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### More than a message: Producing cyclists through public safety advertising campaigns

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# 11 More than a message: Producing cyclists through public safety advertising campaigns

Rachael Nielsen and Jennifer Bonham

## Introduction

Despite the burgeoning field of cycling research and widespread concerns over media representations of cyclists (Horton, 2007; Skinner & Rosen, 2007; Advertising Standards Bureau, 2011) very little academic work has been published on cycling and the media. A few notable exceptions include Zac Furness's (2010) detailed account of cycling in North American popular culture (film, literature and television), Ben Fincham's (2007) discussion of bike messengers in the British press, and the comparative study of representations of cyclists in Australian newspapers by Rissel, Bonfigliolo, Emilsen, and Smith (2010). The limited scrutiny of cycling in the Australian media contrasts with the recent spate of government-sponsored road safety advertising campaigns which feature cyclists (for example, 'Share the road'; 'Be safe be seen'; 'It's a two-way street').<sup>1</sup> Many of these campaigns aim at

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<sup>1</sup> The Department of Transport and Main Roads [Qld] has implemented the 'Share the road' campaign. For more details, see <http://www.tmr.qld.gov.au/Safety/Safety-campaigns/Bicycle-safety.aspx>. The Motor Accident Commission [SA] has implemented the 'Be safe be seen' campaign; see <https://www.mac.sa.gov.au/besafeseen/be-aware>. The Amy Gillett Foundation has implemented the 'It's a two-way street' campaign; see <https://cyclesafe.gofundraise.com.au/cms/2waystreet>.

fostering more positive interactions between cyclists and motorists. In this chapter, we are specifically interested in a road safety campaign which features cyclists as a point of contrast in its advice to young drivers.

Young drivers are often targeted in road safety campaigns because of their over-representation in road crash statistics (Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics [BITRE], 2013a; Wundersitz, 2012; Curry, Hafetz, Kallan, Winston, & Durbin, 2011). In 2012, people aged 17-25 made up just 13% of the Australian population yet accounted for 22% of fatalities on Australian roads (BITRE, 2013b, p. iii). Graduated licensing systems and mass media advertising campaigns are two interventions used by Australian state and territory governments to address high crash rates amongst young people. Although a number of evaluative studies have questioned the efficacy of mass advertising campaigns (for example, Ulleberg, 2001, p. 293; Delaney, Lough, Whelan, & Cameron, 2004; Wundersitz, Hutchinson, & Woolley, 2010), they remain an important part of the road safety tool kit. The current chapter analyses the road safety advertising campaign screened by the South Australian Motor Accident Commission [MAC] from 2010 to 2014. We are specifically interested in the characteristics and behaviours assembled together under the term 'cyclist' in the MAC campaign.

Road safety campaign messaging has started to shift over the past two decades from 'shock' to 'humour' (Wundersitz et al., 2010; Delaney et al., 2004). But messaging is rarely the focus of attention when researchers evaluate these campaigns (exceptions include Delaney et al., 2004). Rather, evaluations are directed at the *uptake* of the message by the target audience, and this is often assessed using interviews or self-reporting studies (Kaye, White, & Lewis, 2013; Walton & McKeown, 2001). Alternatively, message uptake is analysed by correlating crash statistics with the timing and duration of an advertising campaign (Phillips, Ulleberg, & Vaa, 2011; Tay, 2005). In contrast to this evaluative research, our work does not focus on the uptake of the message but on the message itself — the specific advice being given in the MAC's advertising campaign. Along with Fincham (2007), Furness (2010) and Rissel et al. (2010), we are interested in interrogating media representations as part of a greater social commentary (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006, p. 371). We have used Carol Bacchi's 'What's the problem represented to be?' analytic strategy [WPR] to examine the MAC television commercial which features cyclists (2009; 2012). Bacchi's poststructuralist-informed approach

is generally used in policy analysis (for example, Goodwin, 2012); however, we suggest it can also be applied to public awareness campaigns, as these campaigns, like policies, provide advice to individuals on how to conduct themselves.

The following section examines existing research into media representations of cycling and contrasts the approaches taken in these analyses with the strategy we have employed in the MAC research. After detailing our analytic approach, we describe the MAC advertisements and then go on to discuss the findings of our analysis. The concluding section considers the lived effects of the MAC advertisements and offers recommendations for future engagement with young travellers.

### Analysing media representations

As stated at the outset, only a handful of researchers have analysed representations of cycling in popular culture. Informed by a critical approach, Furness (2010) examines the characteristics attributed to cyclists in North American popular culture throughout the twentieth century. He reports that cyclists in film, television and newspaper reports are usually male and, apart from during a short period of wartime petrol rationing, they are represented as social misfits. This negative representation ranges from the loveable but eccentric, socially incompetent and sexually immature teenager through to the aggressive, public menace of the bicycle messenger. Where women have featured in cycling, it has been in terms of *automobile pedagogy* — learning the road rules in preparation for becoming a driver — or for the purpose of demonstrating the superiority of the automobile (Furness, 2010, pp. 108-139).

Clearly, these representations do not lead to any straightforward rejection of cycling or uptake of the motor vehicle. However, Furness argues that they are located within a specific cultural context and serve an ideological function in producing and reproducing the automobile as the cultural norm:

Mass media do not obviously invent the dominant norms of mobility ...  
[They do, however,] play a collective role in amplifying, and extending the  
predispositions constituting dominant culture. (2010, p. 114)

Furness's quote deserves closer attention, as it locates the mass media outside of, yet 'cheering on', the production of mobility norms. We would question this

symbolic/material divide, suggesting instead that the media is yet one site of several in which mobile subjects are produced (see below).

Chris Rissel, Catriona Bonfiglioli, Adrian Emilsen and Ben Smith (2010) compare representations of cycling in Melbourne and Sydney newspapers across the decade from 1998 to 2008. The authors report that there has been a shift away from negative, and toward more positive, representations of cyclists through this time (p. 4). They reject any straightforward causal relation between negative media representations and negative public attitudes toward cyclists. Working from a (particular) social constructionist position, the authors argue that as individuals engage with, and seek to make sense of, media representations of cycling, their attitudes will be influenced by those representations. Consequently, broader public opinion will be shaped to some extent by positive and negative messaging. Rissel et al. position the media as playing a central role in the success of public health and safety campaigns relating to tobacco use, firearms, HIV and road crashes (p. 6). However, as Ronnie Lipschutz (2012) demonstrates in relation to tobacco use (using an example that applies elsewhere), a plethora of measures are operationalised in making smoking socially unacceptable — from banning smoking in public places to filling out health insurance or medical forms which require information on smoking habits. Rissel et al. flag the increase in cycling through the 10 years covered in their media analysis, but they sidestep the relation between the media and the broader social context — including government cycling strategies, reconfiguration of some public spaces (streets, paths), production of knowledge about cycling — within which increases in cycling have occurred.

Ben Fincham's (2007) study of bicycle messengers uses a form of content analysis to examine how this group of cyclists is represented in the media. Fincham classifies media reports on bike messengers according to two criteria: firstly, the standpoint of the correspondent, speaking from a position as a bike messenger (inside) or not a bike messenger (outside); and secondly, the content of the report itself — as positive or negative. Fincham argues that standpoints are 'important because of their role in informing the wider population about a particular group', while the content creates a 'set of generalizations and stereotypical characteristics' that compete for dominance in the public domain (p. 182). These arguments are important, as we suggest that inherent in each 'standpoint' (what we would refer to as a *subject position*) is the socially constituted level of authority which attaches

to that standpoint. Fincham also foregrounds the formation and contestation of the category and content of the ‘bike messenger’ (characteristics, ways of thinking, activities, language). It is Fincham’s ‘productive’ approach — that is, that categories are in continuous formation — that resonates with our own interest in media representations.

In the next section we provide an overview of Bacchi’s WPR approach to policy analysis and in particular her interrogation of policy problems. We then go on to discuss our application of Bacchi’s analytic strategy in relation to the Motor Accident Commission advertising campaign.

### WPR as an analytic strategy

In contrast to the evaluative and critical approaches described above, we are proposing to use Carol Bacchi’s WPR analytic strategy to analyse the MAC advertising campaign. Bacchi’s approach is usually applied to policy documents, but we believe her focus on *practical texts* lends it to a broader range of applications (see below). WPR differs markedly from conventional policy evaluations, which address competing ways of *solving* policy ‘problems’. These evaluations do not question *how* a problem is being constituted. That is, they do not question the processes through which particular characteristics or activities are identified as problematic. Rather, they tend to assume that certain activities exist objectively as problems and are waiting to be solved, corrected or addressed through government policies (Goodwin, 2012, p. 27). Instead of accepting ‘problems’ at face value and governments as merely reacting to these problems, Bacchi argues that governments are active in ‘creating’ problems (2009, p. 33). This activity is not a matter of manipulation; rather, as government policies ‘make proposals for change’, they simultaneously — and necessarily — constitute whatever is identified as ‘needing to be changed’ as the problem (Bacchi, 2009, p. 1; Bacchi, 2012, p. 4). For example, restricting the hours of sale for alcohol constitutes (or creates) alcohol availability as ‘the problem’ (Bacchi, 2015). The important point is to understand the active role of governments in problematisation.

The WPR approach also takes us beyond the policy maker’s *intentions*, as it allows us to interrogate the assumptions which underpin a particular problem representation. For example, for ‘alcohol availability’ to be the ‘problem’, we must be assuming that people lack self-discipline (Bacchi, 2015). It is this

elaboration of ‘the problem’ and how this representation has become possible that opens a space for creating new ways of thinking and doing. WPR provides tools to examine *how* a particular phenomenon (behaviour, process) — such as the behaviour of alcohol drinkers — has become an object for thought, including the circumstances and processes which gave specific shape to that object. To take a directly relevant example, in the early to mid-twentieth century a plethora of relations — interactions between people in public space; materials such as road surfaces and hawkers’ carts; behaviours like standing about, or alighting from a tram; parliamentary speeches about gambling in the street; engineering discussions regarding the weight of vehicles; regulations relating to loitering and furious driving; newspaper reports on ‘hit and run’ fatalities; contestations over how to conduct oneself in public — operated to forge ‘traffic’ as an object for thought out of a multitude of street activities (Bonham, 2006). Each of the sites (community, parliament, law courts, media) in this network of relations participates, albeit with different levels of authority, in the production of ‘traffic’. Further, the routinisation of this network of relations (Bacchi & Bonham, 2014) has naturalised ‘traffic’ as a self-evident object or fact of existence. And it is within the routinisation of these relations that shape is given to the object ‘traffic’ — what is to be included or excluded as ‘traffic’ — and knowledge about ‘traffic’ is socially produced.

It is also within these relations that people are differentiated as pedestrians, cyclists, motorists, tram travellers, loiterers, hawkers (that is, they are differentiated as subjects of knowledge) and governed in line with the knowledge created about the new object of ‘traffic’. Consequently, it becomes difficult to think about ‘traffic’, or indeed any other ‘taken-for-granted’ object in any other way (Bacchi, 2009, p. 16). Bacchi argues that if we replace the study of the ‘object’ with the study of ‘relations’, it is possible to open up new ways of thinking and being (2012, p. 2). This point is politically important for ‘cycling’. By rejecting cycling as a self-evident fact and examining the relations through which it is produced, we are making explicit the *activity* of producing cycling. Following from this, we can foreground the mutability of those relations and open a space for cycling to be produced ‘otherwise’.

Bacchi developed the WPR approach as she elaborated Michel Foucault’s concept of *practical texts* in the field of political science (2009, p. vi). Practical texts, Foucault wrote in 1986, refer to texts ‘written for the purpose of offering

rules, opinions and advice on how to behave as one should ... to constitute the eventual framework of everyday conduct' (as cited in Bacchi, 2009, p. 34). While policies clearly provide such advice on 'what to do', Nina Marshall (2012) has taken Bacchi's work further, applying it to the World Bank's statements on disability. Marshall argues that these statements are practical texts, as they offer opinions on what organisations should do in relation to disability. Like Marshall, we would argue that public service campaigns qualify as practical texts, as they offer advice on everyday conduct to their target populations.

The WPR analytic strategy asks six questions (see Figure 11.1) of a policy document or practical text (Bacchi, 2012, p. 2) and then recommends that researchers take the additional step of subjecting their own proposals to the six WPR questions. These questions, and the final step, take us beyond the message itself to interrogate not only what we take for granted but also how it has become possible to accept this version of reality. The WPR strategy also foregrounds what is silenced — and whether, making these silences apparent, we can begin to think differently. We can also examine the effects of these problem representations and where and how they are produced and distributed. We have analysed the MAC advertising

#### WPR Questions

1. What is the problem represented to be in a specific policy?
2. What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the problem?
3. How has this representation of the problem come about?
4. What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the problem be thought about differently?
5. What effects are produced by this representation of the problem?
6. How/where has this representation of the problem been produced, disseminated and defended? How could it be questioned, disrupted and replaced?

Final step:

Apply the above list to your own problem representation.

Figure 11.1: WPR Questions.  
(Source: Adapted from Bacchi, 2012.)



campaign using only the six WPR questions because the final step ‘interrogating our own policy recommendations’ — would require an entirely new chapter.

In 2011, the South Australian Motor Accident Commission launched an advertising campaign focused on losing a driver’s licence. The campaign, not currently active, includes three television and radio advertisements and two posters which are displayed on bus shelters and used as webpage banners. The television commercials include a mother picking up her 20-something year old son from football practice; a couple kissing in the back of a taxi with the meter running up an expensive fare; and two young men riding a tandem bicycle. The posters include a tradesman riding a donkey to work and a young man riding his bicycle to pick up a young woman for a date.

Although all of the commercials enact disturbing gender stereotypes, our research focuses on the television advertisement that features the tandem cyclists. We have not included the MAC’s, or the advertising agency’s, explanation of the advertisement in our analysis, as this explanation does not accompany the screening of the ads. We are specifically interested in the advice being given to the viewer at the moment of viewing, as this is likely to be the only advice s/he receives on how to conduct her/himself. As Bacchi suggests, we have worked ‘backwards’ from the ‘solution’ — that is, what advice the viewer receives on how to conduct her/himself — to determine what the MAC and the advertising agency represent to be the ‘problem’ (Bacchi, 2009, p. 55). The following section discusses our analysis of the MAC advertisements as it weaves together the findings from each of the WPR questions.

What’s the problem for the MAC?

Examining this advertisement frame by frame, we are presented with a view of a young man wearing a bicycle helmet. Clearly constituted as a ‘cyclist’, he peers through the window of a Sports Utility Vehicle [SUV] at the young woman behind the steering wheel. His conduct is intrusive, but his youthful smile suggests he is socially inept rather than threatening. Nonetheless, the young woman/driver takes precautionary action, rolling up the window to place a physical barrier between herself and the cyclist/young man. A second young man, also wearing a bicycle helmet, is brought into view and appears embarrassed under the scrutiny of the woman in the back seat of the car. His embarrassment contrasts with the broad

grin of his companion, suggesting that the companion lacks awareness of the social awkwardness of their situation. As the young women drive off and the young men cycle through the intersection, the tagline ‘Lose your licence and you’re screwed’ explains that they are cycling as a result of losing their driver’s licences. The binaries — driver/cyclist, woman/man — are central to this advertisement, as they operate to contrast the appropriate conduct of the women/driver-passengers with the inappropriate conduct of the men/cyclists.

Leaving aside its troubling hetero-sexist and classist stereotypes, this advertisement implicitly provides advice to young women as well as young men. For women, the motor vehicle offers protection against unwanted attention, and the driver demonstrates the correct way to discourage that attention and disengage from undesired (or undesirable?) interactions. She does not tell him what he might do with his ungainly grin, but, like a well-mannered young lady, she withdraws from the situation. The woman-driver’s response combined with the campaign tagline, ‘Lose your licence and you’re screwed’, sounds a warning to young men not to ride a bicycle: ‘Men who cycle are undesirable’. The cyclist/driver binary described by Zac Furness (see above) clearly resonates in the Australian context. Cyclists are also produced either as children learning road skills in anticipation of becoming motorists or as socially and economically incompetent individuals (usually men) who lack self-awareness and are sexually unappealing.<sup>2</sup> According to Furness, negative representations of cyclists emerge from, and assist in, reproducing ‘automobility’ — a set of processes intrinsic to capitalist growth through the twentieth century (Urry, 2004). However, this representation of cyclists would not make sense in market economies such as the Netherlands or Denmark. The important question for us is how it has become possible to assemble a series of negative attributes together as ‘cyclists’, not only in North America or the United Kingdom but also in Australia. Before responding to this question we first need to interrogate the target audience for this commercial — ‘youth’.

Bacchi urges us to interrogate what is taken for granted — the necessary but unstated knowledge required — for a particular problem representation to be intelligible (2009, p. 5). The viewer must comprehend ‘youth’ as a discrete

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<sup>2</sup> John Doyle’s recent (2013) play *Vere (Faith)* features precisely such a character — the cyclist as a physics ‘nerd’ in his late 20s or early 30s.

population segment that can be targeted by messages. There is a significant literature which demonstrates the socially constructed nature of categories such as 'childhood' (see Anne Wilson, Chapter Ten, this volume) and 'youth' (for example, Horschelmann & Colls, 2010). These categories have been produced within population studies, psychology and pedagogy, and have been taken up in fields such as transport, law and economics. A key characteristic of the category 'youth' is taking risks (Abbott-Chapman, Denholm, & Wyld, 2008). A number of activities and ways of thinking have been excised out of the mass of human possibilities and assembled together as 'risk taking'. These include particular levels of sexual activity, or drug and alcohol use; specific types of engagement with other people and/or property; and a range of driving behaviours, such as exceeding the speed limit by at least 20 km/h, running red lights, street racing, changing lanes without signalling, overtaking illegally and following too closely (Fergusson, Swain-Campbell, & Horwood, 2003, p. 338).

As Bacchi suggests, 'the category of "youth" functions to facilitate a wide range of governmental objectives around policing, education, population and economic concerns' (2009, p. 58). As a result, legally enforced limits on smoking, drinking, voting and driving are all in place to limit young people from making what are deemed to be risky decisions and from engaging in reckless behaviour (Tymula, Belmaker, Roy, Ruderman, Manson, Glimcher, & Levy, 2012, p. 17135). Education and public awareness campaigns demonstrate 'risk-taking' behaviours and the consequences of 'youth' engaging in those behaviours. There are multiple mechanisms operating within, but certainly not exclusive to, Australian society which require people to acknowledge themselves in terms of age (filling out forms is one of the most obvious) and a particular age group (for example, through school attendance, public immunisation programs, showing proof of identity to enter clubs and bars). There are a number of policies directed at the category of 'youth', such as Work For The Dole or the 'Green Army', in an effort to guide their conduct in a particular direction; and these policies are underpinned by the understanding of 'youths' as 'risk takers' (see Bacchi, 2009, p. 58).

It is thus accepted that young people are not yet *prepared* for adult life, to make what are considered sensible choices, as they are still developing physiologically, emotionally and mentally (Kloep, Güney, Cok, & Simsek, 2009, p. 136). Given this assessment, the representation of the problem of youths

losing their licence is a proposition that makes sense to the audience, and the MAC campaign is *able* to target the category of ‘youth’ according to this deep-seated assumption about the ‘natural’ qualities and developmental stages of the individual. What distinguishes the MAC campaign from, for example, the New Zealand ‘Legend’ campaign<sup>3</sup> is that risk-taking behaviours are not made explicit in the MAC advertisement and there is no advice on how to behave otherwise in a non-risky manner.

Thoroughly entangled with the assumption that ‘youth’ is a discrete subpopulation, located at a particular point on the physiological and psychological development trajectory, is the assumption that driving a car is both necessary and desirable. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to detail the complex power-knowledge relations at work in producing the automobile as a ‘necessary’ means of mobility (see Bonham, 2002; Paterson, 2007). However, concepts such as ‘friction-of-distance’ and evolutionary theories of land use/transport interactions (Adams, 1970; Forster, 2004) have functioned in the Australian context to form the motor vehicle as the most, if not the only, efficient means of transport. Identifying, measuring and mapping origins and destinations provides us with a way of thinking about people, facilities, services and employment as thinly dispersed across a wide urban landscape. Coupled with this way of thinking is the incitement to think of our mobility in terms of temporal efficiency (for further discussion, see Jain & Lyons, 2008; Bonham, 2000; 2006). Consequently, the efficient traveller in the dispersed Australian or North American city has no choice but to travel by automobile.

In contrast, European or Asian cities — with their short travel distances, dense settlement patterns and close arrangement of origins and destinations — are often used to demonstrate the inverse case that walking, cycling and public transport are only efficient in compact cities (for a critique of this argument, see Mees, 2010). For example, journeys up to 400 metres or even 1 kilometre can be made on foot; journeys under 5-7 kilometres are suitable for cycling; and anything over 7 kilometres requires a car or public transport (Rybarczyk & Gallagher, 2014). As the young men in the MAC advertisement pedal slowly through the intersection, they activate authoritative knowledge (that is, knowledge produced

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<sup>3</sup> This advertisement examines the dilemmas faced by a young man trying to decide whether or not to intervene to stop his friend drink driving. It provides advice on how to behave otherwise — that is, stay at a friend’s house rather than drink and drive.

in research institutions and government departments) about the inefficiency of the bicycle in the Australian city. The absurdity of cycling relies on assumptions about travel modes and travel distances.

The advertisement is also informed by the assumption that driving is 'desirable'. Driving has become 'desirable' through the multifarious processes of forming ourselves as efficient travellers (Bonham, 2006). Mobility is located within a plethora of discursive practices — transport, road trauma treatment, road safety, economic and national development — but the knowledge produced in physiology and psychology and enacted within the law provides both scientific and juridical acknowledgement of the transition from childhood to adulthood. The observation that obtaining a driver's licence serves as a kind of rite of passage (for example, Daley & Rissel, 2011; Delbosc & Currie, 2014) only becomes interesting when we no longer accept it at face value and instead examine the mechanisms by which obtaining a driver's licence has come to be experienced as a 'rite of passage'. Further, in the Australian context, motor vehicle ownership has long been constituted as an indicator of personal wealth and national economic development; and conversely, lack of car ownership is produced in the transport literature as an indicator of transport disadvantage. It is hardly surprising that driving a car has become more socially acceptable than riding a bicycle.

The effects of the MAC problem representation — advice to young people to drive rather than cycle — is to produce driving, once again, as the more desirable form of conduct. Cycling is a punishment rather than a freely chosen form of transport. Cycling and cyclists are positioned as inferior to driving and drivers (economically and socially), and are thus stigmatised through the dividing practice which sets the driver in opposition to the cyclist. As Bacchi (2009, p. 16) suggests, the stigmatisation of minorities 'serves a useful government purpose, indicating and encouraging desired behaviours among the majority'. The marginalisation of cyclists has significant lived effects.

Within the MAC campaign, two 'transport subjects' are presented in opposition to each other. Firstly, the 'cyclist subject' is that of an unlawful 'bad citizen', one who has lost his licence and must resort to an inferior transport option. Secondly, the 'driver subject' assumes the position of the lawful 'good citizen', one who has maintained her/his licence. We propose that the privileging of the 'driver subject' in the MAC campaign produces driving as the only socially acceptable

transport mode. This not only shapes what people are advised to think about as they scrutinise their own travel practices (Bonham & Bacchi, 2013) but also impacts on people's embodied existence. The MAC does not 'reflect' a way of thinking about cyclists which exists 'out there', exogenous to the organisation. The MAC is inextricably networked into society and makes decisions about the movements, materials, symbols and ways of thinking that will be assembled together as 'cyclists' and 'drivers'. Certainly, as demonstrated above, the particular assemblage formed within the MAC advertisements has been produced in many other sites — from the academy to theatre, film and newspaper stories. Nonetheless, within each site, 'elements' are assembled together, and it is essential that decision makers reflect on the effects of these assemblages.

Since this MAC advertisement forms 'not driving' as the problem, it remains silent on speeding and drinking while driving (Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure [DPTI], 2014). These ways of conduct are not problematised in this MAC advertising campaign and hence not produced as socially unacceptable.

Further, by positioning cycling within a car/bicycle binary, the advertisement also silences the numerous benefits that cycling offers to individuals, society, urban liveability and the environment. These alternative ways of creating cycling and cyclists are widely documented and circulated both in academia and government strategies (see 'Smart move — The City of Adelaide's transport and movement strategy', 2012). In terms of social, economic and environmental sustainability, cycling is regarded as the best option. Numerous studies are devoted to this research, demonstrating that increasing bicycle use over private car use will lead to the following: reduced greenhouse gas emissions and fuel consumption (Schwanen, Banister, & Anable, 2011; Newman, Kenworthy, & Glazebrook, 2008; Mees, 2010; Lindsay, Macmillan, & Woodward, 2011), reduced deaths and injuries to cyclists due to road crashes (see Jacobsen, 2003, for the 'safety in numbers' theory); and improvements to health due to increased physical activity (Lindsay et al. 2011). Pucher and Buehler (2008) go on to highlight the increased liveability of cities with the increase in cycling, as *people* are given priority in public space over cars. Additionally, the bicycle is deemed to be among the most equitable of transport modes due to the affordability of both the initial and the continuing cost of operating a bicycle.

Following this line of thinking, in silencing the benefits of cycling, the ads also silence the detrimental effects of driving. These include (but are not limited to)

the rising economic cost of fuel to operate a car, along with the costly infrastructure needed to support high levels of car use; congestion issues in major cities affecting mobility for all road users; and the environmental issues, as fuel-powered transport is one of the fastest-growing greenhouse gas emitters in many countries, including Australia (Lindsay et al., 2011, p. 54). By limiting consideration of the only viable form of transport as driving, through representing cycling as the problem, all the detrimental issues regarding cars are silenced.

The MAC representation also silences the possibility that young people are not necessarily risk takers. Indeed, contrasting cyclist and driver crash statistics offers an alternative way to think about the pervasive view that young people are risk takers and that cycling is a problem. Crash rates of cyclists who are 16-24 years old are significantly lower than for drivers in the same age cohort. According to 2011 data, cyclists were responsible for 171 crashes but only 22 of these crashes (13%), were attributed to cyclists in the 16-24 age cohort (DPTI, 2012). By contrast, drivers aged 16-24 years old were found responsible for 29% of crashes. Further, cyclists aged 40+ were responsible for 65 crashes (38%) despite these age cohorts having cycling participation rates of less than 10% (Austroads, 2011) (see Table 11.1).<sup>4</sup>

### Conclusion

There is no doubt that the MAC did not intend to participate in the devaluing of cycling and the normalisation of motoring. Yet their tandem-cycling advertisement has exactly this effect. Impelled to produce the advertisement by the over-representation of young drivers in crash statistics, the campaign sought to curb young people's engagement with risk-taking driving. Applying the WPR approach to this advertising campaign, it has been possible to make explicit both the advice being given to young people on how to conduct themselves and how it has become possible for such advice to be given. On the basis of our analysis, we suggest that driving is offered as the appropriate way to travel. Further, in this campaign at least, drink-driving, speeding, using a mobile phone while driving or endangering other road users is not constituted as socially unacceptable. Rather, the MAC campaign

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<sup>4</sup> Further research comparing crash rates by age cohort and mode would be beneficial. See Maring and Schagen (1990) for research on age-dependent attitudes of cyclists.

## More than a message

Table 11.1: Responsibility for crashes by age and mode.

Age Cohort	Driver responsible for crash			Bicyclist responsible for crash		
	Percentage of all Drivers	Number	Percentage	Percentage of age cohort that cycles*	Number	Percentage
0-15	N/A	N/A	N/A	43.1	16	9
16-24	13	5675	29	15.6	22	13
25-39	26	5698	29	15.6	50	29
40+	61	8110	42	8.1	65	38
Unknown	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	18	11
TOTAL	100	19483	100	N/A	171	100

\*Figures are adapted from the 'Australian cycling participation 2011' report which does not disaggregate cyclist volumes by age cohort but calculates proportion of people within each age cohort that participate in cycling. Cycling participation age cohorts do not match age cohorts used in crash analysis. Figures have been calculated by averaging across age cohorts where necessary — the 16-24 age cohort is likely to be an underestimate of participation in cycling. Percentages of each age cohort that regularly cycled in 2011 are as follows: 0 -9, 57%; 10-17, 29%; 18-39, 15.6%; 40+, 8.1% (Austroads, 2011, p.42.)

forms cycling as socially unacceptable and cyclists as socially undesirable. It is impossible to determine exactly how an advertisement will be interpreted across its entire audience. However, by devaluing cycling and cyclists, the MAC campaign may go beyond deterring young people from cycling to providing tacit support for behaviours that undermine the safety of cyclists.

The Motor Accident Commission does not simply reflect or re-present an existing view of cycling and cyclists. Rather, the MAC, as a site located within the discursive practice of safety, actively participates in producing cycling and cyclists in particular ways — in this instance, as immature, socially inept, physically slow and sexually undesirable. It is possible for the MAC to assemble these characteristics together because of the *ongoing-formation* of cycling and cyclists within a multiplicity of discursive practices — from transport and psychology to law and economics. The formation of the cyclist by the MAC contrasts with the formation of cycling and cyclists in discursive practices such as health and environment. Sites within



these discursive practices — such as the Heart Foundation, the Australian Bicycle Council, the Department of Transport, Schools of Public Health — are forming cycling as a valuable way of travelling, and cyclists as responsible subjects of health, environment, and urban economics (for example, in terms of road congestion).

Young people cycling are problematised in the MAC campaign, and yet they are considerably less likely to harm themselves in crashes than young motorists or middle-aged cyclists. Several other approaches to this advertising campaign are possible. They range from post-licence training programs (Fisher, Pollatsek, & Pradhan, 2006; Isler, Starkey & Sheppard, 2011; Raftery & Wundersitz, 2011; Beanland, Goode, Salmon, & Lenne, 2013) through to advertising campaigns that are both humorous and positive (New Zealand Transport Authority, 2011) and do not promote one form of mobility at the expense of another.

The important point for organisations, researchers, policy makers and so forth is to reflect critically on how they produce the objects (such as cycling and driving) and subjects (such as cyclists, motorists, young people) in their policies, programs and research. We do not simply reflect what already exists: we actively participate in constituting what exists.

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