

In memoriam

Mark Rapley, 1962–2012

Alec McHoul

Sadly, Mark Rapley passed away in August 2012. He was a close friend and colleague and he will be sorely missed by all who know him.



Mark came to Australia in 1995 and spent a good deal of his time here in the psychology program at Murdoch University. He later moved to Edith Cowan University, and then returned to England as Professor of Clinical Psychology at the University of East London.

But he was no typical psychologist; indeed, his remarks were often blatantly anti-psychological and always anti-cognitivist. His grounding was much more in the theories of mind to be found in Gilbert Ryle and Ludwig Wittgenstein, and his approach—as with a number of his colleagues in discursive psychology—was ethnomethodologically-inspired conversation

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analysis. I remember being told (by him, of course!) that, at a parent-teacher meeting, he described his occupation as 'ethnomethodologist'. It would be typical for him to have done that just in order to start a conversation. He loved to teach and to inform, no matter who the audience.

Mark's work is aptly summed up by the title of one of the last books that he worked on, a co-edited volume called *De-Medicalizing Misery* (Macmillan, 2011). What other clin-psych types called 'mental illness' or 'disability', he called 'human misery' and, as far as he was concerned, it was outwith the business of any medical practitioner. So, on the one hand, he displayed meticulous attention to the details of pseudo-medical discursive practices—therapy sessions, professional opinions of 'mental health' in print, self-help books, and so on down through a very long list of sites where, for him, suffering was exploited. On the other, a determined political stance that relentlessly exposed the wiles of the quacks. He could open any page of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (DSM) of the American Psychiatric Association at parties and have his guests in stitches. He was never more serious than when being outrageously funny.

It was at the Manchester meetings of the International Institute of Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis (IEMCA) in July 2001 that Mark—along with myself and the equally now-missed Carolyn Baker—decided to form the Australian (now Australasian) Institute of Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis (AIEMCA). Caro and I were at the executive meeting and proposed that the next beano be held in Australia, Brisbane being the favoured location. A very prominent member of the executive replied that he had never heard of Australia and that the idea was, accordingly, preposterous. The vote was lost. When we reported this to the Australian delegates, it was obvious what we had to do. The three of us put the plan into action right away and, by September, the AIEMCA was up and going with 32 founding members. Mark's close friend Craig Newnes wrote in his obituary for Mark in *The Journal of Critical Psychology, Counselling and Psychotherapy* that, 'Almost as a hobby he had founded [the AIEMCA]'. This isn't quite true—sorry Craig!—but it could well have been.

The important stuff that he really did do in this respect was to start the first AIEMCA meetings with strong themes, such as the 'Murdoch Symposia on Talk-in-Interaction', and especially 'Talking Health' (2003) and 'Talking Race and Prejudice' (2001). Mark was the inspiration; Sue Hansen did the hard yards ... and I just took the photographs. Mark is survived by his brother, Nick, his wife, Nicola, and by his

beautiful daughter, Ella. If there's a special place in heaven for ethnomethodologists, Mark will still be trying to slip the odd Pete Townshend lyric and/or an allusion to capybaras into the title of his next paper. Vale mate.

