Constructing the cycling citizen: A critical analysis of policy imagery in Brisbane, Australia

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Abstract
Cycling is often promoted as a low cost, accessible and virtuous strategy for solving many urban problems, including air pollution, congestion, climate change and the ‘obesity epidemic’. Yet the status of cycling as a quick and easy transport solution available to all is rarely problematised in policy documents. Focussing on cycling policy documents in sub-tropical Brisbane (Australia) we apply interpretive policy analysis to identify the ways policy representations of cycling and cyclists may work to exacerbate the marginality of certain groups by excluding them from representation. Through analysis of these policy documents, and reference to international research on cycling and the right to the city, this article sketches out the figure of the ‘Cycling Citizen’ constructed within them. The Cycling Citizen is characterised in these policy documents by a combination of actions (such as demonstrations of speed and skill), personal attributes (such as body-type, clothes and gender) and attitudes (particularly around virtue). We argue that the dominance of representations of MAMIL (middle-aged men in lycra) cyclists in the policy documents analysed may work to make cycling less accessible to those less likely to identify as MAMIL such as women, people of colour, people with lower incomes, and fat people, and this may effectively exclude them from cycling policy decisions, and negatively shape personal choices about cycling. We further argue that policy representations of cycling and cyclists matter because they have the potential to influence infrastructure and funding decisions which may have material consequences with respect to cycling mode share, equity and safety.

Keywords
Active transport
Policy
Cycling

Right to the City
Sustainable mobilities
MAMIL
1. Introduction

Heralded as a sustainable mobility capable of addressing social, environmental, economic and personal ills, the status of cycling as an accessible transport solution for all citizens has been largely taken for granted in policy documents (Spinney, 2009). As a result, much of the literature exploring the adoption or rejection of cycling has focussed on the quality and availability of physical infrastructure, perceptions of traffic and hazards, and local urban form and streetscape (Aldred et al., 2016; Chataway et al., 2014; Cole et al., 2010; Garrard et al., 2008). This emphasis has also dominated transport planning and policy efforts to increase cycling mode share (Pooley et al., 2013). There is, however, an emerging international body of research which engages with social and cultural factors that influence cycling behaviour and modal choice (Daley and Rissel, 2011; Gatersleben and Haddad, 2010; Spotswood et al., 2015) and which recognises that the accessibility and adoption of sustainable mobilities — like cycling — are affected by identity and social positioning, in addition to expenditure, infrastructure and education. Decisions to adopt cycling as a personal transport mode can thus be understood to be shaped by a range of physical, social, and cultural factors which are, at least in part, shaped by cycling policy. However, social and cultural factors are rarely reflected in, or explicitly addressed by, policy documents. This omission is important because public policy plays a “crucial role...in encouraging bicycling” (Pucher et al., 2010, p. 106).

The development and implementation of cycling policy can be contested and controversial. In practice Australian cyclists are often marginalised as road users and their claims for space delegitimised (Vreugdenhil and Williams, 2013). Research also shows that investment in cycling infrastructure, a central plank in cycling policy, has also been implicated in processes of gentrification resulting in unequal benefit and contributing to broader exclusionary productions of urban space (Stehlin, 2014, 2015). Bicycling accounts for approximately 1% of daily trips in most Australian capital cities (DIRD, 2015). This is comparable with the low cycling rates experienced in the UK, the USA, and Canada (Fishman, 2016), but as noted by Pucher et al. (2011) considerably lower than bicycle mode shares typically enjoyed in northern Europe. In countries where cycling remains a very low proportion of total trips by mode, the ‘cyclist’ has become an identity in and of itself; an identity that sits more comfortably and consistently with some than others (Gibson, 2015), in turn shaping travel practices and choices.

Some cycling scholarship has engaged with questions of justice, often invoking or adapting the right to the city or just city language and frameworks to discuss cycling justice and just mobilities,
and to highlight intersectional concerns (Batterbury and Vandermeersch, 2016; Goddard, 2016). Much of this literature considers how cycling has become subordinate and other to motorised private transport (Blickstein, 2010), and how this subordination represents a restriction on mobility that may subvert an individual's capacity to exercise their right to the city. Some of this work has focussed on the cycling experiences and needs of particular populations. For example, Whitzman et al. (2010) focus on cycling and children's independent mobility, while Whitzman (2013) highlights the implications of modal choice on women's safety and right to the city. The ethic of the right to the city (Harvey, 2003; Marcuse, 2009a, 2009b) is characterised by the prefigurative and ongoing making of a just city and focusses on equitable access to public services, infrastructure, and spaces (Parnell and Pieterse, 2010), including for cycling (Norcliffe, 2016). It embraces an intersectional view of injustices in city life, and provides a framework for understanding the inequities constructed by and reflected in urban form and associated policy (Fainstein, 2010; Marcuse et al., 2009). Interrogating cycling policy through the lens of the right to the city can foreground the ways transport policies aimed at increasing the uptake of cycling may have unintended repercussions for, and exacerbate the marginality of, certain groups by excluding them from representation, and potentially rendering their mobilities ‘uncycleable’ in the eyes of those intended to apply the policy and make infrastructure decisions, such as planners, and those contemplating cycling as a personal mode of transport.

The struggle for just mobilities and the right to the city we focus on in this paper is not between dominant cars and subordinate bicycles, but rather within the category of cyclist itself. Drawing on how policy documents conceptualise and represent the ‘Cycling Citizen’ in an exclusive, kyriarchal (Osborne, 2015) way that undermines the capacity of cycling to help marginalised people claim their right to city, we argue that cycling policy is complicit in constructing the Cycling Citizen, i.e. the normative cyclist at whom cycling policy and infrastructure provision is directed. With a view to informing more inclusive and just cycling policy we interrogate representations of cycling and cyclists within policy documents governing cycling in Brisbane, Australia. Following Steinbach et al. (2011), through analysis of these documents we explore cycling practices as influenced by intersectional factors beyond those traditionally represented in cycling policy, and expose the limited and limiting ways in which cycling and the Brisbane Cycling Citizen are typically reflected in, and constructed by them.
2. Cycling in Brisbane

The Brisbane Vision 2031 is unambiguous in its pursuit of “sustainable travel choices such as cycling” (p8) for Brisbane. However, despite considerable investment in cycling infrastructure, cycling remains an unpopular modal choice. Census data suggests that in 2011 only 1% of people living in the Greater Brisbane Area travelled to work by bicycle (TMR, 2011). Consistent with trends across Queensland and Australia more generally, women in Brisbane were significantly less likely to cycle than men (Garrard et al., 2006; TMR, 2011). This is in sharp distinction to countries like, Denmark, Belgium, and the Netherlands, which approach gender parity in cycling behaviour, sometimes with women cycling slightly more than men (Aldred et al., 2016; Garrard et al., 2006). This obvious gender disparity (considerably less is known about class and ethnic disparities) is not a natural phenomenon, but rather a product of local cultures and contexts. The importance of diversifying cycling to improve mode share has been acknowledged by transport planners and policymakers (Aldred et al., 2016). However, much of the effort in this area to date has tended towards unproblematised accounts of cycling’s benefits, emphasising personal behaviour change through individual interventions based on education and marketing campaigns focussed on the environmental and health benefits of active travel, and raising awareness of the availability of cycling infrastructure, rather than any meaningful engagement with the structural and social influences on travel behaviour (Marinelli and Roth, 2002; Yang et al., 2010).

The Transport Plan for Brisbane (BCC, 2008) describes cycling as “clean and green”, “healthy and efficient” (p10) and “safe and attractive” (p46); descriptions echoed across the policies analysed. Cycling is also generally promoted as a more affordable travel choice than running and parking a car or taking public transport, and is a form of transportation that may offer children a chance to be independently mobile (Whitzman et al., 2010). Yet these very benefits of cycling may offer reasons to reject it as a preferred mode of transport. An Australian study found that the environmental benefits of cycling suggest to some that it is for greenies, hippies, and/or hipsters, which may not be identities all travellers are comfortable adopting (Daley and Rissel, 2011). Its purported accessibility (particularly for those too young to drive) and affordability have perversely created negative associations in some cultures and places, where because cycling is considered something that children or poor people do, it should be abandoned when one can afford to travel by car (Gibson, 2015; Joshi and Joseph, 2015). Daley and Rissel (2011) also found that cyclists without cars felt stigmatised by other cyclists, suggesting cycling continues to
be negatively associated with poverty, and is only socially acceptable when a choice, rather than necessity.

Contra to constructions of cycling as an activity for children, poor people, and hippies, is the figure of the MAMIL. The prominence of the MAMIL in Australian cycling culture is evidenced by the embracing of this persona by former Australian Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, in an attempt to connect with voters (McNab, 2015; Minear, 2015). The MAMIL, as stereotyped, is White with a middle/upper-income who can both afford a car and an expensive bicycle and accessories. Indeed, the term MAMIL was reportedly coined by the marketing industry (Shannon, 2012) to represent a premium market segment and unique retailing opportunity. While the term MAMIL identifies members of this demographic as possessing a particular elite status, derived in part by their purchasing power, MAMIL is often used as a pejorative term by those hostile to cyclists. Because the moniker MAMIL has been used to imply vanity, arrogance, and belligerent disregard of other road users, it is a stereotype many cycling advocates and activists are keen to distance themselves from. Despite this the image of the MAMIL continues to feature prominently in Brisbane's policy landscape to the point of being the dominant cycling identity, excluding alternative cycling practices (and people).

3. Methodology

Despite outwardly egalitarian claims to access and participation, cycling policy and infrastructure provision cannot be easily separated from broader neoliberal and exclusionary urban processes (Stehlin, 2014). As such, we have an obligation to critically consider cycling and the differential distribution of impacts and uptake across diverse populations (Green et al., 2012). Cycling is often presented in policy as a socially and environmentally responsible, economical and accessible means of exercising mobility and claiming a right to space. However, gender, ethnicity, class, body shape and age, as well as local contexts and geographies, are implicated in decisions to (or not to) cycle (Burton and Johnson, 2010; Steinbach et al., 2011). Further, understanding mobilities entails considering its “fragile entanglements of physical movement, representations, and practices” (Cresswell, 2010, p.18). It is thus important not only that intersectional considerations influence the development and implementation of cycling policy, but that policy documents themselves be examined to explore how the images, representations and discourses of cycling and cyclists they contain might function to exclude marginalised groups and impact ridership levels (Aldred et al., 2016).
Policy documents are “an authoritative statement by a government about its intentions” (Althaus et al., 2013, p.5). However, they are not value free and often serve to shape how policy subjects are seen and treated, and to reinforce stereotypes (Schneider and Ingram, 1993). Through language and imagery, policy documents can work to contest or reinforce particular, and often exclusionary, constructions of the identities of cyclists and their needs, and to shape infrastructure and other decisions relating to meeting these needs. Visual representations, such as those in policy documents, may limit policymakers and planners by directing them to a narrow set of approaches, by easing, rather than challenging, heuristic decision-making, and by reinforcing problematic and undesirable stereotypes in a way that contradicts policy intent and language (Jewitt and Oyama, 2001; Lurie and Mason, 2007). If, as Jewitt and Oyama (2001,p.151) argue, photographs may be considered, “‘images of the real’, as images that show things exactly as they might also be seen in reality with the naked eye”, photographs used in policy documents express an intended reality, and may provide insight into both conscious intentions and subconscious heuristics that shape the practices of planners. Interpretive analysis of imagery used can help illustrate and unpack the often counter-productive tropes present in policy, including the construction and reproduction of social inequality and injustices and begin to unpick them from policy discourse (Fink and Lomax, 2011; Jewitt and Oyama, 2001). This kind of analysis also problematizes the selection of images used, and positions those choices as worthy of critique and reflection – it is worth noting that representations of cyclists in policy documents can vary considerably between jurisdictions.2

Interpretive policy analysis helps to expose implicit, as well as explicit intentions by interrogating language, representations, and absences. Following Yanow (2000), we undertook a three step process of interpretive policy analysis. An initial coding frame, drawing on the right to the city, guided analysis of policy texts and images (Benaquisto, 2008). The right to the city facilitates the analysis of exclusion and inclusion by explicitly linking (intersectional) identities and social positioning with urban spaces and local contexts, and notions of accessibility and mobility. The attributes of this frame included gender, race/ethnicity, class, urban form, apparent purpose of trip, environment and climate, body type, groupings of cyclists, and aesthetics.

Brisbane was selected as the focus of this research for several reasons. There have been a number of studies done on cycling identities and the construction of the Cycling Citizen, but these have generally been based in more temperate cities with a tendency towards a denser urban form and higher population densities in the northern hemisphere (see Aldred, 2013; Blickstein, 2010; Green et al., 2012). Brisbane, by contrast, is a subtropical city characterised by low density,
car-based, post-war suburban development. In Australian-based work, Brisbane is somewhat understudied; it is Australia's third largest city, but cycling studies have typically concentrated on the larger capital cities of Sydney and Melbourne (e.g., Garrard et al., 2008; McNamara, 2013; O'Connor and Brown, 2007; Pucher et al., 2011; Rissel and Wen, 2011) which are different topographically, culturally, politically and climactically. Brisbane faces a number of barriers which combine to limit cycling mode share. These include hilly topography, low densities, subtropical climate, and a high level of car dependence. Further, although cycling policy focussed on Brisbane seeks to improve the cycling mode share, beyond studies of hard infrastructure, little has been done to consider how the representation of cycling and cyclists in these policies might be also affect cycling as a mode choice.

We commenced by collating key policies governing cycling in Brisbane. Because state and local government share responsibility for cycling policy, planning, and infrastructure provision in Brisbane, five contemporary policy documents centred on cycling were analysed: Transport Plan for Brisbane 2008–2026 (BCC, 2008), Brisbane Active Transport Strategy 2012–2026 (BCC, 2012), Brisbane Vision 2031 (BCC, n.d.), South East Queensland Principal Cycle Network Plan (QT, 2007), and the Queensland Cycle Strategy 2011–2021 (TMR, 2011). Together these documents articulate policy intentions and guide the practices of those within various levels of government charged with allied policy development and infrastructure planning and delivery. These policies are also intended as politically-oriented public-facing documents designed to promote and provide information about cycling in Brisbane.

Working independently at first, we identified the discursive themes, conflicts, and concepts in these documents relating to cycling identities and practices, applying the images and texts against the coding frame outlined. Both text and images were analysed to expand “awareness of the ways in which policy meanings are conveyed to various publics” (Yanow, 1995, p.122), particularly in terms of who were constructed as the beneficiaries of policy interventions through representation, and who was rendered absent. The importance of imagery in cycling policy documents has been emphasised by Aldred et al. (2016) as they may discourage the participation of already underrepresented groups.

Using hardcopies, we manually identified and tallied each attribute where it appeared. For example, we searched the documents for mentions of gender, and noted the apparent gender of the cyclists depicted in images. We then considered other attributes alongside gender; for instance, we considered the groupings of people in images that contained female cyclists –
finding that women were more likely to be depicted cycling with other women or in mixed groups than alone. Following our initial independent parallel coding, we compared, discussed and reflected on our findings together, revised the coding frame, and revisited the texts as a team. This process of initial parallel coding followed by collaborative reflection and re-analysis has been found to improve the consistency, robustness, and depth of analysis (Barry et al., 1999; Thomas, 2006). Ultimately our analysis suggested four key themes or narratives through which the Cycling Citizen is constructed in the texts: (i) speed and skill; (ii) virtue; (iii) class and conspicuous consumption; and (iv) (dis)orderly bodies. Finally, we explored the implications of this narrow and exclusive construction of the Cycling Citizen against the stated policy goal of increasing cycling mode share in pursuit of sustainable mobilities.

4. Constructing the Cycling Citizen

The notions of citizenship and cycling and/or mobility, and of the Cycling Citizen, have been explored by a number of scholars in order to consider the rights, responsibilities, and representations of cyclists (Aldred, 2010; Cresswell, 2013; Green et al., 2012; Ingram and Schneider, 1993; Spinney et al., 2015). It may be through ‘citizenship’ that rights are claimed, exercised, or struggled for (Green et al., 2012). Citizenship and mobility – and how the former may be enacted through the latter – have also been explored and linked to discourses of rights and justice (Cresswell, 2013; Green et al., 2012), as mobilities and power are intimately entwined, even co-constituting (Cresswell, 2012). Cresswell (2013, p.110) argued that, “the capacity to move is central to what it is to be a citizen”, but of course mobility, as with other attributes of citizenship, is not equally accessible. As such, citizenship “is theorised not as a fixed right and privilege but an ongoing relational negotiation of identity and difference where the resources required for success are unevenly distributed” (Spinney et al., 2015, p.326). Ergo, as we explore the construction of the Cycling Citizen we must do so with attention to identity, difference, power and privilege, for which we draw on the right to the city. These interrelated concepts provide a framework for considering how our experiences of and access to the city is influenced by intersectional identities, geography, and the social, cultural, and political structures that (re)produce urban spaces and mobilities.

Aldred (2010) described the construction of the Cycling Citizen in Cambridge, an area with atypically high rates of cycling. She argued the Cycling Citizen was constructed through enacting four dimensions: ‘the environmental citizen’; ‘the self-caring citizen’; ‘the locally rooted citizen’; and ‘the citizen in the community’ (Aldred, 2010). This construction is tied to place, to local
cultures, norms, and practices. In this paper, we adopt Aldred's (2010) interest in the construction of the Cycling Citizen, with a particular focus on intersectional identities, spatial justice, and how mobilities shape one's ability to exercise a right to the city. This paper is part of an emerging tradition (see Aldred, 2010; Green et al., 2012; Joshi and Joseph, 2015; Norcliffe, 2016) interrogating constructions of the Cycling Citizen in diverse geographical contexts, with an emphasis on the influence of local norms, cultures, practices, and representations, and in the complex link between mobilities and justice.

Through its discourses and images, policy specifies targets and subject identities, positioning these against one another, “constructing their power and deservedness” (Ingram and Schneider, 1993, p.85). Aldred's work informed our analysis, but our understanding of the Brisbane Cycling Citizen also emerged from the policies analysed. These documents intentionally portrayed cycling as a form of responsible urban citizenship; one that demonstrates care for self (health), care for environment (reduced emissions) and care for one's community (reduced congestion and improved ‘neighbourliness’) (see ‘Speed and skill’ and ‘Virtue’). This bears some similarities with Aldred's reflections on the Cambridge Cycling Citizen – ‘the environmental citizen’, ‘the self-caring citizen’, and the ‘locally rooted’ and ‘citizen in the community’. Less intentionally, these documents also portrayed cycling as an ‘elite’ activity linked to class and consumption behaviours, and to a certain normative body type and aesthetic practices (see ‘Class and Conspicuous Consumption’ and ‘(dis)Orderly bodies’).

The policies analysed suggest that being and becoming a Cycling Citizen in Brisbane is a moral imperative or ethical stand that is available to all, yet the resources for success in this form of citizenship are not equitably distributed. This notion of citizenship belies differences and excludes diversity. The status of ‘cyclist’ becomes almost an identity in and of itself, which is tied to particular, often privileged groups, erasing the influence of diverse and intersectional identities on mobilities. Further, any consideration of the right to the city requires the interrogation of the power dynamics implicit in the cyclist-as-identity, and how an exclusive construction of ‘the cyclist’ may work to limit the expression and enactment of citizenship through cycling. Indeed, as Green et al. (2012, p.285) argue, “where mobility is materially and structurally constrained, it cannot so easily provide an arena for demonstrating citizenship obligations; and citizenship rights, in consequence, become potentially more eroded.”

Although it may be due to the marginality of cycling as a transport practice that ‘cyclist’ has gained something of an identity status, it is not a neutral descriptor of transport behaviour
This production of an identity does not exist in a vacuum, but is produced alongside, and reflects, existing power structures in the struggle for space and belonging in cities. Steinbach et al. (2011, p.1127) observe cycling has “become attached to a particular White, bourgeois (and to some extent, male) sensibility, such that it is then harder work to ‘become a cyclist’ if one's identity is differently constituted”. Lubitow et al. (2016) have likewise noted, in a US context, that cycling advocacy and ridership is a predominately White practice. However, cyclists are also associated with traits like athleticism, environmentalism, and risk-taking which also conceptually exclude those who do not, or choose not to, identify with these traits (Aldred, 2010; Daley and Rissel, 2011; Gibson, 2015; Horton, 2006). Cyclists are typically constructed as slim but muscular people (Aldred, 2013), who “are more likely to be male, affluent and…identify themselves as White” (Steinbach et al., 2011, p.1124) than female, working class or poor, and/or people of colour. The accuracy or representativeness of this construction is debatable; it is one many cyclists are ambivalent about, or actively distance themselves from (Aldred, 2013), and it erases the people (often people of colour or those living in poverty) who have “long used cycling…as…ways of ‘making do’” (Stehlin and Tarr, 2016, p.5). Yet despite this complexity, this image of the cyclist is perhaps the most visible, and is reinforced in media and policy representations of cycling (Steinbach et al., 2011).

The conflation of ‘cyclist’ with MAMIL is reflected in cycling policies, which functions both to construct cycling as an exclusive activity associated with a particular intersection of identities, and to obfuscate many barriers associated with adopting cycling as an alternative form of daily transport. This is despite the overt intention of the policy documents analysed to encourage all Brisbane “residents, workers, students and visitors…[to] choose to walk, cycle or use public transport as part of their everyday travel” (BCC, n.d., p.22), and to position Cycling Citizenship as equitably attainable.

In the five policy documents analysed there were 87 unique images predominately featuring cyclists (see Fig. 1). Women cycling alone or with other women were depicted at less than half (n = 13) the rate of men cycling alone (n = 24), with other men (n = 28), or in mixed groups (n = 27); overwhelmingly depictions of women were in two of the five documents analysed (BCC, 2012; QT, 2007). Interestingly, there were more images of cyclists with an indiscernible gender (n = 15) than images containing only women. It should be noted that where gender is indiscernible, in the western world we are conditioned to assume a subject is male by default, particularly if the situational context is a gendered one (Merritt and Kok, 1995). In addition to the lack of gender diversity, although race or ethnicity cannot be ascertained from images alone,
it is notable that there was no observable ethnic or religious diversity in any of the depictions of cycling in the policy documents analysed. In terms of attire, there was one image each of children in school uniform, a woman in what could be considered office-appropriate attire, and a man in a high visibility shirt (commonly associated with manual labourers). There were also three images of men in button down collared shirts typical of office workers in Brisbane, but the considerable majority of cyclists wore lycra, casual attire, or active wear.

This analysis of gender, race, and attire alone suggests a narrow construction of the Cycling Citizen in policy documents. In the following sections we interrogate the characteristics of the Cycling Citizen and the possible unintended consequences of this limited construction. This discussion is structured around the actions, attitudes and attributes of: speed and skill; virtue; class and conspicuous consumption; and (dis)orderly bodies. It is important to note, however, that these themes are not mutually exclusive but interrelated.

4.1. Speed and skill: survival of the fittest

Speed, skill and athleticism are valued highly in marginal cycling cultures like Australia and the UK, where cycling is typically characterised as a serious or specialist undertaking rather than means of daily transport (Aldred, 2013; Daley and Rissel, 2011; Garrard et al., 2006; Pooley et al., 2013). Speed was a potentially inadvertent, but recurring, theme across the policies. An emphasis on speed is strongly linked to masculine cycling cultures which emphasise strength, power (Fullagar, 2012) and a perceived need for specialised equipment and gear, which constructs cyclists as athletes as much (or perhaps more so) than travellers. This may work to exclude those from cycling who do not consider themselves ‘athletes’ or ‘sporty’, or who feel alienated by the (implied) competitiveness and/or masculinity of cycling (Aldred, 2013; Aldred et al., 2016; Daley and Rissel, 2011; Pooley et al., 2013). This athletic association is also evident in the analysed policies where the wearing of lycra is reserved for male cyclists or cyclists with an indiscernible
gender, whether cycling alone or with other men. The masculine overtones of athleticism are reinforced by images of men wearing casual attire when cycling in mixed gendered groups, suggesting that travelling with women and/or children is less a serious athletic pursuit and more a leisure activity.

The policy documents made use of a significant number of blurred photographs, indicating men travelling at speed through both cityscapes and parklands (see Image 1). Speedy cycling is associated with skill and confidence. Where cycling remains a marginal form of transportation roads remain the domain of cars, and cyclists wishing to use roads feel they must ‘keep up’ with traffic as far as possible both to protect themselves from the ire of motorists and to assert their right to space. The dominance of the vehicular cycling paradigm, where cyclists are expected to behave as vehicles on the road, adds to this pressure (Pucher and Beuhler, 2009). An emphasis on speed may deter those who do not possess the athletic ability to move quickly, or who lack the confidence or experience to move amongst and alongside traffic (Daley and Rissel, 2011).
Image 1. The policy documents are replete with blurry images of men in lycra suggesting speed.

It is often assumed that all able-bodied adults know how to ride. Yet teaching children to ride bikes is a non-universal cultural practice. In some cultures, cycling (particularly for girls and women) may be considered inappropriate or immodest (Joshi and Joseph, 2015), and in others there may simply be no history of the practice, and thus no one to teach the activity or act as role models (Steinbach et al., 2011). This represents a significant barrier for cycling uptake for some, especially when coupled with a mobility culture that prizes speed.

Fear of being slow and holding up traffic may also deter those whose travel involves mobilities of care (Sánchez de Madariaga, 2013; Grant-Smith et al., 2017) – those who must travel with others (including children, either on their own bikes or as pillion passengers) and those who must carry cargo (including shopping or equipment for work or leisure). Such trips, termed ‘quaxing’ in the social media space (Johnson, 2015), have been pre-judged “not potentially cycle-
able” (Aldred et al., 2016, p.4) by a lack of representation in policy documents. This exclusion has significant implications for women as potential cyclists as quaxing and mobilities of care are gendered transport patterns. Women are more likely to engage in trip-chaining and travel for household errands (Dobbs, 2005; Greed, 2008; Hanson, 2010) and their mobilities tend to be more affected by parenthood than men’s (Schwanen, 2011; Hjorthol, 2008; McDonald, 2006; Sánchez de Madariaga, 2013). Indeed, it has been found that having children may lead people (typically women) to abandon cycling as a form of transport, especially in the period between children comfortably using bicycle-mounted child seats and them being judged old enough to safely cycle on their own (Chatterjee et al., 2013; Eyer and Ferreira, 2015; Scheiner, 2014; Schwanen, 2011). Elder care – also gendered – may have a similar effect (Pooley et al., 2013).

The emphasis on speed may also deter those seeking to participate in cycling as a social activity as well as a form of transport. Aldred (2013, p.265) notes that “cycling two abreast…is seen as a sign of bad behaviour due to its perceived profligate sociality within a space where speedy movement is prioritised”. The Brisbane policy documents support Aldred's observation, with ‘social cycling’ only depicted in segregated cycle spaces, rather than on roads, where speed remains prioritised. Even in these instances cyclists travelling together were staggered.

The policies also reflect a distinctly masculine interpretation of the cyclist by focussing on increasing commuter and school cycling trips at the expense of mobility patterns that may be slower, encumbered, and oriented around care or household labour. There is limited discussion of the role of escort trips (other than to school), and no images which show either children as passengers or in dedicated cycling trailers. This can be seen in direct contrast to understandings in more cycle-friendly jurisdictions of cycling as conducive to the transport of children, passengers, and goods (Colville-Andersen, 2012) and where speed is necessarily decentred.

In Copenhagen, Denmark, as cycling's proportional mode share has increased, the average speed of cyclists has dropped and bicycles with trailers for children and groceries are common (Gössling, 2013). Similarly, in the Netherlands encumbered trips are depicted in cycling design materials (Aldred et al., 2016), and recent work has shown that many Dutch mothers find cycling remains a viable and appealing choice for many trips, even when travelling with children or on household errands (Eyer and Ferreira, 2015). These examples suggest the identities of cyclists are more diverse in countries where cycling is more prevalent, speed is less central to cycling culture and there is more conceptual and literal road room for cyclists whose travel purposes require more space and a slower pace. Indeed, emphasising the value and pleasure in “slow mobility”
may be instrumental in increasing the inclusivity of cycling and promoting sustainable mobilities (Fullagar, 2012, p.110). Notably, cities and countries with high cycling participation amongst both men and women, such as The Netherlands, are also often characterised by a comparatively high degree of gender egalitarianism, and a more equitable split in household and caring responsibilities (Eyer and Ferreira, 2015). This highlights the link between the accessibility of sustainable mobilities with equity and the just city more generally.

4.2. Virtue: safeguarding Brisbane's liveability

Although cycling does present some risks, it is generally accepted that it can contribute to improved personal health and wellbeing outcomes through improved fitness and in improvements to local air quality (Aldred et al., 2016; Daley and Rissel, 2011). Cycling represents a form of socially and environmentally conscious citizenship, crucial to building a more human-scale and connected way of urban life (Aldred, 2010). The policies analysed were unambiguous in their declaration that cycling positively contributes to the very social fabric of communities. The South East Queensland Principal Cycle Network Plan (QT, 2007), asserts, “residents of cycle friendly communities are more likely to explore their neighbourhood and befriend their neighbours, and in so doing create a culture that deters crime and anti-social behaviour” (p.5). This purported benefit is also addressed in the Queensland Cycle Strategy (TMR, 2011) which pronounces: “more people cycling, more often, for more types of trips will help make our cities and towns more sustainable, vibrant, and friendly” (p5). Thus, not only is cycling positioned as having an important role, “in the fight against traffic congestion” (BCC, 2008, p.22) but also in “safeguarding Brisbane's liveability” (BCC, 2008, p.13).

While these ambitious claims position cycling as an inherently virtuous activity, these associations do not necessarily render cycling more appealing as a practice, or necessarily allow the ‘cyclist’ identity to sit easily with those considering modal shift. It is further complicated by the difference in associations between ‘cycling’ and ‘cyclist’, as cycling, as an activity, may be perceived differently to cyclists as people. For example, Daley and Rissel's Australian study (2011, p.213) found that positive associations of cycling as “clean and green” and “healthy and fun” were countered by more negative associations of cyclists as “risk takers and law breakers”.

Further, the policies analysed praised cycling's environmental benefits and suggested those who cycle take responsibility for reducing their personal environmental impact. Indeed, cycling may be interpreted as a performative display of one's environmental ethic (Aldred, 2010). However,
the green identity conferred on cyclists may sit uneasily with some and deter others (Daley and Rissel, 2011), as in an Australian context there is some general hostility towards environmentalists – who are often constructed as out-of-touch, privileged inner city elitists (Glasson, 2012; McKewon, 2012) – thus conflating multiple unpopular identities.

In addition to environmental associations, cycling may be construed as a way to perform healthfulness (Aldred, 2010; Pooley et al., 2013). In a culture where athleticism (particularly as it is presumed to correlate with thinness, especially in women) is prized, and the perceived necessity of weight loss is conceptualised as a violent conflict (‘the war on obesity’), exercise is deemed a virtuous, socially and personally responsible activity. The Queensland Cycle Strategy (TMR, 2011, p.5–6) promotes cycling as, “a great way to improve your cardiovascular fitness, tone the body and shed some unwanted kilos”, although fat⁴ cyclists were not represented in any of the policy documents. This rhetoric of ‘self-care’ and personal responsibility for health through cycling corresponds with the neoliberal philosophy that characterises much of urban space (Aldred, 2010).

### 4.3. Class and conspicuous consumption: an elite activity

Cycling has, in some contexts, been constructed as an elite activity marked by forms of conspicuous consumption associated with inner-city wealth and White masculinity. As argued by Norcliffe (2016), “like clothes and cars, bicycles are used in full view of everyone because they are paraded in public spaces…This means that a person's identity can be immediately tied to what he or she wears…or rides” (p17). In an Australian study, cyclists reflected on the image-conscious and consumption-focused culture of ‘weekend warrior’ riders (generally male, White, and wealthy), with “the latest carbon fibre bike and the latest gear, all the light weight everything, even the helmet will be $300 or $400” (O'Connor and Brown, 2007, p 89). While some cyclists may feel unentitled to claim the ‘serious’ or ‘real’ cycling identity without these, conversely, some who choose such trappings may fear the judgement of others if they fail to conform to the physical traits of a ‘real’ or ‘serious’ cyclist (O'Connor and Brown, 2007; Steinbach et al., 2011).

In an Australian study, Daley and Rissel (2011, p.214) found that “bike style and cost, the purpose for riding and the type of accessories and clothing worn by the rider” were influential in shaping cycling identity and status. The “highest status”, they observe, “was afforded to the lycra-clad sport cyclists, who rode expensive racing bikes for fitness and recreation, yet drove (often luxury) cars for transport. Some of these bicycles were status symbols in their own right, worth thousands of dollars” (p.214).
These bourgeois associations of cycling construct it as an exclusive, elite activity (Gibson, 2015). This can be contrasted to depictions of cyclists in texts from places where cycling is more common (Colville-Andersen, 2012), and to the claims about affordability and accessibility made in the cycling policies analysed. For example, the Queensland Cycle Strategy explicitly states that, “cycling can provide affordable access to jobs and services for people who cannot easily access public transport or a car” (TMR, 2011, p.5). Yet in most Australian metropolitan areas, investment in cycling infrastructure has been directed towards the inner-city and inner-suburban rings inhabited by the middle- and upper- socioeconomic groups. Those dwelling on the city fringes experience lower levels of access to public transport and dedicated cycling infrastructure, and are also less likely to have access to a private vehicle while needing to travel further to access employment, education and services, and experiencing higher levels of transport disadvantage and greater cost burden (Dodson and Sipe, 2008). Those within cycling range of city work centres and with good access to cycling infrastructure are disproportionately likely to be well paid, salaried workers (who are also more likely to be male, White, and young to middle-aged). White collar employers, such as hospitals, universities and government employers, are also more likely to offer end-of-trip facilities free to workers. The few fee for use facilities in Brisbane's Central Business District are used primarily by male white-collar workers (Burke, 2011) and are potentially unaffordable for lower income workers.

4.4. (dis)Orderly bodies: appearance, attire, and aesthetics

The status of cycle commuting as an athletic, serious, and bourgeois undertaking has implications for the clothing and appearance markers that construct the cyclist (O’Connor and Brown, 2007). This is, perhaps, compounded by the visibility of cyclists as they are exposed to onlookers and to judgement, which may also work to deter some people from cycling (Daley and Rissel, 2011). This kind of appearance appraisal may come from other cyclists, particularly in social cycling or club based cycling (O’Connor and Brown, 2007) or from non-cyclists. Fear of visibility and exposure – particularly while exercising – may be especially prominent amongst certain identity groups. For people (particularly women) from some cultures, cycling and other forms of public exertion are immodest practices, and engaging in them would threaten their respectability and social standing. Further, athleticism and vigorous exertion are typically constructed as masculine traits; it is more socially permissible for masculine bodies to have visible musculature, to sweat, and to smell in public spaces.
Specific clothing may help some adopt the ‘serious cyclist’ identity that facilitates cycle commuting and certain forms of leisure cycling, but it may be off-putting for others (Daley and Rissel, 2011). Many cyclists, particularly female cyclists, are required to give explicit consideration to appropriate travel attire (Aldred and Jungnickel, 2014) and how they “appropriately clothe the cycling body” (Steinbach et al., 2011, p.1125). Many women feel that, even while exercising, they must continue to “demonstrate[e] adherence to a more orthodox feminine aesthetic” (Steinbach et al., 2011, p.1125). Yet, somewhat ironically, shaving one’s legs can be a way that men of the MAMIL set signal their serious cyclist identity to one another (O’Connor and Brown, 2007).

Further, cultural norms about appropriate appearance in public do not only come into play during the act of cycling itself, but also afterwards, such as in appearance codes at work after arriving by bicycle (Garrard et al., 2006).

Issues around dress and appropriate appearance are not universal. Where cycling is less closely linked to a particular identity and constructed primarily as a form of transport rather than a form of exercise, much greater diversity in attire can be seen, both on the streets and within planning and policy texts. In Copenhagen cycling documents, a diverse range of attire is depicted (Gössling, 2013). Indeed, the book Cycle Chic (Colville-Andersen, 2012) by a Copenhagen-based writer contains 368 images of stylish cyclists, wearing everything from miniskirts, business suits, skinny-leg jeans, to cocktail dresses, and footwear ranging from thongs (flip-flops) to stilettos. Of course, it should be noted that like all identities, being ‘chic’ is not equally available to all but influenced by body type, class, ethnicity, and performance. Notably, although a range of headwear is exhibited, not a single ‘chic’ cyclist is depicted wearing a helmet in this book.

Helmets are mandated under Queensland law for all cyclists, and as such all cyclists ‘on’ cycles in the policy documents analysed wore helmets; the few images of those ‘beside’ bicycles in work clothes did not. The wearing of a helmet does not necessarily preclude the wearing of work appropriate clothes when cycling, but representations of cyclists in policy documents are conflated with a certain aesthetic. This aesthetic allows people to wear casual attire (though no skirts or dresses were seen) or lycra rather than work-appropriate outfits. This sets cycling apart from other forms of transportation, such as driving or taking public transport, which is typically conducted in the clothes one intends to wear at the destination. Where cycling is associated primarily with exercise and athleticism rather than daily travel, this may seem sensible as it may be considered unprofessional, disorderly or unhygienic to wear exercise clothing to work. However, while centring lycra or casual/exercise attire, the cycling aesthetic in the policy documents paradoxically suggests a non-sweating body. Faces, where visible, are smiling or
focussed, but never flushed or tired. Hair, where visible beneath helmets, is neat. Notably, the photographs suggest a mild and dry climate – no rain, or the after effects of rain like puddles and mud are suggested. Even physical obstacles such as Brisbane's hills are absent. This maintains the depiction of cyclists as neat, clean, dry, and orderly (see Image 2). The only recognition (albeit circumspect) of sweating bodies in the policy documents is references to end-of-trip facilities, however as previously discussed, such facilities are disproportionately allocated around white collar employment centres in Brisbane.

Image 2. Faces, where visible, are smiling or focussed but never flushed, sweaty or tired.

Body size and type can also be a potential barrier to cycling. Waitt and Stanes (2015, pp. 33–34) argue that: “Exercising with sweat becomes a visceral reminder of how the slim, fit, athletic body of the sports-person inhabits a privileged status within the nexus of sport and urban space”. Sweatiness and smelliness are stigmas often associated with fat bodies (Waitt and Stanes, 2015),
people from ‘marked’ ethnic backgrounds or race groups (Cover, 2013; Low, 2005, 2006), and people from low status class groups (Low, 2006). It is part of how they are constructed as ‘Other’ and out-of-place in urban(e) public spaces. Such Othering may increase the risks and costs associated with exercising in public; claiming sweatiness as a source of pride in virtuous exertion is less available to them as they do not have a privileged identity protecting their status. This issue is heightened in a subtropical city like Brisbane, where heat and humidity exacerbate sweatiness from exertion.

The potential for cycling to create or implicate a disorderly body presents a serious barrier to the uptake of cycling for many. For women, fat people, people with disabilities and people of certain ethnic backgrounds (or any intersection of these), adopting cycling as a form of transport is not merely about modal shift, availability of infrastructure, lifestyle, or personal skill. It is also about their willingness and capacity to claim space for themselves, to assert their rights to be fat, sweaty, un-athletic, female, and/or of colour in urban space, to engage in exertion publicly, and to face the potential stigma associated with, and hostility directed at, non-normative bodies being ‘disorderly’.

5. Practicing cycling identities in Brisbane

In Brisbane, the promotion of cycling has been central to planning strategies and policies aimed at reducing congestion and delaying infrastructure (TMR, 2013). However, as the capital of Queensland, Brisbane is an urban metropolis in which cycling must contest with the prevalent tensions between cyclists and other road users. To illustrate, members of the Queensland Police Service have publicly described cyclists as “cockroaches on wheels” (Calligeros, 2014, para. 5), characterising them as a pest species invading urban spaces to which they have no right. Policies in Brisbane promoting cycling as a virtue, a social and environmental good, and part of the performance of responsible citizenship, are doing so in a context with competing and conflicting discourses around cycling, including significant hostility. This obvious tension presents a challenge for public policy, which must not only seek to develop and promote cycling as a viable form of transport, but challenge the hostility and negative stereotypes about cyclists that could deter non-cyclists from modal shift.

Brisbane is a compelling case in which the policies analysed reflected a particular kind of cycling identity, suggestive of cycling being for particular people and particular mobilities. This is despite claims that cycling is an “easy choice” (BCC, 2012, p2), and the prevalent belief that the current
low cycling rate in Brisbane is attributable to laziness, motivation and a lack of “awareness about...alternative travel options” (BCC, 2008, p.28). An inability or unwillingness to adopt cycling as a regular form of transportation cannot be reduced to laziness or ignorance of cycling's benefits or possibilities, as is often implied in cycling policies. Indeed, these policies do not challenge the prevailing imaginaries of the cyclist in Australian cities as privileged MAMILs or support the development of a more inclusive approach to cycling, both in terms of infrastructure design and mobility cultures.

The existing imaginaries do little to quiet tensions between cyclists and other road users and between cycling cultures, which may act to deter people from adopting cycling. The policies reinforce a masculine understanding of the traveller, moving directly (and quickly) from an inner-city home to work, with limited recognition of trip chaining, mobilities of care, or quaxing. While some policies analysed emphasised the affordability of cycling, they did not acknowledge the spatial distribution of different socioeconomic groups in Brisbane and the link between travel distance and class. The Brisbane Active Transport Strategy (BCC, 2012) acknowledged that cycling behaviour may differ by ethnicity, age and gender, however, like other policies it did not explicitly recognise the influence that intersections of these identities may have on travel behaviour, or propose strategies to address these. Women, children and minority groups were underrepresented in the plans, and the images of cyclists used were overwhelmingly light-skinned and appeared white.

Although women were underrepresented in the policy documents, women have been identified as an “indicator species” for cycle friendly cities (Baker, 2009, p28). This is because women tend to be more risk averse than men, which often translates into an increased demand for safe, and often segregated, cycling infrastructure (Aldred et al., 2016; Garrard et al., 2008), combined with a reduction in hostility from other road users, as prerequisites for participation. Women's journeys are highly spatially structured (Beecham and Wood, 2014) due to their caring and domestic responsibilities. Transport infrastructure needs to be practically organised around a greater range of urban destinations and services (Aldred et al., 2016; Grant-Smith et al., 2017), and the slower travel pace that comes with this kind of mobility needs to be acceptable by other cyclists and road users (Latham and Wood, 2015). However, in the policies analysed, most images of segregated paths – also where women were more likely to be depicted – were along picturesque rivers and parkways rather than the urban routes that would make cycling a more practical and inclusive travel choice (as opposed to leisure activity). Furthermore, despite Brisbane's often hilly terrain and sub-tropical climate characterised by hot, wet summers and
occasional tropical cyclones and extreme rainfall (TMR, 2011), the generally young, slim and athletic-looking cyclists pictured were neither sweaty nor flustered by exertion, and were depicted travelling in what appeared to be warm (but not uncomfortably hot), dry weather.

These representations arguably do little to position cycling as a viable modal choice and construct the cycling body through a series of exclusive and privileged norms. They maintain the image of cycling as a sporty activity requiring specific clothing. Extremes of temperature or wet weather and hilly terrains – themselves presenting more of a barrier to women's inclination to cycle (Heesch et al., 2012) – are rendered 'uncycleable' through lack of representation. Yet the assumptions about the nature and possibilities of cycling reinforced by these plans differentiate cycling practices from those in countries where cycling is more common. For instance, an analysis of transport documents in Copenhagen, where cycling enjoys one of the highest shares of modal split in the world, found images include:

mothers with young children, elderly, people belonging to different religious groups, overweight cyclists, as well as men in business suits – all moving leisurely or at brisk speeds in different weather situations, conveying the message that bicycling is a cultural norm and pleasurable for everyone. (Gössling, 2013, p.201).

This stands in stark contrast to our analysis of Brisbane's cycling policies. The marked lack of diversity in depictions of cyclists belies claims about the importance of improving diversity in cycling, and suggests a disconnect between policy goals and cycling imaginaries. These policies do little to contest, and much to reinforce, the positioning of cycling as a bourgeois activity that is “available and attractive to a relatively narrow slice of the public” for whom cycling is a virtue rather than necessity (Gibson, 2015, p.235). Although cycling has the potential to be transformative and empowering (Fullagar, 2012; Hanson, 2010) the accessibility and adoption of cycling as a transport mode is affected by identity and social positioning. Those working with these policies are not provided with meaningful representations of (or guidance for achieving) diversity in cyclists or cycling practices, and members of the public perusing these documents will see cycling stereotypes reinforced, rather than challenged or subverted. These representations of cycling and cyclists also act to iteratively privilege the already privileged MAMIL identity.
6. Conclusion: supporting cyclists' right to the city

Through exploring the paradigmatic case of Brisbane, Australia, in this paper we have identified the ways in which cycling imagery and representations are inappropriate for the jurisdiction, and for the stated policy goals of an inclusive and diverse cycling citizenship. Based on an analysis of cycling policy documents and with reference to international cycling research we identified that in Brisbane, the Cycling Citizen is constructed as a figure who embodies a combination of practices (such as demonstrations of speed and skill), personal attributes (such as body-type and clothes, but also gender, race, and body size) and attitudes (particularly around virtue). This reflects Cresswell's (2013, p.119) observation that “a citizen is (culturally, if not legally) in possession of a mobile body that fits into norms of fitness, health and independence from the world around it”. This representation works to exclude those with bodies and identities that are less able or willing to conform to this notion of the Cycling Citizen, and may have material consequences with respect to both cycling mode share and the fullness of one's sense of citizenship.

It is important to acknowledge that the exclusionary discourses of ‘choice’ prevalent in these policies work alongside the portrayal of the Cycling Citizen to obfuscate the social, economic, cultural, geographical and identity-based constraints on modal choice. Policy and planning efforts to improve the adoption of cycling as an alternative to car-based travel must consider how certain practices and cultures may be exclusionary, and how identities and social positioning may affect one's willingness and/or capacity adopt certain modes. The dominance of certain cycling policy tropes may work to make cycling inaccessible to those less likely to identify with, or actively excluded from, this representation, such as women, people of colour, people with lower incomes, and fat people. These barriers are rarely reflected in, or addressed by, policy documents.

This paper does not seek to diminish the importance of cycling in the suite of urban transport solutions. Cycling is a matter of justice. Cycling that is genuinely accessible and inclusive is vital to the achievement of the just city and expression of one's right to the city. Borrowing from the cycling experience of high-cycling countries with approximate gender parity in cycling rates we can observe that they are likewise marked by a high degree of gender equity more generally (van der Horst, 2014) and more diverse representations of cycling (Colville-Andersen, 2012), suggesting that the pursuit of sustainable mobilities, social justice, and the just city are indeed related. However, Goddard (2016, p. 104) suggests that “planners, engineers, and anyone
advocating for and promoting bicycle transportation must be willing to confront the potential impacts of racism in their work”. It is imperative, therefore, that the Cycling Citizen constructed by policy is inclusive and contains multiple, intersectional identities.

If the policy intent is that cycling is for everybody, but the imagery and discourses of policy documents contradicts this rhetoric by perpetuating the link between ‘cyclist’ and certain privileged cycling identities and practices, these policy documents are unlikely to achieve their stated goals. How can cycling policy possibly help us to exercise our collective right to the city if cycling identities are so narrowly constructed and if they exclude the multiplicitous collectivity?

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