



# Teaching in Higher Education

## Critical Perspectives

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: <https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cthe20>

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To cite this article: Nina Ginsberg & Sherilyn Lennon (2023): Using velo-onto-epistemology to reimagine the candidate-supervisor-relationship, Teaching in Higher Education, DOI: [10.1080/13562517.2022.2162815](https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2022.2162815)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2022.2162815>



Published online: 10 Jan 2023.



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# Using velo-onto-epistemology to reimagine the candidate-supervisor-relationship

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## ABSTRACT

Traditionally, the candidate-supervisor-relationship is predicated on a supervisor as teacher/expert – candidate as learner/novice model. But what becomes possible when the materialities of this power dynamic are destabilised and reimaged? This article draws from emerging feminist ontologies to introduce the concept of velo-onto-epistemology [VOE] as a means of *re-cycling* candidate-supervisor-relationships. VOE acknowledges the agency of the bicycle in moving and being moved. This novel approach is used to explore how stor(i)ed encounters and *in-the-moment* bodily responses enact current-future becomings. Through *re-cycling*, the candidate-supervisor-relationship is dis-articulated and re-articulated in ways that enable alternative and more equitable understandings of the world to emerge.

## ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 15 June 2022

Accepted 21 December 2022

## KEYWORDS

Velo-onto-epistemology; new materialisms; candidate-supervisor-relationships; feminist post-qualitative methodologies; re-cycling

## Introduction

Much has been written about the hierarchical nature of the modern neoliberal, technorationalist Western university, leading some to call for an interrogation of ‘the politics of privilege, hierarchy and exclusion that continue to be present’ (Manathunga and Bottrell 2018, 3) in these institutions. While the multilayered managerial structures of universities provide fertile grounds for power imbalances to seed and take root, this paper concerns itself specifically with the PhD candidate-supervisor-relationship and how it might be reimaged more equitably. In re-imagining it, the authors make a conscious decision to *undo* an existing version of the candidate-supervisor arrangement in order to *re-cycle* the ‘systems of entrapment that manifest power relations in the academy’ (Charteris, Nye, and Jones 2019, 2) and see what happens.

## Exploring the candidate-supervisor-relationship

Studies on doctoral supervisory relationships show recurring themes that foment around conversations and practices relating to timelines and milestones for degree completion, research direction setting, theoretical and methodological choices, emotional support, and administrative procedures (Lee 2008; Pearson and Brew 2002; Satariyan et al. 2015). Much of the literature on supervisory contributions can be synthesised under

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four categories: progress management, academic enculturation, intellectual emancipation, and the development of scholarly relationships (Gill and Burnard 2008; Moltschanivskyj and Moltschanivskyj 2007). Despite a small, but growing pool of literature interested in how candidate bodies operate in different academic learning spaces and places (Cox 2018; Hopwood and Paulson 2012), very little has been written about alternative ways of relating that might work to diminish the institutionally entrenched power imbalances that exist between supervisors and candidates. Traditionally, the candidate-supervisor-relationship is predicated on a ‘supervisor as expert’ – ‘candidate as novice’ model of knowledge transmission that works to reinforce power relations in the Academy (Fogelman 2021; Hemer 2012). In this model, most supervisory work is performed either on the university campus or via institutionally approved digital channels that allow the ‘expert’ to direct the conversation and establish the research and performance agendas for both. This model uses material practices to support traditional power hierarchies such as who establishes meeting times and places, who sets the learning agenda, and what/whose knowledge gets valued.

There is a growing interest in the power asymmetries entangled in these material practices. For instance, Fullagar, Pavlidis, and Stadler (2017) have utilised collaborative rhizomatic e-writing practices to highlight embodied, non-linear critical moments of (un)doing doctoral supervision. While these much-needed reconfigurations of power and knowledge are important, the focus of Fullagar et al.’s study remains on academic knowledge-making practices linked to scholarly performances such as writing and/or text production. In moving beyond conceptualisations of candidates and supervisors as ‘thinkers’, ‘writers’ and/or ‘knowers’, we use a shared weekend bicycle ride to re-cycle these scholarly bodies as ‘feelers’ and ‘doers’ who are also sensorial, physical, and embodied beings with (her)stories. In doing so, we reanimate the candidate-supervisor-relationship to see the ‘fragments of experience left hanging’ (Stewart 2007, 44) and how spatial, temporal, discursive, bio-physical/material, and affective forces contribute to the ongoing materialisation of relationships and the world.

The concept of *velo-onto-epistemology* (VOE), and its associated process of *re-cycling*, are introduced in this paper as a feminist ontology for heightening understandings of how we move and are moved by, with and through bicycles. VOE is a process of *riding-with* (physical) and *thinking-with* (cognitive). It makes deliberate use of hyphenated words to flag multiple possible meanings and re-interpretations. For instance, the term ‘re-cycling’ is deliberately hyphenated to encourage readers to pause, re-read and re-think. The word ‘cycle’ or ‘cycling’ has links to bicycles and biological processes but also to political and iterative processes associated with evolutions and revolutions. ‘Re-cycling’ can imply a generative process wherein something original is repurposed and transformed in order to create a more ethical and sustainable world. Rather than ask ‘what is this bicycle event *about*?’, we take inspiration from Cooke (2010) and ask instead ‘what does this bicycle event *do*?’ This approach re-positions ‘the mode of questioning towards context, capacity and possibility, rather than meaning’ (Cooke 2010, 205). Our novel approach works to re-cycle the candidate-supervisor-relationship in ways that enable alternative, more equitable and empathetic understandings of the world to emerge. We use VOE to examine a shared riding-with event designed to disrupt conventional academic *doings*. This becoming-with methodology draws from a parliament of philosophical approaches including feminist ontologies – in particular

the New Materialisms, critical ethnography, geography, the mobility turn and affect theories.

In moving to re-cycle our two-year relationship, we devise an encounter with bicycles wherein Nina (candidate) can become the ‘expert’ or ‘teacher’ and Sherilyn (supervisor) the ‘novice’ or ‘learner’. Nina is an experienced athlete who has represented Australia in two sports (freestyle wrestling and Enduro mountain biking). While reasonably fit, Sherilyn is an inexperienced rider who feels ‘at risk’ and unstable on bicycles. Instead of the usual fortnightly supervisory meeting held during work hours in Sherilyn’s office at the university campus, Nina suggests to Sherilyn a shared weekend bicycle ride in her bayside suburb. The intention is to uproot and reseed habitual academic practices in ways that might allow for a more ‘fluid, dynamic, in flux ... mobile ... progressive, exciting and contemporary’ (Cresswell 2006, 25) supervisory experience. Ivinson and Renold (2013) argue that ‘educational research tends to look in the wrong place [when addressing inequities] by focusing on the subjectivities that make it into the classroom ignoring what gets left outside the door’ (371). As part of this re-cycling process, we agree that in the week subsequent to the ride we will, separately, document the event and use these documentations as a tool for *re-cycling* our relationship. Such an approach allows us to explore the relational and ontological shifts that open up when familiar spaces, times, bodies, technologies, rituals, and performances linked to the candidate-supervisor-relationship are re-imagined.

### Drawing from feminist ontologies

While the philosophical approaches used by feminist scholars are varied and continually evolving, some core tenets would seem to be emerging. Central to these are a focus on how *matter matters* (Barad 2003) and a need for reclaiming the materiality of embodiment (Frost 2011). Embodied understandings enable feminist accounts to bring to the fore the ways that power shapes the surface of bodies as well as worlds (Ahmed 2014) while also foregrounding notions linked to responses, response-ability, and responsibilities (Barad 2003; Haraway 2016).

VOE attends to the dynamic material-discursive-affective intra-actions of bicycles, humans, visceral and articulated bodily responses, and the agency of pl/s/paces. What distinguishes VOE from other mobile methodologies is its particular interest in foregrounding the agential forces of bicycles – not only when mobile, but also when stationary, broken, in parts or otherwise. Using this understanding, it may be more fitting to consider VOE as an im/mobile ontology or perhaps a more-than-mobile ontological approach.

It is not presented as a ‘framework’, ‘methodology’, or ‘procedure’, but as a move to (re)work with(in) the speculative middle and explore research (in)tensions (Springgay and Truman 2018). Our approach reimagines the bicycle as an agentive force entangled in research-making practices. Influenced by scholars embracing ‘the new Mobilities Turn’ (Sheller and Urry 2006), ‘walking-with’ (Truman and Springgay 2016), ‘ride-alongs’ (Spinney 2011), ‘co-riding’ (Andres et al. 2019), and ‘go-alongs’ (Kusenbach 2018), VOE uses bicycles to *re-cycle* the micro and macro realities of bikes, bodies, spaces, places, and relationships.

In our riding-with event, we use VOE to decolonise academic practices and destabilise colonial power structures by exposing hierarchical assumptions, practices and processes. An interruption of academic practice-as-usual requires different ways of being in the world capable of reframing Western understandings of what is commonly considered as ‘known’. Using VOE enables multiple other worldviews and dynamics to emerge. These include marginalised Indigenous place-based histories, embodied pastpresents, and human-nature encounters. VOE is a commitment to decentering the white huMAN as the principal source of knowledge and power and actively promoting the bicycle as a more-than-human, agential, and actively relational ‘other’.

We are particularly influenced by Barad (2007) who understands the world as an entanglement of social and natural forces forever *intra-acting* in dynamic and agential ways. This thinking means that a rider is never separate from the bicycle they ride, nor the inner or outer landscape that they ride through, nor the events that have occurred/will occur within that space during, before and beyond the ride. Barad puts forward the idea of an *ethico-onto-epistemology* to argue for the mutual imbrication of ethics, epistemology, and ontology and the impossibility of achieving one without the others. It is the embodied intra-actions and relations that are continually being cycled and re-cycled through encounters with space, time, and matter/other bodies that are of paramount interest to us in this paper. This thinking enables us to explore how feelings, bodily responses, thoughts, places, spaces, and words perform as agential forces that are forever and always reinscribing iterative becomings. Embodied approaches have the added benefit of allowing us to be increasingly more creative in how we intra-act with semiotic systems, syntax, narrative flow, organisation, and formatting (see, for instance, Chappell, Natanel, and Wren 2021; Ginsberg 2020; Honan and Bright 2016; Koro-Ljungberg 2012; Lennon et al. 2020; Manning 2013; Speedy et al. 2022; Thorpe 2021; Reinertsen 2014).

### Using velo-onto-epistemology to re-cycle a riding-with event

McIlvenny (2015) stresses that co-social cycling is a way to establish and sustain our co-presence as a velomobile ‘-with’. Extending this, our *riding-with* approach permits human bodies, affective flows, and technological apparatuses to *intra-act* (Barad 2007) with the materialities of sight, smell, sound, words, movements, shifting landscapes, and the absent-present of those past and yet to come in ways that are profoundly different from that of the *passive-observing-traditional-qualitative researcher*. For instance, the biomechanical performance required of the human body to successfully power a moving bicycle intra-acts with aspects of the natural and unnatural world (e.g. wind, sunshine, gravel, smells, obstacles) to create affective flows capable of mining memories while producing feelings of euphoria, fear, and/or physical exhaustion. These affective flows become entangled in how we are coming to know our world and relate to other bodies within this world. Our approach permits *herstories*, words, experiences, bodies, places, and spaces to be plumbed for their relationality and inherent power asymmetries. VOE acknowledges that supervisors and candidates alike bring to their academic work and professional relationships past stor(i)ed encounters and *in-the-moment* bodily and voiced responses that work to enact current-future becomings.

## Four rememberings

Using a diffractive methodology, we re-cycle our *rememberings* of the bayside cycling event using four point-in-time recounts. According to Barad,

... remembering is not a replay of a string of moments, but an enlivening and reconfiguring of past and future that is larger than any individual ... The past is never finished ... we never leave it and it never leaves us behind. (2007, ix)

Our eight rememberings (four each) map the relational cartography and moments of tension of a shifting candidate-supervisor-relationship. They are deliberately positioned side-by-side, or, in keeping with our bicycling metaphor, ‘in tandem’, in order that they may be read through the other, thus further destabilising hierarchies of power and knowledge. While we make use of the personal pronoun ‘I’ in each of our rememberings to denote the supervisor or the candidate experience, in the diffractive analysis which follows each remembering, we revert to our given monikers of Nina and Sherilyn to avoid confusion.

### Remembering #1

Candidate	Supervisor
I sweep around a long, lazy, tree-lined bend – and let go of the handlebars. My hands hang down beside me. I close my eyes momentarily, enjoying the hands-free exhilaration of perfect balance and control <i>rider-bike-flow</i> . I effortlessly manoeuvre my bike through the apex of a turn. Ahead, I see an elderly walker in ‘my lane’ coming towards me on ‘the wrong side’. She looks nervous as I ride no-hands towards her. I smile and gesture to the path beside her. Walker relaxes and nods. Silent agreement. Gently, I guide <i>me-bike-arc</i> around her, then ease smoothly back into ‘my line’. <i>Shriek! Shriek!</i> My phone alarm. Time to head back. Sherilyn will be arriving soon. I have great respect for Sherilyn who I think is connected to her body and her health – a critical point for me before asking her to be my PhD supervisor. I pull over for a moment to take in the bay: pelicans suspended in the air, my thighs thrumming from exertion, the smell of fish and chips. My bayside community is turning it on! Is there time to grab some food on the way home? No. I need to get home now. <i>Gosh, what a stunning day. Sherilyn is going to love this!</i>	Anxiety rises as I navigate the busy four-lane motorway. From the car’s console a smartphone barks directions at me: <i>Stay in the left lane. Take Exit 32 in 16 kilometres.</i> Why am I here? I don’t like driving on busy highways to unknown destinations. Besides, the last time I rode a bike I was so useless at it that I fell off, slashed my knee and needed stitches. This is my weekend. Aren’t I supposed to be doing something that I like? Not something that feels like work. Nina first proposed the idea of the bike ride at one of our supervisor-candidate meetings two weeks ago. Somewhat taken off guard I remember spluttering out a disjointed catalogue of excuses as to why it would be impossible for me to bike ride with her. Excuses she skilfully and systematically dismantled. Three days ago the weatherman had forecast rain for today. <i>Yes! That will do nicely. A perfectly legitimate reason not to go.</i> But, no. Today had to be about as brilliantly sunny a winter’s day as can be.

Nina comes to know and be in her world through her *bike-body*. This one-ness is also connected to the landscape – built and natural. Her experience of perfect balance and control – *rider-bike-flow* – is something rarely experienced within the confines of her university setting. At university, cognition takes precedence over physicality, and it is physicality that is central to Nina’s understanding of herself, her world(s), and her relationships with others. Cycling is how she comes to know and be known. It is her entry point into the world of research. In contrast, Sherilyn is uncomfortable with the thought of the pending bicycle ride and wrestles with feelings of ineptitude and ‘uselessness’. She is out of her pl/s/paace and her unease at transitioning from ‘settled-expert-

known’ to ‘unsettled-novice-unknown’ (Lennon 2015) is both visceral and real. For her, in this moment, past memories of pain, injury, and humiliation are amplified.

Such affective intensities have significant impacts on how bodies evolve and relate. A failure to acknowledge how past experiences, current motivations, and affective flows impact our personal and professional evolutions and relationships can obfuscate the role and importance of the corporeal. Heeding the agency of bodily matters can be challenging, given the hegemonic academic performance measurements and material structures reinforcing the maintenance of titular hierarchical ‘divides’ (Parker-Jenkins 2018, 57).

## Remembering 2

Candidate	Supervisor
<p>I ride back home – fast. I am beetroot red, sweaty and grinning. I need time to check the bikes. I change one of my bikes to flat pedals and lower the seat as far as it will go. <i>How tall is Sherilyn? Will it be too high for her?</i> I realise I have never considered Sherilyn’s height before. We’ll just have to make do – biking never ‘feels perfect’ anyway – there is always something uncomfortable. Sherilyn will be riding my top-of-the-line singlespeed: minimalist, quiet, and capable. ‘Look after Sherilyn today’ I whisper to my bike, ‘You know how to bike around here, she might not’. I hold the handlebars a little longer, caught in fond memories of past bike adventures.</p> <p>My stomach grumbles. I haven’t eaten. Has Sherilyn had lunch? We didn’t talk about lunch. My eating is a little peculiar and I hadn’t factored on sharing something that personal today. I’m uncomfortable at the thought. To calm my nerves, I drink some water, but it goes down the wrong way. I start coughing. Body hacking, eyes watering. I go outside for fresh air. Doubled over, gasping for air, I suddenly see Sherilyn across the street. I stand up straight and wave to her. <i>Hullo!!</i> How long has she been there? Did she see my body revolting? I’m clearing my throat as she approaches. It sounds like I’m nervous, but I’m not. I’m excited. So much for body-confident first impressions. Oh well – too bad. It’s out of my control. My body always has a way of making itself known.</p>	<p><i>Nauseatingly-polite-female-American-robot-voice: ‘Arrived’.</i></p> <p>No turning back now. What do I need? A water bottle? My phone? Is it safe to leave my wallet in the car? I look up and down the street trying to get a gauge on the neighbourhood. I am judging and guilt washes over me. Sixties-style chamfer and red brick houses with high-pitched tiled rooves, sagging fences, and chunky cement dual carriage driveways straddle both sides of the street. The dwellings remind me of gingerbread men’s cottages and my student years over three decades earlier. At first glance the street is devoid of life but then I notice Nina waving energetically at me from the opposite curb. Fake enthusiasm kicks in. ‘Hullo. Great weather for a ride, hey? Sorry I’m a bit late. Took a wrong turn once I got off the motorway’ and I step forward into her world.</p> <p>Leaning against the front wall of the house is a bicycle – but it is not just any bike. It is completely covered in large colourful plastic flowers. Sitting side-saddle atop the handlebars is a life-size plucked rubber chicken. My body goes rigid. ‘Oh God Nina. Please don’t tell me that is what I’ll be riding!!’ She is laughing.</p> <p>‘No. No. I wouldn’t do that to you. I’ve got a bike inside for you. Much more sedate. This one is mine. This is Leki. Sherilyn meet Leki. Leki meet Sherilyn!’</p>

In this remembering, Sherilyn has entered Nina’s private world; a world that exists beyond the materialities of the university campus and its office desks, chairs, computers, signages indicating rank, role and import, workspaces, food outlets, clusters of human bodies deep in conversation, architectural edifices, manicured gardens, and curated collections of scholarly books. By entering Nina’s world, a disruption process has begun and, in the seams of difference between two human bodies, historical, socioeconomic, and psycho-social patternings can be traced.

Although they are sharing the same space, time and activity, Nina is experiencing pleasure, delight and excited anticipation, while Sherilyn is apprehensive, tense and concerned, yet neither verbalise these vulnerabilities to each other, bounded as they are at this early stage by prevailing social conventions of tour guide-tourist, host-guest, candidate-supervisor subjectivities.



When Nina is around her bikes, she experiences that ‘connection one sometimes feels with people. Bikes are like special friends. If you take unconditional care of them, if you bother to talk to them and share your thoughts with them, they never let you down’ (Zapata-Sepúlveda et al. 2015, 504). In entrusting the bike to ‘look after’ Sherilyn, Nina recognises her ‘expertness’, the bike’s agency, and Sherilyn’s lack of experience. The supervisor’s unquestioned authority and control is being reinscribed.

### Remembering 3

Candidate	Supervisor
<p>Sherilyn is quiet behind me. I keep turning around to see if she is okay. She is concentrating – brow furrowed above dark sunglasses, jaw tight. I’m focused on ‘Goldilocks’ riding – not too fast, not too slow, just right. I’m looking ahead for obstacles, anticipating changes and adjusting the ride accordingly. This is one of my favourite, regular routes. I know every bump, crack, and bend. I know where the stinky mud is at high tide, what birds nest in which trees, and when the local over-50s line-dancers spill out over the pathway. Today, our path is clear. I can’t resist. I proudly point out a few landscape features to Sherilyn as we float by. I fall quiet when there is no response – sightseeing and riding at the same time is tricky. Instead, I sit up straight, breathe deeply and silently sonar: relax and enjoy. I hope this will flow over/back/on/into Sherilyn. We ride around a dog park and behind a soccer field. As we swoop under an overpass, I feel an immediate drop in temperature. We transition from Suburbia to Jurassic. We coast through a cool, dank, fusty mangrove forest. Dappled light, pungent detritus, a forgotten marine ecosystem. We roll through silently.</p> <p>Dark green flattens and recedes. Up ahead, metal glistens as we turn to intersect the foreshore boulevard. On the foreshore, modern life glares and I blink at its overwhelming shininess. We gawk at three side-by-side marinas. Sprawling nautical enclaves filled with expensive yachts invading the natural shoreline. Bright sun, big noise, weekend activities. People materialise across the path in pairs and small groups: milling around, oblivious and content. We are (dis)placed again. I shift my body forward into a more assertive posture – obstacles ahead. I concentrate: tourists ogling at marinas, joggers weaving between prams, cars forcing their way at crossings, and Sherilyn on my tail. These convergences demand my full attention. My sight telescopes as bikes-riders-crowd-A line (e)merge – and I trace a path of least resistance for all. Past the marinas, I relax. I call out over my shoulder to let Sherilyn know what I have planned. The tour has started! I give Lek’s chicken a playful honk as a happiness reminder-pedestrian notice-community announcer. I smile, Lek smiles, the public smiles.</p>	<p>We continue riding along the path for another 10 minutes. Gradually I start to relax. I feel my grip on the handlebars loosen and my body remembers <i>riding-past</i>: an excited 8-year-old child, Christmas time, a gleaming red bicycle replete with ribbons and a bell ...</p> <p>The rhythm of the landscape shifts from the manicured green of the park to a primordial mangrove flat. Between the stunted grey-green trees on my right I catch glimpses of a tidal creek. A <i>muddy-salty-crustacean-rotting-scent</i> hangs heavily in the still air. A remnant of another time and place. A few minutes later we burst onto the foreshore and I feel an ocean breeze caress my face. The landscape has transformed again.</p> <p>‘Apparently this is one of the largest yacht clubs in the southern hemisphere.’ Nina’s words are thrown back to me over her right shoulder. I lift my head and catch them, snatch a look and laser in again on Nina’s back tyre. Looking ahead helps me to stay balanced and upright. A floating city of crisp white yachts moored with military precision to a complex system of elongated piers stretches out to my right: An army of impossibly tall masts in stark contrast to the primordial world that we have just left behind.</p> <p>Five minutes later and the landscape transforms again. This time, I cycle past two neat rows of hundred-year-old Norfolk pines standing sentinel over the routines and rituals of weekend life: Families cluster together walking, talking, eating, sleeping. Gulls fight over food scraps. Dogs strain at leashes testing their owner’s patience. Other riders and runners make contact with me nodding knowingly as they pass: an acknowledgement of our exercising fraternity. And it is here that Nina-flower-chicken-bicycle really starts to perform.</p> <p><i>Hullo. How are you? Love your dress. Mmm those ice-creams look good. Lovely day, isn’t it? Good afternoon sir. Great bike. Yes. This is Lek. (Rubber chicken hoot) She is beautiful, isn’t she?</i></p> <p>I am caught in her slip-stream; a flow of energy that entangles <i>leaps-of-delight and gasps-of-joy and me. Mummy! Mummy! Look! It’s the flower lady! Look! Why does she have flowers all over her bike? Are they real? Can I please have a bike like that? Giggles. Joy. Applause. Awe.</i> Nina in her element. Recognised. Celebrated. Familiar. Welcomed. An unstoppable force.</p>

These rememberings provide further evidence of how the candidate-supervisor-relationship might be re-cycled in a *becoming-with-bicycles*. In this case the biophysical movements and whole-body flow of candidate and supervisor moving at speed as one



mobile assemblage have produced a dynamic which is hard to achieve in a the predominately separated, seated and hand-dominated world of academia.

In this moment, Nina is literally 'out in front' of Sherilyn, performing the role of *leader-guide-local-expert*, piloting and shepherding her less experienced companion. *Expert-rider-candidate* and *novice-rider-supervisor* move as one mobile assemblage through a changing landscape (space) encapsulating *ancient-modern* (time) and *natural-built* (matter) worlds. Sherilyn's 'tight' grip on the handlebars suggests a habitual over-reliance on 'hand dominance' as a way of experiencing and negotiating the world. Hands have considerable agency in how many humans encounter the world. They are central to the daily routines of academic life, necessary for such things as printing, operating devices, holding books, accessing rooms, gesturing, shaking hands, typing on keyboards, marking papers, opening mail and – of course – writing. Conversely, 'expert' riders use their 'whole body', as when Nina shifts her 'body forward into a more assertive posture' for more advanced synergic (embodied) capabilities for bike control (balance, weight distribution, gyroscopic effects, speed, momentum, steering). These biophysical movements rely less heavily on hand strength/grip (Astrom, Klein, and Lennartsson 2005). Perhaps, in this instance, employing previously learnt behaviours from her academic context gets in the way of Sherilyn's capacity to flow *with* the bike.

In contrast to Nina's experience of *rider-bike-flow*, for Sherilyn the bike feels alien and awkward. Initially, the divide between human-body and bike-body dominates her ability to appreciate the sensorial experiences on offer. However, as she *becomes-with* the bike, she is able to intra-act with the world more freely and openly. Initially experienced as a sensorial response to a change in temperature, smell, and vegetation, the shifting landscape becomes co-implicated in how Sherilyn is coming to know her world. MacLure (2013) reminds us that, 'this opening to becoming is the reason sense matters' (662). By accessing archival embodied experiences of *riding-past*, Sherilyn is able to enfold time, thus opening up different worlds and sense-making possibilities.

The *bicycle-as-mobile-machine* enables Nina and Sherilyn to move at considerable speed through multiple landscapes in ways that map the intensities of the country's precolonial and postcolonial histories. As they move through the mangroves, each rider experiences a form of 'biosocial becoming' (Ingold 2013) as the sensorial drop in temperature and primordial smells provoke an immediate ontogenetic attuning to the vegetal 'tree realms' (Abbott 2021). Most noticeable are the embodied response both riders have to the ways in which the ancient and primordial mangroves rub up against the capitalist excesses of the modern-day marina. These contrasting landscapes hint at ghosts from the past, a clash of cultures and environmental reconstitution.

The sharp transition from the natural (mangrove) to the artificial (marina) is significant in the way that these spaces work to re-cycle both riders. Each rider experiences a strong affective response to the marina's past-present meaning-making brought on by its 'out-of-placeness'. The marina compels the riders to acknowledge the ongoing legacy of exploitative colonial and capitalistic practices of power, control and ownership over sea, land and peoples. As settler-colonial visitors to this area, the landscape

transformation from mangroves to marinas means disparity and displacement of Indigenous experiences – a dynamic of which we are all, to some degree either directly or indirectly, co-implicated (Nxumalo, 2019). Riding-with this bayside landscape pushes Nina and Sherilyn beyond known and habitual ‘academic’ spaces and relational limits to activate broader historical, cultural, natural and temporal forces. It serves to disrupt the privileged position of two white, educated, healthy, fit, able-bodied, cis-gendered bodies. Uncovering place-based colonial tensions provokes engagement with broader power dynamics that have far-reaching implications within and beyond candidate-supervisor-relationships. Manathunga et al. (2021) stress that moments like this are important as they locate ‘candidates and supervisors in place priorising geography and Country as more than a backdrop or a stage setting for human experience’ whereby in this case, the marinas are ‘agentic forces shaping individual and collective histories, identities and research interests and approaches’ (231).

The impact of affective intensities is further evidenced in Sherilyn’s account of the fluid interplay of parametric, situational and embodied forces that is *Nina-flower-chicken-bicycle* (see Figure 1). Sherilyn describes this assemblage as an ‘unstoppable force’. Here, Nina’s bicycle evokes a very different response from the bayside crowd than elicited from Sherilyn in the first remembering where she recoiled in shock at the thought of having to ride the highly decorated machine in public. As a first-time visitor to Nina’s world (see Figure 2), Sherilyn is coming to know that the *Nina-flower-chicken-bicycle* assemblage is one that is familiar, public, powerful, and celebrated in this world. The vitality and vibrancy of this assemblage is one that is not made possible within the confines of the university campus and its scheduled office meetings.



**Figure 1.** Nina-flower-chicken-bicycle ‘An unstoppable force’.



**Figure 2.** Leki the flower bike, Sherilyn, and single speed bike.

**Remembering 4**

Candidate	Supervisor
<p>Sherilyn and I take a break. We chat and admire the bay view. Over Sherilyn’s shoulder, I see a bike rider approaching. This is the third time he has passed us. He and I nodded the first time; second, we’d smiled. As he nears this third time, I call out to him: ‘Nice day to cut laps, mate!’ He is roughly dressed, covered in tattoos, and his skin is deeply pockmarked. He slows and stops. <i>Velo-stranger-public</i> agrees. We talk. We laugh. Sherilyn stands quietly behind me: a silent fortress. Me-he-we are now engaged – talking about riding bikes. He doesn’t know the area but needs to ‘get out for a ride’ for his ‘mental health’. He tells me why. A familiar story for many riders. I nod knowingly. We <i>riders-bikes-sunshine-therapy</i>. I give him local beta to extend his route. He is delighted and rides away, waving. I turn to Sherilyn. ‘Wow!’ she says ‘He was so chatty! Do you know him?’ ‘No.’ ‘I can’t believe the amount of information he just offered! He practically told you his whole life story.’ ‘Did he?’ I stop to consider this. Sherilyn is right, he did. But, ‘stranger’ bike riders do that all the time with each other. What is ‘giving too much information’? Is/was that a bad thing? Suddenly I feel self-conscious. I thought that interaction was ‘normal’. Now my mind is troubled.</p>	<p>Nina and I have reached the end of the boardwalk and, at my suggestion, we dismount. I tell Nina that I am finding it difficult to <i>talk-view-and-ride</i> but, if I am honest, I am also struggling to keep up with her. We have been riding solidly for 30 minutes now. My backside is aching and my legs are burning.</p> <p>Nina asks me how I’m feeling about the experience so far and I comment on the attention her <i>flower-chicken-bicycle</i> is commanding. How it seems to make strangers feel free to talk to her. She smiles and nods.</p> <p>‘Leki and I have become quite well known around here. I like it. It makes me feel as if I belong and it makes me feel safe.’</p> <p>I weigh this up and respond, ‘Well there’s some irony for you. I have spent my entire parenting life telling my daughter not to draw attention to herself if she wants to stay safe.’</p> <p>Nina’s retort stops my world.</p> <p>‘But you are a feminist Sherilyn. Surely you of all people must know that when no-one notices you it is then that you become invisible. It is then that you are at your most vulnerable!’</p> <p>Her words reverberate through me and pierce my maternal flesh. What have I been thinking? What have I (un)done?</p>

Here is an instance of a more-than-mobile velo-onto-epistemological moment where cyclists are neither riding nor mobile, yet continue to be re-cycled by the capricious nature of a world in flux; a world that is becoming with the agential forces of bicycles.

In these final remembering, both candidate and supervisor experience moments of rupture and recalibration triggered by an encounter, cycling, shared words, beliefs around how much to reveal to strangers, past parenting practices, and learned responses about how to ‘stay safe’ as a female. Collisions between Sherilyn’s and Nina’s wor(l)ds manifest as ripples of tension that unsettle their thinking, doing, and being. Nina’s questioning of Sherilyn’s parenting advice to her daughter is informed by feminist understandings of the patriarchy as a material-discursive structure that limits and constrains by constructing an ‘ideal’ for female performance as demure, silent, invisible, and responsible for one’s own safety. At odds with the flamboyant *Nina-flower-chicken-bicycle* assemblage, young women are often inscribed to take responsibility for their bodies and safety in public spaces with well-meaning advice such as ‘don’t walk alone’, ‘avoid dark spaces’, and ‘don’t draw attention to yourself’ thus limiting female mobility, visibility and agency (Bates 2018). Just as Nina’s questioning impresses on Sherilyn in ways that are profoundly disruptive to her thinking and past actions, so too are Sherilyn’s comments to Nina around how much (personal) information is appropriate to share with a stranger. Ahmed (2014) posits that words and feelings are performative and that they cannot be ‘simply cut off from bodies ... they move, stick, and slide. We move, stick and slide with them’ (14). In this moment, both women’s known wor(l)ds are slipping and sliding as they are becoming anew.

Nina, Sherilyn and other rider-travellers experience manifold temporalities, bodies and places of doing, thinking and feeling when riding, moving, dwelling and relating with bicycles. This pause in the bike ride, where bicycle-rider-movement is suspended, enables a different embodied moment to materialise. It is not the actual riding of bikes that enables this moment, it is the relative (im)mobility (Adey 2006) – or the pausing-with-bicycles that creates this moment. While taking a break from riding, Sherilyn’s mention of *Nina-flower-chicken-bike* sparks a feminist challenge that would otherwise not have emerged during a regular campus-based meeting. We are well trained to view riding *on bikes* as important (think transport, sustainability, sporting competitions, fundraising events, and recreational activities), but using VOE helps attune us to what can be found by looking at other-than-riding *on bikes* – like dwelling-in-motion *with bikes*. These VOE attunements include less-mobile, immobile, or sometimes-(im)mobile-with *bike* moments. Dwelling-in-motion moments highlight how moving away from distinct ontologies of ‘place’ and ‘people’ (Sheller and Urry 2006, 214) towards more material and embodied relationalities can help reconstitute candidate-supervisor-relationships differently.

## Recycling practices of power

The mangrove-marina encounter continues to resonate and reshape thinking, being and doing well beyond the riding-with event. The ride illuminated Eurocentric practices of power over spaces, places, and bodies and, using a process of re-cycling, enabled us to become more attuned to identifying similar socio-spatial colonial, patriarchal and capitalist practices shaping academic spaces, places and bodies. Colonialism is driven by a need to control the material and ideological by establishing categories of inferior/superior, personal/collective, civilised/uncivilised, educated/uneducated, have/have nots. Increasingly, academic work is geared towards neoliberalist practices of turning

knowledge into competitive metrics and monetised outputs (Davies and Petersen 2005). Academic managerialism reinforces compliance and individual success as the university standard, undermining collaboration and reciprocal learning. After undertaking the ride, instances where supervisory differences highlight the unseen connections between higher education, gender and the economy were more visible. Our riding-with event heightened the risky business of individual and collective vulnerabilities, of being (in)visible, of being mother-daughters, and of doing feminist work on the fringes of a patriarchal, competitive institution.

The ride also recycled considerations of how power dynamics such as colonialism, capitalism and patriarchy intertwine with other dynamics, such as time, space and place. During the ride we were moved by Mangrove Time – a timescale that is vastly different from academic time. Time for academic supervisory work is shaped by a ‘time-is-money’ capitalist imperative and reductive expectations focused on three-year linear candidate progressions, milestones and submission dates. As a consequence, doctoral supervisors and candidates are increasingly restricted and conflicted in time, money and support.

### Re-cycling the candidate-supervisor-relationship

According to Barad, ‘[t]he world and its possibilities for becoming are remade in each meeting’ (2007, x). Our rememberings have mapped a series of encounters and selected iterations of our becomings with other bodies/matters that continue to unfold. We understand that candidate-supervisor-relationships are entangled in personalities, systems, spaces, human needs, and material realities. During the ‘doing’ of doctoral supervision and research, there are many moments of transgressive embodiment, affective (con)fusions, and/or corporeal awakenings that pass undisclosed, are hidden, or deliberately omitted (Aberton 2020; Bunds and Giardina 2017; Donnelly 2014). Such omissions raise difficult conversations about the relationality of women-researcher-bodies. Emboldened by our shared bike ride, Nina and Sherilyn continue to explore dwelling-in-motion moments for other suspended feminist collisions to emerge, ripple and unsettle. The *riding-with* process and VOE we enacted as a recycling process highlights the significance of moments of risk, vulnerability, confusion, and joy in providing ‘the possibility of redrawing the boundaries around oneself ... where pedagogy becomes potentially transformational’ (Garbutt, Biermann, and Offord 2012, 79). It was, for us, a useful means of interrupting power differentials associated with candidate-supervisor-relationships requiring that we ‘shift gears’ – physically, materially, socially, and relationally. The ‘what’ and ‘how’ of ‘doing’ research supervision is critical if we are genuine about trying to reinvigorate possible futures that avoid repetition, power inequities, and sameness. As St. Pierre (2016) reminds us: ‘research training too often gets in our way, prevents us from recognising the “new” that is always already there in the world, and shuts down futures that might be—an education-to-come we might desire’ (8). While a traditional qualitative account of our ride might have focussed on its overlaps/sameness, using VOE has enabled us to map divergences and tensions that attest to different ways of knowing and being in the world. Our ‘diffractive methodology provides a way of attending to entanglements [and] ... reading important insights ...



through one another’ (Barad 2007, 30). It provides exciting possibilities for VOE to be applied in different situations, something which Nina fully intends to explore further.

Therefore, we offer our process of re-cycling as an example of what becomes possible when traditional rules, physical and institutional boundaries, and academic performances are reinscribed in ways that destabilise hegemonic forces, places, spaces and institutional power structures. We do not mean to suggest that doctoral supervisors and candidates must cycle together as a means of enriching and extending their relationships. For us, *re-cycling* was a process for enabling encounters with/in the self/world that might reimagine the ways supervisors and candidates come to know and be in the world. It offers possibilities for how candidates and supervisors might co-create a kind of ‘minor pedagogy’ that looks more closely at ‘that which is yet to come or might become as students and instructors engage with more-than-human bodies in their thinking and doing of inquiry’ (Mazzei and Smithers 2020, 105). While some of our mappings show evidence of a recalibration of the candidate-supervisor-relationship, others have inspired us to rethink practices and beliefs that are located ‘outside of the confines of university relationships, roles, and performances. As a consequence, we have experienced un/intentional, embodied, intersecting, and relational ‘other’ positive possibilities (Olive 2017) that were beyond our previous university-inscribed relationship.

There are any number of ways candidates and supervisors might dynamically reconfigure the human and non-human materialities of their relationship, ranging from supervision over coffee (Hemer 2012) to the more adventurous pursuit of *re-cycling* as outlined in this article. For this candidate and supervisor, re-cycling helped uncover crucial clues about the workings of power within the academy and outside it – and how these forces shape and impact relationships. Since undertaking this activity, Nina and Sherilyn continue to inquire and challenge each other in ways that more fully recognise the embodied, material and relational nature of things that matter. As Keune and Peppler (2019) pointed out, ‘learning is entangled with materials and spatial development’ (291). At the very least, it is important to attend to these *matters* and acknowledge how materiality ‘plays an active role in the workings of power’ (Barad 2003, 809).

## Acknowledgements

The authors recognise the Quandamooka peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the land, sea and air on and in which this project took place and that sovereignty was never ceded. Nina would like to thank Sherilyn for her trust and courage during this undertaking – and also for Sherilyn’s unwavering, purposeful and inspirational supervision over the years.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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