be your last. And crashing is good, right Laurence?"
> He addressed this young-looking boy behind me, but Laurence missed what we were talking about. The man tried again: "Crashing, that is good for ya, makes ya stronger, hardens you up, some concrete therapy".
> The boy kind of agreed. Another man walked by and he knew the man preaching concrete therapy. He looked at me: "You alright?"
> I repeated: "Not really".

[16] 'To suffer illegitimately has many possibilities and is perceived by the cycling industry as almost always the result of one's inability to meet the corporeal requirements of cycling discourses' (Gilley, 2006, p. 60).

He said: “Let me show you, look at this”.

He unzipped his jumper and showed a big, thick scar on his collarbone.

The first man: “That’s a collarbone” [meaning the injury of breaking a collarbone, something many cyclists encounter].

The second man: “Happened last year, last corner”.

Me: “And it was dry [weather] last year?”

First man: “Oh, that was you!? I have footage of that”.

They started talking about that crash and how they have footage of it. Feeling left out, I tried to work my way back into the conversation: “And this was the first time I got to wear this jersey”. My jersey was ripped.

The first man: “Oh, you should never wear a new jersey to a race! You train in it and then you wear it to a race!”

He concluded I was going to be fine and said: “take care”. (Fieldnote, 16 December 2018)

In the above interaction, my trauma was normalised and at the end, considered illegitimate because of jersey superstition. It was also an invitation to discuss their own trauma and proceed in membership talk, something many men did throughout my fieldwork. Crashing was phrased as something positive, ‘concrete therapy’; something that I, and anyone on a bike, will benefit from, because it ‘hardens you up’. The acceptance, normalisation, and glorification of crashes and injuries is strongly related to hegemonic masculinity (Atkinson, 2019). Men are considered riskier and more dangerous riders and racers (Bonham & Johnson, 2015). This is exemplary in my interaction with an experienced woman racer.

On Instagram there was a post saying she had crashed and that she just got back on the bike last weekend, so I asked her about that.

Me: “Did you crash last weekend?”

Racer: “No, two weeks ago”.

Me: “Are you okay?”

Racer: “Yea, just my wrist”.

Me: “What happened?”

Racer: “Just stupid boys doing boys. There was a guy and he had enough, so he just went right across and took us down” (Fieldnote, 28 November 2018).

In 2021, this woman had actually decided to discontinue racing with men, because she was involved in too many crashes caused by reckless racing by men. In general, cycling safety is

considered a major constraint for women to participate (Garrard, Handy, & Dill, 2012). I argue that the management of safety in road racing is a power relation situated in the social structure of masculinity.

Learning how to race

> Before the race, one of the women wanted to comfort the new woman who was so nervous for her first crit, telling her: "Don't look at the men, don't think women race anything like that". Some other woman: "Yeah, we are way faster!" First woman again: "And nicer. We don't shout". More women came up to her and started telling her how exciting it was she was joining, and how good it was of her and sharing tactics about the course. I had the feeling everyone said the same things. It started to make me nervous, so I stopped listening. (Fieldnote, 28 February 2018)

Despite the thrill of racing, an increased risk of crashing is involved, and no cyclist wants to crash. To minimise the risk of crashing, SSCC has a policy on learning how to race. Lars told me about the policy when I saw him after his crash.

> One of the guys that caused the crash had called Lars to apologise. Lars said that he told the guy he accepted his apology but also told him: "In all this time that I have been racing, and yeah, I like to go for the win and be competitive, I can honestly say, I have never taken anyone down. That has always been my focus, because victory is not worth a crash". That is why they changed the [club] policy. They want people to learn how to race when they are new and therefore ask them to tell that to the club. (Fieldnote, 13 October 2018)

I learned most of my racing at SSCC. Although D-grade has a recurrent group of members that race, the grade was also used for newbies to learn how to race. Every cyclist that is new to racing needs to talk to Hank, the D-grade marshal, before the race. At most races I participated in, not just at SSCC, marshals were there to control race safety. They ride with the bunch, warn the riders when another grade is about to pass and correct rider's behaviour if they think it is unsafe. Hank would explain how they want riders to race at SSCC: no sudden movements, calm pace, just follow and learn. The race would start with 15mins under control, meaning that all riders in the bunch would roll turns (rotating riders at the front of the group), and the pace is comfortable. After that, Hank gives a vocal signal that the race is on

and riders can increase the pace, make attacks and stop rolling turns. Before my fourth crit at the club, Aiden, an active member, took the liberty to tell me what I should do in a race. He said:

> "Don't take turns, just sit in the back, taking turns costs you energy and you need the energy to not get dropped; stay on the wheel and if you do get dropped, take a lap, ride real slow, take a good breath and some water, take a rest and let the bunch catch you. Then you hop back on and stay in the back again, because you will get stronger and fitter if you ride in the bunch, rather than riding the race on your own. Anyone can ride on their own: that's a waste of money, you don't pay for the race to ride on your own, you pay to race. So, take that lap to rest, then get back on". (Fieldnote, 27 October 2018)

He wasn't telling me anything new, except for taking a lap, contradicting what Hank had said about taking turns and he repeated himself a lot. He also involved two other members in his 'speech' who were minding their own business.

> He then looked around and saw Thomas. Aiden asked: "Thomas, [do] you have minute?" Thomas came over, interrupting his cleaning of the track, and Aiden repeated the whole sequence and asked Thomas if he agreed, which he did. Then Thomas went back to his work and Aiden repeated what I should do again. Then Matt arrived and Aiden started telling him what I should do in the race, asking Matt if he agreed with his strategy, and Matt agreed as well. Aiden literally said: "The poor thing gets dropped every time". I didn't feel like a poor thing being dropped. That is what I expected of the races, because I am not 'bike fit', nor fast, nor experienced. I have been pretty happy with my results so far, but Aiden perceived them differently. (Fieldnote, 27 October 2018)

Aiden's benevolent sexism positioned me as a 'poor thing' in need of help, even though I was not experiencing the need for help at all. The experience of benevolent sexism is common among women in competitive cycling (Dellanebbia, 2020). There were subtle differences in how racing was taught to me and to other men. Even though all new racers are talked to about how to race, I have not heard any of the established members describe new men members as 'poor things' when they get dropped or make mistakes. (In my first crit with SSCC, a man couldn't turn the corner and went straight into the grass. The men joked with him.) How to

race and how not to race was a recurring theme of conversation of SSCC members and was strongly related to race safety.

For some new men, SSCC's way of learning how to race was difficult. There were instances where strong and fit cyclists would take off in an attack, lap the group and race by themselves. This behaviour would anger established members of the club:

> I was chatting to Margot while A- and C-grade took off. The secretary was a marshal in C-grade. Suddenly, the secretary pulled up next to us and he seemed grumpy. He complained that one guy just took off and was going really hard. He wasn't happy with that because that way, he wasn't going to learn how to race properly.
>
> He said: "Just sit back and learn!"
>
> Margot said it was Lucas and I said: "The guy who smashed D-grade last week?"
>
> Margot: "Yes".
>
> This meant he signed up for a higher grade and since he had won D-grade, the handicappers let him. And now he was smashing C-grade! Margot said Lucas became a member last week and that someone at the club had talked to him about his racing behaviour and how he should not do what he was doing; obviously he didn't listen. The secretary responded:
>
> "He either can race with us and do it how we want, or he can go away and race somewhere else". (Fieldnote, 27 October 2018)

The way you race and in what grade you race is something marshals have influence over: it is a controlling factor. The constant discussion of race safety and race behaviour becomes a relation of power. I argue that, although the expression of risk and normalisation of crashing is an expression of masculinity, the counter measurement of management and control of safety is also an expression of this social structure. Marshals are usually from a grade up (so a marshal in C-grade races B-grade). At SSCC, Sharon and Amanda would sometimes marshal E-grade, but all other marshals were men. Some marshals at SSCC would use the road safety narrative to express dominance. They would find and talk to riders after a race; they would angrily chase down groups that behaved in an undesirable way (passing another grade on the inside. Sharon: "Stupid boys"), yelling that riders are doing something wrong from the side of

the road: “And that’s supposed to be A-grade!”, and in other ways be vocal about their disapproval of racing behaviour. The managing of safety became an exertion of dominance that in turn defines their masculine identity.

Emotional relations

My journey into the space of Melbourne road racing was quite a successful one. I found my way into cycling via women’s organised groups and I found my way into racing via a club of supportive men. My involvement in local racing helped me in my fieldwork in Europe as my experiences gave me cycling capital and a basic understanding of the labour professionals do. When I returned from observing the Women’s World Tour (WWT) and I joined the young club, XCC, I felt I had acquired even more cycling specific knowledge from my time with the professional teams. After overcoming my fear from the crash, going on regular training rides, increasing my kilometres per week, and taking on a cycling coach, my confidence as a cyclist increased. I had won a race; I did a three-day tour, and I found myself talking cycling tactics and strategies at length. I became a cyclist. In the following section, I focus on how emotional relations in this field enabled my success in the field. I identified predominantly heteronormative practices.

Heteronormativity

After the SSCC meeting in November 2018, I chatted with one of the life members, an old man whose glory cycling days were well behind him, and he asked how much I had been riding. I said I just did the criteriums (crits) twice a week.

> “Crits are good. And very popular. Back in my day, when I was your age, we had track in winter and road in summer. We don’t have a track anymore, so now we do crits”.
>
> I asked why he thought the crits were so popular. His answer: “If you’re a family man, you just go do your crit in the morning and then you’re at home by noon to wife and kids, and that keeps everybody happy”. (Fieldnote, 12 November 2018)

Although he was talking to a 26-year-old woman racing crits, his answer focused on how the structure of crit racing benefits the heterosexual man in a nuclear family. His answer is unsurprising because it was mostly men racing and since the club did not have junior members, most men were 30 to 35 and older. The few spectators that would come to the races were mostly women (wives/partners) and children. At a road race of SSCC, when a bad crash happened, a crashed rider (man) said:

> "You know the scariest part of crashing? Calling the Missus". (Fieldnote, 8 September 2018)

Heterosexual coupledom is also common when women are involved in running the club. In SSCC and XCC, both the most prominent women members (like Clara, Amanda and Sharon) and their husbands were involved in the club. Considering Shona Thompson's (1999) work; it is hard to imagine that these women would be able/willing to spend the same amount of time and energy in their leisure activity if their husband and/or family were not involved in the sport.

As a young woman who came into the road racing scene by herself (i.e. not introduced to the field by a male relative), I was in a different position and I was quite wary of this situation, especially when I was by myself. Dellanebbia (2020, p. 113) found that competitive women cyclists are sexualised through social media, by sponsors and by being framed as a 'cycling whore' or 'pro hoe' for dating or being interested in other competitive road cyclists. I was not exposed to such practices in that way, which most likely relates to the specific space of road racing I found myself in. When I was racing and observing at SSCC, it was mostly older men (family age and retirement age) and I usually left before men my age finished racing. There were also few single women riders at SSCC to 'flirt' with. At XCC there were more opportunities to interact with all members that went on rides but the focus of this club and rides was not on competition which creates different relations. I also was not part of the most inner group of competitive cyclists in Melbourne, which would be the A- and B-grade riders, both men and women. Despite this different space, I was exposed to subtle practices that reproduced heteronormativity. During my second track session, while walking toward the group of women I was going to ride with, I discussed the trouble I was having with my new shoes and cleats with the male coach. He suddenly asked me if I was married.

> Coach: "Are you married?"
>
> Me: "Uh, no."
>
> Coach: "Engaged?"
>
> Me: "Nope."
>
> Coach: "Boyfriend?"
>
> Me [not very fond of the word 'boyfriend', what am I, twelve?]: "Boyfriend?"
>
> Coach: "Or girlfriend! Boyfriend or girlfriend, both are possible!"
>
> Me: "Yes, well I have a partner."
>
> Coach: "Cool!"

> I still am not sure how this subject came into our conversation. After the training, we took a group photo. The coach took the photo and he was really fast taking it. He said: "And, done!" I said: "So fast, so fast!" Coach: "Nah, that is just a rumour". It took me three seconds to understand what he was saying. I knee-jerked laughed at his 'joke'. (Fieldnote, 5 October 2017)

The relationship status check and sexualised joke can be situated in the emotional relations of this space. At other times, jokes were directed towards me.

> I set up the registration table and laid out the numbers that were on the list. The speedy-car guy George (moments earlier he had raced around the circuit at high-speed in his car, probably thinking nobody was here) asked me: "So, what is your role today?"
>
> Me: "I am doing registration. What is your role?"
>
> George: "I am a first aider today. So, I will be the one to give you mouth-to-mouth".
>
> Me: "Well…. I would have to crash really hard before that will happen".
>
> Him: "Yeah, true". (Fieldnote, 6 December 2018)

While SSCC did not organise prize ceremonies, occasionally they had more significant races where riders could win medals and plates. At one of these races, without realising, I had won third place.

> Lars: "Now, onto the women. In third place Suzanne! Where are you at?" I walked over, and I turned to Thomas who was holding a medal. He then leaned in for a kiss on the cheek, smiling and said something like: "I've got to give you a kiss". He kissed me on the cheek and put the medal around my neck. Lars said: "Here's Thomas to keep the political incorrectness going" and he shook my hand and gave me an envelope with $30. (Fieldnote, 25 November 2018)

Despite Thomas thinking it was acceptable to congratulate me in a different manner from the men who had won a prize (kissing rather than shaking hands), his behaviour was also somewhat corrected by Lars with a joke and opposite behaviour.

Figure 4.8 - Racing with men

Internalised misogyny/hostility/sexism

When a race is on, it is usually just wheels and legs, but there are differences between racing with only women or men. I experienced complex feelings and emotions towards gender in my riding and racing. In my reflection on this, I realised a lot this stems from internalised sporting ideologies and since sport is a leading definer of masculinity (Connell, 2005), I adopted masculine norms. I had the privilege and opportunity to move, exercise, and play sports from a young age. I acquired competitive sporting capital that results in developing new skills relatively easy, feeling comfortable in my body, and having an understanding of what I am capable of. I have cycled my entire life which helped me to feel confident on a bike. While I felt more competitive racing with women (it gave me a sense I could actually win), racing with men felt like I could watch, learn, and grow stronger with every race. When I got fifth in D-grade on 2 December 2018 at SSCC, I had beaten many men (the only other woman dropped out of the race) and I was so proud, I told everyone. As I gained experience and confidence, I started advising, encouraging, and correcting other riders in a race. I would tell them to stay on the wheel, keep their line, and not cross wheels. I felt like I knew what I was doing, and I could then use this knowledge in the women's races. I did two crits, a kermesse, a handicap and the Tour of Bright grade for women. I did track and training sessions with women only; and I also signed up for a specific handicap skills session for women. While I was thankful for these safe, separate spaces for women, I also had hostile

feelings towards them. I struggled with being competitive and being inclusive. For example, during the handicap training session, a few women were slow to understand how to do rolling turns (a skill I had practised many times), the pace was very slow, and despite being overly cautious, one woman crossed wheels with my back wheel which almost made us crash. I was annoyed and I wanted them to do and be better. I did not want them to 'prove' the stereotype of women being lesser riders. But most of these women had never done something like this and they had not raced 13 crits at SSCC and spent time with professional teams in Europe. However, the requirement for women to be 'different', to be 'othered' in the space of cycling, annoyed me.

> There was me and Christy who looked a bit nervous, and the commissaire said: "There is a race within a race. I will pay the first woman as well". When the commissaire points out that there are women and he will pay the winning woman, I feel like we stand out. Before that moment I feel like we're a group but after he announces the women, I am like, wait, I am not really. I don't disagree with the club having prize money for women when there is more than one woman, because it is unlikely for a woman to win the grade and in this way, they (or we) can still win money too. Especially because women pay entry fees as well. (Fieldnote, 25 October 2018)

Throughout my fieldwork, I wanted to be and feel included in the cycling community. My reflexivity shows that this inclusion was strongly based on masculine practices and values.

> When I recovered from the race, I went to see Hank, who was talking to someone. Great timing, because when I went over, he was saying: "And the other girl…" turning his head around to see where I was. He shook my hand, which I gladly accepted, because it is such a men thing to do. I feel it is such a gesture of inclusion and it's easy. I wish it had the same meaning for women. I felt super cool when he shook my hand, also because he complimented me: "You did good". (Fieldnote, 13 October 2018)

The validation from experienced riders, mostly men, was a positive experience. My appreciation for these practices and my sporting capital – both are situated within masculinity – contributed to my successful journey to becoming a racing cyclist. My socialisation equipped me with strategies to deal with the status quo successfully, but only to a certain extent, because my gender remained a limiting factor. The following example shows how.

Many men were supportive either vocally or silently, but there was also resistance against women racing and openly expressed discontent. In preparation for the Tour of Bright, I did a crit race (not at SSCC).

> After the commissaire finished his race briefing, a man behind me asked: "Just to be clear, there is no race within a race?" The commissaire said no.
>
> Man: "So, the women are not racing their own race? I see six women: one, two, three, four, five, six. It said online that if there were six, they would race their own race". Commissaire: "They compete with each other, but they are in D grade".
>
> Man: "But there are six women".
>
> Woman: "But one of the women wants to ride in D grade, she's not in the women's grade".
>
> Man: [mumbles].
>
> Woman [annoyed]: "Don't worry, we won't take your money".
>
> I was not sure what was going on, but the man seemed to be unhappy with women racing there. (Fieldnote, 23 November 2019)

His expressed hostility was towards 'us' by questioning 'our' presence and putting up resistance that way, he influenced the welcomeness of the race to women. Everyone is there to race and he questioned whether we should be there or not. I tried to ignore him and focus on the race, but I really wanted to finish before him (which I did). This kind of 'positive impact' of sexism is often mentioned by female athletes who say to use the situation to motivate themselves to play better or change things for the better (Symons, O'Sullivan, & Polman, 2017, p. 479). After the race, I asked the woman who responded to him why she thinks he made this comment. She said that the week before a woman had become first overall, beating all women and men, and taking double prize money. His behaviour and comment can be related to feelings and arguments of unfairness when affirmative action is taken in organisations to create equality (see for example Hardin & Whiteside, 2009). In this situation, a woman winning the overall race and cashing perhaps $100 is constructed as unfair and undeserved, not considering the larger structure of road cycling in which men and masculinity dominate. This man benefits from this structure as he is privileged to not have to face the barriers women face in the activity that is his hobby. Rather, he took a woman's uncommon success and her reward, and made it a point of objection and tried to explicitly

change the situation of the race for other women. Clearly, people in cycling have internalised misogyny and the need for women's advocates remains necessary.

Symbolic relations

By now, it is quite evident that cycling is male dominated, and heterosexual masculinity is normative. These symbolic relations in the grassroots road racing scene in Melbourne manifest in everyday language, images, looks, and dress. In my fieldwork, I observed that cycling was considered a 'man's-thinking-game' because you have to be smart. Events and grades were gender-marked for women but not for men. Grown women were infantilised as they were constantly referred to as 'girls'. Bike shops lacked specific bike seats for women. At SSCC, all life members were men and all memorial races were in memory of men. Although SSCC included results of women racing in race reports, these were written about differently than the men's. The looks and dress of cyclists and their bikes are imperative in my discussion on symbolic relations of gender regime in local Melbourne cycling.

Your glasses go *over* your helmet straps

> The Monday after my crash, I returned to the university office. A concerned colleague asked me what happened as I was covered in 'road rash'. I had lost skin on my left arm from my shoulder to my lower arm. My shin was in similar shape, my knee worse. I told her I had done a bicycle race and had crashed only three laps in. She grimaced and told me to wear long sleeves and pants: "Or no, actually: you should wear pads!" She was not alone in this sentiment as other non-cyclists expressed similar opinions. I was even given knee pads for Christmas as a joke. (Fieldnote, December 2018)

Meanings are created through social interaction. As an ethnographer, I embedded myself in the field of cycling to observe and engage in interactions to retrieve tacit knowledge and identify meanings. Besides finding myself in this field, I exist in many other fields, for example, my work environment at the university. The above fieldnote is an example of me existing in a non-cycling field and giving me the opportunity to observe – and feel an emotional response to – the different meanings given to crashes and crashing.

My initial response was that it was the most ridiculous thing: "I'm not gonna wear pads!" But I realised that being exposed to cyclists, I had normalised their clothing. In my observations and experiences, road cyclists generally wore short sleeve Lycra jerseys and shorts, half finger gloves, medium high socks, a pair of glasses and a helmet: a kit that offers little to no

protection. My colleague's comments made me reflect. Why does no one wear pads? Why do cyclists wear the thinnest of materials to cover their body and have minimal head protection while racing at insane speeds? In conjunction with the high-performance model of sport (Maguire, 1991), the industry narrative to downplay the risk of cycling and simultaneously glorifying crashing might provide an answer. The less cyclists wear and thus, weigh, the more they have a chance of winning, and when cyclists don't look like they are anticipating crashes (besides their minimal helmet), it might give insiders and outsiders a false sense of safety, because if cycling is truly dangerous, why would cyclists wear such minimal protection?

Another explanation is the meaning of masculinity and the related looks that have become normative in cycling. As a researcher, as an aspiring cyclist, and as a human, I wanted to be and feel included, I wanted to belong. To look like a cyclist was a huge part of belonging, because there seemed to be consensus on what a 'real' road cyclist wears and pads were not included. This emphasis on the proper look made it difficult to feel like a proper 'roadie'. This experience was even reiterated by some of the professionals I interviewed:

> If you are a cyclist, the culture is… kind of interesting, I think. It's almost… there are so many like unwritten rules. It's like you kind of have to be stylish as well. That's kind of fast. So, it's like, people really love the equipment and the gear and the clothes, as well as following their favourite riders in races or racing themselves so, it's a really strange culture in a way. (Liza)

> One thing I do find in cycling is, it's almost exclusive. Like people are very aware of appearance and brands and styles and everything like that. We tend to… like, I guess sort of segregate ourselves a little bit, like there are your weekend warriors, uhm, there is a very big difference between your recreational cyclist and your pro cyclist and sometimes they don't necessarily like to intermingle, like they can be a little bit judgmental of each other. Like, I find, that's something that's actually quite detrimental to cycling like we try to be exclusive and I just don't find that a welcoming culture. (Violet)

Tiziana Ferrero-Regis's (2018) relational analysis of the cycling kit as a symbol of class, status and power, and above all, masculinity, offers an explanation for this sense of exclusivity in cycling. 'Both the kit and the bicycle are models for the creation of modern masculinities, normalising the practice of wearing the kit in the city, in the countryside and at

amateur rides' (Ferrero-Regis, 2018, p. 109). The kit, originating from the professional cycling space, entered the wider market of amateur road cyclists and wearing a full kit became a way to be distinguished as a road cyclist who is committed to the sport for fitness and health, rather than a commuter or leisure cyclist (Ferrero-Regis, 2018). The immaterial quality of the cycling kit is shaping a new form of male self-fashioning, to an expression of narcissism for mutual admiration on the road (Ferrero-Regis, 2018). 'The kit embodies the conflation of subtle power, whereby the cyclist dressed in tight-fitting sportswear commands attention, with the exercise of a more virile and imposing form of power through cycling' (Ferrero-Regis, 2018, p. 102). This power was exemplified in an explorative interview with a SheRace initiator. She told me cyclists are very specific about how they look and behave, and there are 'rules' formulated by the Velominati. She gave the example of how glasses go over the helmet straps, not under (rule #36). She emphasised taking the rules with a grain of salt.

Ferrero-Regis (2018) differentiates club kits from kits worn by the performance rider out on the streets or at amateur rides/races. Both SSCC and XCC had club kits that their members could order, but both clubs did not require their members to have one. When I tried the SSCC kit, it did not fit at all because it was a men's cut. (The jersey was tight at the hips and loose around my waist. Their new kits include women's cuts.) XCC encouraged their members more by pushing the narrative of unity and solidarity. There are clubs in Melbourne that require their members to wear the club kit to specific rides (e.g. 'Wednesday's kit ride').

Not every kit is equally appreciated. For men, there seemed to be a generational gap in the appreciation for kits. When three teenage boys showed up for D-grade at SSCC, they wore the same funky kits with bright colours and prints, something I have not seen with the regular SSCC members. Another kid wore a skinsuit and socks with cactuses on them.

> I saw the marshal chatting to the winning group that got away from the rest of D-grade. When he came over to us, he said that they didn't belong in D grade and chatted to them about it. There were some young boys in there too, but he said: "I haven't talked to the one in the weird kit yet. What was on there?"
> I said: "Cactuses!"
> Marshal: "It's like he is wearing pyjamas." He obviously didn't care much for the cactuses on the boy's cycling kit. (Fieldnote, 25 November 2018)

For road cyclists, it is not just about the kit and matching socks. To match their complete outfit and their bike is an embodied practice that intersects a heightened sense of self-

fashioning with leisure, and that implies a degree of men looking at other men while riding prescribed routes (Ferrero-Regis, 2018). The larger context of these practices is the translation of professional cycling practices into a wider market of amateur riders by the cycling industry. Historically and economically, the industry has focused on male professional cycling as the norm, including masculinity in their for-profit endeavours. Therefore, these practices have become the standard and have shaped the meaning of cyclist identity, seemingly regardless of gender. In my fieldwork, I have observed women adopt these practices as well, intertwining emphasised femininity, for example, by matching their nail polish to their kit and bike.

> Wilma asked me to put her race number on her jersey. In the elastic bands of the jersey, so the pins wouldn't make holes in the material. I complimented her on her kit, which was black with all kinds of funky colours. She said she liked it too and she bought the kit first and then a matching bike. (Fieldnote, 14 November 2018)

Interestingly, although bicycle shorts (without the chamois) have become a trend in regular fashion, the proper cycling shorts destined for riding have become shorter for women and expose more of their legs.

Figure 4.9 - Confident cyclist

To line up next to someone in a race who wears a kit of a renowned cycling brand that matches her socks, her shoes, and her bike, wearing non-see-through eyewear and a helmet that makes her, somehow, look good, is very intimidating. It was an indication of high financial status as they were able to afford all those kits and accessories. Additionally, the riders who seemingly did the most riding and training also had proper clothing and accessories. This display of class and wealth is also portrayed through social media practices and frames the sport as exclusive (Lamont & Ross, 2020). For a year and a half, I had one pair of cycling shorts and I had second-hand jerseys. When I was able to purchase more shorts, jerseys, and a pair of gloves, I was able to ride more and feel more confident about my looks as a cyclist. During my first ride with XCC, one of the women

commented: ‘Wow, you look like a real cyclist’. This validation definitely increased my self-esteem as a cyclist.

I argue that the power associated with a kit and looks is phallocentric and is policed by men (quite literally, as the people behind Velominati and the comments made appear to be men). This power poses several questions in relation to gender; for example, what does it mean that women perform these practices that originate in masculinity and are practices to construct masculinity? Have these practices become gender neutral? Or does the adoption of these practices allow women entry to this male dominated sport? I observed some resistance to the normative dressing code. At XCC, one of the male ride leaders would wear an MTB helmet and shorts while riding road bikes.[17] The women’s group I did track sessions with has a focus on women (cis and trans), transgender men, and gender non-conforming folk.[18] There was a mix of novice and experienced riders, and many different clothing styles were apparent and accepted.

Discussion and conclusion

By identifying how economic, power, emotional, and symbolic relations reconstitute gender, I described the structure that constrains the play of practice in this sport. Naturally, these relations overlap and reinforce each other. In this discussion, I bring them together to explain how the gender arrangements work in this local setting of road cycling.

In this setting, men, masculinity, and heteronormativity shape social practices that reproduce current gender patterns. At club, regional, and national organisational levels, men are in positions of control and authority. Despite promising gender equality policies, Cycling Victoria and AUScycling do not follow through in their actions, preserving the power of the ruling class. This bias towards men and masculinity is not only rooted at the top organisational level but recognised throughout the sport. Even though grants for women’s cycling are available to clubs, and some clubs offer races within a race with equal prize money for women, women continue to be constructed in a different and inferior manner. Women’s entry to the sport predominantly depends on men and their presence and success at races are questioned. When women are involved in a club, their concerns are supportive of

[17] When Cyclingtips reposted two photos of actor/comedian Kevin Hart on Instagram, many people criticised Hart’s outfit. In the photos, he was posing with a road bike, in a cycling kit, knee-high socks and a helmet with a visor (a MTB helmet) (Cyclingtips, 2021). Rather than celebrating his attention to cycling, many people were criticising his socks and MTB helmet because that is not what ‘true’ road cyclists wear.

[18] The group recently updated their focus on off-road cycling (i.e. trails, cyclocross, MTB and ultra-endurance events). Road cycling/racing seems to be actively avoided.

labour or they carry the specific responsibility of managing the 'women's side' of the club. The position of women's officer can be an effective tool to address gender issues in clubs and promote more inclusion. I do not disagree with mostly women taking on these positions as their own lived experiences and socialisation could lead to more success. However, my findings indicate that the responsibility of women's cycling falls predominantly on the shoulders of women rather than responsibility being carried by the organisation as a whole. In addition, women in road cycling can carry their own biases against women due to dominant masculine sporting ideologies.

The involvement of women's labour is based on the prerequisite that their husbands and/or family are also involved. Women's races are gender marked while men's races are either 'races' or 'open grades'. Women are exposed to a heteronormative and men centred context, as they experience social practices that emphasise heterosexuality, such as sexualised jokes, relationship checks, and different behaviour at prize ceremonies.

The structure and culture of Melbourne road racing are constructed around men in a nuclear family, the celebration of men's accomplishments, and the glorification of crashing and scars that functions to shape masculinity. The cyclist look is based on professional men's cycling and masculinity. Men use cycling as the new business networking tool reinforcing an old boys network that contributes to creating a space that is mostly exclusive to women and only accessible (on the surface) to women with specific capital. My previously acquired sporting capital and my positionality as a young, white, heterosexual, and able-bodied person (cathexis) enabled me to become a racing cyclist in this space. The practice of this 'man's-thinking-game' work to socialise both men and women into internalised sexism and hostility towards women.

The gender regime arranges the social divisions in this local setting of road cycling that impact women's access and opportunities in the field. The complex interplay of power patterns advantage men on the circuits, in the committees, in the federations, and on the boards that constrain women to freely move in the space of road cycling. Women's bodies and looks are scrutinised to look like proper cyclists. Women also use their own agency to actively transform this scrutiny by adopting feminine features such as nail polish. The 'modern' approach of XCC (i.e. women group leaders, women committee leaders, supportive men leaders, a focus on participation, and an encouragement for competition resulting in a majority of women members), is one example of practice that turns against constraints of the

larger structure of road cycling. Nonetheless, these practices cannot escape structure, so women's emphasised femininity could be seen as submitting to male desire, and XCC's leadership remained predominantly male despite a larger membership of women. Practice cannot float free from its circumstances (Connell, 1987).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I used Connell's (2021) gender relations framework to describe the patterns that limit freedom and shape constraints in the social organisation of Melbourne road cycling. When professional women cyclists, specifically Australian cyclists, start cycling, they are exposed to and participate in a particular gender regime. By analysing the site of local Melbourne road racing, I provide a piece of the puzzle to the gender and labour relations in professional women's road cycling. Through understanding the structure and culture that professional women cyclists are exposed to in the early days of their road racing journey, I understand the practices that have shaped their lived experiences. In turn, these lived experiences, their exposure and participation in the gender regime, shape their capital and agency that they carry into other cycling spaces, such as elite national road cycling, and professional global cycling. Gender relations in Melbourne road cycling, that function as a reproductive arena where bodily capacities become social (Connell, 2005), show how practices in this space construct the categories of 'women' and 'men' as different and unequal. This construction affects women's opportunity and inclusion. While women can be part of a 'modern' club like XCC and have women role models and peers, and the support of men, the acquired capital and socialisation will less likely lead to a trajectory that enables women to become professional cyclists, because the overall structure of road cycling remains phallocentric.

In the next chapter, I expand on the gender regime of professional women's road cycling, and build upon the findings, discussion, and conclusion of this chapter.

Chapter 5 – The Production of Professional Women's Cycling

In this chapter, I describe the world of professional women's road cycling. Central to my fieldwork was to explore what it is like to be a professional cyclist in the women's peloton, to understand what cycling is like at the highest level of the sport and thus, what the production of professional women's road cycling entails. I bring together the observations, conversations, media messages, and interview data from the different race locations, with the different actors, media outlets, and riders. Thus, in this chapter I present a comprehensive picture of the field that is professional women's road cycling from the perspective of a woman rider coming up through the ranks, making it to the professional peloton, and what she is exposed to along the way. I use Connell's (1987, 2021) gender framework to analyse the gender regime to create an understanding of gender and labour relations in this field. Rather than breaking it down by using the four different dimensions – power, economic, emotional and symbolic – I keep the cyclists' narrative central and weave the dimensions in. The chapter concludes with a discussion that explicitly examines the relations between these four dimensions.

From the bottom to the top

Many of the women I interviewed described themselves as 'sporty', growing up and doing many different sports or physical activities before 'finding' cycling at a later age. For example, Christine did some surfing and skating, Camille did every sport in high school possible, Liza and Maria did horseback riding, Sandra swam and did triathlon, Jodie started with gymnastics and soccer, and Julie and Abigail were serious runners. Similar to girls and women in other sports (e.g. Nash & Moore, 2020), many cyclists are introduced to cycling by a male figure in their life, like their father, uncle, brother or boyfriend. Despite this introduction, the same male figures discouraged women to participate in the sport. Christine's father said the sport was too hard, and while Sammy's parents were both former elite cyclists, especially her dad, did not want her to race.

> He just thought: 'Just keep playing tennis and do athletics, and you should not necessarily want to start cycling. You may cycle for fun, but not… uh, not [race]'. (Sammy)

After their introduction to cycling, they do some casual riding, experience a bunch ride, join a club, train on a velodrome, and progress into racing. Once they gain a feel for it (or catch the 'racing bug' as some interviewees called it), they compete in local races, like criteriums, kermesses or road races. They will get better and stronger, and their results are self-evident: a top 10, top 5s, podium finishes, wins, and they start to move up to the harder grades; they make it to A-grade; they race with men; they travel far for bigger races and compete in the regional (e.g. Victorian Road Series) or national competition (National Road Series, NRS). During this process, they often need support from their family while some also study or work. Christine, for example, said:

> [My family has] supported me with, from when I very first started, I guess, I mean it's an expensive sport and I was working as well and saved up my own money. I've had a few jobs actually before I started cycling, so I had already saved up money. They [my family] could support me as much as possible. (Christine)

Through their club and the races, they get to know the people in the community, and create a network. To continue the journey towards elite cycling, they depend on their results, on the word spread about their results, racing style, and commitment. They also make calls or send messages to the 'right' people to join a team. They get awarded a scholarship, e.g. Amy Gillet foundation, and join a local (e.g. NRS) team to race in a team setting. They learn a lot from their more experienced teammates and volunteers who run the team. Their results keep coming in and they play with the idea of going overseas: to the United States or to Europe. They know it would help if they race in the national championships and how valuable the national title is to attract the attention of potential teams. As these cyclists improve over the years, they feel they are outgrowing the Australian racing scene and decide to go overseas. Some might move to Girona, Spain; others have to find accommodation in cycling houses. They learn that Belgian races are considered the hardest. They ask for guest rides on local teams in the United States or Europe. They learn even more, get even stronger, get some results, and sign up with one of the club teams. While in this new environment, they look at and judge the other teams they compete against in the races: *are they more professional? Is their equipment better? Do they have proper staff? What is their race calendar like? Do they do the big races? How can I make them notice me?* Through their new acquired network and their results, they find themselves being offered a contract to a 'bigger' team that does the 'bigger' races. By now, they have become a cyclist in the women's peloton.

Sexism along the journey

We learned in Chapter 4 that the racing scene in Melbourne is limited for women, which is similar to the rest of Australia. Hannah said the following about racing:

> It's interesting to me in Australia, you know, you can play representative netball in Victoria and they get paid to play their games, whereas you know, you win a race in Australia, at a national, *even* [her emphasis] at a national level and you might win a bottle of wine. I mean, Australia is just not super supportive of female cycling. (Hannah)

In their journey to the top, many cyclists compete with men and face overt sexism while doing so. I asked Maria if she cycles with men and her answer below captures the experiences of many women cyclists.

> I love racing with men, I love going in groups with men. It's a different style, which makes you a very strong bike rider. Because they just simply have a different physiological make up, which means you know, usually they can put down large amounts of power very quickly which is different to how females race, which makes you stronger. In different ways. They're generally faster so it's good for leg speed if you can sit in. I can't, as a female racer, some can! I know female racers that are stronger than me who can put most men to shame, which is, we call that getting chicked.
>
> Me: Getting chicked? [laughs]
>
> Maria: Getting chicked, haha, you know, some women who are strong enough can go up the front at a fast men's bunch and roll turns which is so awesome, so I love it when that happens. But you know, generally, I race or I can go on a 'Hell Ride' with a whole bunch of really strong elite men, and I can sit in and use it as a motor pacing session and I don't have to pay someone $50 to actually motor pace me.[19] It promotes a challenge, because

[19] The 'Hell Ride' is a well-known bunch ride that occurs along Beach Road in Melbourne and is affectionately called the 'Hell Ride'. In their study on sporting cyclists in the social, semi-competitive, adrenaline-charged atmosphere of the weekend bunch ride, O'Connor and Brown (2007, p. 90) found their participants describing the 'Hell Ride' negatively: 'They're crazy down Beach Road? . . . they're all over the road, spread out. They do a lot of silly things. And that's what's giving the sport such a bad name'.

> they are physiologically different. Uhm, which makes some weaker areas, for me, as a female cyclist, stronger. So, yeah, that's a challenge.

Maria's positive feelings towards cycling with men are situated in the construction of biological differences between women and men that result in different athletic performances. In this context of riding bikes and riding them fast, she constructs male physiology as superior and views it as a means to make some of her 'weaker areas' as a 'female cyclist' stronger, suggesting that being a female cyclist is physiologically inferior. It is clear that the physical sense of maleness and femaleness is central to her interpretation of gender. While she acknowledges there are female racers who are stronger than men and 'put most men to shame', this becomes a punishment for men as they are 'getting chicked'. This language genders a female body outperforming a male body and is symbolic of the co-construction of the biological and social. 'Getting chicked' seems to be universal in cycling (see for example Dellanebbia, 2020) and other endurance sports (Springer, 2017). This demonstrates how the local gender regime of cycling corresponds to a larger gender order. I argue that women who use this term is symbolic of consent to their own disempowerment. 'Getting chicked' is a gendered term that positions the performer as woman first and athlete second. A strong performance of a female racer is no longer about her, but about the 'shame' it brings to the men she beat. These social constructions of differences between female and male athletes are amongst the most powerful techniques to support male hegemony in sport (de Haan & Knoppers, 2019). The interview continued by me asking Maria how men respond to her when she sits on their wheel (i.e. in their slipstream) or when she races with them.

> It depends on the bunch. Back when I started, uhm, they quite often wouldn't really let you in on a wheel. Like, if you were in a pace line, and you were single file, they would resist letting you in, because they didn't want to get caught behind you. Uhm, in races, occasionally the older guys would like [laughs] basically cut you out. First track race I ever did, I got really bumped quite heavily, and I was terrified, because I had never been to fixed gear racing before, never been in that sort of environment, and I got like full on shoved and out, and I shit myself, and you know, it was just not really nice. And it was uncalled for, it was just like a show of, I don't know, brutish male force, like them forcing their power or something but then, yeah, you know, it just rolls off my back because in my professional world, I was a firefighter and I exist in a man's world, yeah.

Me: So, you're saying you were used to that or?

Maria: Yeah! So, I just went: 'Oh well' [shrugs shoulders]. The only thing you've achieved is just make another challenge for me, so good on you haha.

Similar to my experience related in the previous chapter, Maria's quote is an example of what Symons et al. (2017, p. 479) describe as a 'positive impact' of sexism in sport. She framed the words and actions against her as motivation to overcome another challenge. Maria also framed this positive impact as something she is used to, because she works in a man's world. *Maria cannot catch a break from the patriarchy.* She reflected on the power dynamics underlying the actions of the men she raced with, and her way of coping is to normalise behaviour and construct it as 'another challenge' that she is willing to overcome. This is a challenge and struggle to be included and belong. These struggles of belonging are experienced by many women in competitive cycling. Violet shared the following:

Me: Have you ever experienced, feeling unwelcome in cycling yourself?

Violet: Yes. Uhm, but I think that was partly a little bit of sexism as well. I was competing in an event called the Melbourne to Warrnambool. Which is like a 280km race and there was, uh, this was one of the first years where they actually held a women's category and uhm, I… so, it happened a couple of times, but I had people make comments that I wouldn't be there for long or had men comment that I wouldn't be part of the race for long and that my, and it just didn't make you feel like you belonged as part of the race, simply because I was female and not capable of completing that distance.

Me: So very specific comments from other participants?

Violet: Yeah, as well. And then, yeah I feel like a lot of the time, a lot of the time I find sexist comments like that, they're really based on stereotypes and because you're female, you're not strong enough to be, to be able to, to complete that distance or be a part of that bunch or things like that. (Violet)

Even though structural opportunities for women are opening up in Australian cycling (e.g. participation in the Melbourne to Warrnambool race), women still face a sexist culture that challenges their existence in the sport.

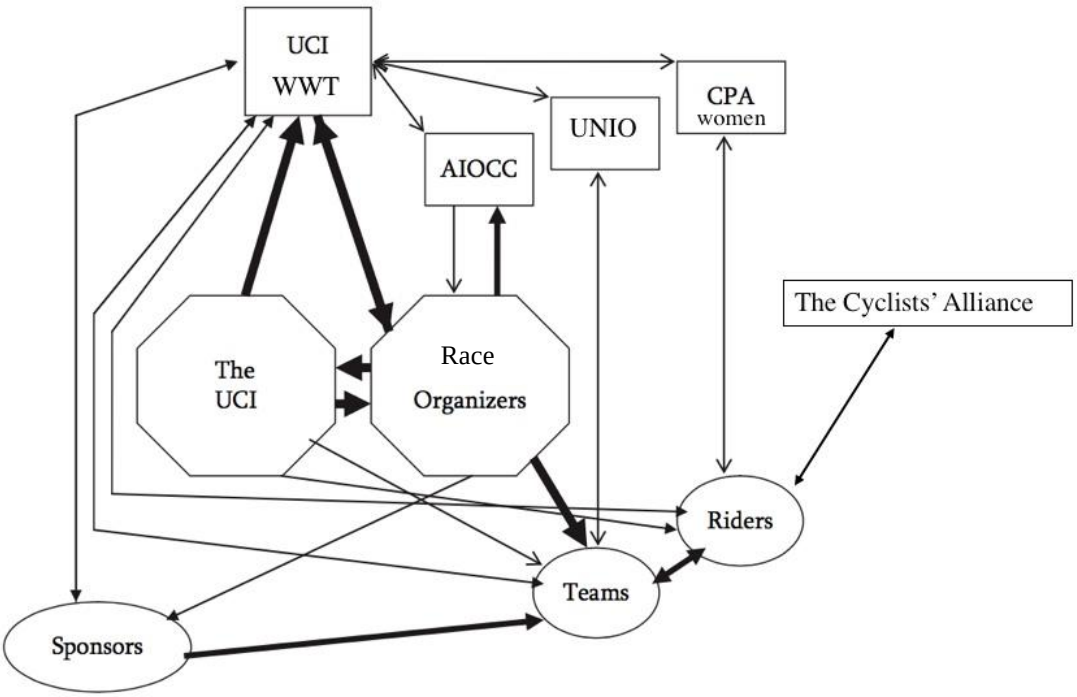
Being part of the women's peloton

When cyclists make it through to sign with a 'bigger' team, they are set to participate in the UCI mandated racing calendar. During the season, they are exposed to many dynamics that constitute professional women's road cycling. In the following sections, I explain how cyclists become part of the web of stakeholders, how old and new races shape the field, how there are different teams to be a part of, the staff structure that operate the teams and races, the exposure to media, promotion, and fans, and how these components of professional women's cycling shape a culture in which the cyclists (and all other actors) are socialised into a masculine dominated system.

A web of stakeholders

In the postwar era, cycling began its orientation towards the sports industrial complex, which involves four elements: sports medicine, sports science, sports science support programmes, and regional/national centres of excellence (Gilley, 2006; Maguire, 2005). Besides professional athletes, Gilley (2006) characterises the modern cycling industry along the lines of this complex: 'National and international federations, team owners, team sponsors, bicycle and cycling related manufacturers who sponsor teams, race owners and promoters, and directeur sportifs or "team directors" (DS's)' (p. 57). These stakeholders are visualised in the figure below, adapted to professional women's road cycling from the original figure by Morrow and Idle (2008).

Figure 5.1 - Organisational structure of professional road cycling



Union Cycliste Internationale

According to van Reeth and Larson (2016), the cyclists, teams and race organisers are the main actors in cycling. The Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI) provides a larger structure around those main actors and functions as the regulatory body that generates general rules, supervises competitions and provides the licensing for race events, teams and riders. In other words, they sell licenses to organisers to be allowed to host an event, for teams to compete in races and riders to be allowed to be part of a team and compete. The UCI is located in Aigle, Switzerland and is recognised by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). The UCI management committee includes eighteen positions of which two are held by women (the UCI Director General is also a woman). The UCI has never had a female president. The UCI owns the Women's World Tour (WWT) which is the highest level of road racing and it clearly states this in its regulations: 'Item 2.13.002 The UCI Women's World Tour shall be the exclusive property of the UCI' (UCI, 2021d, p. 132). The UCI management committee establishes the WWT calendar every year.

Unions

Two important actors in women's cycling have recently organised in federations to better coordinate their interests. The Cyclists' Alliance (TCA) was founded in 2017 by former

professional cyclists Iris Slappendel, Carmen Small, and Gracie Elvin, and all the union's main organisational positions are filled by women. TCA advocates for women cyclists to have a safe and stable working environment and support them during and after their careers. Three months after TCA launched, CPA (association of professional [men] cyclists) announced their own women's union led by Alessandra Cappellotto and Marion Clignet. CPA Women works with the UCI to improve the working conditions of female cyclists and ensure their safety, 'following in the footsteps of the men's chapter of CPA' (CPA Women, n.d.).

Besides the two riders' organisations, UNIO is a women's team association, launched in February 2020. They aim to safeguard and promote the interests of all professional women cycling teams worldwide while working together with all stakeholders in order to guarantee a sustainable future for all teams and women's cycling in general (UNIO, n.d.). UNIO was founded by Esra Tromp (currently vice-president), Ronny Lauke (currently president), Thomas Campana and Danny Stam. The existence of UNIO, TCA, and CPA Women could lead to the opportunity for riders and teams making agreements about working conditions outside the UCI, similar to the joint agreement between the CPA and AIGCP (international association of professional [men] cycling groups).

Teams and sponsors

Teams need sponsors in order to exist. The name of the team usually carries the main sponsor's name, for example: Liv Racing, Canyon//Sram racing, Trek-Segafredo, Team BikeExchange. Many sponsors are cycling specific brands, although non-cycling companies continue to sponsor as well (e.g. Moviestar team women, Team DSM, Team SD Workx). The names of cycling teams change often because sponsors usually agree to short-term sponsor deals (Mallon & Heijmans, 2011). The UCI mandates teams to be not-for-profit organisations. The teams depend on their sponsors because they have no other stream of revenue. Road cycling is organised on public roads which means there is no ticketing revenue teams can rely on. Rebeggiani (2016) explains how teams also lack an income from merchandising. Although we have learned in Chapter 3 that amateur cyclists dress similarly to professionals, there seems to be a taboo on wearing the actual kit of a professional team (Fretz, 2019; Velominati, 2020), something reiterated by Camille in her interview:

> Now, if you're a cyclist and you buy, you know, some pro-team kit, the year, if you wear that riding your bike, everyone says you look silly. (Camille)

Another important income that lacks in cycling teams is broadcasting (Rebeggiani, 2016). The race organisers hold the TV rights to the races, and they do not share their revenue with the teams. Most of the teams are run and sponsored by men.

Race organisers

Race organisers such as Courage Events, ASO (Amaury Sport Organisation) and Flanders Classics are private-run organisations. Race organisers pay the UCI to register their event and invite and pay teams to participate in their race. When organising a WWT race, the organisation must invite between 15 and 24 teams (they must invite the WWT teams) and pay them a participation fee. The organisers also pay the top 20 races. They determine the prize money, but the UCI has a minimum of €7.005 ($AUD10,941) for the top 20 for one-day WWT races and €3.040 ($AUD4,748) for prologues and €3.930 ($AUD 6,138) per stage for multiple day events. These costs of race organisers are streams of income for other stakeholders: fees to the UCI, invitation money for the teams and prize money for the riders. Race organisers receive their income from selling TV rights of the race to the media. For example, the ASO, who also organises the Tour de France, makes about €50 million on cycling races (van Reeth, 2016a). The race organisations are predominantly run by men.

Gender power in the web of stakeholders

From a feminist perspective, aiming to explain, analyse, and interpret gender-based inequality and oppression, this organisational structure carries powerful gender dynamics. During an explorative interview with a women's cycling advocate, I learned that before founding their separate union, TCA reached out to the existing CPA to potentially create a branch for women cyclists. Unfortunately, despite the CPA inviting them to their meetings, they faced an unwelcome and intimidating environment where they felt they had to please male egos in order for the CPA to help women cyclists.[20] Interestingly, from a symbolic relations perspective, both the CPA and CPA Women's website underline they are the only association recognised by the UCI, emphasising their power position. The opening words of the CPA are 'we are the riders' where CPA Women opens with 'the women riders'. This gender marking suggests men are the norm for the CPA and the women are an add-on. TCA's independent

[20] Many professional male cyclists advised TCA to start a separate union instead of joining CPA. The men riders have been dissatisfied with the representation of the CPA. This dissatisfaction actually led to the formation of The Rider's Union in 2020, a stand-alone riders union for male cyclists, came into being because the CPA was unsatisfactory in improving their existing structure after 350 World Tour riders pressed for change (Hood, 2020).

launch could have been seen as a threat to CPA's power position as the sole rider representative body. The CPA might have acted towards their increasing loss of power by quickly responding and launching a women's branch. On 4 April 2021, the UCI announced they endorsed the CPA women's section and UNIO during their management committee meeting from February 2-3 and consequently made financial contributions to these organisations (Frattini, 2021b). The UCI did not mention TCA, which leaves them independent, but also without a direct seat at the table. Despite the politics behind this, TCA and CPA Women seem to be working together on wider issues such as sexual abuse and rider safety (Jones, 2021).

The UCI management committee is currently 89% men, which means that the bureaucratic control of the federation is mainly in their hands. The UCI has a women's commission and its president, Tracy Gaudry, is also a member of the UCI management committee. The women's commission is a group of women bound by their constitution: they are an 'advisory commission that does not have any executive or decision-making powers' (UCI, 2020b, p. 2). Similar to gender relations in the local Melbourne road racing scene, the concern of women's cycling falls predominately on the shoulders of women (in this case the women's commission), which means that the responsibility for women's cycling is not inherent to the organisation, but they lack the power to act upon it. In this way, the people in power also seem excused from any responsibility.

I recognise how the power relations in this web of stakeholders are constructed as a balance of advantage towards men. The stakeholders are dominated by men and this dominance has created an inequality of resources in these institutions and the larger field of women's cycling. This dominance of men and masculinity continues directly into the playing field: the races.

Old and the new races

In 2019, the UCI announced a restructuring of professional women's road cycling which included a change in the race divisions (UCI, 2019). Since 2020, four divisions have made up the racing calendar: UCI Women's World Tour (WWT), UCI ProSeries, Class 1 and Class 2. Events in both the WWT and ProSeries division are required to abide by certain organisational standards; for example, they need to improve their television production. These divisions in the women's cycling calendar include races organised by diverse types of organisations. Some races are organised by cycling clubs (e.g. Omloop van het Hageland)

and others are run by commercial organisations used to only organising (renowned) men's cycling races (e.g. La Course by le Tour de France). Some women's races on the calendar are organised by relatively new organisations and I describe these as 'new' races (e.g. OVO Energy Women's Tour). The combination of these races, the age of a race, and differences in who organises them influence the structure and culture of women's cycling.

Prestige of races

In cycling culture, old, long-distance stage races hold high prestige as they generally become national events with cherished traditions. This prestige stems from races like the Tour de France, Vuelta a España, and Giro d'Italia. Historically, such races take participants across the country while the media report extensively on the local surroundings, which creates excitement for local audiences (Oosterhuis, 2016). Also, one-day events known as the five monuments or Classics, which have a centennial history, enjoy similar fame. The so-called five monuments are Milan San-Remo, Ronde van Vlaanderen, Paris-Roubaix, Liège-Bastogne-Liège, and Il Lombardia. The races have specific characters and professional male cyclists specifically target them during a season to add them to their list of victories (Wynn, 2019). These races are constructed as historically rich and they have many associated traditions. Due to their longevity and history, these events often are more important for cyclists to participate in and win, than winning the overall competition (i.e. the World Tour). The race series does not have similar importance nor do the UCI World Championships, and some people doubt if it ever will (Rebeggiani, 2016). According to Rebeggiani (2016), the prestige of individual events over the overall competition implies a weaker bargaining power of the governing body. This means that the UCI has a different power position as an international sporting federation than, for example, FIFA in football or Netball Australia in netball. He continues: 'The governing federations manage and have to market 'products' of a lower value than some race organisers, and therefore, they do not have an economic or decision-making power comparable to that of federations in other sports, or to the powerful IOC' (Rebeggiani, 2016, p. 49). I argue that this importance is more nuanced in women's cycling. The Grand Tours mentioned above and the 'monuments' are races for men. These races have been, and really still are, only for male participants. The table below shows the Grand Tours and monument races for men and equivalent races for women.

Table 5.1 - Grand Tours and monuments

Version	Race	First edition	Organiser	Duration	Status
Men	Tour de France	1903	ASO	Three weeks	WT
Women	Tour féminin cyclists	1955	Fédération Francaise de Cyclisme and Fédération Sportive et Gymnique du Travail	5 days	
	Grande Boucle Féminine Internationale	1984 - 2009	Société du Tour de France (also organisers of men's race at the time)	10 – 15 stages	
	Tour Cycliste Féminin		Pierre Boué	Four days (2009)	
	La Course by le Tour de France	2014 - 2021	ASO	One day (2021)	WWT
	Tour de France Femmes avec Zwift	2022?	ASO	8 days?	WWT?
Men	Vuelta a España	1935	ASO	Three weeks	WT
Women	The Ceratizit Challenge (La Madrid Challenge by La Vuelta)	2015	Unipublic/ ASO	Three days	WWT
Men	Giro d'Italia	1909	RCS Sport	Three weeks	WT
Women	Giro Rosa	1988	PMG Sports	9-10 days	2.Pro
Men	Milan San-Remo	1907	RCS Sport	One-day	WT
Women	La Primavera Rosa	1999-2005	RCS Sport	One-day	-
Men	Ronde van Vlaanderen	1913	Flanders Classics	One-day	WT
Women	Ronde van Vlaanderen	2004	Flanders Classics	One-day	1.Pro
Men	Paris-Roubaix Nickname: Queen of the Classics	1896	ASO	One-day	WT
Women	Paris-Roubaix Femmes	~~2020~~ 2021	ASO	One-day	WWT
Men	Liège-Bastogne-Liège	1892	ASO	One-day	WT

	Nickname: the Old Lady				
Women	Liège-Bastogne-Liège Femmes	2017	ASO	One-day	WWT
Men	Il Lombardia	1905	RCS Sport	One-day	WT
Women	-	-	-	-	-

Based on the above information, it is clear how women's cycling is and has been organised inequitably. The race organisers did not commence organising women's races until the 2000s, with the exceptions of the Giro Rosa and a Tour de France for women in the 1980s, which discontinued after 2009. Not all monuments have both men and women's races (Il Lombardia and Milan-San Remo), and none of the women's races are a Grand Tour (lasting three weeks).[21] There is clear gender marking in the names of the races, as the women's versions include 'Rosa' (pink) or 'Femmes' (women). This is done more so by the Amateury Sport Organisation (ASO), while Flanders Classics named the race the same for women and men, i.e. 'Ronde van Vlaanderen' and distinguishes the race as 'elite men' and 'elite women' on their website (Flanders Classics, n.d.).

In men's racing, a rider would rather win the Tour de France than the world championships. In women's racing, a rider would rather win the world championships and the Olympic race than the one-day race La Course has become (even though La Course is a very desired race in the women's peloton). Christine, for example, said:

> I went to my first Olympic Games in 2012, London Olympic Games, and represented Australia there, which was an amazing experience (…). I've represented Australia at quite a few world championships but to go to the Olympic Games, I guess it's the pinnacle of our sport and for lots of sports, for sportsmen and women it's really yeah, such a high level and really special. (Christine)

However, the prestige of old stage races, and the desire to be included in the status quo, affects women's cycling. Despite 'crazy' routes on dangerous, badly maintained roads, with little to no coverage, and with questionable accommodation for lower ranked teams, the Giro Rosa has enormous appeal for a lot of riders (Benson, 2020). This race is a longstanding nine-

[21] The UCI limits women's elite races to six days, unless a race organisation applies for and is granted a special waiver from the UCI management committee (UCI, 2021d). This rule creates an extra barrier for any organiser to put on a Grand Tour for women. There is also a different cap on the distances allowed for stages: max. average per stage for men: 180km; women: 140km. Max. distance per stage, men: 240km; women: 160km (UCI, 2021d).

or ten-day tour. The first edition was in 1988 and with two missed editions in 1991 and 1992, the race had its 30th edition in 2019. It is considered the only 'Grand Tour' in professional women's cycling, covering many iconic mountain passes, making it the sole race similar to those iconic Grand Tours exclusive to men. Abigail, a relatively new rider to the professional peloton, said of the old Italian race:

> The Giro is a lot of fun, the Giro is a kind of a special race, because it's our Grand Tour and it's the longest one and it's very prestigious, that's kind of a cool one. (Abigail)

The desire to ride the Giro Rosa is related to the prestige associated with men's races and how the sport was developed. Women were predominately excluded from this development, except for the roles of *spectatrices* or stage models (Oosterhuis, 2016).

The prestige of men's races impacts the organisation of 'new' women's races. In April 2019, I did fieldwork at the Healthy Ageing Tour – a 2.1 race (a stage race) in the Netherlands organised by Courage Events. While I followed the organisers during the race, they told me that their race might be jeopardised if the ASO started a Paris-Roubaix for women because the timing of the two races would clash. Their prediction was that if a Paris-Roubaix would become reality, fewer teams would participate in their race. During my interview with Liza, I asked her how a hypothetical Paris-Roubaix would impact the racing calendar of her team. She said:

> We would do Paris-Roubaix, definitely. I think, like the Healthy Ageing Tour; I really hate to say this because I think they do a really good job, better than most races in the year. The organisation [is good] and they have live stream, and a lot of races don't. I think they really want to be World Tour and they actually deserve it. They do everything right and they don't have the World Tour status, whereas other races actually don't do everything right and they do have it. (Liza)

Organisations that offer newer women's races (agency) cannot escape the larger structure of professional cycling. The history of professional cycling is phallocentric and will advantage men over women, even when races are not associated with men's cycling. Women want to race the best races, and the old races are constructed as the best in the field of cycling. However, the quality of races is not necessarily linked to prestige.

Different calibre races

The prestige of old races not only impact race preferences of teams and riders but shapes the way races are organised. During my fieldwork, I observed similarities in races, but also many differences in how race organisers situated their women's race. For example, my first observed race was the Omloop het Nieuwsblad in Ghent, Belgium, a 1.1 race and also a men's World Tour race. I followed the crowd to a large warehouse attached to an indoor velodrome. The men's teams had parked their large buses inside and outside the warehouse, and people (mostly men, and some women and children) admired the bikes, listening to the riders or DS's chat with the press and watching riders warm-up on their stationary trainers.

Figure 5.2 - Crowd at the start location and men's buses

Event staff handed out cycling hats with the race's logo and a race information booklet. Occasionally, a fan with a camera would run after a cyclist to take a photo and ask for an autograph. Inside the warehouse, there was a blue carpet and the wall next to it was covered with logos of sponsors. The athletes would ride on the carpet and they were interviewed in front of a camera while standing behind barriers. That whole scene had a very Hollywood feel. This feeling was only reinforced when I entered the velodrome. It was dark, all the seats

in the stands were full, the inside of the track was full of people, and there was a big stage where the riders were presented. Loud music was playing, and colourful lights added to the show. In case a team had both a women's and men's team, they were presented alongside each other. Each team had a rider or two interviewed by a female and male host and were guided off the stage by another woman.[22] I had no idea cycling races were like this: a big show, crowded with people, and the women were introduced in the same fashion as the men.

Figure 5.3 - Team presentation

This race was an exception to the rule, and even this race had trouble putting on an equal event. They miscalculated the men's racing behaviour (the men raced too slow and the women were catching up) and the organisation paused the women's race to create a big enough gap between the two groups. The controversy around this decision made international news (Wilkinson, 2019). The organisers also decided to exclusively show the men's race on

[22] I was watching the team presentations from diagonally behind the stage because that was the only available spot. I shared this section with many men, but the music was too loud to hear what they would be saying. However, I could observe their actions and one of the men in front of me was zooming in on the woman on stage who was directing the teams off stage with his camera. She was white, slim, had blond hair and wore black heels: conventionally attractive. I saw her later at the start area where she was wearing sneakers.
The women were not introduced alongside the men until 2018. This was also the year the race organisation moved the women's start to the same start location as the men's (McKall, 2018).

the big screens at the finish location. Nothing at the finish location indicated that a women's race was happening, and I had to pull out my phone to watch an unstable livestream.

Figure 5.4 - Finish location only showing the men's race

Sexist prize ceremonies

Every race has a prize ceremony that generally consists of a presenter who announces the winner; the winner steps on the stage, receives their jersey and prize, and steps off the stage. Although the ceremony is straightforward, each race organiser seemed to want to do things differently. At the Omloop van het Hageland, for example, the top three riders were asked to come to the stage for the prize ceremony. The race organisers had appointed many people to hand out prizes, presumably guests and sponsors of the race. Besides winning respectively €420, €365 and €295, the riders received a bouquet of flowers, a goblet, a hamper with local products and a bag of sugar, handed out to them by four different people. During these interactions, it was customary to congratulate the (female) rider with kisses on the cheek by the (female and male) guests. This custom created awkwardness (at most races, not just Omloop v/h Hageland), because the number of kisses varies per culture (the winner was Italian, second was Finnish, and third was Canadian, and the organisers' guests were presumably Belgian). This gender performative practice is also reproduced at amateur level and relates to the larger gender order in society (see Chapter 4).[23] Although a prize ceremony

[23] Covid-19 impacted this tradition as physical distancing was required and organisers were advised to create a self-service option where riders could collect their medals after hand sanitising (UCI, 2020a).

is like the cherry on top of the achievement, as one rider told me during the Giro Rosa, most riders dislike the awkwardness of award ceremony traditions.

Figure 5.5 - Professional prize ceremony

Many riders have to give away their bouquets because travelling with flowers is not ideal (I was given bouquets twice). Besides the uselessness of the flowers, at some races or stages, these women riders are rewarded with houseware for example, a vacuum cleaner at the Drentse Acht van Westerveld, a vacuum cleaner, waffle maker, and TV at the Ronde van Drenthe, and pots and pans at stage seven of Giro Rosa 2019. In 2020, the UCI raised the prize money (€665) and will raise the stakes again in 2021 (€735), but prize money is set to remain the same in 2022/2023 (€735) (UCI, 2018a).

Figure 5.6 - Podium at Ronde van Drenthe

Figure 5.7 - Sexist prizes

The cyclists pictured in the photo above share a laugh at the prizes with each other, but these prizes do not match their labour and their respectability as professional athletes.

Teams

When the level of competition gets higher, the dynamics of bicycle racing change and riders race as an individual in a team sport setting. This combination of individual and team sport is

due to the occurrence of drafting: an aerodynamic technique to save energy by cycling behind another rider in their slipstream. Research shows that a rider saves between 27% and 39% of the energy needed to move their bicycle forward (Hagberg, 1990). Drafting causes cyclists to organise in teams and operate with two types of riders: the domestiques (helpers) and the captains. This team structure revolves around increasing the opportunities for a captain to win. The purpose of the domestiques is to protect their captains from the wind, letting them draft, closing the gap of a break away or executing other team tactics. Even though winning cyclists are very dependent on their teammates, the rider who crosses the finish line first is still the winner. This rider is awarded prize money, UCI points, and attention and exposure.[24] This is regardless of whether a cyclist becomes a domestique or a captain depends on their strengths and what qualities the team is looking for. Generally, age and experience play a big role. To support their captain, domestiques sacrifice their energy and their own chances of winning or even finishing in the top 40.[25] With limited broadcasting of women's races, the domestiques might have already done their part and are riding in the grupetto or have been picked up by the broom wagon. It is difficult for these riders to attract potential new teams to hire them, as they do not have results on paper and no footage team managers and directors can view.

Variety of teams

There is a variety of women's teams. When cyclists first move overseas to race bikes, they might do guest rides for a club or local team. To race, riders can also be part of a national team or the UCI's World Cycling Centre (WCC) team. The restructuring of professional women's road cycling included a reform of the women's teams. The sport changed from one division of teams (i.e. UCI Women's Teams), to a two-tiered system: WWT teams and Continental teams depending on their UCI license.[26] These are the most important teams in professional women's road cycling as they offer the opportunity to become a professional cyclist. The nine teams that attained WWT status in 2021 were Alé BTC Ljubljana, Canyon-

[24] During my fieldwork, when I asked a DS how prize money is paid to the rider, he told me that prize money was transferred to the team's bank account. The rider would then get it from the team. Prize money is often shared between teammates.

[25] In WWT races, the first 40 riders to cross the finish line are rewarded with UCI points. The winner is awarded 400 points, and the last ten receive eight points. During a stage race, wearing the race leader's jersey adds eight UCI points to a rider's total. If, for example, 15 teams of six riders participate in a WWT race, there would be 90 riders at the start; 50 of whom will not receive any points.

[26] I did my fieldwork in 2019, which is prior to this restructuring. I decided to include the current organisational structure of professional women's cycling to have the most up-to-date information in this thesis.

SRAM Racing, FDJ Nouvelle-Aquitane Futuroscope, Liv racing, Movistar Team Women, Team BikeExchange, Team DSM, Team SD Workx and Trek-Segafredo. Three of these teams (Alé, Canyon-SRAM and SD Workx) are women-only entities. The other WWT teams have an equivalent team in the men's World Tour.

UCI Continental teams are registered via their national federation. In general, the nationality of a Continental team is determined by the nationality of majority riders. Continental teams can have eight to 16 riders (UCI, 2021d). There were 50 Continental teams in 2021. Unless a Continental team is registered as a professional team, there is no minimum wage requirement (UCI, 2021d, p. 281). In 2019, national teams also received an allowance, but that is no longer the case in the restructured system. This lack of allowance makes it more difficult for national talents to participate, gain experience, and showcase their talents at important races because there is less funding. Teams pay fees and salaries, but also receive a fee when they compete in races (i.e. a participation fee). The table below displays the different fees and number of riders. I included the men's World Tour (WT) for contrast.

Table 5.2 - Overview of fees

Item	WWT		Continental		WT	
Number of riders	9 – 16 in 2021 10 – 20 in 2022	**AUD**	8 – 16	**AUD**	At least 27	**AUD**
UCI fee	€10,000	$15,620	€4,250	$6,686	€81,500	$128,343
Anti-doping contribution	€10,000	$15,620	€2,250	$3,467	€16,000	$25,196
Total registration fee	€20,000 (€22,000 in 2022)	$31,240 ($34,364)	€6,500	$10,153	€97,500	$153,539
Participation fee one-day	€3,000	$4,686	€2,000	$3,124	€8,500	$13,385
Participation fee stage race	€2,000 per day + accommodation	$3,124	€500 per day + accommodation	$781	Acc. for 24 people + 3 single rooms	

The fees show that it is more costly to register a WWT team, but WWT participation fees are also higher which covers more race costs. It is much cheaper to attain a WWT license than a WT license, and to invite WWT teams to a race. The variety in teams means that a combination of WWT, Continental, national, and club teams could be competing in the same race. Although these teams might be competing in the same races, they have many differences, and therefore the opportunity for an athlete to excel and perform can obstruct the creation of a level playing field.

Big and small teams

A recurring notion in both my fieldwork and interviews is that actors describe teams either as big or small, which is related to a team's budget rather than victories. The difference in budget is easily observed at team zones of race events. The team zone is usually an exhibition of elite cycling where people can wander through, watch the teams and riders get ready, and inspect their top-notch bikes. At events with both a women's and men's race, the contrast between these teams is very clear, because every men's team has a large bus, whereas most women's teams have campervans. However, this contrast is also apparent within women's cycling. For example, at the Omloop het Nieuwsblad, the Boels Dolmans and CCC-Liv arrived and departed in a big bus.[27]

[27] Despite not being a WWT team in 2020, then Boels Dolmans (now SD Workx) has been a 'big' team for years. Their riders dominate the field, and they have professional staff and good equipment. In the past, the DS of the team, Danny Stam, has voiced concerns about the new structure for women's cycling: 'The minimum salary requirement isn't the problem, but there are a lot of additional costs that add up to quite a big amount of money that a team needs to have in order to set up a professional women's team' (Fletcher, 2019).

Figure 5.8 - Team vehicles

The photo above was taken at the finish of stage one of the OVO Energy Tour in England. It captures the difference between team vehicles, with the big buses in the back, and the smaller campervans for most teams in the front.

An impression of having such a bus can be found in the promotion video of stage four of the 2019 Giro Rosa by Mitchelton-Scott. Rider Sarah Roy explains how the team does not get to use the bus often (this makes me believe it is a bus of the men's team), 'so, this is super exciting! We've got it for the whole Giro. Throughout the rest of the season, we usually have a much smaller camper, so, this is a bit of a luxury for us. So, we're making the most of it and we're feeling very lucky and privileged (…)'. She gives the viewers a tour of the bus, showing the numerous seats, a lounge area where her teammates are relaxing and a kitchenette where a soigneur is preparing drink bottles. Next, Roy opens a door into a change-room where she says, 'this is where we disappear to straight after a race. Super lucky to have a whole bunch of showers and a nice changing area!' (Mitchelton-Scott, 2019) These riders can step off their bike after hard racing, hand their bike to a mechanic, step into the bus, have a shower, put on clean clothes, eat a nutritious meal and remain in the bus while the driver is navigating to the next hotel. Some teams only have a car without even a campervan to change in. After the first stage of the WWT Emakueen XXXII Bira stage race in Basque

country (Spain), the riders of an American team gathered their camping chairs around the cars, changed out of their kits and cleaned themselves with wipes without any privacy.

The top-tier teams offer their riders access to nutritionists, a team doctor, coaches, massages, and a salary that allows them to be a full-time cyclist. The bigger teams are identified by higher paying sponsors, good management, access to coaching, support, training camps, facilities: all aspects that make teams 'professional'. Lack of resources in smaller teams makes riders face more difficulties to pursue their best performance, develop into the best bike rider they can be, and stay safe and healthy.

Team staff

Figure 5.9 - Soigneur

To run a professional women's cycling team, you need more than riders. The 2021 UCI road race regulations include the organisational criteria for WWT teams to abide by to receive and maintain their license. These criteria include the requirement to employ at least one sports director (DS) and three other staff members (coaches, doctors, paramedical assistants, mechanics, etc.) on a full-time basis and for the whole registration year. In 2022, teams must hire two DS's and five other staff members. These staff members are required to be either a coach or a performance manager, and a 'chief medical officer' as a doctor responsible for the organisation of care (UCI, 2020c, p. 138).

The DS is the race leader during a race and generally, they lead the riders and other staff, like the soigneurs and mechanic(s), by planning the logistics of travel and equipment, the briefing, departure, arrival and division of tasks. The team manager oversees all organisational aspects, sponsor agreements, and potential strategies and goals. The soigneurs are the carers of the team: they have a range of tasks and responsibilities but generally feed the team before, during, and after the race, hand out bottles to the riders along the race route, massage riders after a stage, and assist in other ways. The mechanic takes care of all the equipment, which means they clean and fix the bikes, but also

set up the team zone together with soigneurs (e.g. stationary trainers to warm up). The DS drives the team car in the convoy and the mechanic sits in the back, ready to change wheels or fix other mechanical issues during a race.

Mobilisation of masculine bias

Especially for Continental teams, there can be multiple DS's, soigneurs and mechanics either on full-time or casual contracts, or even voluntary verbal agreements. There are instances where the composition of staff is informally achieved. For example, during the Giro Rosa, I learned how for one team, one of the soigneurs was an old friend of the DS and they used to race together. The DS had asked his friend (who had soigneur experience and a massage certificate) to help the team. None of the other staff knew him, nor did the riders. It was an intense 10 days getting used to each other, personality clashes, and communication errors. During La Course, one team had none of the usual directors available and the team worked with a substitute DS whose last race was one year prior (a men's race). In the briefing, there were uncomfortable moments where he clearly misunderstood the context of women's cycling. I also feared for my life while he was driving in the convoy (this is where he told me that is had been a year since he had driven in the convoy, so he was a little 'rusty'. 'But it's like riding a bike! You never forget!'). Also, during dinner with the riders, the conversation turned to how one of the soigneurs sometimes seemed out of it. One rider's anecdote from inside the peloton during a previous race:

> It was like he looked straight through me! I put out my hand to grab a bottle and he just totally didn't see me. Maybe he's too old… (Fieldnote, July 2019)

These situations are examples of how the old boys network is maintained. I argue that the behaviour of male team leaders is a self-fulfilling circle of men asking men for jobs within a team. They consider their own network which exists of mostly other men, which keeps the sport male-dominated, and steeped in male mediocracy.

Gratefulness and stereotypes

The team of staff is responsible for supporting the riders to perform during a race. However hard-working and willing, not all staff in women's cycling is full-time and paid, which impacts the professionalism of a team. In this type of situation, gratefulness creates a difficult space for these women athletes. For example, Julie said the following about one of the teams she used to race for:

> I loved it. It is more of a glorified club team in the sense of how it looks is what you get, like from the outside. Really nice people, they all had other jobs actually, the staff. This was like their hobby, not professional. It was a good environment and I was like: 'I want to train hard and do my races' and that was what I could do there, with nice people around. Good mix of teammates. We did most of the big races together and we got some good results. [It was] a really nice group even though it is not a really big team. I really enjoyed my time [with them]. But yeah, I decided to leave, because, at the end of the day, it is not super professional. I put in a huge amount of training and work and you don't want like, my chain wouldn't be good; my gears wouldn't be good, because they don't have a full-time mechanic because it is his other job. So, my bike, it didn't work one week, it didn't actually get checked until the day before the next race. And you're like: 'it's not his fault, because he's not full-time', but I'm like, I need a professional environment. If I do all this work, I need to have good equipment and for it to be looked after. (Jodie)

While the staff might try to do everything they can, she understood they are also limited. This rider had the opportunity to decide to change to an environment where staff was not a limiting factor in her progress as a professional rider. On the other hand, staff have internalised their own gender stereotypes. A female soigneur at the Ronde van Drenthe had to be convinced to get involved in women's cycling because of stereotypes.

> Beatrice told me that when some of her male cycling friends suggested she should get involved in women's cycling, she wasn't excited, and she literally didn't want to do it. She thought women would be more difficult and complaining. I asked if she could give an example to explain what she meant. She said that women would talk behind each other's back more and they couldn't let go of things such as arguments. A specific argument was that the women would complain about the van more: they want a bigger van and they would keep nagging about wanting a bigger van even though it was clear they were not going to get a larger van. She thought that was annoying. (Fieldnote, Ronde van Drenthe, March 2019)

Professional women cyclists are exposed to a space that is not always inclusive of women, and they need to perform gratefulness to tolerate and accept it.

The higher the level, the more men are represented

The staff positions are dominated by men. When women are part of staff, there is a gendered division of labour. In my observations, most mechanics were men, and some soigneurs were women. In management positions in Abigail's team, a division of labour was also present.

> Me: Cycling is said to be a very male-dominated sport.
>
> Abigail: Yeah, coaches and DS's and uhm, yeah, it is definitely male dominated. All the DS's are male.
>
> Me: Are there any women involved in management positions? Or in other structures of the team?
>
> Abigail: Uhm, not a lot… only at administration, haha, I suppose. Yeah not so much. We work with some females like physio's and osteo's [osteopaths] and things like that, but all the DS's are male. (Abigail)

The teams in general are dominated by men, but especially in leadership positions. On their website, the UCI considers general managers, DS's, and assistant sport directors as part of team management. In 2021, 9.1% of management positions in the nine WWT teams were held by women.[28] Three teams (Alé BTC Ljubljana, Canyon-SRAM and Trek-Segafredo) employed women in their management team: Alessia Piccolo as general manager for Alé; Beth Duryea as assistant DS for Canyon; and Ina Teutenberg and Giorgia Bronzini as directors for Trek. These four women are part of the 44 management positions and names mentioned on the UCI website (UCI, 2021c). The majority of the women's peloton exists of Continental teams. With 50 teams, the teams are good for 173 management positions (the China Liv Pro cycling team did not show any management positions). Women serve in 26 of these positions, resulting in a 15% representation of women in leadership positions. The lower 9% in WWT teams and the slightly higher 15% in Continental teams signal a larger societal trend of how higher positions have fewer women represented. Schlesinger and Weigelt-Schlesinger (2012) argue that while formal barriers (such as rules) can no longer

[28] This was 10,25% in 2020, when there were eight WWT teams. SD Workx joined as a WWT team and added four management positions, all covered by men. However, two current riders of SD Workx, Chantal van den Broek-Blaak and Anna van der Breggen, announced their retirement after the 2022 and 2021 season and are planning on taking on a DS role in the team (Cash, 2020).

explain why women are clearly underrepresented in leadership positions, there are factors and processes at work at an informal level that often remain invisible (such as gender stereotypes), but are nonetheless effective in preventing women from striving for these positions. Ryan and Dickson (2018) clearly state that when discussing the relationship between leadership and gender, it is the dominant presence of groups of men and valued forms of masculinity that are the problem, not the underrepresentation of women.

Male staff and the problem of safety

In Chapter 1, I discussed many examples of misconduct in professional women's road cycling where male staff members were the perpetrators. During my fieldwork, I did not observe such explicit behaviour nor was I exposed to instances of abuse. I observed some measures taken to ensure (feelings of) safety of the riders. For example, when riders would get massages from male soigneurs, the door to that room was left open and teammates would be in the room with them, awaiting their turn. At the same time, I was exposed to behaviour undesirable behaviour from men that made me feel uncomfortable. However, I suspect that male staff behaved differently around me than the riders. I was most likely viewed as an independent figure that was not related to their team, which positioned me as less threatening, and possibly a target of questionable interactions that would not have the same consequences for them or the team.

I experienced a heteronormative culture that emphasised heterosexual male desire. For example, I was flirted with by an Italian soigneur at several races; I was invited inside a team van for a cup of coffee while the soigneur had closed all the blinds (I declined); during a race where the route involved a loop that included a bridge over a river where people were sunbathing, the male DS hoped to see the 'lady with the big boobs' again; a soigneur shared a video in the staff group chat that showed the back of a car that had a picture of a woman wearing a bra. When the windshield wiper would go on, the bra would come off, exposing her breasts. The soigneur suggested it was something for the team leader car (nobody replied). A DS told me that his staff told him that he gave me too much attention (we had frequent conversations). In one instance, uncomfortable sexualised jokes were made.

> They had asked me if I wanted to do laundry in their washing machine, which I accepted because I was running out of clothes. Unfortunately, I had forgotten one pair of underwear in the washing machine and the soigneur came to my van while I was hanging my clothes saying he didn't mean to

> offend but he thought I forgot something. I laughed, embarrassed, and said: 'Yep, I figured that would happen. Even though I checked the machine twice.... Thanks'. Later, when another staff member returned, I wanted to tell the story before the soigneur would without my presence. I laughed it off. The staff member made a comment that the soigneur probably sniffed it, but he said: No, they were already washed'. (Fieldnote, July 2019)

Such behaviour, comments and practices create a heteronormative space where male desire is centralised. While no direct harm other than uncomfortableness was done, it required careful navigation from me as a young woman researcher. I needed to be aware of how to navigate this male-dominated field that I need access to for data collection while being respected and safe.

Professional women cyclists need to perform their labour in a setting that is male-dominated, and they are exposed to staff's internalised gender stereotypes. In Chapter 6, I explain more about the culture of secrecy, of not speaking up, in women's cycling; however, this context shows that the space of professional women's cycling is not always inclusive of women, and the athletes need to either tolerate, accept, and perhaps internalise this exclusivity themselves to become or remain a professional cyclist. Besides their teammates and staff, cyclists are exposed to the media, promotional material, and fans in the field of professional cycling.

Exposure to the media, promotional material, and fans

The media

The current media infrastructure of women's cycling is somewhat regulated by the UCI. With the introduction of the WWT and the restructuring of competition, the UCI implemented a mandate to increase media exposure. WWT race events are required in order to provide coverage of at least 45 minutes of the race. All events need a website in French and/or English and to create social media accounts on both Facebook and Twitter. Hashtags for each event must be defined by the promoter early on in the season and be promoted. All events must also provide live coverage of racing on their Twitter accounts (UCI, 2016). The UCI runs their own Twitter and Instagram accounts for the WWT and provide short clips after each race with highlights. Photographers line up at the finish line to capture the winning moments and riders are filmed, photographed, and interviewed before and after the race. Cycling journalists are organised in the Association Internationale des Journalistes du Cyclisme (AIJC) and dominated by journalists from Belgium, Italy, France, the Netherlands,

Spain, and the USA (and by men) (AIJC, 2021). All WWT teams and most Continental teams have their own website, social media pages, and provide their fans and followers with updates and insights.

Nevertheless, lack of media coverage and exposure is a very prominent topic in discussions about women's cycling. As mentioned in the previous section, the sport is very concerned with growth which mostly entails more TV coverage and media exposure. A common belief is that the 'rest' will follow, meaning more professionalism, better working conditions, and a safer environment. Especially (live) TV coverage is regarded as essential for women's cycling existence and growth. Every rider I interviewed, commented on media exposure and TV coverage.

> I honestly think that TV coverage is the most, the single most important thing. If we could get good TV coverage, then everything else would follow. Uhm, and it's slowly improving, slowly improving. (Abigail)

> We were aggressive and, I mean, there wasn't coverage last year and we'll see what happens next year, but we don't… like, prize money is nice, because they gave us equal prize money. Like it's huge, HUGE [my emphasis] prize money Tour Down Under and at Cadels, but at the end of the day you don't care about that. You care about TV coverage. (Jodie)

> It's not exactly easy to find it [broadcasting of women's races] and easily accessible. Unless you're already like a fan of cycling and women's cycling. If you're not necessarily and do not seek it out, it's not like you're just flicking through channels and happen to come across a race. So, I, yeah, it's harder to, to gain your fans when you don't have, when they don't have easy exposure to racing. (Violet)

The importance of TV coverage of road cycling is thoroughly explained by Daam van Reeth (2016b) in his chapter on TV viewing of road cycling races. A road race can only be fully understood through access to the media, because being a spectator on the side of the road only exposes the audience to the peloton and convoy for several minutes. Fans need television or radio reporting to appreciate a day's racing. However, non-sports fans are also a major group of viewers of road cycling races. According to van Reeth (2016b), this is due to the accessibility as the sport is reasonably straightforward: the first rider over the finish line wins. This simplicity stimulates family and social viewing. Road races are also ideal to

promote tourism, since cyclists compete on public roads through diverse regions. This factor allows for a spontaneous mix of live sport images and scenery that almost no other sport offers and consequently makes road cycling one of the most watched sports by non-sports fans. The importance of regional promotion during cycling races has grown and has led to an increase in broadcasting races from start to finish.[29]

Despite van Reeth (2016b) using men's cycling as his frame of reference, I argue that the above factors can be and are also offered by women's races. The problem is the myth of lack of interest. Kane (2013) argues that lack of media coverage of women's sport suggests that 'the media do not just ignore sportswomen; they construct and actively perpetuate a false narrative that women are not interested in sports and are not very skilled when they do participate' (p. 233). Sport media are an effective tool to preserve male power and privilege by reproducing dominant ideologies and practices that systematically position sport as an exclusive male terrain, essentially creating a false narrative that suppresses knowledge about, and deny the reality of, the ever-expanding and highly accomplished world of women's sport (Kane, 2013).

Online and social media can play an important role in women's sport (Bruce, 2016; Toffoletti & Thorpe, 2018; Vann, 2014). The internet provides the opportunity for races to be (live) streamed for people to watch. Though this might be seen as improvement since women's races could now be followed, it is often unclear where the links to the races can be found or what time the streaming starts. Not all streams have commentators and the connection is often poor with grainy images. The (live) streams do not allow for spontaneous viewership as people have to actively search for the coverage. While van Reeth (2016b) suggests that non-sport/cycling fans represent a huge chunk of the viewers of cycling races, this is not the case for women's cycling as their coverage is hidden on the internet. In 2020, Eurosport, in

[29] Historically, the media play a crucial part in road racing. Many bike races in the late 1800s and early 1900s were organised by newspapers to promote their products and increase their sales (Oosterhuis, 2016; van Reeth, 2016b). The journalists covering the bike races not only reported on this exciting novelty with commercial interests, they also functioned as gatekeepers to the social associations of the sport. For example, with the development of the Tour de France (TdF) in 1903, journalists, commentators and organisers portrayed TdF racers as hypermasculine 'giants of the road' to implicitly counter the national anxiety in France of the lack of virility in French men due to its defeat in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 and the death toll in World War I (Thompson, 2006, p. 96). Considering both this fear of loss of masculinity and the athletic heroism fuelled by sports fiction and new visual images, the race aimed to celebrate a new, hypermasculine French manhood (Thompson, 2006). This relation between cycling, racing, and masculinity remains today (Falcous & Masucci, 2020), and shapes the lived experiences of professional women road cyclists.

partnership with Global Cycling Network (GCN), invested in professional women's road cycling coverage. However, as a result of this investment, most races were almost exclusively available via the Eurosport Player or a GCN pass, which means that women's cycling became a niche product for fans and less accessible to the broader public (van Reeth, 2020).[30] The data presented in van Reeth's (2020) report are limited to the viewings and audiences of major public channels. Nonetheless, the report shows an increase in TV audiences from 2014 (7) onwards with a high in 2019 (75) and a dip in 2020 (69) due to the pandemic. Despite warning caution with limited numbers in his report, van Reeth's (2020) numbers suggest an increase in viewership in many territories that have a high viewership of cycling, such as the Netherlands and Flanders. For example, with over 730,000 TV viewers for the Ronde van Vlaanderen, it was the best watched women's race in Flanders. Only five men's races recorded higher TV audiences in Flanders in 2020 (van Reeth, 2020). Interestingly, Flemish fans were older (2% more viewers in the 65+ category) and more often male (1,4% more male viewers) compared to the viewers of men's races (van Reeth, 2020).

There is a demand to consume women's cycling and Maria's quote below captures her lived experience of the discrepancy between demand and the media upholding the lack of interest myth.

> The public are starting to scream out for women's cycling. The last two years of the Tour Down Under, the crit, which is the last stage for the women, and the prologue for the men, uhm, they are recording it. They have it on big television screens and they have Scott McGrory [Australian commentator] commentating, yet they can't livestream it. Because we [the organisation] don't have the $30,000 that require that timeslot on SBS [TV channel], but they'll do the men's. But then the amount of outrage from the public, saying: 'why can't I see the women's?! There's a women's race happening right now, and my Twitter-finger is fatiguing because it's only on Twitter, what's happening? I want to see this. You're filming it, why can't you just put a link up?' Like, people are screaming out for this. The public is starting to realise how exciting and how awesome women's cycling is. (Maria)

[30] Eurosport Player and the GCN pass are streaming services to which consumers need to prescribe. Also, these services are not offered in all territories.

Besides these (social) media practices, the promotion of the race by race organisers is carried out through other promotional material at event locations.

Promotional material

Throughout my fieldwork, I would access livestreams on my phone when available. Many races did not have live commentating, which made the coverage quite unexciting. At some races, like Dwars door Vlaanderen, where only the men's race was displayed on the big screens at the finish location, I had three or four soigneurs around me, watching the race on my phone with me. However, overall, I was less exposed to race broadcasting and more exposed to promotional material on the ground. This material differed per race. The OVO Energy Women's Tour in England situated cyclists as proper athletes and stayed away from emphasised femininity to speak to the public. While the race organisation had attracted women specific sponsors or causes (e.g. Eisberg and Breast Cancer care), the event also had many cycling specific brands and sponsors present in their promotional material, for example, Skoda (important sponsor of cycling events) and Wahoo, positioning the race as a true bike race. The race's iconic green colour is not traditionally associated with femininity, and their logo is a white abstract lined cyclist. These practices created an atmosphere of athleticism and professionalism. The photo below was taken at stage two of the Women's Tour.

Figure 5.10 - Photographic impression of the OVO Energy Women's Tour race

The Healthy Ageing Tour in the Netherlands had cardboard posters portraying cyclists, around lighting poles in the host towns. While talking to one of the race directors, two middle-aged women approached us and asked if it was only a women's race that was happening. The race director replied that was correct: the race was a women's only race. One of the women said: 'But on the poster, it's a man?' The race director told her to have a closer look and she would be able to see they were women. While the race organisation chose

images that displayed women as cyclists, the women viewed these 'neutral' pictures as masculine and expected the event to be a men's race.[31]

At some races, promotional material contributed to the alienation of women. For example, at Dwars door Vlaanderen in Belgium, both a women's and men's race, I had a strong feeling of not belonging. There was an unmistakable male dominance in many practices including: the overrepresentation of men spectators; the prominence of the men's team buses close to the finish area, while the vehicles of the women's teams were not in sight and there was no signage where they were; only the men's race was on the screens; the merchandise tents only sold men's jerseys; and a Twitter post by the organisation that stated: 'Let's not forget, we've got an exciting women's race coming up as well' (Dwars dr Vlaanderen, 2019). The most prominent practice that shaped the space of the finish location as a men's space were the flags displayed by a sponsor named Group Delrue, a construction material company. This sponsor had a secluded section along the finish, seemingly a VIP area. They had put up flags, an old English bus and a tent, under which men were drinking beer. The flags displayed an image of a sexualised woman on a bicycle with construction tools. The photo below shows one of the flags.[32]

[31] Interestingly, the women recognised the race director as she is a former elite athlete herself. The women asked for a photo, which she was happy to pose for. This interaction suggests that the women were familiar with women's sport and even retired athletes, which means they would have been exposed to women's sport.

[32] This image is also used on their Facebook page as their cover photo. The cover photo shows two sexualised women, one on a bicycle and another handling a drilling machine, and a traditionally masculine man carrying a wheelbarrow. The company also used the image of the woman on the bicycle for their personalised wine bottles on 18 December 2020 (Group Delrue, n.d.).

Figure 5.11 - Sexualised image

As Lafferty and McKay (2004) argue, everyday language and images play a fundamental role in the construction and reinforcement of gender differences. The flag was one of the few images of women in the space and it symbolised a gendered practice that reproduced meanings of women as sexualised beings and not as serious athletes. As a 1.1 race, at the time the second highest class of races for women, Dwars door Vlaanderen is an important race on the women's calendar. The race organiser, Flanders Classics, is a powerful actor in the field of professional cycling as they organise five other significant races, for both men and women.[33] At most of their races, Kwaremont, a brand of beer, had the following boarding

[33] Their most important race is the Ronde van Vlaanderen (WWT/UWT), which is one of the monument races in men's cycling. Since 2004, the race has had a women's edition. Their other important races are Omloop van het Nieuwsblad (Proseries/UWT), Gent-Wevelgem (WWT/UWT), Scheldeprijs (1.1/Proseries) and de Brabantse Pijl (1.1/Proseries). UWT is the UCI WorldTour, the men's highest competition.

displayed on barriers around the course. The photo below was taken at Omloop het Nieuwsblad in Belgium.

Figure 5.12 - Male-centred sponsoring

In Dutch/Flemish, it reads: ‘gebrouwen voor kopmannen. Pittig blond. 6.6%’. In English, this would translate to: ‘brewed for male leaders. Spicy blond’. A kopman (singular) is a specific and gendered word used in cycling to describe the most important rider in a team. In women’s cycling, the Dutch and Belgians use kopvrouw to indicate the team’s captain. Although ‘pittig blond’ refers to the flavour of the beer (full-flavoured blond), in colloquial Dutch it is also used as a description of a strong-minded, feisty blond woman (‘pittig blondje’) which could indicate sexualised wordplay. In 2017, the new managing director of the beer brand was said to have specifically marketed their beer towards cyclists with a slogan that applied to both professionals and weekend-warriors that would jump on their bikes on a Sunday morning and challenge themselves (de Vrind, 2017). He also said the orange and black label was inspired by the jersey of Eddy Merckx, a male Belgian cycling legend. Based on the semiotics of this brand, the beer is strongly marketed towards men while potentially sexualising women. Interestingly, a recent visit to their website shows a

change of slogan: ‘Kwaremont, met liefde gebrouwen voor elke fietser’, or in English: ‘Kwaremont, brewed carefully for all cyclists’, and in a specification below: ‘Kwaremont is bier van kopmannen en kopvrouwen’ (this would translate to ‘Kwaremont is beer of male leaders and female leaders’) but the English version on their website is: ‘Kwaremont is brewed for leaders’. The company also dropped ‘pittig blond’ from their logos and pack shots (De Brabandere Brouwerij, n.d.). However, Flanders Classics allowed Kwaremont’s male-centred marketing and Group Delrue’s display of sexualised images of women at their event that was supposedly about elite racing and women cyclists performing their athleticism and professionalism. Accumulation of phallocentric practices indicates that, although a women’s race was organised, women’s racing was inferior and secondary to the organisation, the sponsor, and the public.

At stage eight of the women’s only race, Giro Rosa Iccrea in Italy, the local promotion of the race used posters and banners displaying a femininised cartoon (see photos below).

Figure 5.13 - Emphasised feminine image

The cartoon, most likely a squirrel, was also used in a 2017 Giro Rosa leaflet for the second stage of the race (*Depliant generale Giro Rosa*, 2017). There appears to be an artist’s signature next to the squirrel, which leads me to believe that the organisation hired someone to design this image and approved its use for their promotional material. The function of the cartoon is unclear, especially because the posters also display a photo of the 2018 Giro Rosa winner. This photo shows a professional woman cyclist in kit and in a victory pose, which portrays her as a serious athlete. However, the cartoon’s appearance undermines this

meaning, as the pink clothing, the pink bike, the pink flower in 'her' ear, the extended eyelashes, and the pouted buttocks and arched back do not indicate athleticism, but rather infantilises the sport, and uses emphasised femininity in the shape of a cartoon character to promote the race stage and women's cycling.[34]

Additionally, while no merchandise of women's teams or the women's race was sold at the Giro Rosa, people were able to purchase Giro d'Italia gear at every stage from a merchandise van (see photo below). The Giro d'Italia is a men's only Grand Tour and appears to have no formal connections to the Giro Rosa, as the Giro Rosa is organised by PMG Sports and the Giro d'Italia is organised by RCS sport, two different organisations.

Figure 5.14 - Merchandise van

Gendered practices at race locations and the choice of promotional material suggests how symbolic gender relations in professional cycling are situated and contextualised in a phallocentric and heteronormative manner, predominantly at 'older' races. The OVO commenced in 2014; HAT in 2011. Dwars door Vlaanderen started in 1945 for men, in 2012 for women, and the Giro Rosa commenced in 1988. Perhaps a modern approach to organising elite bike races should include respectful symbolism.

[34] The peloton was led out of town by a group of junior cyclists, so potentially the squirrel was on the poster to attract children. However, there is no text supporting this on the poster.

Fans

I find it difficult to identify women's cycling fans, as I observed many different groups and individuals at different races in diverse nations. I approach identification with a difference between spectators or event attendees, and fans. The races with both a men's and women's event seemed the busiest, such as Amstel Gold, Omloop het Nieuwsblad, Ronde van Vlaanderen, La Course by le Tour de France (only towards the end because the race started early), and San Sebastian Klasikoa. Especially at these races, men had an unmistakably larger presence than women. The OVO Energy Women's Tour also attracted significant crowds, both at start and finish locations and along the route. Many other women's only events were not well visited. The second stage of the Emakumeen Bira in Basque country was organised in the tiny town of Aduna, where the parents of a young Dutch rider, a handful of old locals, and me were the only spectators. Notably, women's only events, such as OVO, Healthy Ageing Tour, Emakumeen Bira, invited local schools to attend the start of the race. I observed many children along the boarding, waving flags, and cheering on the riders when they departed. The OVO Energy Women's Tour also organised a competition to design the trophy for the winner of 'a major professional cycling road race' (Fieldnote of local newspaper in Warwick, 13 June 2019). These practices are similar to the marketing strategy of a professional women's football club studied by Rachel Allison (2018). Allison (2018) found a strong preference for marketing towards white heterosexual families, positioning women's football as family friendly and the athletes as good role models, a common narrative in women's sport.

Some of the professional races were organised concurrently with social rides or, as Holden, Shipway, and Lamont (2019) describe it, the emerging cycling sport tourism events segment. For example, the Cadel Evans race in Australia put on the 'People's Ride' offering a 35km, 65km and 115km course to 'challenge yourself' and 'find your greatness' while purchasing the ride's specific merchandise (Cadel Evans Great Ocean Road Race, n.d.). After their ride, the cyclists could hang out at a festival-like square where coffee, a beer and food were available, while watching the elite women's race (WWT) on big screens with live commentary. Most participants were men, but the race organisation collaborated with the This Girl Can campaign and Wheel Women to encourage women to join the ride, which resulted in a higher participation rate of women than previous editions (Cadel Evans Great

Ocean Road Race, 2019).[35] It is uncertain whether these riders were also (women's) cycling fans and whether they would be there or watching the race at home if they had not participated in the People's Ride.

There were a couple of instances where I observed people who I would describe as proper fans rather than spectators. At most Belgian races, a Belgian man walked around with a flag on a long pole. The flag, that he made himself, had the Mitchelton-Scott logo and the riders' profile photos on it and beneath a flag of just their rider, Gracie Elvin. He explained he used to be a fan of Emma Johansson, a Swedish rider who joined Orica Scott at the time. He said he had talked to her a few times and somehow, they agreed that the next time they saw each other, he would have a flag with her photo on it, so she would recognise him. He made the flag and then carried this flag to all the races. When Emma stopped racing, he asked Gracie Elvin if he could be her fan, which she agreed to, and he then made a flag of the team and of Gracie. He also created a Gracie Elvin fan Facebook group.

At times, I would see men asking for autographs, for example, at Dwars door Vlaanderen.

> At the side of the stage, there were barriers set up and a steward stood there and pointed where the cyclists could position their bikes while they went on the stage. There was a fan standing behind the barriers right where they would park their bikes and ask particular riders if they wanted to sign something. I saw he had printed photos of riders and asked them to sign their own photos. When Ellen van Dijk was up, they made eye contact, he gestured if she wanted to sign, and she gestured she would come see him after she was done with the stage presentation. (Fieldnote, Dwars door Vlaanderen, April 2019)

At the Omloop van het Hageland, there was one young man in a long-sleeve shirt with the French flag on it, wearing a blue-white-red wig and holding the French flag. He would cheer on every group and rider that would pass us, but in particular a rider named Chloe, who smiled and shook her head several times. He would run along and yell: 'Allez, allez!' I also met three people, a Dutch young man, a Spanish man and Basque woman, who were part of a larger group of fans that collect data on women's cycling and publish on their website. They would visit races when possible and meet up with each other. The Dutch man is very active on Twitter, and he provides great information about riders, teams, and races when other

[35] See Fullagar and Pavlidis (2012) for an ethnographic study on women's participation in cycle tour events.

channels are quiet. The Spanish man also provided live coverage of a women's race for a Spanish broadcaster, and the Basque woman had occasionally provided live Twitter updates for the official UCI WWT account (this was paid work).

Although fans were not often discussed in detail in the interviews, Christine commented on how the sport of cycling is accessible for many people which is positive, but somehow also results in less than desirable fans.

> I think it [road cycling] is one of the sports where spectators can really come and see the racers face to face. It's something that's, yeah, that is cycling. We get a lot of crazy fans. A bit weird though.
>
> Me: Yeah? Like what?
>
> Christine: Creepy ones with postcards of you like six years ago and they're asking for you to sign it haha and you're thinking: 'Oh, yeah… where did you get that picture from!?'
>
> Me: How would you, are they…?
>
> C: They're creepy, old Belgian men usually.
>
> Me: Haha
>
> C: No, no, haha, there are a few nice fans. And it is getting a bit better, but you think: 'Oh, why can't we just get some nice people sometimes?' But yeah, we have got, yeah, the crowds are getting bigger, it just depends what race you race. (Christine)

I was unable to find any market research or literature on who or what groups identified as women cycling fans. From my observations, I conclude the fans are diverse, but as with most things in cycling, men, mostly older, white men, are currently the largest group of fans.

Discussion and conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to describe the world of professional women's road cycling through sharing the journey and the experiences of women cyclists. I used Connell's framework of gender relations to analyse the gender regime of this space. The framework allowed me to study how gender is done in cycling at the micro level, while still being sensitive to the formidable wider structures that anchor gender identities and relations

(Lafferty & McKay, 2004). The table below summarises empirical examples of the gender regime in professional women's road cycling.

Table 5.3 - Gender regime in professional women's cycling

Empirical Examples of the Gender Regime in Professional Women's Road Cycling			
Economic	**Power**	**Emotional (cathexis)**	**Symbolic**
Women need financial support of family	Male superiority and female inferiority central to gender construction	The sport is too hard for women	Getting 'chicked' consent to women's disempowerment
Many successful women had been rewarded scholarships	UCI, race organisers, CPA, teams, and sponsors dominated by men	Heteronormative space where male desire is centralised	Constructing sexism as challenge to overcome – 'positive' impact of sexism
UCI's endorsement of CPA W. results in financial contributions	UCI endorsing men dominated union (CPA) over women-led union (TCA)	Social practices that emphasise heteronormativity (kisses on cheek)	Building tolerance against sexism and phallocentrism of cycling
Little prize money	Lack of power women's commission	Internalised stereotypes of women athletes in team staff	Gender marking on CPA's website resembles men as the norm and women as add-on
Big 'rich' teams related to men's teams vs small 'poor' teams	The power of old races	Gender bland sexism in coverage of women's cycling	Gender marking of women's races, especially by 'old' race organisers
Old boys network: self-fulfilling circle of men asking other men to do jobs for teams	Grand Tours and monuments organisers structurally ignored women's cycling	New races have family friendly approach to promotion of women's races	Tokenistic equality at team presentations but no true inclusion of women in the event
Combination of races and public events attracting spectators/fans	Higher positions in teams are more dominated by men	Older men as die-hard fans of professional women's cycling	Men's merchandise at women's races (no women's merchandise available)
	Myth of lack of interest in women's cycling		Most WWT teams are the women's equivalent of men's WT team's
	Large presence of men spectators and fans at the race locations		Alienation of women in sexualised promotional race material
			Sexist prizes
	Foundation of The		**Change from sexist**

	Cyclists' Alliance is challenging male power		**branding to more inclusive of some sponsors**

In terms of power, there is an unambiguous dominance of men in positions of power that control the sport. The web of principal stakeholders is dictated by male committee members, race organisers, team directors, sponsors, staff, journalists, spectators, and fans, which leads to practices that reproduce professional cycling as a male preserve favouring masculine norms. These relations commence when women cyclists find their way into the sport via male gatekeepers and continue to find them along the way to the top. The opening and closing of doors in cycling is predominantly in the hands of men. Through their journey in this male dominated sport, women are exposed to, and have internalised, dominant cycling ideology that is historically produced, socially constructed, and culturally defined as a space for men. The long, mythologised and women-exclusive history of road cycling races plays a significant part in the shaping of gender relations in professional cycling. Road races have been organised since the late 1800s. Paris-Roubaix originated in 1896 and still runs today. This longevity indicates an enormous and continuous effort to organise an event for that duration. To this day, no women's Paris-Roubaix has been held and two other 'monument' races do not include a women's event. The historical prestige of races is destined for men's cycling. This destination positions women's cycling, due to limits and barriers created by men, as inferior. From this history and today's professional cycling ideology, the discourse of gender hierarchy places the male sex and masculinity as superior, based on biological explanations. Women are denied longer distances, more days, and riders internalise the notions of being weaker.

In respect to economic relations, this inferiority is visible in the division of labour in relation to stakeholders. The few women represented in stakeholder positions predominantly perform these roles without much power. The UCI women's commission is 'a woman's job' since all members are women; the CPA's general secretary is a woman; and cycling teams mostly hire women in supportive roles such as soigneurs. The accumulation of wealth is another aspect of economic relations that is gendered in professional women's road cycling. Unequal and low prize money, useless gendered prizes instead of money, lack of broadcasting that makes it difficult for domestiques to be picked up by future or 'bigger' teams, and riders do not often enjoy social mobility within cycling by landing a DS job after their athletic careers. There is a dependence on men's World Tour teams to create the Women's World Tour field, as six out of nine WWT teams have an equivalent men's team, which also creates a disparity between

‘bigger’ teams that are able to hire riders full time, and offer them services and resources that ‘smaller’ teams cannot afford. Often these teams compete in the same race, which leave the smaller teams with fewer opportunities to be influential in the race. The sexual demarcations through work practices that reinforce male solidarity are strongly related to emotional and symbolic relations in the field. Staff members make sexualised jokes, they share sexualised imagery of women in group chats, and sponsors use women-exclusive, sexually objectifying language and images that reinforce the space of professional cycling as a space for men and their desires. Concurrently, women’s cycling is generally presented in a duller fashion (gender bland sexism), and their presence and performances are questioned through overt and covert sexism. Symbolic relations in professional women’s road cycling unsurprisingly follow this gender pattern. Women’s excellent performances are situated in men’s shame (‘getting chicked’), male superiority is dominant in language, and riders frame sexism as a challenge, as a ‘positive impact of sexism’. Throughout the sport, women’s cycling is heavily gender marked, while men’s cycling is not.

Summing up, the gender regime of professional women’s road cycling shows a male dominance in all four relations, which makes this sport another example of a condescending, paternalistic, infantilizing, essentialist discourse that has been invoked for over a century in order to exclude women from participating in sport (Hargreaves, 1994; Lafferty & McKay, 2004). However, at the same time, we see resistance in power relations that influence economic relations in women’s cycling as well. Women use their agency to question and challenge male normativity in the field. This change is visible in the organisation of The Cyclists’ Alliance, pushing back against the patriarchal machine of professional cycling. We also see how gender relations differ in newer races, such as the Women’s Tour in England and the Health Ageing Tour in the Netherlands.

This chapter gave an overview of how professional women’s cycling is produced and how gender relations shape, and are shaped, in this field. The next chapter discusses labour and professionalism more extensively, which I relate to economic relations from Connell’s framework.

Chapter 6 – The Job and the Money

In this chapter I focus on the labour of professional women road cyclists. The space in which they perform their labour is described in Chapter 5. This chapter delves deeper into how this labour is constructed and gendered. Also, the lived experiences associated with professionalism and the construct of this concept in the field of professional women's cycling are explored. To support this analysis, I specifically use the economic dimension of Connell's (2021) gender framework. In her framework, Connell (2021) explains that the economic dimension of gender looks at the division of labour, unpaid labour, the continuous disparity in wealth accumulation, gender typed occupations, and the maintenance of sexual demarcation through work practices that reinforce male solidarity. However, what can be said of women taking up labour that is in the public realm, gender typed as masculine, and yet unpaid and therefore precarious? These questions are explored in this chapter.

Gendered labour

To understand gender, Connell (2021) emphasises it is important to take institutions, economies, ideologies, and government into account (i.e. the material of the world of work and organisational life). Therefore, to look at what women and men actually do, is to examine gendered labour. Based on many ethnographic studies, Connell (2021) writes about existing gender divisions of labour. In the larger gender order, this division of labour shows how men perform paid labour in the public realm, and women perform unpaid labour in the domestic sphere. In Chapters 4 and 5, I showed how the division of labour in cycling sees men in positions of authority and control, and women predominantly in supportive roles. Connell (2021) also points out gender-typing of labour. Occupations are gender-typed, which means those jobs are either identified as masculine or feminine. Some occupations that are strongly gender-typed can have workers of the 'non-typical' gender, such as men in nursing. Studies on such situations show that women in male-dominated corporations reinforce emphasised femininity due to social pressures. Men continue to be privileged as they are more likely to be promoted to management positions than women. Their position in the larger gender order mattered more than their minority position in the gender-typed job (Connell, 2021). I argue that, even though women were professional cyclists in the early days of bicycle racing, professional women cyclists perform unpaid and/or underpaid labour gender-typed as masculine (Knuts & Delheye, 2015; Simpson, 2007). In professional women's road cycling,

the field revolves around women doing labour that is traditionally male associated. The men that run women's cycling are able to do so because women are performing cycling labour. Much research on women's labour focuses on their unpaid labour or their gender-typed 'feminine' jobs. But what is known about women doing labour that is 'masculine', but unpaid and/or underpaid? In this chapter, I explore what this labour looks like, and how women resist or reproduce gender relations.

Professional bike riders

> After 75km, the unforgiving 16km climb with a gradient of 12% started, and the peloton broke up. This was going to be brutal. The road is steep, and the insides of the hairpin bends are like walls. Spectators stand along the road, in the corners, encouraging and cheering on the riders making their way up the mountain. As the riders climb, their tempo slows, and it becomes difficult for the team car I am in to keep momentum. We stop to avoid hitting any riders, and the car refuses to pull up after that. 'Get out and push!' yells the DS. The mechanic and I rush out and start pushing with everything we've got. As we are pushing, Charlotte passes us: her mouth open, breathing controlled, face fully focused, muscles tensed, and legs pedalling powerfully. A Dutch rider follows, clearly in a lot of pain, on the verge of crying. I feel an urge to help her, but of course I can't. Next, I see one of the best cyclists of all time coming from below. As she passes me on the wide bend, I shout her name. She looks up, sticks her tongue out as a sign of exhaustion and simultaneously gives me a smile. Then, she looks ahead to the road she still has to cover. (Fieldnote, Giro Rosa, July 2019)

The above fieldnote describes one of the hardest stages in the Giro Rosa in Italy, the longest stage-race for the professional women's peloton. It is a 10-day showcase of women's athleticism and labour on the bike, where fans come to watch, and host-towns are transformed into festivals. This opening fieldnote is a glimpse of professionalism in women's road cycling. The athletes are performing feats that require large investments in their physical and mental capabilities, there is fandom, and there is a large infrastructure in place that upholds the product of cycling. The professionalism in women's road cycling is also something that is considered to be growing (see Chapter 8). For example, Ane said:

> You see, for example, here at the Giro, that women's cycling is becoming more and more professional, you see more and more specialisation. You already see this with the men. You have the general classification riders; you have the Spring riders; you have the sprinters. And then you have riders who, for example, are very good at the Flemish classics, but you also have riders who are better at the Ardennes classics, those are steeper. And with the ladies, for the longest time, if you did road cycling, if you were able to ride a bike, then really you were capable of a little bit of everything, but that is changing. You can really tell with the ladies, they are training very specifically for the Giro, for real. And if you do not specifically prepare yourself for this race, which I didn't do, then yeah, yeah… then it's really, really hard. (Ane)

Women cyclists are on a journey towards professionalism, but they are facing challenges along the way. As McLachlan (2019) states, 'women still face discrimination, exploitation, and abuse in sport' (p. 9). In the following sections, I examine the struggles of women in relation to the social construction of their labour.

Professionalism

Professionalism is a concept without clear definition (Ruoranen et al., 2016) and it comes in various forms in different sports and organisations. In general, 'professional sport can be defined as any sport that offers a form of remuneration or compensation to an athlete for their ability, skill or performance within the sport' (Gladden & Sutton, 2014 cited in Taylor, 2020, p. 223). In line with this definition, sporting codes and leagues, traditionally volunteer-based, have become increasingly complex, for-profit, strategic organisations in a professional and business-like manner (Shilbury & Ferkins, 2011). Some athletes can make good money by being a professional athlete (e.g. tennis players) but the majority struggle to make ends meet (Taylor, 2020). In Australia, many women's sport leagues are considered professional, but this is a contentious point as many women are only paid a small sum of money that does not offer a living wage and is not comparable to the wages of male athletes (Taylor, 2020). This contention is also the case in professional women's cycling, especially when compared to professional men's cycling.

> I really loved watching the Tour de France and it didn't really occur to me that it was only for the men, haha, so I could just, like, I was really inspired and motivated, watching that every year and really wanting to be a

> professional athlete, especially a professional cyclist. And then, I guess as I got older, it became more of a reality that I could do it but also, the reality that it wasn't like how I thought it might be, because it wasn't like men's cycling. (Liza)

Like Liza, many women cyclists grew up watching men's cycling, and that became their inspiration, to become professional cyclists themselves, only to find out that the sport does not offer equal access, opportunities, rewards, prestige, and respect. Nonetheless, the cyclists I interviewed constructed a definition of what it meant to be a professional cyclist. For them, a professional cyclist is someone who signs a contract and receives a salary. Someone who gets paid to ride her bike to train and race. For example, Christine said the following about being a professional cyclist:

> I guess you are just racing and training every day. You work out your contract, for everyone is really different with their contract. Yeah, you pretty much get a salary and [you are] paid to ride your bike, haha, and race it in all the different races. You get to go to team camps, you get your work racing schedule, yeah, it's pretty much professional, pretty much I guess being [a] paid, professional sportsperson, being paid to do it. (Christine)

Christine is referring to the differences in pay negotiated in a rider's contract. According to the 2020 The Cyclists' Alliance (TCA) survey, only 18,6% earns €40.000 (AUD63,008) or more, and 25.5% of the women's peloton does not get paid at all. These figures show that salaries differ for many riders in the peloton, but this is also the case for riders within the same team. A theme that emerged in this study is the culture of secrecy around pay and salaries.

A culture of secrecy

> Everyone is really different with the amounts they get, ha. And it's always a hush-hush, secret thing in women's cycling, because some people are higher and some people are a lot lower, so no one really wants to be truthful about what they get. (Christine)

When it comes to salaries, a culture of secrecy reigns in the realm of professional women's road cycling. Secrecy is unsurprising in women's cycling as the sport, mostly on the men's side, has dealt with corruption and doping scandals over many decades (Chappelet, Clausen, & Bayle, 2020; Sefiha, 2016; Smith, 2015). In broader society, pay secrecy is a contentious

issue in many organisations (Colella, Paetzold, Zardkoohi, & Wesson, 2007). The term is defined as a restriction of the amount of information employees are provided with about what others are paid. Colella et al. (2007) argue that pay secrecy exists along a continuum where the most secretive organisations provide no information to their employees other than their own pay and salary increase. At the other end of the continuum are organisations that provide information about pay and salary increases to all employees. In this study, I noticed the secrecy around salaries took shape along this continuum. Besides the 'hush-hush' informal pay secrecy, some teams take formal measures. Sandra's team is an example.

> It is a very awkward question to ask someone, like: how much do you get paid? I don't know why it's awkward, but it [is], haha. People don't really like talking about it, so it's hard to ask someone. I'm not supposed to [talk about my salary with teammates], but I do.
>
> Me: The team told you not to talk about [your salaries]?
>
> Sandra: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I think because if you know how much someone else is getting paid and it's more than what you're getting then… you might be able to try and get more. And [you] might not be as happy with your wage. But I talk about [it] because I think it's something that needs to change in our sport. (Sandra)

Sandra's experience is exemplary of how secrecy around pay takes shape at structural and cultural levels in women's road cycling. The structural implementation of pay secrecy is organisational control, which is considered a benefit of pay secrecy for the organisation (Colella et al., 2007), in this case, the team. Sandra's team potentially tries to avoid conflict about pay distribution among the riders to create a peaceful workplace and to avoid disputes, but it is clear the team benefits from this construction as it keeps riders from demanding more pay. Besides teams, some individual riders may benefit from their 'enhanced privacy' (Colella et al., 2007, p. 62). Women who make a 'good' wage benefit from keeping their pay secret from other riders in their team to prevent negative reactions and riders demanding the same pay. This could result in reduced pay for the rider that receives a decent salary. It has been demonstrated that higher performers prefer to keep pay secret more so than lower performers (Schuster & Colletti, 1973).

Two out of 11 professional cyclists interviewed for this study disclosed their salary, of which one later emphasised in an e-mail to not include her or her team's name with that number, as

she was not sure ‘how public those numbers are’. Christine, who treated the issue in a more comical way, producing short laughs at the end of her sentences, mentioned that some women in the sport earn hundreds of thousands of euros.

> Christine: So, you get people that you’re racing with and they make nothing! They just do it for pleasure, and they’re with a UCI team, the smaller ones, or, a non-UCI team. And then you get women that are making… a lot, ha.
>
> Me: Yeah… but that’s through the grapevine and, you’re not sure?
>
> Christine: No, I am sure, because I know, ha.
>
> Me: You know what they get?
>
> Christine: Like, it’s always uh, yeah… some I know, for sure. And some, like, uh, like 8.000 [dollars], a year ha. So, it’s really, such a big gap, and such a different level for all of this. (Christine)

Christine was reluctant to identify the riders, what teams they ride for, or whether the rider does or does not earn that salary. When asked if she could live off her salary and save on the side, she answered both questions with a short ‘yes’. Her response, similar to other participants’ responses, indicates that while opening up about the problematic secretive attitude towards salaries, she has internalised the practice.

Pay secrecy should generally be expected to lower employees’ organisational trust (Colella et al., 2007). However, literature on sport teams indicates that secrecy has an important function. Within teams, some sort of team ethos will emerge, and team members expect ‘that any contradiction to the ethos should remain backstage. Thus, team cohesion depends on secrecy as it strengthens the “team ethos”, keeping everything that disrupts it backstage’ (Halldorsson, Thorlindsson, & Katovich, 2017, p. 1284). In professional cycling, the (men’s) peloton has often been described as a very close community, or even as a family. Each rider needs to observe tacit rules and noncooperative behaviour is undesirable. ‘Betrayal’ is considered a mortal sin which prevents illicit behaviour from being exposed, a peer pressure element that has drawn parallels to mafia organisations (Rebeggiani, 2016). In order to win bike races, domestique riders need to give up their chance to win by working for the team captain. Disparities between riders’ salaries in the same team could be considered disruptive to the team ethos and is therefore not discussed.

It is clear that secrecy around pay shapes professional women cyclists' lived experiences. There are no public records of these salaries. This lack of transparency relates to how most teams operate as they are not registered as companies or businesses, which prevents them from having to publish their finances. Without transparency around salaries, the overarching system of stakeholders is benefitting from lack of collective action from riders to demand more pay. The cheap labour of women cyclists allows for sponsors and teams to get their products on the market and exploit the riders.

Some of this pay secrecy is reduced by the 2020 restructuring of professional women's road cycling. This reform introduced a minimum salary for WWT teams. In 2020, the minimum salary was set at €15,000 (AUD24,838) annually excluding prize money. This minimum wage is set to increase every year: €20,000 in 2021; €27,500 in 2022; and from 2023, the minimum salary should be the same as the wage for the men's UCI professional Continental teams, which is currently around €32,000 (AUD50,406). There is clearly a unified positivity towards a minimum wage among women cyclists. However, the salary disparity within the women's peloton shapes cyclists' perceptions differently. Christine discussed the minimum wage:

> [I think] it will just be like how the pro men's conti[nental teams] were a few years ago. I think it was like 24.000 euros, was like minimum. But for the women, I don't know what figure they've come up with yet. Some teams actually couldn't do it because women's cycling is so much smaller than the men's and I guess some teams could not afford to pay every single rider that amount. (Christine)

Christine seems not overly concerned about a minimum wage as she is unaware of the inaugural number. Despite not disclosing her income, her answer suggests she earns enough to not worry about a minimum wage. Pay or no pay is not the only way riders construct their professionalism. The next paragraph will elaborate on these aspects.

It's not just about money

> That is not just with money too, it's like in your contract; does it say you get a bike? Does it say you get travel and accommodation paid for? What does it say about your insurance? Are you going to get a visa for being in America for that long? All those little things, you have to make sure are in your contract. (Sandra)

The women's peloton exists of a continuum of professional cyclists. All WWT and Continental team riders must sign a contract. The content of those contracts varies deeply. According to the TCA 2019 survey, labour agreements that do not include a salary may instead include team clothing and a racing kit, racing bike and equipment, travel to scheduled races, health insurance, medical support, mechanic services, and soigneur support (The Cyclists' Alliance, 2019). These crucial and basic aspects of a cyclist's ability to race and perform are offered to riders as professionalism without pay. In exchange for these aspects, teams expect a certain attitude and labour in return. For example, this expectation is clear in my interaction with a team mechanic:

> While preparing the bikes for la Flèche Wallonne Féminine, the mechanic grumpily said that some of the 'girls' on the team do not deserve all of the great material the team offers them. When I asked him why he said that, he explained that some of them do not train hard enough. He felt that they did not put in the work and effort to be worthy of the bikes and service the team offered them. (Fieldnote, April 2019)

Cyclists continuously need to prove they are worthy of these goods and services. When asked if her team paid her, Camille let out a long, deep 'nooo'.

> There's not much money in women's cycling. Even if I was on a professional team, it's not… you're not even breaking even with your costs. So, they supposedly, they are meant to pay for all your travel, and they're meant to pay for your bike and everything related to your bike, but you always hear stories about how the girls never got paid back for their flights [coming over] here or all sorts of things, so, no. I definitely do not get paid by [my team], but they do a lot for me. The team manager, in particular, he will go out of his way, which is really great, because you do hear a lot of stories about women's cycling and these crazy men who, you know, don't have the girls' best interests at heart, so in that sense I'm very fortunate, and then, they pay for your UCI race entries, as well. (Camille)

The dominant narrative of lack of money in women's cycling, and the alarming stories about non-payments and men with immoral intentions shaped Camille's lived experiences in the sport. She constructed her current team environment against these negative practices and

perceptions. Consequently, Camille accepts not being paid, highly appreciates the work of the team manager, and creates a story of how fortunate she is.

For professional riders who earn a salary, contractual agreements may also include modern labour agreements that include health insurance, pension plan, sick leave, holidays, and maternity leave. Women riders who are not on such a professional contract often consider the inclusion of travel pay or racing equipment worthy enough of their labour. Other riders may only receive a stipend. These 'professional' cyclists are also responsible for their own insurance and visas, which consumes their entire compensation, or more. Many cyclists would start on a contract with a small salary, and their visa and insurance covered. When they renewed their contract, the salary would go up, but the team would no longer pay for their visa. For Kate, her salary increased from AUD11,500 to AUD25,370, and she had to change visas. The team owner started to take money out of her pay for what they claimed to be legal fees. Kate was able to find a new team that pays her a more comfortable AUD68,775 per year, and they also cover her insurance, visa, and equipment.

Resources and health

While many other professional athletes, like football or netball players, have access to changing rooms, toilets, and showers, cyclists are dependent on their team's resources and what the race organisation arranges (depending on start and finish locations, budget, and perhaps will). Of the races I observed, only a few (e.g. Omloop van het Hageland and Amstel Gold) offered the opportunity for riders to shower at the finish location. However, when I asked a team staff member (who was also a former elite cyclist) if riders make use of shower options, she said it was uncommon. It was more common for riders to clean themselves with baby wipes outside or in a campervan, put on their casual wear and shower when they are back home or at the hotel, which could take hours. When the Giro Rosa was finished, two cyclists were joking about how bad they would smell to the people who might sit next to them on the plane back home.

Observing the hygiene conditions of some of these teams, I wondered how professional cyclists dealt with preventing genital issues. For female cyclists, genital hygiene is important, because they are prone to cycling related genital problems (more so than males), which can even lead to surgery (e.g. Dines, 2019). Health information is much accessed online (Rowlands, Loxton, Dobson, & Mishra, 2015) and many online cycling sources (e.g. Flottrop, 2019; Yeager, 2020) discuss associated issues, such as vaginal infections, saddle

sores, and urinary tract infection, which are caused by the unique physiological and mechanical factors cyclists are exposed to: friction, heat, pressure, moisture, and bacteria in the saddle area (Bury, Leavy, O'Connor, & Jancey, 2020). The most repeated advice to prevent these issues is taking off the shorts as soon as possible and cleaning the genital area.[36] However, most cyclists do not have access to showers, and the riders who are part of the prize ceremony after the race, often do this in their cycling kit. Lack of hygiene availability (structure) and uncommon use of showers when available (cultural) are barriers for female cyclists to properly take care of their health. I view these barriers as a result of the dominance of masculinity in cycling. When I drove around with a commissaire during a local Melbourne club road race, he told me how things have changed with an increase in female participants. He said:

> Back in the day[s before more women cyclists joined the club's races], male cyclists would just line up on the side of the road and have a wee, but now the club has to arrange facilities. (Fieldnote, September 2018)

The gendered 'issue' of urinating extends to mid-race 'natural needs'. Lucas (2012) explains that during a race, male cyclists have the option of urinating without leaving their bike or soiling their kits. This solution is not available for female riders, so they rather organise a stop to collectively have a 'potty break'. Lucas (2012) observed that female cyclists are often chastised by male racers and support crew for their cooperative approach to this physiological need, suggesting that the stoppage is an indication of women's lack of competitiveness, and it is used to validate calls for shorter races. During my fieldwork, the long drives following the peloton tested my ability to hold my 'natural need'. I observed it was common for the support crew to 'relieve' themselves.

> The DS had pulled over to pee and when he got back in the car, we heard one of the riders on the radio. The DS accelerated insanely fast, beeping the horn, going into the grass next to the road. We saw two riders on the right side of the road. One of them was the team's captain and the other one had already taken off her wheel to put it onto the leader's bike. The mechanic finished the

[36] I bought my first cycling shorts in October 2017. I went to my local bike shop with an all-male crew and a small selection of shorts. I picked one pair of shorts, tried them on, and sent photos of how they looked to my female triathlon friend who knew more about cycling shorts than me. Despite the slight sausage look of my legs (which she said was quite common) I went to purchase them. I asked the man at the pay desk how to treat the shorts. He advised me to rinse them in the shower and use some hair conditioner to clean the chamois. When I later told my friend this, she was appalled, and told me to wash my shorts in the washing machine and use detergent, because the chamois needed proper cleaning.

> job and the leader went on her way. The mechanic quickly put a reserve wheel on the other rider's bike: she jumped on, he pushed her, ran back to the car, jumped in, and the DS drove in front of the rider, bringing her back to the peloton in the slipstream of the car. When things were settled, the DS made a joke: 'That was almost a [name of a male pro rider]'! The mechanic laughed. I asked what he meant. He explained that during the Giro d'Italia, a rider who was leading or had a good chance of winning the stage needed assistance, but his support crew was having a pee break while it happened. (Fieldnote, OVO Energy Women's Tour, June 2019)

There is a clear hypocrisy in men's chastising of women riders, because collective pee breaks also occur in men's cycling, and support crew's breaks could easily be read as a lack of competitiveness as their breaks jeopardise competitive advantage. In both local and professional races, the organisational structural and cultural norms in cycling are based on masculinity, on the notions that males can pee on the side of the road, discreetly from the bike and male genital infections are (almost) a non-issue.

The conditions teams offer cannot be a mere result of lack of money. As this study aimed to examine in-depth professional women's cycling, the complexities of the field go beyond the funding aspect. The next paragraph discusses how the supply of athletes influences the state of professionalism in this sport.

Everyone wants to be a pro

> The expectation is that, everyone at that top level in Australia wants to become a pro cyclist. Like, it's not like they have to really incentivise so much. They think 'we're just giving you what you want anyway'. (Julie)

The offering of a spot on a team in the women's peloton is considered and sold as a dream to women cyclists, and teams expect riders to pursue this dream regardless of pay. For Abigail, it was not even a decision she had to think about.

> You only get one chance, you can only be a professional athlete for so many years and I am already… pretty old to be starting out, so it's really only a few years of my life, whereas I can sit at my desk for decades, haha. And as I've said, from my whole living memory, all that I have really wanted to do, is to be an athlete, and so it was like: 'Finally, I am getting to do it, full time, and get paid to do it'. (Abigail)

Many Australian cyclists described cycling as a minority sport in their country, and to become an accomplished cyclist, they would need to go overseas: to Europe. This sport labour migration is similar for other non-European riders, although Australian riders use the American cycling competition as a steppingstone for Europe. Additionally, the opportunities for Australian women athletes to become full-time professionals, earn higher levels of income, and increase fitness and technical skills are considered higher overseas (Dabscheck, 2017). In pursuit of their dream and lack of opportunities in Australia, elite Australian cyclists seem to be willing to accept minimal offerings teams make. This acceptance is especially prevalent at the beginning of a cyclist's career. Kate expresses this well.

> I am obviously pretty self-motivated, very resourceful, and obviously going from applying all my own equipment to having all the equipment provided for [by a team] was a huge step up. I was extremely grateful, perhaps even more grateful than others. To actually have a team where all your equipment is provided, all your travel is paid for, your food is paid for, I was like: 'Oh, this is awesome, I have everything I need!' But over the years, the more that you race, the more you realise the levels that exist, the more I was starting to see the cracks of what was lacking. Which is unfortunate, because I really, really try to keep a positive attitude and be like: 'No be grateful for what I do have, not what I don't have'. But there are just these obvious gaps and it's pretty hard to ignore that, if you want to take your performance to the next level. (Kate)

It is clear that Kate struggled with how she felt about her reality. As she looked to take her performance to the next level, she initially viewed the team as the right environment, and she was grateful for the opportunity. She deemed her critical observations as unfortunate because she wanted to be positive and remain grateful. This individualistic coping mechanism is prevalent in women's cycling. For Sandra, in order to 'survive' the system, she tried ignoring her situation.

> Probably one of the more important [discrepancies between women and men's cycling] is the health care of the female peloton and that comes down to teams not having enough money to really take care of their riders. So, you definitely start to see those discrepancies and I find you can spend a lot of

> time thinking about it or you can get on with being you and I tend to sort of do the latter. (Sandra)

'Women's hopes – to play at the "top of their game", to be paid to play sport – are simultaneously being fulfilled and hampered by the development of women's competitions' (Pavlidis, 2020, p. 1). The discourse in elite women's sport compels women athletes to be happy with what they get; happiness and optimism are expected regardless of substandard conditions (Pavlidis, 2020). Drawing from Julie, Sandra, and Kate's experiences, women cyclists are not offered optimal labour conditions, and as I will show in the next paragraph, part of this struggle is the gendered process of negotiating.

Gendered negotiating

> There should be a minimum wage. People [will] have a clear understanding of like: 'Okay, if I can get to that level, I get paid this much'. It's super stressful, and you don't know what your value is, you don't know what you're worth, so it's super hard to negotiate contracts when you have no idea what you're worth. (Sandra)

Negotiating is critical to professional and personal advancement as it plays an important role in determining outcomes for career advancement (Guthrie, Magyar, Eggert, & Kain, 2009; Sturm, 2009). An evident moment for negotiations is the offering and signing of contracts. Negotiating a contract can assist in determining salary, time off, health coverage, and retirement savings. Negotiations can shape one's career and quality of life (Sturm, 2009). For Jennifer, a novice pro, her team sent her contract via email and asked her to sign it within a few days. Despite describing her pay as 'a small salary, [and] there's still costs', the only negotiation Jennifer engaged in was to be guaranteed to race a few specific races. She said she felt confident to negotiate with the team, which suggests she did not believe she was worthy of a higher salary or was afraid this might impact her relationship with the team. This apprehension for negotiating can be related to gender socialisation. Although professional women cyclists may have chosen a non-stereotypical female career, they are nonetheless socialised into a female gender ideology in which they are encouraged to develop nurturance, emotional expressiveness, sensitivity, and adopt a communal and relational orientation (Coogan & Chen, 2007; Turetsky, 2019). Even the specific study on negotiation and female athletes by Guthrie et al. (2009) shows how the confidence gained from doing sport, does not diminish traditional gender beliefs. In part, this socialisation results in a pattern where women

ask for less in negotiations – if they ask for negotiations at all – because they are worried how this will affect their relationships (Turetsky, 2019; Wade, 2001).

Some of the interviewed cyclists did negotiate their salary, of which many had previously worked, and earned a decent wage. Julie was not impressed with her team's offering, and she negotiated for more pay.

> Julie: For me, I guess, in terms of salary. Yeah… I think a lot of people would go over for not much. But, personally, I wanted a good reason to leave Australia.
>
> Me: What made you decide to negotiate?
>
> Julie: I guess, before, I was working [in] sort of business consulting in Melbourne, so I had been exposed to like, negotiating and that sort of stuff already. Um, and also my… my, yeah, my partner yeah, really, encouraged me to get as much as I could.
>
> Me: Were you surprised to find out how much you could get after negotiating?
>
> Julie: Yeah, I mean, it still wasn't heaps, but it was a lot more than what other neo-pro women would start on. (Julie)

Previous work experience and the advice of male figures are imperative in riders' negotiating game. Violet was advised by a renowned male team owner who told her that she should value herself 'a little bit more, and don't settle for anything less than what you think you're worth', which gave her confidence to negotiate for more money. (She also had two offers at the same time and used that as leverage.) An emerging theme from cyclists' stories was their struggle to identify how much they are worth. Jodie's answer indicates the complexity of the meaning of worth in professional women's road cycling.

> From a negotiating perspective, I help a lot of other girls with this. They reached out: What do I ask for? What am I worth? Like, it used to be your points; your UCI points were your value. But I think that's changing hugely now that we're becoming more professional. Like, my value is as a captain and as an experienced [rider]. The last few years, I've had less results and less points, but my salary has gone the other way. So, it's obviously not [the

> points], because I would be earning less, but I am earning more. [laughing] (Jodie)

Jodie has found a way to situate herself in the system of cycling and even increase her salary over the years despite her decrease in results and points. The search for clarity about riders' worth can partly be explained by gender socialisation. In Barron's (2003) study on gender differences in negotiators' beliefs, she found that 83% of women participants were unsure about their worth (versus 17% men). The women in that study did not conceptualise themselves in a way where salary equated their worth. Furthermore, women believed it was the responsibility of the company to determine how much they were worth (Barron, 2003). In this study on women's road cycling, it is evident that the field of professional road cycling provides cyclists with neither a clear framework nor culture in which they can understand and communicate their worth. Negotiating a decent contract is troubled by gender socialisation in women's cycling. In the next paragraph, I discuss their inferior position in the field and the crucial support network cyclists need in order to be part of this industry.

Inferior position and necessary support network

Exploitation identifies power in a relationship (Connor, 2009). Such power between riders and teams sits disproportionately with the team and is related to different structural and social processes. As discussed in Chapter 5, professional road cycling is an individual sport in a team sport setting due to the aerodynamic technique called drafting which saves a rider between 27% and 39% of their energy (Hagberg, 1990). Therefore, individual cyclists are unlikely to win a race without a team, and UCI regulations only allow teams to participate in WWT races. Cyclists are dependent on teams to be able to participate in the highest competition and make it as an elite/professional cyclist. Subsequently, the cyclist is in an inferior position because riders outnumber teams. For example, in conversation with a female director sportif (DS) of a long running professional women's team at a WWT race, I asked if she was excited about the new season. I enquired about the new riders on the team and how they became part of the team.

> She said, 'there are more riders than teams', with a self-explanatory facial expression. 'So, the riders usually approach us. But we also look out for them during the season. Sure, results are important, but some riders are really good for the team but don't necessarily have the results to show for it. Like, supporting roles. Also, the personality of a rider is important because it's a

> tough life on the road and when things are not as great, like poor weather or a lot of travelling, you need riders to be able to get along'. (Fieldnote, February 2020)

The DS's answer exposes the inferior position of the riders, which also feeds into the secrecy of the sport. Teams look for riders who can physically and mentally race, but also consider riders' personalities due to the expected adversity and hardship they will encounter. Teams need riders to perform behaviour that is not disruptive to team dynamics. Teams look for homogeneity and shared pasts to strengthen the power of collective representation (Halldorsson et al., 2017).

The inferior position narrative was strongly reinforced by the riders themselves, especially discussing the beginning of their career. Sending cold emails to teams with their results, asking for guest rides on lower (club) teams, and networking. Teams can turn to the army of reserve cyclists willing to cycle for nothing. According to Connor (2009), this reserve army puts elite athletes in a powerless position and vulnerable to exploitation. This inferior position in finding a spot on a team and the secretive attitude concerning salaries make it hard for cyclists to negotiate a living wage, especially at the start of their career. Parallel to this is an eager acceptance from riders to anything a team offers: a spot on a team is an opportunity to learn, to experience, to show themselves to the people that matter, to collect results and grow into the field, and make it to the next, bigger team. Abigail, a former engineer, said becoming a professional cyclist was not financially attractive, but she took the opportunity anyway. In her first year with an $8000 stipend, Kate said

> I was very happy to be getting paid... anything! An opportunity to even get paid to ride a bike, I thought that was amazing. Plus, I also got all my equipment paid for, and accommodation and that kind of stuff. But I would not have been able to survive if I had not already saved money from working full time before. There would've been no way. Like, if I didn't have my parents helping me and giving me money or a partner, and I lived in my own home and paid rent… Whereas a lot of girls, either lived nowhere or lived with their parents, so they don't have to pay rent or anything like that. (Kate)

Despite Kate receiving a stipend and having her cycling costs covered, she still would not have been able to live off her labour performed for the team had she not saved before, and without her parents and partner's help. This financial support network in Kate's example is

prevalent in many other cyclists' stories. Almost all participants came for sporty, supportive families that were able to support them financially. Interestingly, it seems that some teams take this family support into account as part of their model. Kate's team owner asked if 'her parents were not helping her out'. This suggests teams may prefer to sign riders with a financially supportive background because it allows them to sign riders for a low salary or just a kit and a bike. Professional women's cycling is an apparatus that assumes women's dependence on a financially supportive family and/or partner and reinforces this dependence.

Before Australian cyclists reach the elite/professional level, the expense of getting there is a large hurdle. The transition costs from being an elite Australian amateur to a professional overseas, seems to only be possible with a financial support network. Hannah experienced hardship in maintaining her dream as a domestic cyclist.

> I think, financially, it's, I need to have a full-time job, because the costs of being a cyclist are immense. I have well and truly spent a couple of house deposits on being able to chase my dreams, so I really have had to maintain a full-time job, which is as hard as being a full-time cyclist. I'm trying to do that as well. (Hannah)

Hannah's need for a full-time job kept her in the same workplace in the same position for many years to maintain the security of an income. Her employer supported her athletic dreams by granting her leave, but this security prevented her from progressing in her professional career, and the financial need for her job prevented her from reaching the absolute top where she could be financially supported by teams and sponsors. In the next section, I discuss how cyclists' attitudes can change once they have reached the desired bigger and better teams.

Questioning the bigger 'better' teams

When riders come up through the ranks and sign with a bigger and more 'professional' team (i.e. a WWT or Continental team with a larger budget), they might also discover the downside of riding for such teams. For Violet, for example, she had to change her mindset towards her cycling because now it was a job.

> My approach to cycling, like originally yeah, cycling … was always on the side, like my study or my work had become before training whereas now training is my occupation and like, I have to channel my energy into that. Like, I had to focus on my training like it was my job. So, I guess part of that

> kind of took some of the enjoyment out of it, because now that it is my job, it is what I have to focus on. It is not necessarily for enjoyment or the outlet like now, yeah, that's the focus. (Violet)

For Julie, she alternated between big and small teams. In her first professional year with a big team, she did not win any races and described herself as not physically strong. She was told by the team that they could not keep her. Although the team kept other young development riders, Julie's nationality was a problem. The Dutch sponsor preferred Dutch development riders over other nationalities (or at least, this is what she was told). Her next team was a 'small' team, which she loved but left behind in the end due to lack of professionalism. When Sammy's club team was taken over by a new sponsor with 'serious' management, she noticed changes she didn't like:

> I couldn't find my ground and I don't know why exactly, well, I guess it's part of who I am but yeah, pff [audible distress], I had a lot of issues with management and perhaps also a bit with authority, which I handle poorly, back then. So, uhm, I rode with them for half a year and then, I essentially handed in my contract, because I didn't want to ride like that. (Sammy)

For many cyclists, they were introduced to a sport in which they could be an individual and find enjoyment and pursue their own goals. Discovering a talent for riding bikes, they followed the pathway to elite cycling with many different dynamics. Dynamics that could take the joy out of their cycling experience. Pushing their talent, physical and mental limits, these riders work hard to be part of a team and find their place.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the labour of professional women road cyclists. I situated this discussion in the context of the economic dimension of Connell's (2021) gender framework. I focused on the construction of labour of the main actors in the field of professional women's road cycling: the cyclists. Their labour is gender typed as masculine and often un(der)paid, which affects their lived experiences.

Women cyclists perform hard athletic labour that requires physical and mental dedication and sacrifice. It also requires a financial supportive network in the shape of family or partners, something teams seem to consider when signing a rider or not. This consideration reflects what Connell (2021) writes about, that is, how traditional masculine occupations continue to assume that employees are supported by a wife at home. However, in professional cycling,

this approach to hiring riders reproduces women as dependent on men (their father or partner) and upholds the idea that teams do not have to financially support riders as independent workers.

To do what professional women cyclists do requires a certain level of tolerance and acceptance of their labour situation. Teams benefit from a culture of secrecy that is upheld by the cyclists themselves who do not talk about their income. Discussing such 'disruptive' topics brands cyclists as troublemakers; this might impact their future opportunities that are already precarious due to the reserve army of athletes happy to take their spot. This attitude towards becoming a cyclist gives teams the ability to 'offer' the professional cycling dream without offering much or indeed any pay. Therefore, women tend to accept any kind of offer teams make in exchange for their labour: a kit, a bike and equipment, or mechanical services. Some teams deceive their riders by first offering a contract that includes a small stipend and a visa and insurance and offer a higher stipend the next year, but exclude insurance and the needed visa, leaving the cyclist with higher overheads and less money.

The horror stories of what other (young) women have endured following their passion and dream create a quick satisfaction and gratefulness for what teams put on the table. For these women, their own situation might be bad, but there are always other women who have it worse. While some women questioned their precarious labour conditions, they felt like they needed to change their own attitude towards the situation, rather than put effort into changing the situation. This coping mechanism can also be identified in negotiating contracts, which is gendered. Even though women in professional cycling might feel empowered because of their participation in this male-dominated sport (see Chapter 8); this attitude is often not reflected in their negotiating. Most women cyclist do not know their worth and do not ask for (higher) pay unless a male figure gives them advice, or they have work experience outside of cycling.

Cycling involves dangerous labour (see Chapters 4 and 7). Besides the more direct danger of crashing, women cyclists' labour also involves other health concerns, such as lack of hygienic conditions. I relate this to the male-centredness of professional cycling, as men are not as concerned with these issues as women, due to biological and financial reasons. This dominant masculine discourse influences how the way women perform their labour is viewed negatively as their collectively organised 'natural needs' breaks are constructed as lack of

competitiveness (Lucas, 2012). In other words, the male construction of competitiveness is superior.

Even though women cyclists are performing ‘masculine’ labour, the way their labour is viewed and rewarded constructs women’s as inferior to men’s cycling. Women are viewed as dependents of their family or partner, who are pursuing their hobby, and therefore unworthy of serious remuneration, which is tolerated and accepted by the cyclists themselves. By constructing women’s labour in such a fashion, the dominant position of masculinity and men is reinforced.

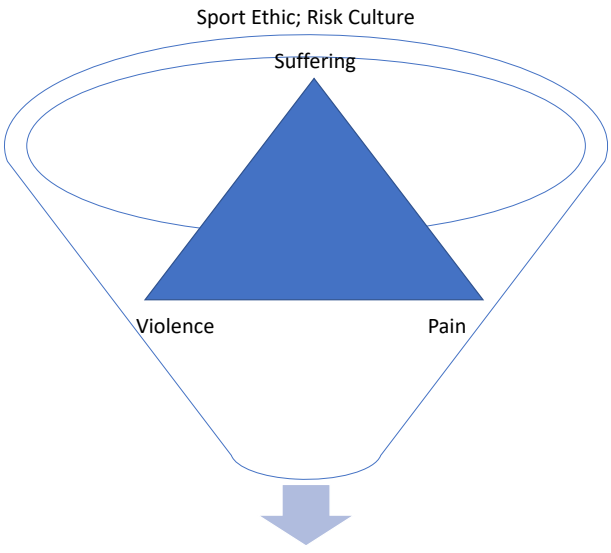
Chapter 7 – Sufferfest 2.0

This chapter focuses on suffering in professional women's road cycling. Athletic activity has a fundamentally risky nature and the equipment required to participate brings risks as well. However, the way sporting activity is perceived, planned, practice ed, and policed is imperative to understand how sport can lead to injurious outcomes (Young, 2019). Cycling is a dangerous sport, and suffering is glorified and considered heroic. To understand women's lived experiences in professional road cycling in relation to suffering, I specifically use the power dimension of Connell's (2021) framework. In society, and especially sport, the culturally idealised form of masculine character stresses the connection of masculinity to toughness and competition, and the subordination of women (Boyle & McKay, 1995). This consideration leads to key questions for this chapter: What are the conditions of professional women cyclists' suffering? How is suffering socially constructed? How is suffering related to gender and labour? Sport sociology literature has critically unpacked violence and pain, but the concept of suffering is relatively untouched terrain and mostly framed as social problems (Smith, 2019). Before I explain what suffering looks like in professional women's road cycling and how gender and labour relations shape this experience, I briefly introduce the relational concept of suffering.

Suffering in sport

The figure below represents how the sport ethic and risk culture shape the distinct yet connected concepts of suffering, violence, and pain that partly construct athlete identity.

Figure 7.1 - Human suffering in sport triangle



Many scholars have written about the culture of risk in sport (e.g. Atkinson, 2019; Theberge, 2012; Young, 2019; Young & White, 1995) and show how pain and violence are associated with such culture, as it socialises young athletes to uncritically accept the risk of pain and injury inherent in sport participation resulting in athletes' normalisation and denial of pain and injuries during sporting competitions (Atkinson, 2019; Smith, 2019). This socialisation relates to sport ethic, which is a value system that determines whether one is a 'real' athlete, and therefore truly belongs. The criteria of this system involve sacrifices for The Game (or the race), seeking distinction, taking risks, and challenging limits (Hughes & Coakley, 1991). These risks athletes are often encouraged to accept as part of their sporting pastimes, are inherently associated with the reproduction of dominant cultural identities and structural power in sport (Atkinson, 2019). However, winning competitions is no longer imperative in sporting participation/cultures, 'but rather maintaining one's membership in a special group, be an athlete that is idolised for their willingness and ability to endure pain, suffer through injury, and push their limits' (Smith, 2019, p. 123). This desire for membership can partly explain why athletes without the hope of making a financial profit from their sporting participation (of which most women cyclists can be considered an example) continue to accept risk and perform through pain doing their athletic practice (Smith, 2019).

Pain and violence are forms of suffering, but suffering goes beyond those two notions. Athletes are not only at risk of physical harm (pain and violence) but they are also exposed to self-loss, social loss, emotional loss, and existential loss within the cultural framework of sport (Atkinson, 2019). To understand athletes' suffering, Smith (2019) proposes to use ideological suffering which portrays how people attempt to make others suffer through words and other symbolic representations. An athlete's self can be threatened by emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually harmful actions, words, and behaviours that cause suffering (Smith, 2019). This suffering is based on exclusion and the reproduction of power and powerful enough to interfere with every aspect of an individual's personhood, potentially depriving one's humanity, impacting how an athlete views their bodily integrity, relationships with other people, and their sense of self (Smith, 2019; Wilkinson, 2005). Consequently, suffering can be identified in several ways (e.g. depression, anxiety, guilt, humiliation, boredom, distress, dread), and it can stem from uncertainty, loss, isolation, and personal estrangement (Smith, 2019). These different ways of suffering are deeply rooted within sport and beg questions. For example, are women cyclists suffering because of ideological suffering, because people attempt to make them suffer through words and other symbolic

representations? Is their sense of self threatened because they have to manoeuvre in an androcentric world that does not fully accept them as athletes, but rather views them as second-class cyclists in a world that does not respect and recognise their feats and performances as legitimate?

It became clear through my data analysis that women in professional road cycling experience suffering beyond pain and violence. I discuss this suffering in the remainder of this chapter. Firstly, I unpack risk culture and acceptance of the sport ethic in cycling, followed by an understanding of the pain and injury that women are exposed to. Secondly, I explore suffering beyond pain and injury that relates to damage from mental health issues, depression, loneliness, travelling, and riders' appearances leading to issues with weight and eating disorders. Throughout, I connect these findings to other chapters in my thesis.

I guess that's why you wear a helmet – acceptance of risk culture

> The peloton suffered several big crashes. The crashes left some teams with only two or three riders to start stage four, rather than the usual six. When I checked in with one of the teams the next day, the Director Sportif (DS) said that things were not great as one of their riders had broken her collarbone. They spent the evening in hospital: crashed riders lined up in the waiting room, and the team cars parked outside. He said their rider coped with the situation in an odd way, laughing about it in the hospital and now, skipping around the team zone with a smile on her face (and her arm in a sling). (Fieldnote, June 2019)

The risk of crashing, injury, and pain is high in cycling and as described above, I observed crashes and cultural attitudes toward them at many races. Cycling is considered a power-to-weight sport: the lighter and stronger the rider, the better the performance will be. In the power and performance type of sports, people encounter the opportunity to engage in a range of physically dangerous and emotionally thrilling pastimes in a *relatively* safe (rules intending to contain risks) manner (Atkinson, 2019). The magnified risk-taking in these sporting contexts validates one's status as an achieved athlete in the sport and serves as an important social indicator of one's commitment to sporting excellence (Atkinson, 2019). In Chapter 4, I discussed how I was exposed to 'concrete therapy' that signified the acceptance of risk, pain, and injury in amateur cycling. I related this attitude to power relations in the gender regime of local road racing, as it is a means to articulate masculinity. I recognised a

similar attitude in elite cycling. At a race in early March, for example, I parked my van five minutes away from the start location of the race.

> While driving over [to the race], I noticed how terrible the wind was. I heard on the radio how there were wind speeds of 110 km/h causing traffic jams and damage. When I walked to the entrance, I had to hold my beanie and at one point, I had to grab a tree to not get blown over. I thought: 'This race will definitely end in a sprint, because no sane person wants to ride alone in this wind'. Once at the start location, I asked one of the cyclists to participate in my research. The rider said: 'Yes, sure. I do need to race, if they don't cancel it'. Me: 'Yeah, I know. What are you thinking? This wind is horrible? Are you still excited to race?' Her: 'Yeah, I want to race'. (Fieldnote, Omloop van de Westhoek, March 2019)

In the end, the race was cancelled, and she and some of her teammates decided to ride home, nonetheless. Her will to race and ride despite the dangerous winds (a big tree branch had fallen on a team car in the team zone) is exemplary of her acceptance of risk.

Figure 7.2 - Dropped rider in the convoy

Risk culture in women's cycling was also present in the interviews. For example, Kate said: 'To be honest I suppose in road cycling, I expect it. Like I expect it, at the start knowing that is a possibility and that is a risk I'm willing to take', equating the choice to line up with the acceptance of crashing. Jodie's quote below represents how crashing, pain and injury are

accepted and normalised in women's cycling. She discussed how her team responded to her crash and breaking her arm:

> And the manager, he was always like: 'No it's fine, take it easy and you'll come back stronger' and I remember thinking at the time that injuries are good sometimes. It sounds a bit bad, but they make you stronger because sometimes when you have adversity, you have to work hard. You have to work hard just to come back to normal. There is not a whole lot of sympathy within our sport. Of course, we feel bad if someone crashes and, it's not nice, but haha it sounds really… Like in a normal job, if someone broke their pelvis or femurs, that's horrible and you'll send a lot of messages. But that's it [in cycling] now, like 'Okay, she'll come back'. It's just like expected.
>
> Me: It's expected, to come back?
>
> Jodie: It's totally normal. Where if you were in a normal job, and someone broke their pelvis, you'd be like, like [horrified]. [Whereas] I broke my arm and it's just a totally normal conversation in my life. 'Oh, I haven't seen so and so in a long [time]', 'Oh yeah, they broke their arm', 'Oh, okay', like, yeah I think sometimes having adversity can make you stronger because you have to do everything right, just to come back to be able to finish the race. Like, you have to eat right, a hundred percent. You can't be… training and everything, sleeping like! So it makes you more focused and then of course, you get an edge actually. (Jodie)

The acceptance of crashing, pain, and injury is very prominent throughout Jodie's quote, especially in her overt framing of injury as 'good sometimes'.[37] As Nancy Malcom (2006) demonstrates in her uncritical work on the sport ethic and girls' softball, actors such as

[37] Jodie has a point when it comes to adversity, but it is rather incomplete. Generally, adversity experienced from injuries is negatively appraised by elite athletes, but is nonetheless deemed as growth, as it can develop mental toughness. Though focused on male athletes, research on injured athletes showed how 'perceived benefits across different phases of injury included understanding and regulating one's emotions, strengthened social networks, increased perceptions of social network availability, gaining perspective and reappraising priorities, improved technical and tactical awareness, and the ability to empathize with other injured athletes' (Wadey, et al. (2011) in Tamminen, Holt, & Neely, 2013, p. 29). However, female athletes' experiences of adversity features withdrawal/isolation, emotional disruption, and the experiences caused them to question their identities and abilities as athletes (Tamminen et al., 2013). In cycling, many (foreign) cyclists are away from home, living by themselves or in cycling houses with teammates or strangers, and as Jodie said, there is little sympathy towards other injured cyclists.

coaches impact athlete's socialisation into accepting pain greatly. The manager's expectation for Jodie to come back stronger made her view her crash and resulting pain and injury as an opportunity to come back better. The words of the manager, 'Take it easy', would mean, for Jodie, to not have to participate in races. Those words did not literally mean to take it easy, because Jodie has 'to do everything right' to be able to finish a race again: to come back to her pre-crash level or actually stronger. A crash and subsequent time off the bike could be viewed as a 'pass' to not race, but only with the expectation that the rider comes back stronger, since they had time off the bike and did not have to race. This view on pain and injury is similar to how female gymnasts viewed their pain and how that pain was necessary to become better athletes (Tynan & McEvilly, 2017).

Acceptance can also be found in the normalisation of pain, injury and being off the bike when Jodie spoke of how crashes are talked about in the peloton. No one seems horrified by an absent colleague-rider because they broke a limb and there is little sympathy for injuries. This attitude is also exemplified in Sammy's comment:

> You know, in cycling, you're always as good as your last result. And when things aren't going so well, then it's like: 'Oh, they're not riding well today, huh'. But no-one [emphasises no-one], no-one who realises: 'Okay, but why are they not riding well? What's going on with them?' And I get it, maybe that's too social or something, but like: 'Have you been sick, or is something going on?' But that's not the case in cycling. 'Oh, you've been sick? You still gotta ride'. Yeah, that's how it goes. 'Ah, did you crash? Luckily you didn't break anything'. And I'd think: 'Okay sure, but it's still not great that I crashed'. (Sammy)

This lack of sympathy could stem from how everyone is exposed to the same risk and has experienced crashing one way or another, and therefore their stoic attitude serves as that social indicator of one's commitment to sporting excellence (Atkinson, 2019). Thus, this attitude as an indicator of commitment has cyclists riding in pain and risking crashes, which in relation to the sport ethic, is a crucial part of claiming an athletic identity (Malcom, 2006). This identity runs deep, especially for elite athletes (Tamminen et al., 2013). When I asked Violet about her experiences with crashing, she became slightly defensive.

> Violet: It's part of racing, it's like an assumed risk of racing. It's just… which part do you want to know about?

Me: Well, so it's your job, right?

Violet: Yeah, it's part of racing, we've had quite a few racing accidents. Especially, like a lot of small falls this year and a lot of, some more significant than others, and it's an accepted risk and when you're racing, especially in Europe on narrow roads, with lots of girls. There are sometimes slippery conditions, crashes happen: it's part of it [racing]. I guess that's why you wear a helmet, because there's an assumed risk for a crash. If you always thought you weren't gonna crash, then you wouldn't need the helmet. (Violet)

Violet's explicit words indicate an acceptance of the crashing risks in cycling, but the repetition and her tone suggested how deep this acceptance runs and how questioning it feels threatening to her carefully acquired cycling/athlete identity. To uphold a strong athletic identity may allow elite athletes to perform at the top level in their sport, but adversity described by elite athletes may threaten their competence, identity, and sense of self-confidence (Tamminen et al., 2013). The quotes above are a representation of collective understanding in women's road racing that cycling the way these professional cyclists do, will lead to pain, injury, and crashes.

Every driver wants to kill you – the danger of training

Besides the dangers of racing, cyclists are not risk-free during their training. For road races organised on public roads, the race organisation blocks the route off from other traffic to eliminate (or rather minimise) the risk of colliding with other road users.[38] The women in this research mostly train on public, car-dominated roads, and the relationship between cyclists and car drivers is a problematic one (Balkmar, 2018). Camille was very outspoken about road safety and said 'Every [car] driver wants to kill you in Australia'. I asked if she felt safe riding in Melbourne.

Nah [very quick answer]. Nope. I've had a few close calls! But if I am riding by myself, on the road, on a busy road, I will look over my shoulder every twenty… I am not even kidding, every twenty to thirty seconds and if it's a two-lane road, I will purposely ride in the middle of the one lane. It's so bad, but it's just a mentality.

[38] However, there are many instances where blocking other traffic is not executed effectively and cars, pedestrians, pets or other cyclists have found their way on to the course. In 2020, during the Race Torquay, pedestrians almost collided with Brodie Chapman who was on her way to victory. Evidently, crashes have happened this way.

Me: How did that affect your training?

Camille: I won't go to the hills on a weekday, because it's a 30k ride down a very busy road, so I will only go down on a Saturday or Sunday ride out there. So, in November and December, I was having to drive, I would drive to the hills, on weekdays. But it means that a three-hour ride takes you six hours and then you can't study, and you can't work, which is just so impractical, whereas I need to be getting quality training, and going to the hills. (Camille)

For Kate, riding bikes has always been a big part of her life: engaging in mountain biking, being a courier, working at a bike shop, commuting everywhere by bike, a lot of social riding and now, riding as a professional. Kate has also been hit by car drivers, twice, and suffered several injuries both from car accidents and race crashes, such as breaking bones, tearing tendons, being concussed, going to hospital, getting surgery, that left her incapacitated to ride her bike. However, she seemed to view injuries caused by accidents as different from crashes. Her compliance with the sport ethic is apparent when we discussed crashing in her interview:

You're definitely aware and scared of [crashes] happening, but you can't go into a race scared of crashing, then you can't really race. If you are that terrified of crashing, you can never put your thoughts in those positions where you might be able to win or take a risk or fight for a position. (Kate)

Kate continued by saying that in all honesty, when she lines up for a road race, she expects crashes to happen, knowing there is the possibility of crashing out the race. She continued, however, by saying:

What actually scares me the most is training on the road. Like the fact that I could be doing everything right and someone who is texting in their car could kill me when I'm out training. There are not many sports where you have to take such a huge risk purely by training. The more I'm a professional and the older I get, the more that really affects me. I know close friends of professionals who've died being hit by cars and I've obviously been hit by a car twice where I was absolutely not taking a risk. Whereas in road cycling, you are more in control, in the peloton, where at least you're still protected and everyone rides a bit more careful in the rain, but training on the road! There, I have no control over someone running me over with their car. (Kate)

The contrast between her sense of control in a race versus training gives Kate the confidence to accept the risk of crashing in competition. Besides the acceptance of risk, riders also accept enduring pain.

Do you want paracetamol? – Riding with pain

Compliance with the sport ethic also extends to cyclists riding and racing in pain. During the OVO Energy Women's Tour, I observed the race from a team car when the team was called on the radio:

> 'Team QA, to the peloton please'. The DS sped up to leave the convoy and we saw Sammy with her hand up in the air. She told the DS that her shoulder was really hurting. Earlier, the mechanic had seen a QA rider being dropped and wondered aloud: 'Is that Sammy? She was saying her shoulder hurt this morning'. The DS told Sammy that it is her body and it is up to her to decide to stop. He asked if she wanted paracetamol, but she said she had already taken one. She was going to try to ride some more kilometres and went back to the peloton. At the end of the race, the staff was waiting for the remaining riders to come in and the mechanic said: 'Is Sammy still in there? Maybe she's thinking about Derek'. The DS answered: 'I guess so'. I gathered Derek is Sammy's romantic partner and that the men joked that thinking of him would give her some sort of energy to keep pushing through the pain and finish the race. (Fieldnote, June 2019)

Sammy had expressed her pain on several occasions, and while the DS said it was her body and her decision, for her to decide to abandon the race (meaning she would not be allowed to start the last two stages), would result in her team missing another rider. To have less riders in the race would jeopardise the position of their lead rider. If Sammy decided to quit, she would have not only abandoned the race, but also her team. Clearly, this decision was viewed as an individual responsibility. This is in line with (bio)medical discourse where suffering is seen as a private and subjective experience, excluding social and cultural contexts, and viewing medicine as the best solution for the problem of pain (Smith, 2019). The dominance of the subjectivity of pain also becomes clear in the 'Derek' comment by the mechanic, reinforced by the DS. That Sammy finished the race while she expressed her pain, made them not take her pain seriously (how bad could her pain be if she's able to finish?), but if Sammy had actually quit, she would not have been tough enough, not hard enough, not enough of a true athlete. By making a joke, suggesting Sammy was only able to finish the race, despite

her pain, by thinking of her partner also indicates they did not take her potential injury seriously. Research suggests that women athletes talk more about their pain and have relatively strong help-seeking intentions for their injuries (Berg, Migliaccio, & Anzini-Varesio, 2014). While Sammy, a rider towards the end of her career, was confident enough to put up her arm and speak of her pain, the response she received from the male support team (DS) was situated in a masculine constructed discourse of how to handle pain in sport. I wonder how many more riders struggled and ignored their pain that day.

She had some bad injuries, but she wasn't… dead – Differentiating crashes

Similar to female gymnasts and football players whom differentiate various types of pain and injury (Berg et al., 2014; Tynan & McEvilly, 2017), female cyclists differentiate between types of crashes: 'crashing' and 'real bad crashing'. My personal crash (described in Chapter 4) left me with what cyclists describe as 'road rash'. A layer of skin was scraped off by my fall, the injury sites oozed for several days (gaining me the nickname 'oozy-suzy') and has left significant scars on my arm and knee. I had wounds, bruises, but mostly, I feared the bike, the road, and riding with other people. It took me months before returning to riding and longer to get back to racing. Although a common occurrence in the sport of cycling, and an intense and substantial moment in my life, it was nothing compared to what professional cyclists deal with.

> My very first World Tour race, I crashed out in a corner in the wet. Pretty hard. I have had some pretty bad concussions from local [criterium] races. My helmet cracked and, yeah, I am quite lucky in a sense, I haven't had anything hugely horrific [happen] in road cycling. (Kate)

> I've crashed over the years, but never had a really bad injury until last year. I crashed, and I broke my arm. Not a super… like, it can always be worse. I had done surgery and I have a big scar and I have a plate in my arm. I mean, it's my arm, it's not a major like… it wasn't my leg, you know, at least. I also crashed on my face, but it's fine, but I had stitches in my face, and it wasn't very nice. (Jodie)

In their acceptance of the sport ethic, the risk of crashing and normalising injuries and pain, cyclists seem to push and shift the boundaries of the severity of their injury. According to the professional cyclist, road rash is bad until you break an arm, but that is not bad compared to

when you break your leg or cut your quadriceps.[39] This complicated relationship with crashing seems to continuously extend the category of 'crashing' and minimise 'real bad crashing'. This distinction is exemplified in Sandra's discussion of her experience when she saw another rider crash.

> There definitely have been times where I have seen people crash and it has affected me during racing. The last one I remember, one of the girls crashed and I remember seeing her like basically wedged up, against a pole, and her neck was just… like the pole was right here [makes gesture] and her neck was like that [makes a crooked gesture] and I was like: 'I think… she's dead. Her neck is broken'. It just looked like her neck was like: 'Krrukuck' [makes breaking sound] and I was like: 'Oh my god'. And I was glad I was in the dropped group, because, I couldn't race from there. I felt sick, like: 'This is horrible. We need to stop racing. It's not worth it. It's not worth dying for'. So, yeah, there's definitely… she's okay, I mean, she had some pretty bad injuries, but she wasn't… dead. (Sandra)

The shifting of the type of injury from minor to severe seems to result in death. Unfortunately, these injuries are glorified in the sport of professional cycling.

Scroll to the crash – Glorifying crashing

Besides the prevailing acceptance of the risk ethic, women riders were also somewhat reflexive about the risk, and some expressed their dislike of the risk of cycling. For example, for relatively new professional rider Abigail, her season prior to our interview was full of crashes, surgeries, and hospital stays. She explained that she dislikes the physical risk the most about cycling. In our interview, I suggested that crashing is a big and unavoidable risk that seems to be normalised in cycling. Her response:

> It's almost kind of what people like about it… like watching. People like watching the big crashes and crazy descents and things like that, so it's… well, it's what I dislike about it but it's also part of the appeal of the sport I suppose, it's kind of what makes the sport so exciting, I guess. But yeah,

[39] During the 2020 World Championships Individual Time Trial, reigning champion Chloé Dygert crashed off the road, over the traffic barrier, down a hill. She hit the unpadded part of the barrier causing a deep laceration in her left leg that needed surgery. On Twitter, Dygert posted a photo of herself racing and a photo of her injured leg with the description 'I remember thinking if I can get to my bike, can I still win?' (Dygert, 2020). Later, her coach Kirstin Armstrong said: 'There is no question that Chloé will come back stronger than ever' (Frattini, 2020c).

> people are pushing physical limits as well as things like risky... haha. It's what makes it [exciting] for spectators and… and I guess some of the riders probably love it as well, and the adrenaline haha I mean [voice volume goes up] there is a bit of that when you are going fast down a hill, it is pretty fun as well but yeah, for me that's the thing I dislike the most. If I could do something in cycling so there wasn't any risk, then yeah haha [I would do it]. (Abigail)

The appeal that Abigail referred to is what I would describe as not only the acceptance of crashing and pain, but also the glorifying pain in cycling. When commenting on how boring the Tour de France (TdF) was and how exciting women races are, the partner of one of my interviewees (he came along to the interview) said the following:

> Nothing happens, you know, and as a male cyclist, I have no interest in watching it [TdF] at all. You know, I may watch the highlights, scroll through to where there's a crash. It's just dull. Maybe I'll watch it because I have a mate riding. (Kees)

This cultural attitude extends to women's cycling and is exemplified in Maria's interview. When we discussed the future of professional women's cycling, she suggested how the public is beginning to realise how great women's cycling is.

> Some of the feats that these women are doing are so incredible, like she [Annemiek van Vleuten] broke a leg [her kneecap] and rode to sixth in the world championships or whatever it was. Like, what the hell? That stuff gives you goose bumps and because it's televised now, people are realising like: 'Oh my god, this is awesome'. (Maria)

The entertainment factor of professional road cycling is established in the crashing element of the sport and achieving physical feats no ordinary person would attempt. Maria's admiration and condoning of van Vleuten's gritty determination by riding through the pain is an example of the framing of a cultural hero. 'But these heroes are not born; they are made. Their callous attitudes toward even extreme pain are the result of cultural messages that are reinforced throughout their sporting career' (Malcom, 2006, p. 496).

Much research on how and why athletes become accepting of risk, pain and injury as a badge of honour has focused on the relationship between risk-taking and achieved masculinity. Arguably, achieving masculine strength, dominance, fearlessness, and power is marked by

the ability to take dangerous risks (Atkinson, 2019; Kalman-Lamb, 2016). Messner (1992, as cited in Atkinson, 2019) argues that risk-taking is part of proving a specific kind of masculine character in sporting environments, which 'by definition marginalises other masculinities, femininities, and (non-hetero) sexualities' (pp. 6-7). Considering an idealised femininity based on physical passivity, how does the theorising of complicit masculinity help us to understand women cyclists' tolerance and acceptance of pain and risk by riding and racing through pain and injury, and taking risks by descending hard and fast from mountains, riding in wet weather, and racing on narrow roads with traffic islands?

The choice to engage in risky sporting practices is never made outside of the context of socialisation, cultural norms, discursive ideologies, and history (Atkinson, 2019), and research shows that women are just as willing as men to expose themselves to physical risk (Young & White, 1995). I argue that the historical and contemporary male-dominance in cycling connects masculinity with athleticism, and that to be a true athlete, to truly gain membership to what it means to be an elite or professional cyclist, a rider needs to prove their 'athleticism' which is masculine. Women cyclists adopt this form of athleticism, because that is what is valued by the media, the team leaders, the fans, the race organisers, and the other riders: it is what is valued in sport. Similar to other sports, women's participation at the top level of cycling seems to be contributing to the reproduction of a male-defined cycling process replete with violent, excessive and health-compromising characteristics (Young & White, 1995). However, the adoption of this athleticism is not necessarily considered the 'natural' state of women. When asked what she thinks of professional women's cycling as a sport, Julie said:

> I don't know, I think it's a great sport, uh, and… I really like seeing all these women doing something that's physically a bit scary and a little bit against the female instinct [laughing a little], the crashes and all that. So, yeah, it sort of inspires me, seeing all these tough women out there. (Julie)

I agree that risk-taking in sport is a collective phenomenon that goes beyond the position that risk-taking in sport is a simplistic expression of hegemonic, white, patriarchal masculinity (Atkinson, 2019). The qualities of sport, such as 'extending physical limitations, developing a positive sense of physical self, enjoying the satisfactions of learning new skills, and of cooperating with or competing against others' are considered to be emancipatory for women, and do not compromise their femininity (Talbot, 1990 cited in Young & White, 1995, p. 56).

Therefore, physical strength, aggression, and experiences of injury become worth it, as women athletes gain self-esteem, confidence, female bonding, and the experience of sharing (Young & White, 1995).

Risk-taking is saturated with social power in the form of anxieties associated with living up to (or not) socially normative identities, and complicity in the reproduction of dominant social relationships of the time (Atkinson, 2019). There is a strong desire in the field of women's road cycling to professionalise and create a viable market for the sport. Arguably, in the existing market of men's cycling a certain type of athleticism is valued, which offers an explanation of its adoption in women's cycling. According to Kalman-Lamb (2016), culture in professional sport, in which athletes are expected to assume that bodily risks associated with competition are a basic job requirement, comes from the way risks are diverted. Those with more power and agency (Kalman-Lamb gives the example of front office executives, whereas for cycling, I would consider the team owners, sponsors, and race organisers the ones with more power and agency.) are less associated with the risks of sport (job security, economic viability) than those with less power and agency, namely athletes. Consequently, an ideological system emerges in which athletes receive constant reinforcement from within their social network that risk is a legitimate aspect of their athletic pursuits. As a result, injuries are naturalised and normalised as part of the job, even as athletes are held accountable for the assumption of risk (Kalman-Lamb, 2016). If women want to be professional cyclists, the belief is that they must accept the associated risks in sport that is structured and cultured by men.

Atkinson (2019) refers to two decades worth of research on power and performance sport cultures by Kevin Young (2012) to draw attention to precisely what is so risky for athletes in uncompromising sport cultures: 'The use of the body as a weapon of performance and identity, the normalisation of one's own self-objectification and self-alienation, the learned (and often times compelled) disregard for one's personal safety, the immersion in lifestyles of pain and injury, the subcultural neglect of basic human needs, and one's existence in (stereotypically) hostile social settings that stigmatise weakness and failure' (p. 10). Based on the above discussed data, I argue there are many similarities between these claims and the reality of professional women cyclists. In the following paragraphs, I discuss the suffering of women cyclists that goes beyond physical harm.

Suffering because of suffering

Women cyclists undeniably suffer pain from crashing and injury in their sport. In this section I want to focus on a deeper understanding of suffering. What does physical harm lead to in the bigger picture? From the data, it was apparent that women do not only suffer physical harm. The professional cycling lifestyle exposed them to other hardships as well. The sport is known for its limited budgets and resources, which has a considerable impact on suffering. Jodie explained how she had broken her pelvis in the past and how the scar tissue from the fracture caused her iliac artery condition.[40] She explained:

> I've broken my pelvis in 2008 and that led to my iliac artery in 2014 but I didn't know until after the surgery. I had a big lump of scar tissue that was pushing onto the artery. It wasn't position based for me, it was from previous injury. So, [I] dealt with that, so I learned from that in hindsight that I need to do proper rehab, like physio[therapy] and everything but when I broke my pelvis, I was still a junior, so I wasn't in a sort of support network, that I'd be aware of now. (Jodie)

The lack of support for Jodie as a junior to deal with her injury properly is a limiting structure for healthy sporting success. The lack of resources stretches to the professional peloton, as Kate exemplifies when I asked her if she had guidance from her team about recovering from injury.

> No, not at all. Unfortunately, this might be a women's cycling thing but in the lower teams, like my team, if a rider has implied an injury, so whether it's like an injury from crashing or an injury from, like the iliac artery thing where a lot of is going on at the moment. The team I am currently on has not supported the rider at all and has literally ended their contract because… It's too hard for them to deal with, with the injury. Whereas in a bigger team or men's team, the rider as an employee, they will support you through your recovery and understand that an injury takes time to come back from. Whereas, this team, unfortunately, I've seen, really good riders with great

[40] Iliac artery endofibrosis is a condition caused by the narrowing of the iliac artery, which restricts blood flow to the affected leg. The condition is often not recognised in elite athletes and therefore goes undiagnosed for a long time. Cyclists can develop iliac artery endofibrosis because of high volume, repetitive hip flexion. I would argue that the sport ethic, the culture of pain in cycling, contributes to an undiagnosed iliac artery condition. The sensation is uncomfortable, painful, but does not make it impossible to ride and race. Cyclists will therefore not speak up about their pain because they are afraid to lose their spot on the team or race schedule. Besides, research suggests that mainly male endurance athletes cope with the condition (Brunelle, Baradaran, & Keeler, 2016), making it unlikely for physicians to diagnose it quicker with female athletes.

> potential, literally just being forced to resign or not have their contract renewed, purely because they've had an injury. (Kate)

Young (2019) explains how injury and pain are far more lived experiences than moments. 'Some pain and some injury are easy to recover from and represent no more than a small physical inconvenience in athletic lives, while other pain and injury are far more socially, psychologically, and emotionally impacting, lasting days, weeks, months, or longer' (Young, 2019, p. 1). The process of injury and pain for women cyclists is only prolonged by a structure that fails to provide safe racing, adequate care once injuries occur, or even punishment when a rider fails to avoid inevitable crashing and injury in their sport. While women cyclists are trying to be the best they can be, their sporting success seems to come down to which cyclist is able to recover best, since all cyclists will crash throughout the season and suffer physical trauma. The lack of resources available to most cyclists not only affects them physically; it is a form of suffering as their recovery is their own responsibility which results in an isolating process. This adds to making road cycling an incredibly tough sport, and this toughness is recognised by the riders. For example, Liza was glad she was involved in mountain biking till her early twenties before going back to road cycling, claiming to be 'ready' for the sport.

> By the time I went back to road [racing], I was really ready and mentally ready to be really professional and serious and like, to do a good job and actually get results by then, like I was good enough physically. [But] I think it can be pretty harsh on young riders. Especially, Australians that have to come over and live in Europe for a whole season and that's really, it's hard for the Aussies to be away from family and friends. Especially if you're a bit younger and if you're in a foreign team, you have maybe some problems with languages if it's not an English-speaking team. Where you're living is hard, if you don't know the area or the culture and I've seen some riders just really struggle with that. (Liza)

Mental toughness may not outweigh the accumulated suffering of women cyclists. Earlier in this chapter, I discussed Violet's defensiveness towards my question on crashing. It is important to add that when I interviewed her, she had a concussion from a recent crash. Her injury caused her severe headaches when riding her bike, so she was waiting for those to pass to get back to training. During the interview, she had trouble remembering the years of

significance in her cycling journey and at times, she had trouble pronouncing words. Violet mentioned her concussion when I asked her about cyclist identity.

> At the moment I don't really feel like a cyclist. I am recovering from a concussion, so I haven't really been able to train. So, my body shape has changed as well, uhm, yeah, even though, everyone knows me as a cyclist, I am not necessarily feeling like that because I'm not fit, I am not able to train, a part of my identity is gone by not being able to ride. (Violet)

Besides enduring a horrific crash that left her with a bad brain injury, incapacitating her riding, training, remembering, and speaking well, Violet also suffered beyond the pain and violence of the crash. Her identity was incomplete and for athletes, 'given their generally excellent health and their public posture of physical invulnerability, athletes unsurprisingly understand injury as a form of bodily betrayal that often results in self-resentment' (Young & White, 1995, p. 53). The injury impacted Violet's view on her bodily integrity, relationships with other people, and her sense of self.

As previously discussed, athletes are not only at risk of physical harm but they are also exposed to risks of self-loss, social loss, emotional loss, and existential loss within the cultural framework of sport (Atkinson, 2019). Women cyclists not only face adversity from crashing out of races, difficulties with recovery, and financial hardship, but riders in the women's peloton endure the struggles of high frequency travelling, the pressure of appearance, and obsession with weight and nutrition. These experiences are problematic because 'the accumulation of adverse events may be a risk factor for depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder' (Tamminen et al., 2013, p. 29). In the following paragraphs, I explore the themes of travel, appearance, and weight and nutrition. I open this discussion with Sandra's quote below, which captures this suffering comprehensively.

> What I don't like [about cycling]? Probably those times where you push yourself, you find your limit, you're tired, you do crazy amounts of travel, and then you're expected to be able to perform at your best… you know, the ideal isn't really in arms reach, preparation is shit for your racing, pfff [audible distress]. I've had a lot of emotional rollercoasters in the last two years of being a professional. I've found the depths of my mental… yeah, I guess, I've fallen into depression a few times, but gotten myself out of it. Those times, I don't like that about the sport. I don't like those places that it

> can take me mentally, but I think having that background of what I was speaking about before, with my meditation and just being aware of my own emotions and being really in touch with my own mental health, I am pretty equipped to deal with it, even if it's incredibly tough at times. I think I am good at reaching out to people at the right times. Yeah, learning about myself again, bringing myself out of those paths. I think that's the worst part about it haha but yeah, it's not a forever thing, like you come out of those times and as long as you still love all the other things then you know, it's kind of worth it. (Sandra)

Sandra's mental suffering is very clear in her comments. Any elite sport is physically demanding, but few sports need athletes to travel as much as cyclists do. This map includes the locations of my fieldwork and it gives a small indication of the travel cyclists have to make.

Figure 7.3 - Map of fieldwork

When cyclists speak of their travelling, this entails their journey from their 'home' to the race; to the next stage; to training camp; back 'home'; and to the next race. Riders that are part of an American team, for example, also have to make the transatlantic journey several

times a year, inflicting jetlag. Many women viewed their travels as an opportunity to see a lot of the world, and to experience different cultures; but the hardship of being away from home and the travelling was a dominant theme in the interviews and the fieldwork. [41] Especially at one day races, it was often hard to get time from cyclists after the race as they were shoving down their food while getting ready to leave in team cars to go to the airport.

> Also, like in the season, you are fresher when you come back from an injury and that does help, for sure. Because you get tired, we race a lot now and travelling. Travelling takes a huuuuge [my emphasis] amount. Like the men have more race days than us but they have a lot more tours, we have a lot more days. [Because] we do a lot more one-day races, we have a lot more travel. (Jodie)

> It's a lot of travelling! You do get very sick of spending time at airports. It took us, we had delays coming in because the wind was so crazy, like twelve hours to get here [laughs], insane. But oh, it's part of the deal. (Abigail)

The labour of professional women cyclists is not just training and racing, it also involves the intense travelling to and from different locations, either by themselves or with teammates and staff. For Australians, they are far from their home country, and their family and friends for a long time during the year. This absence puts a strain on many important relationships, such as partners.

> It's a big thing mentally to be able to… You need to be away from your family for eight months, you know; I've got a partner who lives in Australia and so I haven't seen him for eight months of the year. (Abigail)

[41] When I prepared for my fieldwork, I had not considered the demands of travelling. The advantages of the campervan were flexible traveling, as I was not reliant on air or train travel schedules and the locations of airports and stations. There were campsites nearby the location of a race, allowing me to be close to the field, experiencing local promotion of the race, ending up in the same café as riders or staff before or after a race, and driving on roads where the peloton would pass. At the same time, my days were long with driving, challenged by finding a place to sleep in countries where I did not speak the language. Having to buy and prepare food became a dreadful task as supermarkets were often far from campsites, my fridge would only cool if I had a spot with electricity, and cooking and washing up takes a lot longer whilst camping. During the hot summer nights, I barely slept, and the mosquitoes feasted on my blood, leaving me with itching spots for days. The basic tasks of self-care I took for granted while living in a house with a fridge, bathroom, air-conditioning and mosquito screens, were the things that exhausted me. Another big contributing factor to my exhaustion was to not be settled in one place for longer than a week. But the loneliness at times was a large chunk of the challenge as well, to do all those things by myself for 160 days. It gave me a sense of the lifestyle of cyclists, as they travel so many days a year to work and/or to pursue their dream. While most teams had staff that would prepare meals and wash clothes, the constant travelling and never being home is exhausting, nonetheless.

This lifestyle of a professional cyclist also impacts the type of person and relationship the riders get involved with. Kate's comment exemplifies this:

> I always thought I would have a boyfriend, it could only be a cyclist because... well, cycling is totally my life, and social life, and training, and if you weren't a cyclist, then you're pretty hard to fit into my life. And I see that like, male professional cyclists, they don't necessarily have to have a girlfriend that is a cyclist, because… well, they're away a lot more, they can afford to like, say, their girlfriends often times don't have to work as the male can support them. (Kate)

While the lifestyle of a professional female cyclist may look more and more similar to that of a male's (i.e. more racing, more travelling), the lack of financial income and the different gender expectations in (heterosexual) relationships indicate that women sacrifice both financial means and potential significant relationships.[42]

Other structural and cultural aspects of cycling that impact their suffering are connected to social pressures concerning their appearance. To return to Violet's example, her crash caused her a concussion, physical harm, and with that, she suffered from an identity loss where her inability to train made her feel unlike a (professional) cyclist. Importantly, her loss of identity also stems from her changed body shape, meaning she is less lean and toned than she would be if she was training. In cycling, the dominant body image seems to portray the ideal body as lean with strong toned legs.[43] Female athletes in sports that focus on leanness, like cycling,

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[42] Cycling is entrenched with heteronormativity. In the late 1880s, the 'boy-meets-prettily-attired-girl-cyclist' theme was one of the main analogies of popular cycling culture (Dauncey, 2012). This narrative was taken on and extended by the organisers of the Tour de France, the most influential race in road cycling. They made sure to include the experiences of mothers, wives, fiancées, and girlfriends of male cyclists in their media coverage. This reinforced the gendered representation of the TdF founded on a narrative of separation: the cyclists (workers) left home for a month to make their living, travelling across France. In the media, the women were emphasised as steadfast, as emotional nurturers of heroic breadwinners, which presented traditional, complementary gender roles as positive and natural (Thompson, 2006). Otherwise, women were portrayed as *spectatrices*, female fans in awe of the brave, strong, muscular 'young men who took on a prodigious challenge from which fragile women were naturally excluded' (Thompson, 2006, p. 97).

[43] In 'male-defined symbolic structure' (of which competitive cycling is an example), women have to negotiate their femininity against the physical proficiency for which they gain recognition (Thorpe, 2009, as cited in Bootcov, 2019). Bootcov (2019) explains how in the history of women's cycling, women cyclists' extreme physical power and mental toughness were on display in their spectacular rides, but they were not immune to the social pressures of ordinary women. Traditional feminine qualities were required to offset these traditional masculine dimensions of gender. The heteronormative expectations of sexuality and gender in 1930s Australia, and against residual opposition to exercise, it was imperative for cyclists to emphasise their femininity. Interestingly, in Bootcov's (2019) analysis of masculinity and femininity in 1930s cycling in Australia, she argues that men were encompassed to articulate communication and candid revelations about vulnerabilities,

are more prone to develop body dissatisfaction and eating disorders (e.g. Kong & Harris, 2015). Women athletes are more at risk of eating disorders than non-athletes (Bratland-Sanda & Sundgot-Borgen, 2013), and women are more likely than men to engage in compulsive exercising and pathological weight loss to attain a superior physical condition and achieve top sporting performance (Kong & Harris, 2015). Without explicitly asking about body image and eating disorders in the interviews, many women raised these topics, as presented below:

> Oh, cyclists are super weird, haha! They have weird diets – or eating habits I should say. Cycling is a power to weight sport. So, the more power you have, and [with] the least amount of weight as possible, the faster you go, theoretically. So, people are always trying to be as lean as they can be and as powerful as they can be. So, that creates some habits and if you're not careful, and not mentally on to it, those habits can consume you. Take over, and you become irrational and start to, yeah, be a detriment to your own body. (Sandra)

> I think nutrition is really important for women. It's not so much about losing weight, but it's about getting the right energy for your body. I think a lot of developing riders are trying to figure it [nutrition] out and they are trying to be really skinny, ha, trying to be like the professional riders but they are maybe not doing it in the right way, so they are focusing too much on food and not enough on just training. So, they are doing a lot of damage to themselves, you are not getting enough energy so they can't train well enough and maybe like some people get an eating disorder or some people will start like decreasing their bone mass or doing certain things that have a bad impact later in life. So, my advice to developing riders is, uhm, number one is, you just need to find a good coach that you're comfortable with and have some really good training plans. And also talk to a nutritionist to make sure that you can be fuelling right, and you can have a good relationship with food so you can train hard and that you're not just focusing on being skinny for results. Because the results come when you're strong, not skinny [laughs]. (Liza)

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where female cyclists were reluctant to show vulnerability. 'They had to assert femininity through the semiotics of dress and behaviour, but not through "weakness"' (Bootcov, 2019, p. 1441).

For many riders, the matter of body size and correct eating is something for them to control. This neoliberal idea feeds into the belief that their personal attitude and actions toward the pressure of eating right and looking a certain way will keep them from suffering disturbances in eating behaviour and body image, rather than recognising and criticising the structure and culture of cycling that brings the hardship of looking and weighing right. As with many elite sports, weight is considered a crucial part of professional cyclists' performance and labour.[44] Although other cyclists were vague about their own experiences with eating disorders, Sammy spoke quite openly about it.

> I never really thought about it [to keep cycling]. I just kept going and [that first team] was considered quite a big team at the time and at first, the races actually went quite well, but yeah, then it started to not go well at all. I barely finished anything, I gained a lot of weight and you know, your weight is such a big thing, and I never actually sought help for that, why it wasn't going well, and I actually never received any help either. So, then I signed with [another team] and then I actually got really sick. I only did a couple of races and I was thinking it might be better to quit. I was sick often, with doctors and [medical] exams and things, but yeah, all that stress and I probably did develop an eating problem with [my first team], my body was just exhausted. Eventually, I went back to a club team and the vibe was just so different. At training camp, we had breakfast, you know, like normal! Eating wasn't such a big deal. (Sammy)

Cycling was such a large part of Sammy's life that she was not able to critically examine why she kept on cycling, even though she experienced so much pressure from her team to perform and weigh a certain weight, that she developed an eating disorder and experienced no joy in her cycling. There was no structure in place where Sammy could easily ask for and receive help: struggles she had difficulty identifying. It took a partner and a (temporary) departure from elite/professional cycling for Sammy to find joy in cycling again and to stop the suffering caused by the obsessive culture with weight loss and leanness. Riders who do not

[44] In my ethnographic fieldwork, after I finished the Tour of Bright race in December 2019, I asked a man for a lift down the mountain, who was putting bikes in the back of his car. He agreed and I jumped in the back of the car, joining two A-grade women who had finished the race before me. While we made our way down the mountain, they discussed the race and results, and a renowned woman cyclist and her weight became the topic of conversation. One of the women said: 'Did you see how lean [she] was? I think she dropped it too early, she's peaking too early in the season'. It seems that once women reach that level of leanness desired in cycling, they are still criticised for not doing it right.

have the opportunity to take a break or have supportive partners, such as riders from Australia, face team environments where the suffering of body image and weight loss prevails. For example, Giulia said:

> A lot of riders from Australia go to Europe and put on weight. And, [the team's] way of dealing with that isn't necessarily the healthiest in a female environment, let alone in a male environment. They told a few teammates to stop having breakfast, go for a walk around the park, then if you're gonna go for a big ride, have some breakfast, and then go for your ride sort of thing, you know, to get your metabolism going. When you're talking to a 19-year-old female, who's away from mom and dad, you know, living by themselves for the first time ever, is that sound advice? And, they [the team] had also said that we were gonna have scans and sport doctor appointments and nutritionist appointments and all of this through their sponsors, and it never happened. (Giulia)

While their health is constructed as something the riders are individually responsible for, teams create an environment where peer pressure can flourish and give 'advice' without the expertise of nutritional experts.[45]

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to detail the suffering of professional women cyclists and relate this to gender and labour relations. In men's sport, pain is viewed as inevitable, and men glorify their pain and point to their shared experience of pain as a distinguishing feature that sets them apart from and above women (Malcom, 2006). This also happens within the larger structure of road cycling as crashing and suffering are normalised and glorified from the grassroots to the top level of sport. In professional road cycling, the risk of pain and injury is accepted as part of the job. This stresses the connection between masculinity, toughness and

[45] The problem of disordered eating and eating disorders has been closely related to the world of cycling. A prominent example is former professional cyclist Leontien van Moorsel, a Dutch rider who was active in the 1990's and early 2000's. Van Moorsel had an eating disorder for eight years while pursuing superior athletic accomplishments. After a break from cycling, she recovered and achieved her biggest athletic performances post-eating disorder. Following her cycling career, she used her celebrity athlete status to become an experience expert on anorexia nervosa and healthy lifestyle in general (Verriet, 2020). In his critical article, Jon Verriet (2020) analyses how her celebrity status increased after a highly publicised struggle with anorexia.

competition. In this chapter, I questioned how these constructions shape the suffering of women performing cycling labour.

The power of articulation of hegemonic masculinity through the glorification of road cycling practice is based on competition and suffering; the social structure of professional women's cycling socialises women cyclists into tolerance, acceptance, and internalisation of this articulation of masculinity related to suffering. This power also affects other actors in the field, such as team staff and race organisers, who do not take women's pain seriously and are often the root cause of cyclists' suffering. The sport ethic keeps women from fully criticising their own suffering. Female athletes define the ability to overcome injury as an important indicator of commitment as an athlete (Pike & Maguire, 2003). This definition also appears to be the case in women's cycling. I argue that the complete suffering of women cyclists has a gendered layer to their commitment. Women cyclists endure and even glorify the poor conditions they work, race, and live in, and they see these conditions as a quest to overcome. This is meant to be proof of their athletic ability and that, to break from the shadow of men's cycling, women don't want to shy away from racing tough races that are not well organised, dangerous, and do this all without a structure and culture that supports the welfare and wellbeing of these cyclists once they experience suffering. Similar to women in other (male-dominated) sports (e.g. Berg et al., 2014), these riders do not want to provide any evidence that women are the weaker sex and do not belong in this man's world of bike racing. This broader institutional context of hierarchy and authority in sport, that shapes and is shaped by hegemonic masculinity, results in athletes returning to racing to re-claim their spot, reaffirm their athlete identity valued within, but without the lack of power to speak up and say no (Atkinson, 2019). The view that women's cycling has come a long way and 'it is moving in the right direction', makes these women put up with less than ideal conditions to maintain their own opportunity to race, but also to keep the door to professional racing open for future generations. The finding of the collective understanding of injury, pain, and crashing in the case of women's cycling supports previous research on female athletes adhering to the sport ethic and their experiences with injury and pain in similar ways to male athletes (Young & White, 1995). From this point of view, gender order is not challenged by women's participation in professional cycling; it is therefore not a challenge to the masculinity-sport nexus.

Chapter 8 – ‘I don’t think it can be fast though. If it’s too fast, it won’t work’

Progress narratives in women’s cycling

There is a popular discourse of progress and advancement in women’s sport (Bowes et al., 2021). Women’s sport is said to be an area of exponential growth in the international sport industry, based on participation, high performance, focused initiatives and sport media trends (Adams & Leavitt, 2016; Sherry & Rowe, 2020). Following McLachlan (2019), in this chapter, I discuss progress narratives and gender politics (Connell, 2021) in professional women’s road cycling from a critical feminist perspective. Key questions I address here include: How is progress constructed and legitimised in women’s cycling? What is seen as progress and what attempts are made to change things for the better? What do individuals and organisations do in their attempt to enhance the sport? What progress is made as a result of acts of resistance? How can progress be related to gender relations in professional women’s cycling? Before answering these questions, I discuss the larger context in which professional women’s cycling is situated, namely a neo-liberal and postfeminist setting. Then, I present an analysis of micro, meso, and macro levels, respectively the local Melbourne road racing scene, national Australian cycling, and the international Women’s Word Tour. How does the progress narrative change or remain the same at these different levels? This analysis reflects on several narratives that emerged from my data related to progress in women’s cycling. Throughout, I use Connell’s (2021) ideas about Gender Politics to create an understanding of the struggles to alter the gender regime in professional women’s road cycling and potentially impact the larger gender order of women’s sport.

Postfeminist and neoliberal context

In the previous chapters, I have discussed the gender regime of grassroots and professional women’s road cycling. According to Connell (2021), gender regimes are connected to wider patterns that endure over time across a whole economy. These wider patterns are the gender order. This larger gender order can be situated as a postfeminist and neoliberal context, suggesting that professional women cyclists move, work, and live in this context. Postfeminist sensibility involves the entanglement of feminist and anti-feminist discourse. This rationale displays contradictions with on one hand notions of autonomy, choice and self-improvement (agency) and on the other hand, surveillance, discipline, and the vilification of

those who make the ‘wrong’ ‘choices’ (having a too fat, too thin or too old looking body) (Gill, 2007). ‘These notions are also central to neoliberalism and suggest a profound relation between neoliberal ideologies and postfeminism’ (Gill, 2007, p. 163). Connell (1987) argues that her framework is a tool to describe larger patterns to help specify what it is that constrains practice in play, but at the same time, how people actively and creatively shape and transform situations. Practice can turn against constraints when free invention and reflexive human knowledge are involved. In the postfeminist and neoliberal context, the focus is completely on practice, but it does not consider that practices cannot escape structure. Connell’s framework helps to see the connections between how socially constructed meanings are connected to social structure through time and how that process concerns personal conduct and groups, institutions and whole complexes of institutions (Connell, 2021), not just the individual.

The dominant 21st century capitalist economic paradigm is commonly described as neoliberalism, which includes the central belief that the maximisation of social goods needs to locate all human action in the market (Heywood, 2016; Munshi & Willse, 2016). This belief suggests that leaving individuals free to pursue their own self-interest (i.e. consumption) will develop both individual success and happiness as well as the overall economy (Munshi & Willse, 2016). The neoliberal discourse shapes work and self-identity, reifying autonomy and self-management by holding solely the individual responsible and diminishing structural failure (James & Gill, 2017).

Watson and Scraton (2017) discuss a vivid neoliberal and postfeminist populist imaginary, drawing from the work of McRobbie (2008, 2015) and Wilkes (2015). In this picture, leisure and sport are accessible to the contemporary woman and these pastimes are at once fulfilling, rewarding and appropriately challenging for her worked on, consumerist configured body. The neoliberal woman is white, middle-class, able-bodied, most likely heterosexual or at least presents appropriate heteronormative behaviour or acceptable homonormative ways if her social and cultural circles allow it. ‘She has a job, perhaps a career, that enables continued engagement in her activities of choice, from gym membership, to body and spa treatments to regular overseas travel and holidays’ (Watson & Scraton, 2017, p. 46). Her path in life is chosen as she chooses and develops a leisure lifestyle that fits well with her sporting capital and she chooses if and when to start a family, presenting her growing responsibilities and dependents as an extension of her competence (or compliance?) as ‘having it all’. Her embodiment of neoliberal, postfeminist femininity represents current, popular culture.

Importantly, within postfeminism, meritocracy is the solution to achieve 'equality' and empowerment as every aspect of life is altered through the idea of personal choice and individual self-determination (Gill, 2007; Watson & Scraton, 2017).

The above suggests an image of what women can be, could be or even must be in a neoliberal, postfeminist context, because the individual is all powerful and responsible for their own destiny. This individualism underpins experiences of racism, homophobia and domestic violence and framing those in exclusively personal terms (Gill, 2007). This context signifies a separating of theoretical (personal) and activist (political) feminism that has led to a dispossession in discussing issues of difference, inequality, and social justice (Francombe-Webb & Toffoletti, 2018). The neoliberal, postfeminist belief also extends to when women move into the professional sport space, as sport is not exempt from the increased commercialisation of late capitalism, shifting away from the field of 'play' and pushing women (and girls) into the neoliberal sport-media nexus (Pavlidis, 2020). Professional sports are driven by market fundamentalism and corporate-led development, and thus, women's presence in these sports, such as cycling, is exposed to the relations of capitalism. The imperatives of the neoliberal sporting context that shape sporting femininities (e.g. profit, pleasure, success), have shaped the rise of *paid* professional sportswomen (italics in original, Pavlidis, 2020). The athletes are required to have or adopt a specific orientation towards their employer (e.g. their cycling team) and the broader community (fans and potential fans) (Pavlidis, 2020). When it comes to gender equity, the market determines what is considered equitable. However, as Pavlidis (2020) points out, the status of women as athletes in professional sport is tenuous and precarious.

The F-word

A mainstream belief in the postfeminist, neoliberal sport context is that women are emancipated, liberated, empowered; they have all the opportunities to 'just do it' (Dworkin & Messner, 2002) and gender-neutral sport spaces are today's reality (Schrijnder, van Amsterdam, & McLachlan, 2020). Ahmed (2017) calls this belief a postfeminist fantasy. In this delusion, 'an individual woman can bring what blocks her movement to an end; or that feminism has brought sexism, sexual exploitation or sexual oppression to an end as if feminism has been so successful that is has eliminated its own necessity' (Ahmed, 2017, p. 5). This postfeminist fantasy – a world where feminism is no longer necessary – can be achieved from two very different political positions: working towards the end of gender or working towards the end of feminism (Birrell, 2000). A feminist eradication of gender means

that gender is no longer an indication of privilege or the core of power. The current postfeminist narrative suggests a movement towards ending feminism before gender privileges are deconstructed. A movement that must be resisted (Birrell, 2000), because gender oppression exists and, until gender ceases to matter, feminism is imperative. Correspondingly, feminist research, including feminist ethnography, is necessary (Pillow & Mayo, 2012). Thus far, this thesis has made a strong case arguing that gender (privilege and power) is far from eradicated in (professional) women's cycling. Most prominently and symbolically, as long as women's competitions are gender-marked (e.g. WWT) and the men's competition is not (e.g. World Tour), clearly cycling needs feminism.

However, in the push for change in cycling, feminism and feminist language seem to be avoided or even argued against. On 22 March 2021, I received an invitation to speak at a webinar/seminar about gender equity in cycling. The organisation's aim stated:

> The organisation of a webinar on gender equity in women both professional and amateur cycling […] is meant to use the opportunity of the World Championships in cycle racing to direct the attention of public opinion and the UCI on the still remaining stereotypes and mental and structural barriers in the path to gender equity in cycling. However, instead of complaining and whining on irritating and humiliating abuses and sexism we want to approach gender equity in sport from the angle of human rights. The reasoning is that discussions and actions from an abuse and sexism approach have proven to lead to ad hoc solutions and sweetener services while a human rights approach underscores the respect for women in sport and should lead to fundamental and enforceable measures. (Personal communication, 22 March 2021)

The organisation acknowledged the need to discuss gender equity in cycling, but the formulation of their aim worked hard to avoid talking about the issue of gender equity. Words like 'whining' and 'complaining' are problematic because it suggests that when people (read: women) discuss issues of abuse, sexism, and gender equity, they are negatively perceived. Sara Ahmed (2017) explains how being heard as complaining is not being heard: 'If you are heard as complaining then what you say is dismissible, as if you are complaining because that is your personal tendency. When you are heard as complaining you lose the about: what you are speaking about is not heard when they make it about you' (Ahmed, 2018, p. 16).

Another example is Marianne Vos, arguably the most prominent and successful rider in women's cycling history, who said the following in the promotional video for the #WhyItMatters campaign by media outlet Cyclingtips (Cyclingtips, 2020).[46]

> It's not about feminism or whatever; it is about bringing out the beauty of the sport. (Marianne Vos)

The #WhyItMatters campaign aimed to raise awareness on why coverage of women's cycling matters. Assumingly, this message was directed at a target group that thinks women's cycling is not worthy (yet) of significant coverage. This target group most likely exists of male fans of professional men's cycling, the dominant group of fans, consumers, and men who acquire their masculine identity from the sport. And potentially, the group that would be threatened by women's (call for) increased inclusion in 'their' space. Vos's comment indicates a tension between the desire for change, in this case more coverage of women's cycling, and broader social transformation towards gender equality. For women to take up space in the established male-dominated bastion of professional cycling, the status quo that relates and equates professional cycling to heroic masculinity, will push back. Advocates for women's cycling, like Marianne Vos and Cyclingtips in this instance, might be wary of using the F-word (feminism) as it is often met with resistance. This resistance often takes shape along the lines of the myth of women's unsuitability for athleticism or the dismissal of women's interest in sport. In cycling, this type of resistance could be identified by the people in power – men. Postfeminist resistance looks different and is performed by women athletes themselves.[47] There is scepticism towards feminist perspectives on the activity that brings these athletes a sense of belonging and identity, and physical pleasure (Olive & Thorpe, 2011). Both parties resist using the F-word: men are threatened by it, and women cyclists do not want to need it to progress. In the sections below, I discuss how progress is constructed at micro, meso and macro levels in (professional) women's cycling.

Th progress narratives

Micro: Local – Club racing

Increased participation

[46] On 22 April 2021, the webpage of this campaign was no longer available on www.cyclingtips.com/womenscyclingmatters. The video is still accessible on YouTube.

[47] Even feminists resist feminism. The process of learning to be feminist; the process of recognising sexism: taking in feminism step by step. 'You have to give up on a version of yourself as well as a version of events' (Ahmed, 2017, p. 29).

My fieldwork in the local Melbourne road racing scene started in August 2017 and ended in March 2020. I joined two different cycling clubs: the old club, SSCC, and the young club, XCC (for more detail see Chapter 4). Over the course of my fieldwork, the main narrative of progress was the increased participation of women riding bikes. When I told people in the field about my research on women's cycling, their reaction would often affirm the importance of the research 'because so many more women are riding bikes now'. In interviews, cyclists also discussed the increase in women's participation in cycling, which they said led to positive change in the sport. For example, Maria said:

> There's been a massive increase in women riding bikes in general and that flows right down to racing. Haha, it probably actually started just from companies. Their marketing division went: 'Oh my goodness', you know, 'selling bikes is the new gold. We're selling to all these men and 50% of the world's population is women, oh my god, we haven't even tapped into 50% of our potential market. Let's start marketing towards women'. They start marketing towards women, more women take it up: that snowballs. More women doing it, more women enjoy it, and then the bigger groups start and then [it] just flows into more women racing, more women this, that, whatever. (Maria)

Maria's answer seems based on consumerism (i.e. the inclusion of women in cycling companies' marketing strategies), which leads to some sort of trickle-down effect ('flows right down to racing') from participation to racing. To explore the idea of 'more women on bikes', it is important to understand how riding bikes or cycling is a physical activity with a broad definition. Damant-Sirois, Grimsrud, and El-Geneidy (2014) distinguished the recreational, fair-weather, path-using, and dedicated cyclist. Rowe, Shilbury, Ferkins, and Hinckson (2016) established the following cycling categories: commuter, recreational, and organised cycling divided in competitive and non-competitive forms. I observed and experienced overlap between these categories during my fieldwork, especially during the rides with XCC. Within the same group, we were riding to train and get fit for races (cycling as a sport), others were training but not racing (cycling recreationally or for fitness), and yet others 'simply' enjoyed bike riding (cycling leisurely). XCC's Saturday rides were on road, popular with many cyclists (hills, relatively little traffic), for example, at 'the ponies', Mount P (Pleasant) and Kinglake. During these two- to four-hour rides, we mostly saw men cycling;

but club members, who had been riding on those roads for years, made frequent remarks about observing an increase in women cyclists.

The notion that 'more women ride bikes' was more often repeated in the XCC environment than at SSCC, which might be due to the exposure to more women and the part of the city where XCC members lived (more bike friendly). At SSCC, although I heard many members discuss their kilometres per week or long rides on the weekend, I observed them only as competitive cyclists who raced. While there was (silent) support for women at SSCC, some reactions to my research differed from the XCC environment. One man said that women aren't there yet, and they shouldn't want to race the Tour de France (Fieldnote, 13 October 2018), and another said: 'If you had the choice would you watch the women's TDU or the Tour Down Under? I know what I'm gonna do… I want to watch [Peter] Sagan!' (Fieldnote, 6 December 2018).

The difference between these spaces can be related to what Liza said about women and leisure and competitive cycling in her interview.

> I think probably for women, like I don't really know the statistics, but it seems like the leisure part of cycling is more attractive to women than the racing part, still. But, I still think that the racing part is slowly improving and especially with the women's cycling racing scene and getting better attention now all the time, and there are some really good role models there, like, who people can follow and I think being inspired by them and with the local clubs, at lower levels, having better races for women. That is more encouraging for them, to show up and race other women, rather than racing with the men. (Liza)

Research confirms Liza's ideas about the attractiveness of leisurely cycling versus competitive cycling. Rowe et al. (2016) found that women who participated in courses for cycling training (learning to cycle and/or improving their cycling skills), showed little interest in organised competitive cycling. However, most of their study participants were 30+ years old, which is a group more likely to participate in social cycling events and groups than performance sport activities (Malchrowicz-Mośko, Młodzik, Leon-Guereno, & Adamczewska, 2019; Rowe et al., 2016). At the same time, Rowe et al. (2016) suspect that 'it is possible that some of the opportunities these women sought could increase the profile of cycling more generally and potentially result in women acting as role models for future

generations' (p. 427). I agree that the step to racing is easier to make while already participating in cycling. For example, I observed that many new racers at women's crits and SheRace meetings came from triathlon. They were already acquainted with physical activity, equipment and the social contacts that corresponded between the triathlon and cycling world. Though, to start cycling and take it up as a hobby is the most difficult part. Women face many barriers to taking up cycling (Aldred, Woodcock, & Goodman, 2016; Bonham & Wilson, 2012; Rowe et al., 2016), especially competitive cycling (Dixon, Graham, Hartzell, & Forrest, 2017). The considered growth in women's cycling participation did not create easier access to the sport. First considered in Chapter 4, my struggle getting into cycling was multifaceted: the costs, intimidated by the unknown cycling world, lack of information, and difficulty finding the right group or organisation to join. In my interview with Hannah, I asked her what she would advise a novice rider that tried to get into cycling, and she replied:

> A lot of the women are very supportive of new people coming in. So, basically the best way to do that [is to] become a member of a club, you go to a lot of the club races, you know, there's the St Kilda crits on a Sunday morning, there's the Wednesday night racing at Kew Boulevard. So, the more you attend, be seen in the peloton, basically, the more friends you make that way, the more opportunity you'll see. So, that's the best way to sort of get into a sport; I guess you can tour around Australia, just be part of a club. That we know how to do to get women involved in racing. Sixty women turned up to St Kilda last weekend, so yeah, that's actually massive. (Hannah)

Coming into the sport, Hannah had an athletics background, a degree in sport science, the support of her husband who was an elite cyclist, and she had already built experience, fitness, and skills from riding by herself and in groups. Based on this, her idea of a novice rider or 'new people coming in' are women who have a similar background and can make that step to racing. When I emailed and called several clubs, I found they were not as helpful in introducing me to the sport and it actually undermined the narrative that increased participation which led to progress. The information below was given to me during a call back from a volunteer at a cycling club I had contacted.

- The information about their women's program on their website was set up by a woman who is no longer with the club. That program was focused on new riders. The last two, three years the club has not gotten any new riders in the sense that they are beginners. The women that join are usually experienced

riders. All rides are on road in groups on road bikes. You need to able to go at least 25 km/h.

- The riding at the club is mixed. There is one female ride on Friday morning, but no one has been going (except for her and one other woman) because it's cold. The ride is challenging, hilly. If you're new, it is too hard. Every other ride is really not targeted for beginning riders. "We would like to have more for newer riders, but there are just not enough beginners joining. Other groups have specific people to help new riders. People join [this club] because they want to race, but the club also has lots of other recreational rides. Not just a focus on racing, but also social rides".
- She is sending me some details of some groups that might interest me. Joining the club is a step up and I need increased fitness. The groups are there for new riders, for social rides/activities, focused on skills, and "once you've got confidence and some experience, you could join the club". (Personal communication, 28 August 2017)

In her email that followed, she sent me links to Breeze Rides, Wheel Women, and She Rides, and wished me all the best. From this conversation, I gathered I was welcome to join the club when I was confident, fit, and fast enough, exactly the reasons that discourage most women from taking up cycling. The club did not offer any pathways for beginners, simply because none were becoming members. The special women rides did not appeal to me because they seemed focused on an older age group; I already knew how to ride a bike, and I wanted to race. How does one gain experience if they are discouraged to join a club? How am I supposed to know I am confident and fit enough for the club rides? I have no idea how fast 25km/h is. How do I get confident riding in a bunch and race, if I can't join a club because they don't have anything for beginner riders?

Riders often referred to the improvement of racing for women with local clubs. In Violet's view, this was true as well:

> My mum raced until she was like 17 or 18. Uh, and then there weren't really many opportunities for women in cycling or yea, for women's cycling. Especially in Australia, so she went to university instead and stopped racing. (Violet)

As a 20-something-year-old, if I had wanted to, I could have done only women's crits during my fieldwork. In the 2020 season, four clubs organised specific women's crits which totalled 32 crits with several grades. These crits offered equal prize money, potentially equal racing time, and women were included in prize ceremonies and social media posts. The Hanging Rock women's only handicap race had its second edition in 2020 and proved to be a great success due to its inclusive, friendly atmosphere, and associated skill sessions (Skene, 2020). This race even attracted many women riders without a racing license to participate (temporary licenses are available via CA). However, racing options were still limited for women riders, especially the ones seeking excellence, something experienced by Kate. In her discussion on the level of professional women's cycling, she said:

> Oh, it's very hard, ha. I guess you only compare yourself to what you know. It's funny because I get a lot of encouragement from local men I ride with because they would have never witnessed a girl as strong as them. But once you get to the top level: these are the best athletes in the world. Every single one of those girls in the peloton were that one girl rider in their town that was strong, or they've come from a nation like the Netherlands where the talent field is just so huge... To get to the World Tour, you have to be very, very, very good. Because there are 200 girls lining up at their club races, so you know, they have enough girls and our club races don't have a field at all. You might get three! (Kate)

For Kate and many other Australian cyclists, the women's field does not provide the pathway to professional women's cycling, and they are required to race with men. The 32 crits for women were relatively few races compared to the 90 open crits with several grades. (This number was just by the four clubs that organised women's crits. In total there must have been many more 'open' grade races.) Most club races are still generally organised for men, as 'open' grades are the majority of races and these are dominated by men. These spaces are male oriented and dominated. The inclusion of women in racing may start with separate women's races/grades, equal prize money, and legitimate recognition; the sport needs more work to change things for the better, to progress. When I visited the prestige (notorious) Super Crit in 2017, I arrived at 07:30am to watch women's C and B grades race, and made the following observation while watching the men's race afterwards:

> I felt bad for thinking this, but I thought this race [men's D and B grades] was more exciting than the women's race. There were more cyclists and there was more action because of this, I think. I heard the men [with the microphone on the stage] say there were 62 and 42 men in these grades (there were about 15 in the women's grades). Quite different numbers. You could hear the cyclists shout at each other and see more of them as they would be in a long line or small groups. One of the mic men was also really excited about this race as he lost his voice yelling into the microphone about the final sprint over the finish line. (Fieldnote, 17 December 2017, Shimano Super Crit)

While Maria and Liza might be right that the increase in women's participation in cycling consequently led to progress in women's racing, this progress might only be minimal. The growth has not led to easier access to the field and the racing structure accommodates small fields. At the same time, local club races continue to ignore women's performances (Hart, 2021). If increased marketing (towards women) of cycling companies has affected women's participation, it mostly increased the number of women riding in (organised) non-competitive settings who might purchase a temporary race license for the annual Hanging Rock handicap race. In the next section, I discuss statistics on cycling participation and connect these to more lived experiences from elite cyclists on progress.

Meso: National – Summer of Racing/National Road Series

Increased participation

The participation as progress narrative was unmistakably reiterated at the meso level. To explore whether this narrative can be supported by statistics, I discuss several numbers below. According to AusPlay data (SportAus, 2020), cycling is a popular activity for adults in Australia. 12% of active adults participate in cycling, 15.1% of men and 9% of women. The National Cycling Participation Survey also shows that men cycle more than women, but women's riding increased from 29% in 2017 to 31% in 2019 (Munro, 2019). One study in Queensland showed that 22% of 24,868 adults observed cycling at 17 different sites were women (Debnath et al., 2021). In 2019, Cycling Australia (CA) reported an increase in activity in their participation program with over 9,300 participants, highlighting their 'Let's ride' for children and '*She* rides' for women. It has proven difficult to measure cycling participation in Australia as different datasets define and include or exclude different forms of cycling (Rissel, Munro, & Bauman, 2013). Analysing the AusPlay data from an organised

sport perspective, cycling does not make it to the top 10, which suggests the previous mention of cycling concerns predominantly recreational cycling and not cycling as a sport, e.g. road racing. The data does not seem to include road cycling/racing as an option for participants to choose separately.

The focus of this thesis is organised competitive cycling. To understand women's participation in competitive cycling, I include the race memberships of Cycling Australia (CA) from 2014 to 2020 in the table below (these numbers are based on their annual reports). The 2017 data is missing, because CA did not break down their membership by sex and/or gender in this report. Race memberships are necessary to compete in club races, regional competitions such as Victoria Road Series (VRS) and the National Road Series (NRS).

Table 8.1 - Cycling Australia race membership

Year	Total	% last year	Women	% of total	% last year	Men	% of total	% last year
2020	11,576	(-20%)	1,914	16.5%	-16.6%	9,662	83.5%	-20.6%
2019	14,458	(-2.1%)	2,295	16%	-2.1%	12,163	84%	-2.1%
2018	14,771	(-2.3%)	2,346	16%	+7.2%	12,425	84%	-7.5%
2017	15,125	(-3.1%)	-	-	-	-	-	-
2016	15,614	(-2.4%)	2,188	14%	-2.3%	13,428	86%	-2.4%
2015	16,001	(-1.6%)	2,241	14%	+6%	13,760	86%	-2.7%
2014	16,261	-	2,114	13%	-	14,147	87%	-

Although it seems like more women are racing bikes (from 13% in 2014 to 16.5% in 2020), the higher percentage of women is due to a stark decline in men's race memberships. Sotiriadou, Wicker, and Quick (2014) suggest that the declining number of memberships is part of a larger trend where sport clubs have trouble (re)attaining members, due to demographic shifts in the population. There are more women and old people, and thus fewer young men, which Sotiriadou et al. (2014) regard as problematic because (young) men

represent the typical club member. Also, as discussed earlier, many people practice cycling as a sport, leisurely or recreationally, outside of a club setting. It is mainly the growing group of women and older people that practice cycling in this way. Additionally, those typical club members, the (young) men, are realising their cycling needs and desires out on public roads during "Hell Rides" where they train and compete for imaginary finish lines without prize money (O'Connor & Brown, 2007).

Since 2020 was a year symbolised by the global pandemic and repetitive lockdowns, I consider 2019 a better representation of 'normal' participation numbers. In 2019, there were only 181 more women (+8.5%) in the racing field compared to 2014 (and 1,984 less men). The decline in men is not 'made up' by an increase in women purchasing a race membership. Since women are not the 'typical' club member, clubs should undertake actions to engage with this group (Sotiriadou et al., 2014). Some clubs are taking advice from Sotiriadou et al. (2014). An example is apparent is Maria's experience below. She raced in a crit organised by a club with mostly master's members.[48] A few days after the race, she received a phone call from one of the committee members.

> I answered the phone and the guy was like: 'This is so and so from [masters racing] and I just wanted to have a chat to you'. And I was like: 'Oh my god, my aggressive racing style has offended somebody and I'm gonna be banned or something like that'. He said: 'Nah, nah, nah! All good, I wanted to have a chat with you about how we can get more females out to [our club]. What are some actions that we can do to get some females out to [here] because I watched how you raced on Thursday night and it was really aggressive, and it was bloody awesome to see!' And I was [thinking]: 'Wow that is coming from an older gentleman'. But this older gentleman was like so supportive and so positive, enough to actually look up my details in the membership files, to make a phone call to me and take that effort on a Sunday. And that meant a lot. (Maria)

Considering the critical feminist perspective, power is finite and distributed unequally towards the benefit of men as a group. To have progress in a sport that is male-dominated, men need to give up power for women to gain power. The phone call by the 'older

[48] Master's members constitute eight different age divisions: 35-39, 40-44, 45-49, 50-54, 55-59, 60-64, 65-69, 70+. Master's members are mostly men.

gentleman' can be viewed as an action by a man potentially wanting to change things (for the better?) to include more 'females' in his club. I asked Maria the following:

> Me: So, do you think it is your aggressive racing style that led to him saying that?
>
> Maria: Uhm, I think it was refreshing to him to see a female out there being aggressive. I guess other females that may have been out there, don't… they just sit in. I think it was because I was actually visible, because I was off the front. Maybe that triggered him: 'This is awesome, let's see more of this'. (Maria)

Open grade racing (male dominated) is not always a welcome environment for women. This intimidating space may impact women's racing style where they 'behave' and go with the flow of the bunch, trying not to attract too much attention. Additionally, women may not race 'aggressively' with men because they often assume they are unable to accomplish a 'good' result in a race. This assumption is called 'inhibited intentionality' and sees women underestimating their potential physical power and skills, potentially resulting in a self-fulfilling prophecy (Wedgwood, 2004). Deemed as unusual for women in this space, Maria showed proactive, aggressive racing which is considered a style of racing typical of men (despite many men showing up to races and not racing aggressively: they sit in, barely roll turns and perhaps sprint at the end), a narrative as old as women's racing (Lucas, 2012).[49] Maria thought that this gap between 'usual' racing behaviour for women and her 'aggressive' racing style triggered the committee member to call her, which might be a first step towards change to attract more women to race at the club. In other words, it seems that women need to race like men, and not 'just sit in', and for men to start thinking about giving up their power in the cycling space and become inclusive of women.

Increased performance

To return to progress narrative, women's increased participation was also linked to an increase in performance. Maria remarked of her start in the National Road Series (NRS):

> The depth and the talent, nowadays, is humungous. There are some damn talented women and not just like, so when I started, the NRS here, was like, you know, say, 50 to 100 women depending on what race it was, with ten

[49] In 1985, the race director of the well-known Coors Classic race, Michael Aisner, placed women on 'probation' for not racing aggressively enough. He also threatened to eliminate the women's event altogether if they did not ride hard and fast in 1986 (Lucas, 2012, p. 234). This behaviour is patronising to women cyclists.

> [riders] being stand out. And the rest being a long way beneath that. Now, there's like, 20 to 30 stand outs, strong women. So, yeah, the standard has really increased from [when] I started. I was reasonable, now, six years later, I should be much better and much stronger than I was back then, but I'm no better. I'm not getting any more results than I used to, which means everything else has been developing alongside that. (Maria)

Interestingly, Giulia expressed a very different experience. Maria and Giulia compete at the same level, at the same races and in the same teams, but Giulia's reflection on the quality of Australian women's racing represents a lack of depth:

> We have those three really strong riders who, in a road race, just ride away and no one else can do really anything about it. And it's not like you have ten or 15 teams: you've got five teams and only 40 riders. So, you've got three girls up the road, one from each of the three strong teams and then you've got their teammates back in the bunch, so that's 15 riders and you take that: 'Oh now you've got only 25 riders left but they're the weaker riders and they're not necessarily going try to get back'. So, there is no [choice], they just basically end up letting them go, because that's their only option. That's the race, it's gone, now you've got 60 kilometres of those three girls swapping off at the front. (Giulia)

Giulia's critique not only includes depth of riders; she also directed her criticism to Cycling Victoria and Cycling Australia's focus on participation rather than racing events. Giulia actually thought the women's field had stagnated:

> The NRS, they say, is stronger but six years ago, five years ago, we had 90 girls turn up to the Tour of King Valley, this year we had 43.
>
> Me: Why do they say its stronger?
>
> Giulia: Don't know, haha, that's what people are saying. They're like: 'It's all moving in the right direction', and I am like: 'I don't see how that's the case, because there isn't, there isn't the numbers there'. It's like: 'Okay, we've got more people riding, you've got more members, you've got more money coming into Cycling Australia, but… the elite racing side… isn't… stronger'. Going by the numbers participating, and the number of events. Like, we're

> down three NRS events from four or five years ago. Now we only have like six, so, yeah, we lost half a calendar. (Giulia)

The difference in experience between Giulia and Maria signals the complexity of the field of women's racing. While both seem to believe that more people in the sport can benefit from the racing side of cycling, Giulia critiques the lack of attention and priority to the elite racing which are crucial events for further athletic career options.

Increased quality of races

Although the NRS seems to be a troubled competition, the Australian summer has seen more and better women's races (Giuliani, 2020). When discussing these summer races, Giulia acknowledges this progress:

> It has been amazing to be a part of that as well, I guess, cos the first year I raced Tour Down Under (TDU), it was four crits. And you know, the next year I raced with uh, [a team] and it was three road stages and a crit sort of thing, you know. And to see it… progress and see from it [TDU] go from just NRS to now where we've got some UCI teams [participating], and the next year, it's actually a UCI race, and… and then to first see the Cadel Evans [race] become two days and now, the Herald Sun Tour. [Although] I think we could've had more than one road race and uhm, 1.6k time trial, but…
>
> Me: That was uh, interesting…
>
> Giulia: It is better than nothing. It is seeing it progress, so. (Giulia)

Her last remark exposes a theme of gratitude and positivity for any kind of progress in professional women athletes (Pavlidis, 2020). Pavlidis (2020) argues that gratitude/positivity that women express on entering the sport-industry nexus works to silence critics of structural inequality. While Giulia expressed that the women's race was quite minimal, she quickly formulated the inclusion of women in the Herald Sun Tour as progress. This highlights that race organisers are not compelled to include women; they are not obligated to organise an event for women, so when they do, the least women can do is be grateful and positive.

Since Giulia's interview in 2018, the Cadel race has become a WWT race and offers equal prize money to the elite men and women; the Tour Down Under moved up from 2.1 to 2.Pro; the Herald Sun Tour continues to exist as a two-day road race (without the tokenistic 1.6km prologue) and also went up in ranking (2.2 to 2.1), and Race Torquay was added to the

calendar as a UCI 1.1 race. In the table below, the races that comprise the 'summer of racing' and its first editions and durations are detailed.

Table 8.2 - Australian summer of racing

Australian summer of racing				
Version	**Race**	**First edition**	**Duration**	**UCI rank**
Men	Lexus of Blackburn Bay Crits (Bay Cycling Classic)	1989	3 stages	CRT
Women	Lexus of Blackburn Bay Crits (Bay Cycling Classic)	1994	3 stages	CRT
Men	Santos Tour Down Under (Schwalbe Classic)	1999	6 stages	2.UWT
Women	Santos Women's Tour Down Under	2016	4 stages	2.Pro
Men	Cadel Evans Great Ocean Road Race	2015	One-day	1.UWT
Women	UCI World Tour Deakin University Elite Women's Road Race	2015	One-day	1.WWT
Men	TAC Race Torquay	2020	One-day	1.1
Women	TAC Race Torquay	2020	One-day	1.1
Men	Jayco Herald Sun Tour	1952	5 stages	2.1
Women	Lexus of Blackburn Women's Herald Sun Tour	2018	2 stages	2.1

These international races are considered to function as an opportunity for domestic riders to attract the attention of UCI teams.[50] The continuous climb in UCI ranking of these events is also said to enhance Australian cycling's position in the cycling world (Giuliani, 2020). Similar to the European races discussed in Chapter 4, the younger races (Cadels/Race Torquay) seem to have a modern approach to organising races (e.g. better functioning websites, professional imagery) and include more or less gender equal events from the moment they commenced and take pride in doing so. Challenging, exciting and well-organised races run by supportive and inclusive organisations are important for creating an

[50] WWT and Proseries race organisers must invite eight to 15 WWT teams and the top seven of the Continental teams. Besides these 15 teams, they may invite other classed teams such as the domestic teams. There may be 24 teams in total.

environment where athletes excel. Riders may enter individually in VRS or NRS races, but they need a team in order to compete in UCI mandated races. Australia has one WWT team (Team BikeExchange) and one Continental registered team (Roxsalt Liv Sram), which also competes with 12 other NRS teams. It is difficult to become and stay part of a team in the NRS. Throughout the interviews with Maria, Giulia and Hannah, it became clear they did not ride for the same team for long.

> So, my road team is [ProRacing One] however… we have just been told, we won't have a national road series team for next year [and] I guess that means if I want to race NRS races, I either have to hope to be selected for a guest spot on a road team for an event or I have to enter as an individual. (Hannah)

Before ProRacing One, Hannah was part of another team that had a very supportive environment. She received a lot of support from experienced team members who taught her bunch tactics and race strategies. The team was well managed, and their travel and accommodation were paid for, which she said was a really great experience. When I asked her what had changed, she explained that the team was discontinued.

> Hannah: So, basically, like with all things, they kept the men's team and then the funding was cut for the women's team.
>
> Me: Why did they cut the women's?
>
> Hannah: Uhm, I think, with everything, you know, there's a lot more exposure with men's racing. All the financial support that they could get was directed towards the men's team, so something sort of had to give so yeah, they just put all their focus into the men's team, so there was no longer a women's road team. (Hannah)

Although the 'summer of racing' can provide opportunity for domestic riders to show their talent, the preference for men's cycling and the frequent folding of teams makes it difficult for domestic Australian riders to improve their racing skills and actually be on a team to compete in the top ranked races in their home country. Most winners of these events have been Australians who were often already part of a UCI team when competing.

Besides the difficulty of the NRS teams, former support structures like a national or regional development team have disappeared. Christine, for example, received a scholarship from a national institute that helped her reach the top level of cycling:

> When I was coming up through cycling, they didn't really have much money, but they were still coming back with a bit of financial support from the Australian Government to help put a bit of a women's development program together and I was lucky enough to get a scholarship with them. They [got] together a team and brought them to Europe because I think that's where it's really important for women's cycling in Australia. If they want to become professional cyclists and to get recognised and get on teams, you kind of need that experience over here [Europe]: racing, living, training. But at the moment, everything has completely changed, and there wasn't even meant to be a women's development program this year. (Christine)

Despite the importance of a structured pathway and support for women to reach professional level, CA abandoned many women's cycling development projects from 2015 onwards. The organisational body cut their European-based development women's team in 2015 but agreed to a partnership with Rochelle Gilmore and High5 Nutrition in setting up two women's teams, only to terminate that investment at the end of 2017 (Giuliani, 2017a). CA also discontinued their support for the Orica-Scott women's team (formerly Orica-Greenedge, then Mitchelton-Scott and currently Team BikeExchange) (de Neef, 2017). In the same year, the CA decision makers initially wanted to bring a squad of five riders to the World Championships instead of the full seven available spots (Giuliani, 2017b). These actions happened when Australian women's cycling was 'booming': the introduction of the Orica-Greenedge women's team in 2011, third ranking as a nation in the women's peloton, meant many World Championships and World Tour podium results for Australian riders (Ella Cyclingtips, 2017). After CA's abandonment of these programs, it was unclear what their future support for women's cycling was going to look like. In 2018, their support took shape as the Podium Potential Academy (PPA) (Australian Cycling Team, 2019). In 2021, the academy supports 14 athletes: six women (one sprint/five endurance) and eight men (three sprint/five endurance). PPA women athletes form the Australian women's road development team together with some NRS riders in which they can compete in the Australian summer of racing and race in Belgium for about a month in July. Nevertheless, PPA is clear about their focus: track racing. On their website, they explain their reasoning, suggesting that the track discipline offers the most potential medals and provides physical, tactical, and skill development which can be transferred to road careers as riders mature (Australian Cycling Team, n.d.). The academy does not support a road only development stream because they

believe it is impossible to identify future road stars at U17/U19. Road cyclists are supported by CA's operation of the NRS which they hope to develop as a thriving domestic competition for up-and-coming athletes. Hannah was unimpressed by the effects of these changes:

> I feel like we've peaked, and we have a little bit of a slide. I think a couple of years ago, uhm, it was really booming. And we had a lot of you know, I guess, semi-professional women's road teams, but now the way the NRS is sort of limiting the amount of races, again. I know of lot of road teams that are just not gonna run next year because they don't get the exposure, which is understandable, so I think until CA really starts to promote it to the wider community, we are just not gonna have that funding and support and the attraction for sponsors. (Hannah)

It is difficult to reflect on the progress of this competition. The fields remain small, especially compared to the summer races. For example, in 2021, the field of the Tour Down Under (TDU) included 68 women riders at the start (the men had 106). Because the Australian borders were closed, this number should be close to the maximum size of the women's peloton in Australia. Before the lockdowns, TDU had a field of 94 riders in 2020, and 80 riders in 2019. TDU is part of the summer of racing. NRS races attracted far less riders in 2019: Tour de Brisbane had 57 starters; Tour of Tasmania had 33; Tour of Gippsland had 30; Tour of King Valley had 43 and Tour de Tweed 69 riders. The NRS races were reportedly live streamed in 2019 and 2020 (Cycling Australia, 2019, 2020). While CA is in charge of operating NRS with the race organisers, no extensive evaluations of the competition are included in their annual reports. After a time of ceasing their investments and support in Australian women cyclists, CA's potential podium academy program and the managing of the NRS do not have a strong and direct aim to progress women's (road) cycling.

People in the field, such as cyclists and journalists, are convinced that women's cycling in Australia has progressed because more women are cycling, which affects racing positively, even though this is hardly reflected in racing numbers. International UCI events in Australia are seen as progress because they allow up-and-coming riders to attract the attention of UCI teams. An additional factor is the exposure of these events and role models to young girls who aspire a cycling career. According to Tracy Gaudry (president of the Oceania Cycling Federation and chair of the UCI's women's commission) girls may realise that a cycling career is 'achievable and Australia is behind' them (Giuliani, 2020), even though the PPA

only supports six young women and the NRS competition needs significant improvement. The following section reflects how this progress narrative continues into the macro level of women's cycling.

Macro: International – Women's World Tour

Considering among others Bowes et al. (2021); Cooky and Messner (2018) and McLachlan (2016, 2019), 'it's got momentum' is perhaps one of the most repeated phrases in the history of women's sport. This and similar expressions were certainly stated in professional women's cycling. In this section, I will explain how the cyclists relate these expressions to structural improvements, increased performance, and professionalism in the sport. At the same time, there is a tension between several progress narratives.

'People blink about how bad it is. Look back five years and you can see how far we've actually come'

The progress narrative at the micro and meso level of women's cycling in Australia focused on the idea that women's cycling has grown, therefore improved and thus progressed. Many riders in the professional peloton made similar remarks about the growth and improvement of professional women's road cycling. This narrative is well captured in Abigail's remark about the current state of the sport:

> I think it's got momentum, like I mean, women's salary coming, uh, the parental leave that's coming in, uhm, more races that are having a women's race and a men's race, TV coverage is kind of improving? [hesitant tone] There is definitely, it's on the upward trend, it's not, it's not fast. But I don't think it can be fast though. I think if it's too fast, it won't work. (Abigail)

Similar to many elite women athletes and the general media discourse (Bowes et al., 2021), Abigail thought that her sport was on the up and she recognised progress as structural changes, such as a minimum salary, parental leave, parallel races of women and men and 'increased' TV coverage. While she mentioned the pace of the implementation of these structural changes ('it's not fast'), she views this as rather positive because change should not be fast, because then 'it won't work'. The 'it [progress] can't be too fast' notion returned in many interviews. For example, Liza thought it was impractical to introduce a minimum wage to all teams:

> Hopefully they [UCI] will be able to introduce a minimum salary and that will be starting with World Tour teams. It's not really practical yet to introduce that to all teams cos many teams aren't able to afford that. But to introduce it at the top level and every year just to increase that a little bit like a few more teams so that hopefully in maybe five years' time, most teams would have a minimum salary. But I think it's not practical unless we have better coverage. At the moment, the economy for our sport is just not quite there, and that's mostly because we're not getting really any exposure that we should be getting. (Liza)

More coverage and a minimum wage did not come fast enough for Maria, who became an elite cyclist in 2013. She considered turning professional but the precarious conditions that the sport offered held her back. She said the following about turning professional:

> The lifestyle [of travelling] appealed to me massively but I also looked at the dark side of being a female cyclist: 100% of them do it so tough. There is no money, you can't save money if you're doing it, you're just living from week to week. You're living from win to win. They're getting screwed over by the… the team's management. When I started, five years ago, there was underhanded uhm, manipulation, uh, it just wasn't a nice environment. I also guess my core values have been shaped by my upbringing where uhm, my family was quite poor growing up, we had enough but watching my parents stress like that, I didn't want that for myself and that's what being a professional cyclist looked like back then. Uhm, because there was no minimum wage, there was none of what is just starting to emerge now. You know, it's so much better now. (Maria)

The professional women's peloton missed out on Maria's skills and talent because it offered a precarious deal. Cycling is a tough and dangerous sport that requires long hours on the bike and sacrifices throughout a cyclist's life but gives little stability and security in return. While the lifestyle of travelling appealed to Maria, her childhood socio-economic background shaped her decision to stay out of a professional cycling career. The women's peloton exists of mostly white, middle-class, and educated women, a group that has acquired a relatively comfortable position in society.[51] From a postfeminist perspective, these women are 'free' to

[51] 46% of women riders are studying at tertiary level (The Cyclists' Alliance, 2020).

choose whatever they want to do and with enough work they can achieve anything. To choose a career in professional cycling is a privilege few women can afford. In return, these privileged women are exploited in a sport that undervalues them. Are they consenting to their own exploitation? Are they undoing feminist progress in general society? Or does this show lack of progress in society? To be able to follow your 'dream' of becoming a professional cyclist is a privilege for which women pay a high price in the end. To come from a less privileged background, like Maria, keeps women from entering the sport but also keeps them from staying or progressing in the sport. They see the lack of social mobility and security and cannot afford to continue down that path. While Maria didn't take the precarious deal of becoming a professional cyclist at the time, her final remarks indicate she is seeing change that might have made a professional cycling career more appealing. The change Maria referred to is the restructuring of women's cycling implemented by the UCI which includes a minimum wage. This minimum wage, however, is limited to the WWT teams and before Maria gets to that level, she would have had the squeeze every penny she got. That minimum wage is like a dangling carrot on a stick.

Increased performance and professionalism

Similar to micro and meso levels, progress narrative at the macro level includes the notion of increased performance. This is exemplary in Sandra's quote:

> I think any World Tour race that you go to, it's insanely competitive, the level is really high and it's only getting higher. I think in the last few years, it's grown massively. There used to only be a few teams and a few riders that could really… they would just absolutely smash everyone. Whereas now, there's probably five top teams that are really, really good and then the next five are really close as well, so it's super competitive. Really high level, really exciting racing, uhm, yeah, haha, super hard. (Sandra)

The notion of increased performance is related to increased professionalism due to structural changes, which in turn shaped beliefs about progress. For many, a minimum salary was a sign of a higher level of professionalism and that it would benefit women's cycling. This sentiment is strongly related to the notion of commercialisation. The belief that when a woman is able to be a full-time cyclist, her performances will improve, and she will have more athletic success leading to better contracts with 'bigger' teams. Better performances mean more wins, and more wins mean more exposure which is attractive for those teams who

are always in pursuit of more sponsors and money. The belief that a minimum salary results in higher performance which will lead to more sponsors and therefore more money and professionalism, is a recurring narrative within women's cycling. For example, Liza stated the following about the level of women's cycling:

> I think it's been improving every year, like the level of performance, the level of professionalism, [it] increases every year, which is really good to see. And the races are getting harder and harder to win. The teams are becoming more professional. Uhm, the top-level teams, they are really professional with how they're run, their equipment and the money that they pay riders now is quite good. (Liza)

While observing the steps forward in professionalising the sport, Liza also made critical remarks and expressed that the sport needs to continue to improve.

> But, that's not really a good average across the whole sport yet. So, it's still only a handful of teams that are really at that top level of professionalism and money. (Liza)

When I asked why she thinks the level of competition has improved, Liza said that the increase in salary for some of the top riders results in a filter down, or trickle-down effect to the rest of the peloton. The other riders and teams try to become better to compete and keep up with that level. Overall, she thought that money and resources were better across more teams, which meant that more riders had the opportunity 'to be more professional, do training camps, have good sports nutrition, have good coaching, have good sport science so I think there's quite a lot of opportunity for riders now to improve at that level' (Liza). They just have to be on the right teams. Interestingly, progress in performance was explained in a paternalising way when a male DS of one of the participating teams at the Giro Rosa said he could no longer keep up with his riders. During La Course, a male DS told me, while we were being passed by the team cars of Trek Segafredo and CANYON//Sram, that he was impressed by the sport because 'women's cycling used to be women with fat bottoms in ugly kits and the team cars were just people's personal cars. Now, even the cars have stickers'. (Fieldnotes, July 2019). The bar for progress is set pretty low by these men in professional women's road cycling.

Different but equal

The cyclists believed progress in women's cycling was made because the sport was growing in depth and with positive structural changes. Despite this belief, the riders also formulated nuanced views on considered and celebrated progress in their sport. For example, Violet said:

> I think it is growing and a lot of the time I think, everyone is comparing women's cycling to men's cycling and uh, that's almost to the detriment of women's cycling like, women's cycling is its own entity. It's different to men's cycling and people are trying to make it more like men's cycling but if you let women's cycling roll its own… its own story, its own character and appeal, then I feel like it would attract and grow its own fan base. So, I think women's cycling is growing uhm, it's just about yeah, finding the right market, I guess? There is an interest out there. Like when uhm, Amstel Gold and some of those races didn't offer coverage, there was quite a bit of backlash with that, I think. So, there is appeal for it [women's cycling], it's just, yeah, showing that value to sponsors. (Violet)

Violet addresses many issues similar to other women's sports: the comparison and dependence on men's sport, situating the women's version as different, the challenges of fandom and attracting sponsors (e.g. Allison, 2018). Throughout my research, many people asked if I was comparing professional women's cycling to professional men's cycling. In a way, this question was unsurprising because men's races are older, longer, and more economically and financially established than women's races. However, this question was based on an assumption that a study comparing women and men naturally made the most sense to achieve progress in women's cycling. Equality and progress in professional cycling meant that women's cycling would look more like men's cycling, an idea that the UCI also has trouble escaping (see for example UCI, 2018b; UCI, 2018c). But, comparing women's achievements to men's upholds dominant beliefs about sex, gender, and bodily performance (Allison, 2018; Lucas, 2019). These dominant beliefs extend to the economic viability of women's cycling and enact a logic that situates women's professional sport as 'dependent', unable to achieve self-sufficiency, burdensome, and therefore expendable (Pape & McLachlan, 2020). Concurrently, the immense social, public, and corporate investment that men's professional sport relies upon to retain its cultural prominence is overlooked (Pape & McLachlan, 2020). Men's cycling has had over a century to develop and redevelop their product in times and societies that structurally and symbolically supported men and their endeavours, whereas progress in women's cycling has been obstructed by that same system.

Many riders and women's cycling advocates opposed to the idea of comparison and copy-pasting men's cycling, including in the media (for example Giebels & van der Weij, 2021). Maria spoke very directly about equality and difference:

> I would not like to see women's cycling becoming men's cycling. It's not interesting, to see men roll along for 28 days straight, doing nothing for 200 kilometers and racing the last 30, haha, when you could watch a three-hour women's race absolutely jam packed with attacks from the get-go because they race a shorter race. But still, I think they should be paid equally. Because attacking your ass off for three hours straight is just as much effort racing five days straight but rolling along for most of that. The old argument: 'Oh, we're not gonna pay the women equal prize money because their race was half as long' well, come on. Either make the race just as long and give them equal prize money or appreciate the fact that they have probably worked harder in that short amount of time that still deserves the same amount of recognition. (Maria)

Abigail's response to my question about longer races for women is another nuanced example of resisting the idea that women's cycling has to be more like men's cycling to be good:

> Oh, that's a big thing you know! People get upset saying like: 'Oh, women shouldn't get paid the same, because they don't race as far'. I don't think racing further actually adds anything to… Like, we can race (!) further, but I don't think it really adds anything. I think uhm, yeah, harder racing or more organised racing? Like having them [races] alongside the men's races is really good, a lot of races started doing that now and I hope that more races will do that, because like the TV coverage, it's all set up for the men's race, and then surely it's easy to do it for the women's. BUT having said that… it shouldn't necessarily be that the only big races are the ones that run alongside the men's race as well. Like we should be able to have big races in our own right as well. So, yeah, it shouldn't be only a sideshow to the men's race [laughingly].[52] (Abigail)

[52] Women's racing has functioned as a sideshow to the 'real' racing performed by men since the late 1800s. Women racing bicycles were initially crowd-pleasers, offering an element of exciting novelty and a voyeuristic spectacle to mostly male audiences (Gilles, 2018). Rather than staged in their own right, women's racing events

The above quotes show the tension of progress narratives in professional women's cycling: tension between inclusion narrative and the 'different but equal' idea. The inclusion of women's events along the lines of established men's events is strongly constructed as progress in professional cycling. For one, because these race organisers have historically excluded women from their events. Secondly, the idea that superior events will be organised because they organise the races considered the best and most prestigious in the world. Thirdly, because these races hold prestige due to their longevity and the heroism connected to suffering in the race. When you race those races, you come closer to being a real professional cyclist. Shelley Lucas (2019) explains that this inclusion narrative is problematic because it 'ascribes power to those who afford the invitations, in this case, the male-dominated sphere of road racing, in terms of governance, participation, opportunities and rewards' (p. 5). Around the mid-2010s, race organisers of the Classics and Grand Tours started to organise women's editions of their races (see table 5.1 in Chapter 5). This change came after a long period of women (re)proving their worth and demanding to participate in this playing field as their right (Hargreaves, 1994) (also see *Stand* by Kathryn Bertine). In this way, however, as Abigail pointed out, the women's races are almost doomed to be a sideshow to the men's. As we have seen throughout this thesis, old races that originated as men's only races have trouble putting on equal events because of male bias, heteronormativity, and unequal structural rules by the UCI that feed into gender ideologies (i.e. race distance, maximum stages and prize money).[53] Also, these races are predominantly at the start of the season. After the spring, for men it is time for Grand Tours which is not the case in women's cycling. So, despite the inclusion of women's events at the start of the season, this inclusion is not followed through in the remainder of the season.

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were often on the program of freak shows or staged between the races of prominent (male) cyclists (Dauncey, 2012; Simpson, 2007). Race organisers, instead of organising competitive women's racing as a serious sport, were primarily interested in capitalising on the aura of outrageousness of women racing bikes and exploit female racers (Kiersnowska, 2019). In 2021, women are still on the margin and continue to be exploited. For example, La Course by le Tour de France was moved a day and location because of local French elections but the men's stage remained uninterrupted (Velonews, 2021).

[53] While many riders do not consider unequal prize money the most pressing problem in their sport, fans continue to be outraged about the difference in prize money between men and women in the same event. In 2021, a fan started a GoFundMe campaign to equalise prize money for women and men at the Strade Bianchi. The raised number exceeded expectations and a total of €26,963 was collected (Tanyeri, 2021). In the same year, outrage among fans was caused by the difference in prize money at the Omloop het Nieuwsblad, who paid the first woman €930 and the first man €16,000. The organisation, Flanders Classics, expressed disappointment about this critique because the focus on unequal prize money took attention away from the investments to make their women's events better (e.g. their first live coverage of the women's race) (the last 35km). The race organiser works with a plan since 2020, 'Closing the Gap', which includes moving up their women's events in rank: from 1.1 to 1.Pro which required a €51,000 investment. They aim to offer equal prize money in 2023 (Frattini, 2021a).

The considered alternative is progressing towards women's cycling that is its own entity, 'different but equal'. To have a calendar that exists of well-organised and respected races without direct associations to men's racing and events, although UCI rules still apply. The 'different but equal' narrative brings its own challenges. According to Allison (2018), who uses the 'dilemma of difference' by Deborah Brake (2010), 'invoking gender difference reinforces ideologies of women's inferiority to men. That is because difference is always and inevitably a basis for hierarchy. Selling women's sport, as a different product than men's sports, makes it seem as if women just aren't as physically capable as men' (p. 135). To present women's cycling as different from men's cycling in a patriarchal society will lead to the creation of a hierarchy where women's cycling is viewed as inferior (see for example Lucas, 2019). However, within the field of cycling and most certainly among many women cyclists, the 'different but equal' narrative is a hopeful alternative where women could and should be appreciated in their own right. For example, when I asked Maria about the future of professional women's cycling, she said:

> I don't know if it will ever be equal to men. I think it's unrealistic to ever consider women's cycling to be the same as men's cycling. I'm not saying that's in terms of pay or anything like that. It will be different, but it will be just as good in its own way. We aren't going to be doing the Tour de France style races. It's just not realistic. I would like to see opportunities to be equal, I would like to see prize money to be equal. I would like to see women's cycling stand on its own and be celebrated for what it is, and for women to be able to make professional careers and save money and hang their hats on, and be proud. Instead of not being able to make ends meet for 15 years and then retire and have nothing to show but memories and medals. (Maria)

Progress is more TV coverage

The discussions on progress in women's cycling are almost synonymous with increased TV coverage. In Chapter 5, I quoted many different riders commenting on the importance of more (live) coverage of women's races to continue to grow and to increase the professionalism of the sport, better working conditions and a safer environment. The consensus was that the TV coverage of women's cycling generally has improved, exemplified by Giulia:

> Part of that, I guess, is due to internet and stuff like that, you know, when I first started riding there was no way I would've seen a women's race on TV. Ever. You know, Comm[onwealth] Games, maybe the finish and that was because an Australian was winning it, uhm, but that would be the only time I would see a female race. (Giulia)

The increased broadcasting of women's races most likely influenced the progress narrative in women's cycling, as many folks argue 'it is getting better'. At the same time, riders acknowledge there is space for more growth and the current increase is slow and unlikely to be equal to men.

> I guess there's always gonna be a difference between men and women in sport, but I think we're making positive steps with this. (Christine)

> I don't know a whole lot about the politics of everything, but something to do with ASO and the UCI and money. For some reason, a lot of the races don't get televised. I think that's what needs to change for the World Tour. We need to start showing people these races, because otherwise it doesn't grow. Like the sport can't grow unless there's people who've seen the races, otherwise the sponsors have no reason to sponsor the teams and then the teams have no money and then… it keeps going around in a circle. (Sandra)

The unrestricted development of men's cycling, and the obstructed development of women's cycling has resulted in unequal coverage of races. While online and reduced coverage (e.g. last 35km of the race or only 25 minutes) may be seen as progress, to catch up with the men is seen as impossible ('always gonna be a difference'). So, in this narrative, progress in women's cycling is constructed as something that is unlikely to catch up with men's cycling. At the same time, a dependence on men and men's cycling is formulated. An associated logic was that the infrastructure for TV coverage was already in place which theoretically would make it easier to cover the women's race as well. In that way, Abigail said:

> If that's how it needs to start to get coverage then people can see the races and they can see that it's really good and then, you know, a women's only race can get the investment. (Abigail)

If we need men to get us coverage and a viable sport, then that's what we'll have to do. The disparity in media coverage between women's and men's sport will continue to exist as long as men's sport is viewed by the media and, by extension, society in general as being of

fundamentally better value than women's sport (Shaw & Amis, 2001). This view is socially constructed through ignoring and ambivalent representation of women's sport in the media which feeds into the myth that no one watches women's sport (Leberman & Froggat, 2019). A recent study by the Women's Sport Trust showed that two-thirds of UK sports fans follow some form of women's sport, but the sports industry has underinvested in the visibility of women athletes and sport, making it difficult for fans to access it. When the industry invests in creating more visibility, women's sport could generate £1 billion per year by 2030 (up from £350 million) (Women's Sport Trust, 2021). This study supports the progress narrative in women's cycling: it's getting there but we need more coverage to be truly successful.

Obstructed progress

The aforementioned restructuring of professional women's road cycling that commenced in 2020 was mostly viewed positively by riders and other actors in the peloton. While some renowned characters claimed it was too fast (Fletcher, 2019), eight teams made it work in 2020 and a ninth team joined the ranks in 2021. Giulia had her doubts about how the restructuring was going to help all teams instead of merely those that were already 'big'. She said:

> I just thought of the problem with this [minimum wage], is that, those first four or five teams already have the biggest budget and all of that, so all the sponsors will be wanting to go to them because they inherently now, have more coverage and more exposure. So, you're gonna have five [teams] who get this now. The next year, you're gonna have another five, those five are going to be struggling even more to get the funds to now pay that minimum wage and for the exposure. And I mean, the next five… how are they gonna even find (!) that, almost? (Giulia)

Giulia expressed fear that the restructuring would mainly maintain the status quo of already well-organised and funded teams, which is not progressive for the entire field of women's cycling. Her fear was not uncalled for, as the 2020 annual survey of The Cyclists' Alliance (TCA) shows a growing wage disparity in the peloton. The annual survey included riders from WWT, Continental and MTB branches and showed that riders who earned no salary increased from 22,7% to 25,5%. About 32% earned under €15,000 (AUD24,838) which was

the minimum wage for WWT teams in 2020.[54] Riders earning more than €40,001 (AUD62,000) made a jump from 12,5% to 18,6%. The survey suggested that 3% of the women's peloton earned over €100,000 (AUD155,005) (The Cyclists' Alliance, 2020). While many people are concerned with the disparity between women's and men's cycling, the considered progress in women's cycling is increasing the disparity within the field of women's cycling. The progress is growing the top of women's cycling, but it is also obstructing progress in the wider field despite a trickle-down effect.

Within the progress narrative in women's cycling, obstruction of progress comes directly from the UCI (Union Cycliste Internationale). Though the UCI was a key player in the implementation of the new structure for professional women's cycling, this change was only coordinated after advocating by the TCA, for example, and other advocates in advisory organs such as the UCI riders commission. The position, actions and role of the UCI are controversial, as it does not have the best reputation in the peloton, and those involved are often referred to as 'dinosaurs' obstructing progress (Bertine, 2021, p. 46). When I asked Abigail if she thought the UCI represented her as an athlete, she had trouble answering the question:

> I think they are increasingly trying to? Uhm, yeah, why… that's an interesting question [speaking slowly trying to think] yeah… I think they see…. I think they are starting to see the potential in women's cycling and that it is growing and hopefully they do and want to support it more. (Abigail)

Abigail's uncertainty shows that she does not view the UCI as playing a direct part in her cycling career and she does not feel a strong affiliation with the organisation. This lack of relationship could explain her struggles to formulate an answer. However, in her struggle, she suggested that the UCI is trying to do more for women's cycling and 'they are starting to see the potential and that it is growing' which suggests the growth of women's cycling is not due to UCI's interference but something women's cycling has achieved on its own. Abigail is hoping that the UCI recognises the potential and growth and is willing to support women's cycling more, possibly to achieve an economically and financially viable sport.

[54] The minimum salary was set at €15,000 (AUD24,838) in 2020; €20,000 (AUD31,012) in 2021; €27,500 (AUD42,642) in 2022 and from 2023; the minimum salary should be the same as the wage for the men's UCI professional continental teams, which is currently around €30,000 (AUD46,519).

Besides this lack of connection with the athletes, the UCI is also known to obstruct change outside of their control. An example was given by Violet:

> Hmmm. I feel like it's in a position where I don't, it's kind of, almost like a position of tension, I guess? Like, it's… women's cycling wants to grow and has the potential to grow but there are certain levels that keep blocking it. Like the UCI is kind of limiting women's cycling a little bit or isn't really assisting the growth. Like recently, I don't know if you saw, but the Hammer Stavanger series got blocked by the UCI. Like, women's cycling is doing, it's fine at the moment, it's not like we have terrible conditions, but it's in a position where it can grow, and it's not necessarily given the opportunity to grow. And it's easier to just sit back and be content and like: 'Yeah, it's fine, it's good' but I still feel like there is a possibility to grow. (Violet)

Where Abigail attempted to be positive about the UCI and express hope for the organisation to support women's cycling, Violet expressed discontent about not only a lack of support to grow women's cycling from the UCI, but active moves against progress. Interestingly, Violet frames the current conditions of women's cycling as 'fine' and the conditions are not 'terrible', which could be a downplaying of the conditions of cycling or she considers herself in a comfortable position in a WWT team.

Violet's mention of the Hammer Stavanger series deserves further elaboration. The series is organised by the Velon Group, a company that produces rider data, videos, and social media content to increase engagement in professional cycling and the company is owned by 11 professional men's teams (Frattini, 2019; Treloar, 2020). Velon started the Hammer Stavanger series in 2017 with men-only races and an unconventional race format. In October 2019, they announced plans to include a women's event. The plan was to have full gender parity in race format, courses, length, television time, promotion, and prize money (Cyclingnews, 2019). However, according to Velon, the UCI announced that a women's Hammer race was 'not in the best interest of women's cycling' and therefore did not approve the submitted race application (Cyclingnews, 2019). Cyclingnews (2019) made a critical note that, besides their announcement of a women's event, the Velon Group does not have any representation of women riders or teams in their organisation and has not advocated for women's cycling in other ways. Nonetheless, the initiative was supported by TCA and riders

in the women's peloton, and it was considered a missed opportunity due to power struggles (The Cyclists' Alliance, 2020b).

As my analysis of the gender regime shows, the UCI has a lot of regulating power, including many rules that potentially prevent organisations from wanting to organise a new women's race, such as the distance cap (160km) or the maximum of six days for stage races. UCI registered teams are not allowed to participate in races that the UCI does not sanction, and non-sanctioned races do not get a place on the international calendar and therefore do not carry the same prestige. Additionally, the top 40 of these races would not be awarded any UCI points necessary for the starting slots for the World Championships and Olympic Games. An historical example is the Ore-Ida Women's Challenge (an American race held from 1984 to 2002) that organised more stages and longer distance races than UCI regulations allowed. The race organisers wanted to offer women a chance to race hard races and challenge themselves, but the UCI deemed the race format as 'excessive' and did not sanction the race until 1995 (Lucas, 2012, p. 231).

Riders direct their anger and frustrations about lack of progress towards organisations such as the UCI, narrating the obstruction of progress outside their control. Their ideas about progress are more related to their own position and experienced agency, framing this as empowerment. In the following section, I discuss how empowerment is included in the progress narrative.

'Empowerment'

Despite not actively using a feminist framework, women in cycling use feminist inspired terms and ideas that indicate their socialisation in a postfeminist discourse. For example, Maria's construction described female cyclists as the same as general cyclists but added an extra meaning of empowerment.

> I think it's the same, but I think it's also that sense of belonging to something that's greater than yourself. It's giving that empowerment, but I don't think it's just cycling that does that. For women, it's yoga groups or it's anything we do as a group of females that is empowering. I love my female friends. It feels damn good to go out with the girls. And have no guys there and just be ourselves and have fun. Uhm, but I think that's the same as everybody, you know, we love to get together with the girls and feel empowered. Because we are all strong, amazing, wonderful women in our own individual ways, and

> you put us all together, we are a force to be reckoned with and that feels good to be involved in. (Maria)

Cycling gave Maria the opportunity to feel empowered when riding in all-female groups. Her construction of empowerment, however, begs the question of what empowerment through sports looks like for women. Is it the escape from male presence? Is it the mere participation of women in a traditionally (and currently) considered masculine activity? Or is empowerment a structural and cultural shift affected by women's participation? Is feeling empowered the same as being empowered?

In the postfeminist neoliberal context, empowerment is strongly shaped by the 'notion that all our practices are freely chosen (…), which present women as autonomous agents no longer constrained by any inequalities or power imbalances whatsoever' (Gill, 2017, p. 153). In this sense, the empowered female subject is portrayed as purely following her own desires to 'feel good' (Gill, 2017). Maria and her female friends chose to ride in all female groups, to feel good and have fun and anything they do together without men is considered empowering. Nevertheless, this does not affect power relations in the sport. Julie framed her answer about what it means to be a woman in cycling in a similar fashion.

> Uh, hmm [thinking]. Uhm, that's a really tough question haha, there's like so many aspects to it. I guess, it is pretty cool being in an industry that, that women are really pushing, for like a bigger voice and more recognition. Uhm, and, I don't see it as only cycling, but sport in general, I think, is really powerful for women, because it gives you confidence and skills that help you so much in life.
>
> Me: Do you feel like cycling has done that for you?
>
> Julie: Yeah. Yeah. I feel, I think I feel stronger in society because of what I've done in cycling. I think, like, I can level up [sic] to the men in a way. (Julie)

Both Julie's and Maria's sentiments can be related to a claim by Antunovic and Hardin (2013) about sports participation. They argue that competition through sports has the potential to strengthen participants' sense of self and identity and argue this is particularly important for women, who — under the patriarchal system — have been socialised to de-value their contributions and overvalue nurturing (Antunovic & Hardin, 2013). However, sport also works to reproduce the patriarchal system and feminist 'sport scholars continue to

examine how various embodied expressions of sport (…) might be deemed as empowering whilst simultaneously constrained by dominant discourses of gender' (Watson & Scraton, 2017, p. 47). Julie positively framed being a part of an industry where women are pushing for more recognition. This framing suggests the industry is a male realm, where women need to use their agency to speak up for change and recognition. Julie also constructed women's participation in cycling and sport in general as something positive because it gives them confidence and skills that enable them to 'level up' with men. She undermined this statement by saying 'in a way', which suggests that despite skills and confidence, men remain in a beneficial and superior position in the cycling industry and larger society. In contrast with Julie's positive attitude towards being part of a group of women who are speaking up, Violet experienced things differently which strongly relates to the different economic and professional position of teams in the women's peloton.

> I know that there are some teams where the conditions are not equal and there are very manipulative people organising them. I have friends on those teams and you just hear about the difference between the conditions. Uhm, and I, feel like women, women in cycling like they, they are just grateful to have a team and to be part of a team that they are willing to put up with some of the conditions that they're given. Uhm, whereas, I think we sometimes underestimate our own worth and we should fight a bit more for better conditions.
>
> Me: Are they discouraged to do that or?
>
> Violet: I don't know, discouraged, it's maybe more afraid, I guess. To stand up for themselves, to like uhm, I guess they don't want to get a reputation for being outspoken or as a troublemaker but yea, it's not, it's not necessarily, I don't know, I guess then if you stand up for conditions, like make a big fuss then you get branded a troublemaker and like teams don't wanna be associated with that. But like I think we should! You should value yourself more and you don't necessarily have to put up with those conditions. (Violet)

Fear is a discouraging factor for confronting sexism (Ayres, Friedman, & Leaper, 2009). As clarified in Chapter 5, the power distribution between teams and riders is mainly with the teams. The fear of rocking the boat to create better conditions with the effect of not finding a

team for the following season, silences many riders.[55] I would argue, in line with Mennesson (2012), that the riders with more cycling capital (the captains that win races and titles) have a stronger position in speaking up about issues in women's cycling. However, if all women spoke up about bad conditions, like Violet suggested, things might change for everyone. Nonetheless, the power of individualism fed to women by postfeminist and neoliberal frameworks that women have tolerated throughout their cycling career, prevents riders from taking a stance collectively. Without discrediting the hard work and sacrifices these athletes have made, this individualism is most prominent within the riders' discourse concerning their ability to make it to the top and stay there.

> I think part of it, when I was a junior; I was never the best, like I was the fourth or whatever. But all those girls that were in front of me, they… eventually just stepped out of the sport. And, I don't know, maybe they had other things like school, boyfriends, partying, whatever, they matured, and they just didn't enjoy it anymore. Uhm, and just decided to step out of it. I don't know why but whereas I just… I don't know, maybe resilient or just too stubborn haha I don't know, or too afraid to leave cycling? (Violet)
>
> Me: How did you manage to stay a pro cyclist?
>
> Christine: I just, I'm… I've always felt like, I have goals and one of them was the Olympic Games, but the rainbow colours would always be nice for the World Championship jersey. There's a few races and a few goals that I don't feel like I have finished yet, or I guess you can always try and better yourself; I don't feel like I'm at that point to stop at the moment. I've been doing it since my, my first professional contract, since 2012, yeah, I still love training, love racing and riding my bike, and yeah, I've still got a few things to try and… (Christine)
>
> Me: How did you get to [race in the USA]?
>
> Maria: Uhm, I created our own opportunities. So, I thought about it and I heard other friends talk about it and how fun it was over there and racing is just like a big party, haha, and I was like, yeah I wanna be in on that and the

[55] See for example *Stand* by Katherine Bertine in her journey towards gender equity in women's road cycling and her actions to get the ASO to organise a women's Tour de France.

> racing was hard, and fast and furious and different to how it is here, so I was like, yeah, that sounds good. Uhm, I want that new challenge. (Maria)
>
> Me: How do you combine [your job and cycling]?
>
> Hannah: I am just super disciplined, so as soon as I finish work, I go home, get changed, get on my bike, and I don't overthink it. I go and do what I've got to get done. Yeah. Occasionally, there's days where I have to take a day off work, where I've got such a big training load, and that's the way it is. But I guess being in a position where I have been here at my workplace for a period of time, I've got those leave dates as well. Like, I've talked about, you know, progressing in my career but also the benefits of having long service leave and leave have also worked to support my riding. (Hannah)

These riders mostly centred on their own attitudes, choices, goals, and dedication to their success of becoming and remaining an elite and/or professional cyclist. Only Hannah recognised how something structural, her work, enabled her to support herself on days with big training loads (which consequently resulted in career stagnation). In the neoliberal context, to solve problems, or to stand up against bad conditions and sexism, is a duty of individuals, rather than the structure controlling institutions (Woodhouse, Fielding-Lloyd, & Sequerra, 2019). Survival has become an individual responsibility which takes shape in the feminist movement by turning from valuing interdependence in favour of individual advancement, with the process posited as female empowerment (Woodhouse et al., 2019).

While this neoliberal postfeminist ideology comes through in the stories of riders, we can also see some collective organisation in the field, for example, the establishment and continued existence of The Cyclists' Alliance.

The Cyclists' Alliance

Connell (2021) ponders: 'What of the institutions that represent workers' interests in battles with corporate power – the unions?' (p. 120). She argues that these organisations are also mostly patriarchal. For generations, men were the main members and union leaders, and the establishment of women's voices through unions required a long struggle due to resistance from men who embodied an old, combative style of working-class masculinity, and to whom women were hardly legitimate members of the workforce (Connell, 2021). However, as

economies have changed, so has women's membership of unions. In professional women's road cycling, we can see something similar.

Inherent to feminism is the advocacy for positive affect/change to eliminate sexism and create gender justice. This potential is conceptualised within a sociological framework that recognises agency and 'the possibility to effect change as a dynamic process of ongoing negotiation of complex subject positions and, at times, the wider rubric of intersecting social relations' (Watson, Tucker, & Drury, 2013, p. 1233). Several common themes in women's resistance to neoliberal restructuring are asserting a right to work, struggling for a better quality of life and sustainability (Desai, 2002 in Connell, 2021). These themes can also be recognised in The Cyclists' Alliance (TCA). Iris Slappendel, Carmen Small, and Gracie Elvin used their agency to start the alliance which has grown to an organisation with several operational roles and a diverse advisory board. In their 2020 Annual Review, TCA stated their aim was to 'educate and empower riders, and redress the balance of power in women's cycling by informing riders of their rights, their leverage and helping them recognise and reach their economic potential' (The Cyclists' Alliance, 2020a, p. 5). Resistance is part of sport, because sport, in its broadest sense, is a political project and with that comes transformative potential (Watson & Scraton, 2017). TCA's lobbying for the improvement of women cyclists' lives is a proactive example of resistance to the status quo.

In Chapter 5, I outlined the power dynamics between TCA, the CPA (association of professional [male] cyclists) and the UCI. TCA organised their union separately from the CPA which is similar to how, historically, the women's liberation movement made a claim for autonomous women's organisations, away from a patriarchal system (Connell, 2021). Despite TCA launching their organisation, the CPA started their own women's section three months later, and the UCI officially recognised them as the riders' union. These power moves by both the CPA (to start a women's section) and the UCI (not recognising TCA) can be read as the status quo pushing back against the resistance of TCA. CPA's 'inclusion' of women is an example of a party controlled by men that set up women's auxiliaries to become a voice in a male-dominated space. The formation of this section symbolises the mobilisation of conservative politics as an answer to TCA's move to autonomy and bares similarity to military regimes who had no place for feminist ideas and instead endorsed 'tame' women's organisations led by the wives of the real rulers – based on the 'first lady' concept in the United States (Connell, 2021).

In general, people who benefit from social and economic inequalities have an interest in defending them. Defending the patriarchal order in cycling is relatively easy because this defence happens smoothly through already existing institutions, such as corporations, the media (Connell, 2021), the UCI and CPA. 'Every day sexist practice, such as the media's trivialisation of sexualisation of women, and the routine functioning of institutions, does the job' (Connell, 2021, p. 131). With the overrepresentation of men in all positions in women's cycling, the over-valuing of masculine norms, and everyday sexist practices, TCA and women's cyclist advocates alike have a tough job to fulfil.

While the male-dominated institutions in women's cycling resisted, the introduction of TCA was met with positivity by riders. The alliance was often mentioned in my interviews, for example, in Sandra's:

> One of my friends, one of my teammates, had basically a lawsuit with one of her ex-teams where she was potentially being sued for an outrageous amount of money. When in fact that team owed her money because they had not paid her for the last, I don't know how many last months of her contract. She reached out to the Cyclists' Alliance, they gave her a lawyer, they won the case, she didn't get sued, and the old team ended up paying her money back. If anything were to happen like that, to me, then I would have someone. I wouldn't feel like that with the UCI or Cycling Australia or Victoria, I definitely don't feel like I've had that [support] with them. I just wouldn't even, I didn't even feel like that was an option! (Sandra)

And Violet said:

> I really, I really support the Cyclists' Alliance. Like, I initially joined them, not because [of] what they could do for me, but what they stood for. Like the CPA does have a women's union but I don't really feel like they are actually doing a lot for us, whereas The Cyclists' Alliance are trying. At the moment, they can lobby with the UCI but not necessarily like, they don't quite have enough power yet, to be able to force them to make changes. Uhm, but this, they're really trying to work on that and actually recognise the things that need to happen. They can offer assistance to riders and if you're not on a team, or the team doesn't have lots of support, like they are good networks or contacts to have. And at least it gets you a direction, like what avenue to take,

> if you're in a position and you're not sure where to go, The Cyclists' Alliance can give you an idea of direction and they can offer support. (Violet)

These riders are supportive of the union and their answers indicate the launching of the alliance was appropriate, wanted, and needed. The presence of TCA is considered progress because this organisation offers tangible help and support, which is something the riders feel they need and something that is not truly offered by the old, established institutions like the UCI, Cycling Australia and CPA. Besides direct help such as legal assistance, Violet also commented on the broader implication of TCA, 'what they stood for', which is helping the riders and women's cycling, rather than treating the sport as a sideshow and afterthought to the men.

There are elite riders in women's cycling, who are not part of the 'professional' peloton yet, but they are very keen to join TCA. This desire and support became clear in Camille's answer to my question on what she thinks of the current situation in women's cycling:

> What I do know: At the Tour of Flanders, the female prize was 250 and the men getting thousands. So, that's just disgusting. Uhm, and then I know the organisers of the Tour de France, the ASO, they hate women cycling and [they're not ashamed], they pretty much said, 'if you think there is gonna be a women's Tour de France, get stuffed'. I'm sorry, it's 2019, uhm, as I said: I train with guys, I study electrical engineering, so I'm studying with guys, I've always been brought up [with the idea that] men and women can do anything. I've never been aware that there was all this gender inequality, and then when I was old enough to understand, I thought: 'Oh that's something that happened in maybe the sixties, not now'. So, I think it's good that, there's this organisation now called the women's cyclists alliance, that's really sort of paving the way. I am not a UCI rider, but if you are, it's like a 50 euro fee to join: I think everyone should be doing that. We all have 50 euro to put towards your own, your own health and safety. Because that's what it all comes down to at the end of the day. To make sure you're looked after as a rider, you're not doing races that are too dangerous and shouldn't be run, so yeah. (Camille)

Many professional and elite women cyclists grow up watching the Tour de France, dreaming about becoming professional cyclists, only to find out that this race, and the sport,

discriminates against them based on their sex and gender. For Camille, the shock ('disgusting') of gender inequality in professional cycling is situated in a postfeminist context. In other institutions, such as education and her family, she was exposed to environments where her inclusion and upbringing perpetuated the idea of gender equality and how sex and gender discrimination was something of the past. She was critical of the inequality she observed and experienced in the sport and celebrated TCA for 'paving the way' for individual riders to be healthy and safe. This approach to the Alliance also signals a neoliberal attitude, where the sum of individuals equals the collective: if individual athletes are taken care off, then the sport will progress.

Conclusion

By analysing progress narratives at micro, meso, and macro levels in Australian and international women's cycling, I aimed to understand how progress is constructed and how this construction can be related to changing gender and labour relations in (professional) women's cycling. Through considering the three different levels, I was able to see how the dominant progress narrative was constructed and used to underpin a shared understanding: women's cycling in its entirety is growing and thus progressing. This growth was positioned in the belief that when more women are riding bikes, the sport naturally improves. The progress narrative is reinforced by the assumption that an increase in women taking up cycling leads to more women racing, which positively affects the quality of performances and race events. 'It's got momentum' reflects the progress narrative in women's cycling and is related to practices such as equal prize money at club races, the inclusion of women's events at established races, an increase in UCI sanctioned events, and structural changes like a minimum wage, parental leave, and 'more' TV coverage, changes that represent the increased professionalism of women's cycling. This growth and change in women's cycling are strongly related to an assumption of a trickle-down effect, which claims that progress at the top will lead to progress throughout the sport. The progress narrative includes the idea that women's participation and the progress of the sport overall is inherently empowering them. Additionally, the organisation of The Cyclists' Alliance (TCA) was constructed as progress and empowerment, because the union offers both tangible tools and support, and a broader mission, which is to redress the balance of power in the sport.

The overwhelming positivity in this progress narrative however gives a skewed image of a more nuanced reality. Similar to previous research on women's sport, more women in cycling

does not automatically lead to progress (Adams & Leavitt, 2016; Allison, 2018) and change does not always signify progress (Schultz, 2014). Despite dramatic increases in the representation of women at all other levels of sport, the majority of positions in professional sport are still reserved for men (Theberge, 2012). 'While gender proportionality may certainly be one important measure of equality, simply adding more women to sport does little to address many of the social problems that accompany existing models of how sport is organised and played' (Allison, 2018, p. 15). The existing male-dominated model of road racing continues to exist despite the belief that more women are riding bikes and the assumed inherent empowerment of the activity for women. A postfeminist neoliberal ideology shines through this narrative, as it is clear that the mere participation and inclusion of women has not shifted power relations in cycling. Hence, while these embodied expressions (e.g. riding, racing) may be deemed as empowering, they are simultaneously constrained by dominant discourses of gender (Watson & Scraton, 2017). The dominant discourse of gender that constructs women as inferior to men influences the progress narrative when we speak of the inclusion of women's events in established events. While the narrative predominantly frames this inclusion as positive, the reality of women's cycling being a sideshow to men's cycling creates a tension to the alternative narrative of being 'different but equal'. The gendered discourse leads discussions on progress and equality to comparisons between women's and men's cycling, which results in a hierarchy based on difference. The constraints of dominant gender relations can also be recognised as structural and cultural barriers for women to enter the sport that continue to exist. Likewise, women who do gain access and seek excellence face fewer opportunities to race, train, join teams or receive support. Based on the findings presented in this chapter, and the thesis overall, I argue that the women who made their way in and through the sport to the top of professional cycling have been exposed to a model, space, culture, and structure of cycling that favours men and masculinity which they had to tolerate in order to make it to the top: to 'lean in'. I argue that this tolerance leads to an internalisation of dominant masculine norms, such as the need to race 'aggressively' before being considered legitimate and worthy of a place in the cycling space.

Although the progress narrative focused on increased improvement of the sport, some criticism was formulated as well. The focus on participation by organisational bodies takes away from the quality of the actual elite races and pathway for domestic riders; the structural changes increased wage disparity in the women's peloton; television coverage remains minimal; and the sport certainly has more room to grow. Within this criticism, the idea that

women cannot and will not be equal to men was exposed. While there was a clear wish for the improvement of women's cycling, many riders seemed to have made peace with the idea that reaching parity with men was not going to happen and therefore it was not an active part of their progress narrative.

In the progress narrative, the obstruction of progress was mostly considered to be the responsibility of organisations such as the UCI: a main target of women's anger and frustration. In this way, riders narrated the obstruction of progress outside of themselves with little reflection on their own reproduction of dominant oppressive practices. Riders see progress as a result of individual agency and related empowerment, but do not reflect on their use of agency that actually perpetuates dominant ideas of performance, aggression, and competition. The progress narrative in women's cycling may well have shifted due to the COVID-19 pandemic, similar to many women athletes across different sports (Bowes et al., 2021), but riders continue to talk about momentum in the sport, specifically for a women's Tour de France (Giuliani, 2021).

Chapter 9 – Conclusion

In this conclusion, I reflect on four years of work on examining gender and labour relations in professional women's road cycling. 'Noticing gender is easy, understanding it is a great challenge' (Connell, 2021, p. 147). Women's cycling is a social phenomenon steeped in gender inequality, sexism, and misogyny. Concurrently, the sport signals changes and challenges to these topics. This thesis aimed to take on that great challenge and create a deeper understanding of the world of professional women's road cycling and associated structural and cultural gendered barriers. First, I provide summaries of key findings. Second, I reflect on my theoretical and methodological process. Finally, I offer recommendations for both the field and future research.

Answers to my questions

Throughout my thesis, that had an explicit focus on the Australian context, I posed many questions to support my quest to understand the world of cycling, and specifically professional women's road cycling. I used critical feminist theory and Raewyn Connell's (2021) gender framework to answer these questions. I wondered what it is like to be a racing cyclist (Chapter 4), what the field of professional women's road cycling resembles and what the riders are exposed to (Chapter 5), what the labour of professional women riders looks like (Chapter 6), how suffering is constructed in this cycling 'profession' (Chapter 7) and how, despite precarious conditions, progress narratives are constructed in different fields of women's cycling (Chapter 8). Together, those questions and their answers contribute to the overall aim of this work, which was to create a deeper understanding of gender and labour relations in professional women's road cycling through examining women's cultural and structural lived experiences at multiple sites.

The dominance of masculinity in gender relations

In countries with low cycling participation rates, cycling is considered a masculine activity (Aldred et al., 2016). In any country, the racing of these 'freedom' machines is considered a masculine activity. This study on professional women's cycling shows that the masculine dominance is an inherent part of the sport from entry level to the very top, and shapes the conditions that women are exposed to. Women rely on male introduction and gatekeeping to the sport, while concurrently experiencing discouragement from those same characters. The

sport requires a lot of cycling capital to participate and be included. Women need to be fit, fast, and experienced before they are 'welcome' to learn how to ride in groups and how to race. You are invited into this 'man's thinking game' when those requirements are met. The acquirement of this capital takes a lot of commitment from the cyclist as the physical and mental sacrifices and time involved are considerate. Leisurely racing is barely an option and consistently showing up to events and races is encouraged and normalised.

When a woman makes it into the racing scene, she is exposed to a pattern of gender arrangements that benefit men as a group. Despite an expressed eagerness to include women in clubs with both silent and overt support for women, the gender regime in local cycling includes traditional arrangements throughout the four dimensions of gender. The division of labour sees men in leadership and decision-making positions, while women are mostly in supportive roles or responsible for 'women's issues'. While some practices focus on equality, such as equal prize money, there remains unequal opportunity for women to participate in the road racing scene, such as fewer races. Situating cycling in a larger societal context, the considerable expenses of the sport enable predominantly white, middle- and upper-class males to thrive and display their economic and social status in the sport. This group also has the most bureaucratic control, although some change seemed to be occurring in new clubs making their way in the field of organised cycling, offering support to women to pick up cycling, and apply for grants that are available to support such initiatives.

These structural changes may be progressive in the sport, but subtle forms of power relations that apply the discourse of hierarchy of gender and sexuality and the formulation of dominant masculinity remain. The construction of masculinity through managing race safety as an alternative to risk-taking masculine behaviour is evident of this idea. The same goes for the benevolent sexism that women endure while learning how to race; this relates to the emotional relations dimension that shows how heteronormativity and male sexual desire are the norm. This dominance does not provide much space for resistance and people who do not want to conform mostly turn to other forms of cycling (such as cyclo cross, MTB or they stay away from road racing and simply ride). The amateur, local level of road racing is full of masculine practices that only legitimise certain types of racing. The glorification of pain exemplified in the desire to capture images of suffering and the talk of crashing, injuries, and pain as membership talk construct legitimate and illegitimate suffering. The masculinity of road cycling and racing extends to the proper look of a cyclist which is closely policed and serves as an exclusionary measure.

The history and development of cycling as an activity dominated by men has a prominent legacy in the structure and culture of cycling today, which affects the lived experiences of women in this sport. The associated and socially constructed norm of masculinity prevalent in cycling, and in sport more broadly, leads to the internalisation of these ideologies that in turn leads to a tension between participation and inclusion, and competitiveness and performance. This tension is visible in men's hostility towards women competing in 'their' races, reproducing the myth of female inferiority. It is also visible in women's hostility to other women who potentially reproduce gender stereotypes of being lesser riders, even though that hostility only feeds the status quo of male dominance.

The internalisation of hegemonic masculinity was also apparent when women reproduced biological norms situating male superiority and female inferiority, for example, when they talked about men 'getting chicked'. This universal term in cycling and other endurance sports is used to describe a female outperforming a male. I argue that this is an example of women consenting to their own disempowerment, as such social constructions of differences between female and male athletes are amongst the most powerful techniques to support male hegemony in sport (de Haan & Knoppers, 2019). When women are exposed to sexism in cycling, they often formulate this along the lines of positive impact of sexism as it motivates them to be better. The other side of the coin is expressed femininity to acquire a proper place in the space of cycling. Racing women take the 'proper' cyclist look and feminise this look to position them accordingly in the heteronormative scheme of road racing. This positioning exceeds matching nail polish as it also concerns the looks of women's bodies, especially in the professional peloton, as women's appearances are not only associated with their ability to perform, but also the marketability of women's racing as a product. These are just some examples of how women face the struggle of feeling and being included and belonging.

Professional cycling

This study combined a dominant focus on Australian women cycling and cyclists, and a more general approach to professional women's cycling. My geographical location was a main reason for this consideration, but the challenges that (young) women from Australia face in this sport added to this chosen group of cyclists. Compared to European cyclists, Australian women face more insecurity and risk when they move halfway across the world to follow their dreams. The Australian infrastructure of cycling seems less developed than in countries such as Belgium and the Netherlands, as the opportunities for elite Australian women are

fewer because there are very few top races comparatively. Also, where European riders are able to continue to live with their family, Australian cyclists are dependent on a lot of goodwill from strangers and teams. This dependence makes them more vulnerable to exploitation. Thus, while this study demonstrates dominant structural and cultural ideologies in (professional) cycling, which can impact any woman cyclist, the Australian context takes a prominent place in the data and contextualising findings.

When women are trying to make it to the top of cycling (i.e. professional cycling), they often rely on support from family and/or partner. While trying to make it as a professional cyclist, many also study or have to work to make ends meet. It was apparent that many Australian women who made it overseas, to compete in the Women's World Tour (WWT), were recipients of scholarships that enabled them to focus more on their cycling career. Along the route up and at the pinnacle level of professional women's cycling, these women are exposed to gendered dynamics that create structural and cultural hurdles. Similar to local cycling, elite and professional cycling is a man's world and a prime way for men to network, make deals, and make contacts. In the sport, people seem to hold on to traditions closely and value old races with an origin and history of excluding women from their events. While these events are including more and more women's events, their 'inclusion' is rather situated as sideshows to the 'real' race – the men's race. At these events, phallocentric practices position women as unimportant and unconsidered, and as inferior, sexualised, and feminised beings which contribute to alienation and displacement of women at such events, including riders, female staff, and spectators. When organised as stand-alone events, women's races are often positioned as family friendly, similar to other women's sports (Allison, 2018). Another tradition is the prize ceremony where women are often awarded a lot less money than men, and they receive useless and sexist material prizes such a cookware. Additionally, the riders are exposed to the congratulating kisses of the hosts, which leads to awkwardness and potentially undesired physical touching (although the pandemic might have changed this custom for the future). Women riders are not only exposed to such gendered practices from race organisers, but also from support staff from their own teams, entities that exist to enable women to race and be professional cyclists. In this study, I have observed how team staff have also internalised masculine and heteronormative norms which disadvantages riders.

Professional cycling labour

The labour of professional women cyclists displays many internalised, dominant sporting norms that do not change any problematic sporting practices, but rather reinforces them. In Chapter 6, I related power relations in the sport to the concept of suffering. The desire of these elite athletes to be included, to belong, to be recognised, to be considered legitimate goes a long way despite barely being compensated for their work. Professional women cyclists accept the risk of their 'profession' and pain, seemingly constructing this suffering as necessary to be a true professional cyclist. From this perspective, women need to prove their athleticism and in professional cycling, this athleticism is situated in masculinity. However, their adoption of this athleticism and consequently suffering does not impact their femininity as they consider sport to be empowering for women, which makes the shared experience of injury worth it. Additionally, the riders find themselves in a system with stakeholders who are not greatly at risk (physically and financially) and therefore encourage and normalise risk-taking and pain accepting behaviour (Kalman-Lamb, 2016). The risk of crashing is considered an inherent and unavoidable part of the sport that actually is marketed as a desirable part of the product of professional cycling.

The suffering of women cyclists exceeds the physical as lack of resources prevents proper health care and injuries lead to loss of identity. Dealing with pain, injuries and the physicality of the sport is positioned as something to be dealt with through mental toughness. Cycling is a tough and demanding sport, but the culture and structure make it tougher. While the lifestyle of women cyclists may appear more similar to that of men (i.e. more racing and more travelling), lack of financial income and different gender expectations in (heterosexual) relationships indicate that women sacrifice both financial means and potential significant relationships. Besides the neoliberal idea that individual mental toughness is the solution to dealing with the sport's hardship, the matter of body size and correct eating is situated as something riders need to control themselves. Their personal attitude and actions towards the pressure of eating correctly and looking a certain way will keep them from suffering from disturbances in eating behaviour and body image, rather than recognising and criticising the structure and culture of cycling that brings them that hardship, such as the pressure from teams to perform and be a certain weight. This study shows that riders can have difficulty identifying the root of such problems.

Women cyclists view a professional bike rider as someone who signed a contract and is getting paid to ride and race their bike. Within this construction, the actual pay a rider receives is kept secret by most riders and teams, as team ethos prevents disruptive discussions. Some riders resisted this culture of secrecy by openly discussing their pay in the hope that their resistance would lead to more transparency and equality. The riders are in an inferior position to negotiate good contracts which seems to lead to negotiations about the bare minimum for them to perform their labour: kits, travel, equipment. Some paid riders can concern themselves with more than pay, such as insurance, pension plan, sick leave, and visas. When teams do not cover any of those necessities, riders would need to spend their full compensation on just being legal in a foreign country and race. Riders would not make it without prior savings or outside financial support, which some teams take into account when signing a cyclist. Professional women's cycling is an apparatus that assumes women's dependence on a financially supportive family and/or partner and thus reinforces this dependence.

As this study has shown; the labour of professional women cyclists is not just about training and racing. It involves intense and constant travel to and from different locations, either alone or with teammates and staff. It is managing their health, weight, and fitness. It is recovery from injuries and crashes, and the guarantee of 'coming back stronger'. It is managing the right personality for the lifestyle of professional cycling and finding the competitive edge for a team, such as leadership, domestique or victory skills. It is interactions with spectators, fans, race organisers and their guests who wish to kiss them when they hand out sexist prizes. It is managing 'jokes' and comments by men in the field that make them feel uncomfortable. The hardship of their labour is coped with through individual mechanisms as riders try to stay positive and grateful, or by ignoring the situation. At the same time, women cyclists endure and even glorify the poor conditions they work, race, and live in and they see these conditions as a quest to overcome; as proof of their athletic ability and that, to break from the shadow of men's cycling, women don't want to shy away from racing tough races that are not well organised, dangerous, and they do this all without a structure and culture that supports the welfare and wellbeing of these cyclists once they experience suffering. These women do not want to provide any evidence that they could be the weaker sex and do not belong in this man's world of bike racing.

Reproductive or resistance agency?

Many elite women cyclists watch the Tour de France as young children, dreaming of reaching that level of athleticism and admiration, only to find out their bodies are not welcome, and their gender is not accepted. Despite this rejection, elite women riders have a dream to fulfil, which is to be the best bike racers they can be. Their ability to be the best has been increasing as women recognise progress in their sport: more races, more television coverage, more professionalism, more demand from fans for their races, and a better structured competition. The increase of these various components has also led to an increased positivity and gratefulness for the bare minimum of professional bike racing: a living wage, quality equipment, professional and educated staff, and respect. The riders have internalised the discourse of progress that is affecting women's sport more broadly: 'It's growing, it's getting better'. In their progress narrative, there is a tension between inclusion in old, prestigious men's events and the positioning of women's cycling as different but equal. Nonetheless, women do not think their sport will be and can be equal to men's cycling and therefore they are unlikely to include this idea in their narrative of progress.

In line with increased positivity and gratefulness, women view their increased position in the field of professional cycling as inherently empowering. They do not recognise how this 'empowerment' has not led to gender equity. This study shows how professional women cyclists see progress as a result of individual resistance agency and related empowerment. In this construction, they do not reflect on their reproductive agency that actually reproduces dominant masculine ideals and norms of, for example, performance, aggression, and competition. From the moment women enter the field of cycling and road racing, they are exposed to masculine norms and they tolerate these norms and practices for years in order to make it to the top. This tolerance leads to socialisation and internalisation of dominant gender practices rather than challenging gender regimes and the larger gender order.

Limitations

To understand more about the gender inequality that professional women cyclists face, this study analysed socio-cultural norms that can be at the root of these gendered challenges. The approach to this research offered the opportunity to look at these norms at different sites where professional women cyclists learn their trade and are exposed to socio-cultural norms that shape their lived experiences throughout their career. The lack of previous literature and studies on this topic motivated me to apply a broad approach to the study. This approach means that I aimed to take in everything I experienced when I became a racing cyclist, when I

interviewed the professionals, and when I observed the highest competition of women's cycling. In this way, I was able to capture the world of women's cycling in a general sense but specific to gender and labour relations, offering a steppingstone for future research on the sport.

A limitation of this broad approach is that some topics relatively well-covered in the media, such as sexual harassment and abuse, were not explicitly discussed. Due to the presence of these topics in the press, I expected to find out more about them, but without explicitly asking, the participants of this study were not inclined to discuss in detail. Even though this topic is not explicitly discussed in my findings, professional women's road cycling clearly has a problem with authority figures abusing their power. In the final month of writing this thesis, a sports director of a Continental team was banned from cycling for three years by the UCI because he harassed several riders on the team (UCI, 2021a).

Another limitation is the lacking insight of openly lesbian or bisexual riders' experiences and voices. Women's sports in general seem more accepting and celebratory of openly gay athletes, which could also mean that since homosexuality is more accepted, it is less of a consideration when athletes discuss their lived experiences. Sexuality was not explicitly asked about during data collection. I approached the topic of sexuality more inductively by allowing space for participants to remark their sexuality (e.g. support from partners) in the interviews while not directly asking about their sexuality. Through this approach, some riders talked about their male partner, others did not discuss their relationship status, and some might have kept silent about their sexuality. This means that some of the participants could have been lesbian or bisexual. In this study, the data showed mostly heteronormative practices, and very little about homosexuality.

Recommendations

I repeat Connell's wisdom that relates to the feminist agenda of this research. She writes that practice can turn against constraints when free invention and reflexive human knowledge are involved. In other words, structure can be the deliberate object of practice (Connell, 1987). This study on women's road cycling was not just about hearing and documenting women's marginalised voices in the field of cycling. It was also about trying to help those who are marginalised and exploited to better understand the conditions of their existence, which could better inform their choices and increase their agency.

Based on this agenda, I make the following recommendations to the field of cycling:

- At the grassroots level, institutions such as AUScycling, Victoria Cycling and clubs should create awareness through educational programs on how gender is reproduced via the four different dimensions: power, economically, emotionally, and symbolically. Gender equality is not just a matter of 'including' a women's race or women's prize money. Women's participation and inclusion should be carried throughout the entire sport to no longer make cycling an activity for only men or only women who can tolerate and accept the masculine discourse. In other words, this calls for transformation.
- Take the example of the Hanging Rock Handicap Women's race organised by Hawthorn Cycling Club. While this race remains a competition, it brings women together with a focus on inclusivity, support, friendliness, and a safe space for women.
- Regional and national organisational bodies need leadership and policies that explicitly support gender equality as inherent to cycling, rather than an add-on to the usual state of business.
- Organisational bodies need to explicitly support and associate with women initiatives such as SheRace, the Hanging Rock handicap race, and The Cyclists' Alliance, and listen to women's voices and experiences. These connections should aim to create a structure and culture where women can gain literacy about the field of professional cycling and can gain skills and knowledge about their rights and barriers, which results in greater agency.
- Initiatives such as The Cyclists' Alliance and CPA Women should aim to gain membership of transnational feminist networks that work on gender and race issues.
- All organisations in the field of cycling, e.g. teams, sponsors, media, federations, race organisers, should mandate at least 40% representation of women. Women cyclists have little social mobility within the world of cycling due to the mobilisation of masculine bias. This needs to be disrupted.
- This representation is only a start as women can also internalise dominant gender relations. Organisational bodies, such as Cycling Victoria, AUScycling, UCI, and UNIO, should provide intersectional feminist training of gender relations to clubs and teams to critically interrogate actors on their tolerance and internalisation of dominant and harmful gender arrangements.

- Leading organisations should invest in alternative application processes effective in attracting more women to apply for jobs in these male-dominated institutions with the aim to disrupt the mobilisation of masculine bias (i.e. the old boys network) reproduced by processes such as expressions of interest.
- Disrupt the progress narrative that is situated in a neoliberal and postfeminist context. Women should not be grateful for scraps that do not represent true transformation that values girls and women completely.

This research and these recommendations lead me to make the following suggestions for future research:

- Change and transformation are carried by people in the field. A study on women and men as agents of change will create a better understanding of how gender relations relate to change, transformation and progress in women's cycling.
- The progress narrative suggests that television broadcasting of women's cycling has improved. However, this coverage remains minimal, especially compared to men's cycling. More research on TV and livestream coverage will create a more realistic interpretation and understanding of gender relations in women's cycling broadcasting.
- Social media plays an important part in the business model of women's cycling, and further research on athletes' labour on these platforms will contribute to a greater understanding of professional women's road cycling.
- Professional sport is a commercial product, a form of entertainment, and associated fandom. The market has worked well for men's cycling, as fans of cycling automatically were men's cycling fans. Women's professional cycling would benefit from more research on fandom to better understand its position in the sport-commercial nexus.

Final words

While many women involved in road racing and professional cycling take joy and power out of their pastime, their gendered challenges will be ongoing as long as cycling remains a male bastion where alternatives to the masculine discourse are ignored. Their empowerment is only empowerment because these women gain masculine capital that enables them to move relatively successfully within a patriarchal system. But it remains a patriarchal system that constrains them based on their sex and gender. The historical legacy that strongly influences road cycling as an inherently masculine space and activity, and structurally and culturally

ignores women's voices and experiences, makes it difficult to construct alternatives. The established order (men as the controlling and advantaged group) does not experience the urgency to transform an activity, a sport, a business that empowers them. It is too disruptive to fully and critically question the gender order.

This research has shown that women's participation and professionalisation in road cycling has not led to an altering of the gender regime, and as long as practice is not inherently transformed to create a gender equal sport, the question remains if women and men will ever be equally respected and rewarded for their professional cycling labour.

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Appendix A. Interview guide

Sport background

- What did you do before cycling?
- Sporty/active family/upbringing
- Sport in school? Public/private
- How did you change into cycling?

Role family/social network

- How has your family/social network supported you?
    - In sports
    - Cycling
    - Current cycling career
- Have they financially supported you?

Cycling

- You got into cycling at a certain point, how come you decided to stay?
- How did it start and how did it grow?
- What did it mean to be a girl/woman in cycling?
- How did you experience the cycling scene, the cycling culture when you started out and grew into it?
- What do you think is weird in cycling?
- What do you think is normal but should not be normal in cycling?

Being a cyclist

- What does it mean to be a cyclist to you? Do you identify as a cyclist?
- What does a cyclist look like?
- How does a cyclist behave? What is the ‘cyclist’ lifestyle?
- What did you have to learn or change about yourself becoming a racing cyclist in the WT?

Becoming a pro cyclist

- How did you become a pro cyclist?
- What does it mean being a pro?
- Why do you think you made it? (and others didn’t?)
- What does it take?

- How did you invest in becoming a pro cyclist?
- What did you think of getting on a UCI team and the structure/culture there?
- How is your contract situation?
- Did you have leverage to negotiate anything in your contract?
- Do you work besides cycling? Study?
- Any guidance in how to be a pro athlete/cyclist?
- Coach?

CV/CA/UCI

- What has been the role of these organizations in your career?
- Representation?
- Cyclists' alliance

Current situation women's cycling

- What do you think of the situation women's cycling finds itself in?
- What do you think of the WT competition? The WT races?
- Professionalism
    - Sponsoring
    - TV
    - Media
- What do you see for the future of women's cycling?
- Male dominated. More women?
- Have you had negative experiences in your career?

Change of scene

- Local -> national -> European racing/cycling
- Being an Aussie
- Travelling from Australia to EU (first time)
- Housing

Health

- Insurance
- Crashing
    - What is your experience with crashing? Being injured.
    - How is that handled within the team?

What do you like about cycling?

What do you dislike about cycling?

Appendix B. Consent form

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN RESEARCH

INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS:

We would like to invite you to be a part of a study examining the lived experiences in women's road cycling.

In this project, we hope to engage with Australian cyclists in interviews discussing the life-history and experiences of people involved in (professional) women's road cycling. The interviews aim to:

- Create an overview of overall history of participants' life
- Understand the role road cycling plays in one's life
- Examine why the participant engages in road cycling (racing) more broadly

**Please be aware that it is the ethical responsibility of the researcher to report any unlawful activity, if brought to their attention.

CERTIFICATION BY SUBJECT

I,

of

certify that I am at least 18 years old* and that I am voluntarily giving my consent to participate in the study:

'A job or a hobby? A multi-sited examination of labour and gender relations in professional women's road cycling' being conducted by Suzanne Schrijnder and supervised by Brent McDonald and Fiona McLachlan of Victoria University.

I certify that the objectives of the study, together with any risks and safeguards associated with the procedures listed hereunder to be carried out in the research, have been fully explained to me by:

Suzanne Schrijnder

and that I freely consent to participation involving the below mentioned procedures:

- Participation in an interview that will be digitally recorded
- To be available for follow up questions if necessary

I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any questions answered and that I understand that I can withdraw from this study at any time and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise me in any way.

I have been informed that the information I provide will be kept confidential.

Signed:

Date:

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the researcher

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If any participants would like to speak to psychologist regarding their time during this study, Dr Romana Morda will be available for counselling and can be contacted on romana.morda@vu.edu.au or (03) 9919 5223.

If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Ethics Secretary, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Office for Research, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001, email Researchethics@vu.edu.au or phone (03) 9919 4781 or 4461.