



# Fashioning the feasible

## Categorisation and social change

**Reece Plunkett**

**ABSTRACT:** *In his 'Hotrodder' paper, Harvey Sacks (1979, p. 12) remarks on 'the important problems of social change' and argues for looking at the constitution and use of sets of categories as a means of investigating these problems. This paper investigates the beginning of a public lesbian and gay movement in Perth in the early 1970s, especially the category work undertaken by the newly formed Campaign Against Moral Persecution (CAMP). It traces CAMP's deployment of a new category of person and attendant predicates and the way in which this new category was responsive to a practical problem facing the nascent movement—how to 'go public'? At the time, lesbians and gay men had almost no public profile, except as the 'mad, bad, or sad' of medical, legal, and religious discourse. The paper shows that and how CAMP's move was accountably responsive to this problem and concludes with some remarks on the value of membership categorisation analysis for investigating social change.*

### Introduction

On 30 May 1971, a small advertisement appeared in the 'Personal' columns of the classified section of the *Sunday Times* (p. 105), one of two metropolitan Sunday newspapers published in Western Australia (WA) at the time. The advertisement was placed by David Widdup, treasurer of the recently formed Sydney group, the Campaign Against Moral Persecution (CAMP)<sup>1</sup>. The advertisement read:

*Reece Plunkett, University  
of New South Wales,  
Sydney, New South Wales,  
Australia.*

*People who would like information  
regarding homosexuality and thereby*

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*assist in the development of a proper social understanding write to David Widdup Campaign Against Moral Prejudice [sic] Box 3072 GPO Perth.*

Founded the previous year by John Ware and Christabell Poll, CAMP was one of the first 'out' lesbian and gay organisations in Australia<sup>2</sup>. More correctly, the organisation was the first out 'camp' organisation in Australia, 'camp' being the common term of avowal for the otherwise 'homosexual' in early 1970s Australia<sup>3</sup>. Indeed, Ware and Poll are reported to have chosen CAMP's name because of its local currency (Wotherspoon, 1991). The organisation soon established itself in nearly every Australian capital city. Ware flew to Brisbane and Melbourne to start divisions. Widdup went to Perth, where his advertisement elicited some 70 responses. Those who replied were asked to a meeting at which the WA branch of CAMP was officially formed. By the end of the year, the branch had 500 members and its own clubrooms (Douglas, 1986).

This paper is drawn from my PhD study of lesbian and gay social change in Western Australia. The paper is not a history of CAMP per se, but, rather, investigates a fairly mundane activity in the life of a political movement: inviting people to join<sup>4</sup>. Here we see that, although Widdup used a common enough means of public advertisement—at least for the 1970s—the text has some novel aspects. Specifically, the advertisement created and used new methods for describing people, actions, and knowledge, and the relationships between them. As such, we see the nascent movement begin to stake out a new field of public knowledge and, concomitantly, to claim the right to expertise in this field. In other words, the advertisement heralds, and provides a method for, something of a demarcation dispute with prevailing forms of knowledge on homosexuality, particularly those of religious, legal, and psy-complex bodies. In doing so, Widdup's advertisement put into play a new course of sociopolitical possibility.

The following investigation of CAMP's formative activity relies on Sacks's (1974, 1992) work on membership categorisation. Most well known for his work on conversation analysis (CA), Sacks also founded a particular approach to analysing social categories and categorisation. Although the two 'branches' of Sacks's work have developed largely in isolation from one another, in more recent years there has been a move to rethink CA and membership categorisation analysis (MCA) together, in what Housley and Fitzgerald (2002) call the 'reconsidered model of membership categorisation analysis'. This

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reconsideration has significant roots in Hester and Eglin's (1997a) argument. Both include an appeal to reconsider CA/MCA from a more ethnomethodological perspective (or to remember CA/MCA's necessarily EM roots, depending on the development narrative used). For my purposes, this includes consideration of one aspect of the debate about 'context', a topic of considerable debate in EM literature (see Billig 1999a, 1999b; Schegloff 1999a, 1999b, 1999c; Wetherell 1999, and the 2008 special edition of the *Journal of Pragmatics*). The question of how to address the place and role of the 'stock of knowledge' or 'the machinery' in MCA work is of particular salience. Hester and Eglin (1997b) argue against a decontextualised model of membership categorisation and for an EM version. They propose that, while the former 'reifies' collections and other social facts, the latter understands them as 'occasioned achievements' (p. 12). Sacks's work, they argue, includes both tendencies. Sacks's insistence on a 'machinery' to explain 'ordinary sense' is a move in which 'the devices are reified, the machinery externalised, the apparatus conceived as an object and independent of the actual occasions of interaction being studied' (p.15). They argue for collections as 'assembled objects' (p. 20), which they demonstrate is also available in Sacks's work.

Although in considerable agreement with Hester and Eglin (1997a), their line of argument has a certain tension. Specifically, they seem to want to retain some of the otherwise reified machinery (e.g., standardised relational pairs) as well as to argue for a version of collections as always assembled in the '*here and now*' (p. 22). It is in this tension that I want to propose a version of Sacks's 'machinery' that is attentive to both the 'here and now' and something other; that is, to explore a version of the machinery that is more like procedural regularity than reified machine; a history of what can 'reasonably' be done (including collected). Of course, what can constitute 'reasonable' may well turn out to be some of what is contested in actual interaction (and be part of what is glossed as 'social change'). It also may not. Either way, this is an empirical matter, the analysis of which may be part of the point of MCA. This paper, then, investigates some of this historical possibility in action. It uses a version of MCA that lends itself to such a task, as developed by McHoul, especially in *Semiotic Investigations* (1996).

## Membership categorisation

Sacks (1974) proposed that membership categories are, basically, common sense classifications for identifying or describing persons.

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People assign categories to persons as a means of making inferences about the social world. Membership categories are a key means by which people work out, in common, 'what is going on here' or, more technically, produce and recognise social action. Sacks proposed that categories are used as part of a group of categories, called membership categorisation devices (MCD) or 'collections'. Specifically, he proposed that a collection is:

*any collection of membership categories, containing at least a category, which may be applied to some population containing at least a member, so as to provide, by the use of some rules of application, for the pairing of at least a population member and a categorisation device member. A collection is then a collection plus rules of application. (Sacks, 1974, pp. 218-219)*

The 'rules' to which Sacks (1974) refers are the normative procedures by which we can pair a population member and a categorisation device member. In other words, they are the actual means by which we apply categories to persons, and include the economy and consistency rules for describing people, and correlating maxims for hearing and viewing the descriptions (pp. 219-220).

A collection, then, has three parts: the name of the collection, categories collected, and category predicates, or practices that categories within the collection can be expected to do. Importantly, if two of these parts are known, the third may be inferred. If the category and predicate are known, the collection may be inferred. If the collection and predicate are known, then the category may be inferred, and so on. For example, an adult person facing a room occupied by rows of young people with books on their desks is identifiable as a member of the category 'teacher' in the collection 'profession'. The predicates are the actions that may be expected to go with the identifiable social activity of doing 'being a teacher' and that provide the means of identifying that some person is doing 'being a teacher' (facing the room, addressing the students, standing and talking without permission, permitting students to speak or leave the room, and so on). Teachers and students, then, display and draw on category knowledge to navigate their way around various social worlds, including, of course, schools. It allows both teachers and students alike to see, for example, contrary behaviour and provides an inbuilt warrant for subsequent activities, such as punishment (or possible reward from fellow students).

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Collections also have histories or, in other words, plausible directives that enable and constrain the use of categories and predicates. For instance, the MCD 'sex' has a lengthy history of use as a set with two categories (male and female). It operates (with) the directive that device incumbents may not routinely move between categories. A person is either male or female. In this way, people can generate descriptions of a person as being not only 'a man' or 'a woman' but 'a freak', 'someone who doesn't know if they are a man or a woman', a 'proper man', 'clearly confused' and so on. Historically, a person deemed to be a member of both categories ('man' and 'woman') becomes accountably neither, categorised as intersexed and denied social entitlement. By contrast, in the MCD 'family', it is quite possible that an incumbent of one category is also incumbent in another. A named person may plausibly be described by way of co-incumbency in the categories 'daughter', 'mother', and 'partner'.

It must, however, be remembered that collections are social devices and therefore open to transformation. For example, in the past decade or so, intersexed, transsexual, and transgendered persons and their allies have robustly contested the make up and directives of the collection 'sex'. Transsexuals have contested the non-transferability of persons from one category to the other. Intersex intervention often contests the number of legitimate categories comprising the device, such that, in an intersex version of the collection 'sex', 'intersex' is not a failed version of 'male' or 'female', but a category in its own right. Transgender is another issue altogether, with the basis of contestation often concerning the validity of the device per se, with the aim to replace it with another collection called 'gender', in which there are multiple categories.

That collections look like everyday, unremarkable methodological devices is true and is, indeed, much of the point. While 'collection' is an analyst's term, collections are used by people on an almost ubiquitous basis. In everyday interaction, members both display their use of such categories and *rely on* the competent recognition of such displays. They are part of the stock of everyday methods for making ordered and intelligible everyday social worlds or, in other words, for accomplishing the business of everyday life. As such, they are also primary targets of intervention for those seeking social change.

Indeed, Sacks gestures in just such a direction. In his paper 'Hotrodder: A Revolutionary Category', Sacks (1979, p. 8) explicates some of the social ordering undertaken by recourse to category work, arguing that

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the (then newish) category of “hotrodder” is, in a non-trivial sense, quite a revolutionary kind of category’. One of the critical aspects about the category ‘hotrodder’ is that, unlike the alternative of, say, ‘teenage driver’, incumbents in the former category administer it themselves. In Sacks’s analysis, ‘hotrodder’ is a collective solution to what is otherwise apprehended as an individualised ‘problem’ of ‘independence’, a ‘problem’ that is controlled by adults. In other words, adults control what it is for ‘teenagers’ to be accountably independent. The very basis of what ‘independence’ can look like is, paradoxically, set by others. In this scenario, what can count as independence cannot be determined by those claiming independence.

‘Roughly’, says Sacks, the problem is that ‘what the dominant categories basically own is how it is persons perceive reality’ (1979, p. 11). Further:

*And a big difference between the categories ‘hotrodder’ and ‘teenager’ is that ‘teenager’ is a category that adults administer. What’s known about ‘teenagers’ is enforced by adults. And of course there is a parallel situation for Negroes [sic] vis-à-vis whites. (p. 11)*

Indeed, ‘teenager’ is one of a certain *type* of category with which Sacks is concerned, to which he adds (at least) ‘children’ and ‘Negroes’ [sic]. Their commonality is, of course, that each is a nondominant category, with what can be known enforced by those who are not incumbent in the category itself.

The issue for social change, then, is *how* incumbents in nondominant categories *could* come to administer the very grounds for determining what can be known of category incumbents. A partial solution is to invoke an alternative procedural reality with (and by the use of) particular categories and their concomitant sets of recognition and sanction. Sacks (1979) proposes two procedural aspects to which those seeking social change need attend:

*What is critically needed is to bring about a change in what it is anybody sees when they see one of these things (teenage, Negro, etc.). And then to be able to control what they know about one when they see one. (p. 11)*

In other words, not only does there need to be a change in ‘what everybody sees’, a part of this ‘what’ includes the fact that it is





accountably administered *by* category incumbents. This includes who or what will count as incumbent and on what basis.

Sacks (1979) concludes his paper with two enormously important points concerning social order and social change. Says Sacks:

*The fact that kids have such categories [like hotrodder], and focus on these categories, can be ways that more or less fundamental attacks are being launched against a culture which is stable by reference to everybody seeing the world for what it is, without regard to whether it's pleasant or not, whether they come out on top, and not seeing that they can do anything about it. It's in this respect, then, that the important problems of social change, I would take it anyway, would involve laying out such things as the sets of categories, how they're used, what's known about any member, and beginning to play with shifts in the rules of application of a category and with shifts in the properties of any category. (p. 12)*

In other words, the use of particular categories by 'kids' and incumbents in other nondominant categories is far from trivial. The phenomena with which Sacks deals are actual methods by which practical and conceptual universes are ordered and reordered. Rather than being a trivial moment in relation to so-called macro-change, Sacks's work leads us to a particular understanding of what might be meant by such things as social order, social action, and social change.

Although 1960s hotrodders and 1970s lesbians and gay men are clearly different categories of person, there is nonetheless a salient procedural similarity in play. As we shall see, like the hotrodders, WA lesbian and gay activists mobilised a methodic principle of establishing category incumbents as both the rightful bearers of knowledge and as the rightful 'administrators', as it were, of the categories by which they made themselves (and others) intelligible. Before turning to the analysis, however, one outstanding theoretical matter remains to be addressed.

As my discussion shows, Sacks (1974) implies that category work is not undertaken for its own sake. Rather, people use categories to get things done. People not only do an activity such that they can be seen to be doing just this and not something else, the activity they are doing is also designed for some end, often mundane and unremarkable. Further,

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and to use ethnomethodological language, the two are reflexively related: each elaborates the other. For example, identifying myself (and being identified) as 'the teacher' not only makes me intelligible, it provides a warrant for my authority in a classroom. It thereby solves procedural problems such as determining who has the right to speak and when, to authorise knowledge, to adjudicate disputes, and so on.

Some more, however, needs to be said about EM's version of reflexivity. The notion that people do things such that they can be seen to be doing what it is they are doing is the EM version of 'accountability', which Garfinkel (1967) uses as shorthand for a host of synonyms (including several neologisms). We do things such that they can be recognised and reported as just that thing. In EM, accountability is reflexive. As I have indicated, reflexive means that, given the existence of (at least) two phenomena, a reflexive relation means that each is used to elaborate the other. What, then, are the elements of the reflexive relationship?

Hartland (1991) and McHoul (1996) argue that one of the reasons EM's version of reflexivity can prove difficult is because there are at least two relations of reflexivity. McHoul works with Hartland's arguments on the matter, which in turn incorporates a move made by Garfinkel and Sacks (1970) in 'Formal structures' (in which they argue for the transferability of methods to explain the fact that people do not reinvent the social world anew at each interaction. Methods, they argue, are both occasioned and reusable). Hartland (p. 66-68) proposed that methods are 'context-independent' while activities are always 'context sensitive'. In McHoul's terminology, the two aspects of reflexivity are reflexive relation one (R1) and reflexive relation two (R2). The first is between an activity and the way the activity is carried out (a methodic practice), for example, using category work to produce a description of a person. The second relationship is between the methodic practice—the description, in this case—and the deed it effects. In other words, R1 produces sheer intelligibility while R2 is part of getting things done. It is important to reiterate, however, that separating R1 and R2 is a heuristic move. In practice, the two are clearly 'nested', in that R2 incorporates R1. McHoul also explains this by using Sacks's 'problem-solution' terminology for R2. He calls the use to which the intelligible action (the description, etc.) is put the 'problem' and the methodic action that was used to address the problem the 'solution'. Problems and solutions are simply things to be done and ways of doing them. This is important. If descriptions (etc.) are rarely, if ever, generated for their own sake, investigating the actual use to which intelligible outcomes are put is a critical aspect of MCA.

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To apply this to the case of advertising in the classifieds, there are, as we shall see, clearly accountably methodic ways of doing 'advertising in the classifieds'. Yet it is to be expected that people do such an activity to achieve some end. They do not simply display the fact of an object, service, or event. Advertisements are drawn up for some purpose, to elicit some action, such as encouraging persons to buy or sell an object or to use a service, or to invite people to attend an event. Widdup's advertisement is, clearly, the latter. The point of my analysis is to see how the advertisement formulated something like a generic invitation and event-to-be-invited-to doublet (R1) *and* how the invitation is accountably responsive to sociological considerations (the invitation/event and the 'context' it formulates so as to intervene—R2). CAMP's task, as I develop below, was to find a way in which a largely anonymous or hidden group of people (i.e., 'camp' people) *could* go public, such that they could form a member-controlled social movement. In considering this, two initial questions arise. Firstly, how is the advertisement effectively an invitation? Secondly, in effectively advertising, how is the advertisement formulating the events into which it was also an intervention?

### **Doing 'inviting' (or forming a social movement)**

By invitational work, I refer to those everyday practices by which a party or parties to an interaction invites some other party or parties to join a course of action, be it taking a walk, holidaying with friends, offering a university place, and so on. Although invitational work is a common feature of everyday life, it is also a matter of immense specificity, of just-this-invitation, in just-this-particular-instance, involving just-these-parties, in situ, here and now. Invitational work, like any other instance of action in common (social action), is a matter of 'haecceity', to invoke Garfinkel (2002). Invitations may be explicit or implied, yet all involve consideration of who or what are invited, by whom or what, to where, and for what purpose. Invitations specify the event to which persons are invited, the sort of person they are invited as, and the purpose for which the invitation is issued. Formulating and declaring such details are part of the practices that comprise 'doing inviting'. Importantly, these aspects require investigation, for the very specificities of invitational practices are part of the event-as-formulated. To understand Widdup's invitation, some knowledge is required of the historical norm of classified advertisements, and the way in they were used by lesbian and gay people—or, more properly for the time, camp people.

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### ***Reflexive relation 1: Methods of intelligibility—the classifieds***

As classified advertisements, the Personal columns are part of the reader-centred marketplace of the commercial press. For the owners of the press, the point of classified advertisements (and advertising per se) is profit. For advertisers, the point is more varied. In the classified section of the *Sunday Times* in the 1970s, advertisers were intelligible via two broad categories—those submitting public notices and those involved in a market. Public notices advertised the fact of some instance of an event, such as (circa 1971) a birth, death, marriage, birthday, bankruptcy, or divorce. They also advertised the fact of some proposed instance of an event, hence applications for business or professional licences. Market-oriented advertisements had a different aim, namely, for one party to convince another to participate in some activity (often, but not always, on a profit basis). At its broadest, 'that and how' they did so establishes the fact of a particular object as somehow 'have-able', as well as the fact that some entity exists in order to sell or supply the object in question. This holds for advertisements for goods, services, and information, including sex and venues. All frame the objects in question (be they goods, services, information, etc.) as objects of exchange, and establish relationships between objects and persons, and between persons. Advertisements bring off particular instances of the business of everyday life and, in the process, use and order particular types of persons, activities, and other social objects and events.

Contemporary 'Personals' advertisements are largely a sex market. However, the Personals of the early 1970s *Sunday Times* were more broadly based. While dedicated sections in the Classifieds included Public Notices; Births, Deaths, and Marriages; Motor Vehicles; Real Estate; and Employment, a number of advertisements were clearly not of these types. These remaining advertisements were placed in the 'Personal' columns, making it a form of oddments bin. For instance, the Personals section on 12 April, 1971, carried advertisements for the following: AAA Driving Lessons; Turkish Puzzle Rings; Learner Drivers; Westralian Friendship Centre; Why Cook Tonight—CHIC N TAKE; Bridal Care; Aylett's Butchers; Day Nursery for Children of Working Parents; and Samaritans for The Suicidal and Depressed. Seminars, talks, and public discussions were also routinely advertised in the Personal columns.

How, then, do parties to the interaction (writers and readers of classifieds) make these advertisements intelligible? What common methods of textual production and recognition are in play? I suggest

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that advertisement is written and read as a declaration that some particular object is for sale or otherwise obtainable, an invitation for persons to obtain the objects in question, and a set of directions for undertaking this activity. The set of instructions is 'to have or use X, do Y', or, put differently, 'to obtain the goods and services, use the contact details provided'. Indeed, if such a method of production and recognition *were not* used, we would be hard pressed to know what to do with an advertisement that reads 'Aylett's Butchers, ph 12 3456'. This is not a random or purposeless piece of information. It is placed, produced, and recognised as a declaration, invitation, and set of instructions, as something like 'Aylett's Butchers have meat for sale. Become our customers and obtain our goods by calling the phone number provided'. That people use the same method to read (and write) advertisements in the Personal columns of the classifieds ('to have or use X, do Y') means that the reading/writing is done methodically—that is, the fact and the method for producing the fact are indivisible.

Plunkett (2005) shows that, in Western Australia's mass media prior to CAMP, advertisements pertinent to same-sex attraction were of two types; advertisements for sexual activity and for camp venues. Man-to-man sexual activity was accountably sought, even if that accountability was via highly coded practice: 'Friendship wanted by 38yo male from an active man near same age'; 'Gent seeks male friend to 40...' (*Sunday Times*, 12 April 1970, p. 121). Men also placed man-to-transsexual advertisements; 'He 36 wants generous male friend. Prefer trans' (19 April 1970, p. 131)<sup>4</sup>. Woman-to-woman advertisements were, from a present-day perspective, conspicuously absent. Occasionally, however, mixed-gender venues touted for camp trade in the Personals. For instance, the Blue Note tavern, a camp venue in Perth in the early 1970s, placed this advertisement: 'The atmosphere at the Blue Note will make you want to camp the Darling Lily' (*Sunday Times*, 2 May 1971, p. 121). 'Lily', a shortened version of 'lily law', was a camp term for policing and legal practices. Hence, this advertisement, although placed in the mass media, required specialised competence (of an 'insider' language) to make it intelligible. Here, camp linguistic practice is highly visible, yet widely unintelligible. That is, it was seen, but not seen as camp except by those who knew how to look.

Although Widdup's advertisement is clearly neither a sex nor venue advertisement, in one sense, it is an ordinary Personals advertisement; it is a display of wares, placed in and as market-oriented advertising. It is accountable as a declaration of the fact of some object; an invitation

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to obtain it; and a set of instructions for doing so. However, as we shall see, the nature of the object in question, the category of those invited to obtain the object, and the set of instructions issued for doing so make the advertisement quite extraordinary.

***Reflexive relationship 2: Problem-solutions (or lines of effectivity)***

As shown, the method routinely used to make *Sunday Times* classified advertisements intelligible was to read them as instructions: 'for X, do Y' (for meat, call Aylett's; for help, call the Samaritans). Although Widdup's advertisement relies on generally available methods for its intelligibility as a marketplace advertisement, it requires and undertakes additional work, for it has an additional feature. Rather than 'for X do Y', Widdup's advertisement is a case of 'for X, and thus A, do Y':

*People who would like information regarding homosexuality and thereby assist in the development of a proper social understanding write to David Widdup' (my emphasis).*

So what, exactly, is on offer? There are four possible (hearable) answers to this question; namely, a form of information; a type of understanding; some sort of membership of the organisation that purports to source this information and develop this understanding; and an activity, participation in which can be used as evidence of a plausible identity claim at a later date.

Another way of framing this claim is to say that there are three predicates and one category in play in this advertisement. The predicates are 'like information regarding homosexuality', 'assist in the development of a proper social understanding', and 'write to David Widdup/CAMP'. The category is something like 'those wanting a proper social understanding', a category that was only beginning to take shape in 1971 (and that would go on to be endlessly contested, reconfigured, and transformed in lesbian and gay political discourse). The first and second predicates are tied, in that the second is accomplished *by* undertaking the first ('and thereby assist'). The second works, retrospectively, to clarify the sort of information sought. It is information that, when gained, will assist in the development of 'a proper social understanding'. The third predicate, 'write to David Widdup/CAMP', is the instruction, the required method for gaining such information. By the end of the advertisement, then, CAMP's assertions are clear. Persons undertaking these activities are accountably entitled





to claim membership in that community of people who possess for themselves, and develop in others, a particular social fact—a proper social understanding of homosexuality.

In MCA terms, we are seeing, here, the creation of a new category of person—those with a proper social understanding, gained in a proper fashion. As much as Widdup's advertisement is a display of wares, it is also an invitation to join a course of action that, at this time, was barely operable: those who come together for gaining and disseminating a proper social understanding of homosexuality. It is at this point that we can begin to see that there is a 'problem' to which CAMP had designed a 'solution'. The highly occasioned, methodically inventive clause ('and thereby assist') makes evident the fact that CAMP was responding to something other than the need for an intelligible invitation. In other words, reading this advertisement requires more than competence with the routine methods of classified advertisement intelligibility to ascertain its 'meaning'. It requires competence with the ways in which the advertisement may be used as a 'solution' to a 'problem'. Analytically, we begin to move from R1 to R2. Some more, then, remains to be said about the specifying work done by this clause and the nature of the 'problem' in question.

The clause, I propose, specifies homosexuality as a particular kind of social fact—a fact about which persons seeking information must have a particular form of reason for doing so. The implication is that, as a topic, homosexuality cannot simply be investigated on the grounds of interest or curiosity, as could, say, dinosaurs or geography. This is especially true if investigated by lay analysts (such as readers of the *Sunday Times*). To put the matter differently, I am proposing that offering and requesting information regarding homosexuality could not be done with a warrant of something like 'curiosity' for readers of the *Sunday Times*, at least, not without risking censure.

Of course, some forms of requesting and disseminating information come with a ready-made warrant for undertaking such activity. Basic research, for instance, requires no more than curiosity for its warrant. Seeking and disseminating information about homosexuality-as-sickness, homosexuality-as-criminal-activity, or homosexuality-as-sin is part of the proper business of professional researchers in medical, legal, and theological fields, or, at least, it was in 1971. Widdup's advertisement, however, clearly does not draw on such a warranting device.

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Here, the role of the clause becomes clear. While we could reasonably assume that those seeking the products of a butcher's shop (such as Aylett's) may wish to dine, the purpose for wanting information on homosexuality could not be left unattended. To make something of a breach study of Widdup's advertisement, here is the text with the clause removed:

*People who would like information regarding homosexuality write to David Widdup Campaign Against Moral Prejudice Box 3072 GPO Perth*

That the advertisement is not promoting some form of salacious or sexual activity is readable but not overwhelmingly so. This is a point made even more forcefully if the organisation's name is removed:

*People who would like information regarding homosexuality write to David Widdup.*

It is almost impossible not to hear impropriety, not to hear Widdup as a miscreant. What this suggests is that the 'problem' faced by avowed camp persons was the lack of a type of information about which they could make claims. This means that the proposal that homosexuals did not and could not speak on their own behalf, often made in lesbian- and gay-centred enquiry, may be too broad a claim. My proposal is that the problem was that the field of knowledge that homosexuals could claim as their own at that time was 'technical' rather than 'analytic'. That is, homosexuals could almost not *not* speak about or be rendered intelligible in relation to the specifics of sexual activity. The groundbreaking aspect of CAMP's move was its formulation of a new object of *analytic* knowledge—'a proper *social understanding*'. As such, CAMP laid claim to itself (and *camp* persons) as competent, if lay, social analysts.

My contention, then, is that camp persons did not start to 'come out' in the early 1970s but to develop and use a new collection for navigating social worlds: something like that of 'social issues' or 'social problems'. Concomitantly, 'the public homosexual' is not camp-gone-public, but camp-gone-public *as* a category in 'social issues/problems'. Here, some notes on what I mean by 'public realm' are required. By this term, I mean that bundle of collecting devices that are themselves collected by a common predicate, which is something like 'anyone can join'. Anyone can read public documents, join public institutions, inhabit

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public space, attend public meetings, or talk about social objects or issues of public concern. That some persons are actually, in practice, restricted from reading, joining, inhabiting, attending, talking, and so on does not defeat the argument, for such restrictions must come with some form of justification. That is, the bottom line is that 'anyone can', and we can see this *because* the exceptions must be argued for and *because* the limitations are routinely a source of interactional trouble.

I am not arguing that lesbian and gay sexual practice was not a topic or feature of at least some publicly or socially used device. All social action, including the constitution-use (or formulation-intervention) of topics, objects, concepts are, in some way, 'public'. Action cannot be social *and* wholly private—there must parties, plural, to the interaction. Given that homosexuality was known about in some form or other means, it was at least partially public. The problem was, however, that it was public in a particular way—as a 'professional problem'. Bluntly put, homosexuality had at least something of a public profile; it could be a crime, an illness, or a sin. In other words, if the question is 'what can be done to incumbents of categories of a device?' then in 1970, lesbian and gay people could be punished (as incumbents of a category called 'criminals'), treated (as 'the sick'), or damned (as 'sinners'). Obviously, these options were highly damaging for lesbians and gay men. As it was a *professional* problem, homosexuality was not a topic that *could* be either talked about in the everyday (at least, not without risking a charge of salaciousness) or administered by CAMP. CAMP, it seems, had a complex problem—*how* to get the topic of homosexuality into one of the devices that constituted the public realm but was not the jurisdiction of the acknowledged professional experts, without casting itself as necessarily salacious (and, thus, not credible).

CAMP sought and developed a new option. A rudimentary substitution exercise makes clear the sort of device CAMP used. If we take the phrase 'people who would like information regarding homosexuality and thereby assist in the development of a proper social understanding', we can ask after the sort of objects that could plausibly be substituted in the place occupied by the word 'homosexuality'. The question is, what sort of social objects require understanding or explanation? When CAMP wrote its advertisement, there was already a device that collected such objects, what I am calling, here, social issues. By this I mean those problems or topics that are not yet explicitly dealt with in the public realm, such as organised crime, corporate fraud, child abuse in the Catholic Church, the workings of an old-boys network or Freemasonry, depending on the era. They are topics that are not *quite*

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on the public radar; their incidence is infrequent or their exposure slight, yet they have the *possibility* of being topics of immense public comment or attention. Any such topic works as a substitution for homosexuality in Widdup's advertisement.

Prior to CAMP's mobilisation of the device 'social problems', I can think of few devices, if any, over which avowedly camp persons *could* stake a claim for governance or administration rights. By this, I do not mean that persons who could, on some occasions, be accountable as 'camp' persons were necessarily barred from making any form of public-knowledge statement. Coteries of camps may well have exerted their influence in any number of social interactions, especially those undertaken in particular employment milieus. My point is that activities routinely undertaken in such milieus were not undertaken *as* 'camp activity' or *by* persons 'doing being camp', at least not in a public domain. 'Matrons', 'newsreaders', 'set designers', and 'bread runners' did not routinely undertake public activity as 'camp matrons', 'camp newsreaders', and so on. They did not identify, and were not publicly identified (except at their peril), as some category of 'camp' person, such as the later possibilities: 'camp spokesman', 'gay teacher', 'singer in the lesbian and gay choir', 'gay community member', 'lesbian TV personality', 'gay actor', and so on.

This is hardly news, for it simply gets at the fact that 'camp' was not 'out' or was not in a public realm prior to CAMP. Put differently, and in procedural terms, it is to say that there were few public practices in which persons could be involved *as camp persons* (even if they could be identified by recourse to the category 'camp' in other—endogenous—accountable practices). When camp persons *were* brought into the public realm, it was by means of categories generated, deployed, and largely controlled by disciplinary experts. There was no 'public camp': there were only categories of and for medical, legal, and religious discursive practice, such as the homosexual as patient, criminal, defendant, sinner, and so on. Hence, when otherwise avowedly camp persons were included in publicly oriented semiotic practice, the means of doing so was via ascription in categories that they did not administer (homosexual-as-sinner, etc.).

This, then, raises the ethnopolitical problem of *how* to formulate homosexuality as a matter of public contention, such that CAMP members (and other avowed homosexuals) could have some form of direction over what could be known about homosexuals and homosexuality. Clearly, CAMP's 'solution' was to present itself (as an





organisation of category *incumbents*) as the proper harbinger of true statements concerning those who undertook lesbian or gay sexual activity. CAMP moved homosexuality into what we may call the public realm, *in a particular way, as a particular social object in and through its category work.*

In summary, with this advertisement we see CAMP formulate a particular sociological problem to which the advertisement is a solution—that of the need to go public not only *as homosexuals* but as homosexuals *who could make credible knowledge claims.* It did this by putting into play two new social objects and their attendant predicates. One object was a new category of person ('people who would like information regarding homosexuality'); the other was a new category of knowledge ('a proper social understanding' of homosexuality). The first object could be expected to 'assist in the development' of the second, having followed the instruction to 'write to David Widdup' for guidance on the correct means of doing so. It accountably located these social objects and predicates in an existing device (something like 'social problems') rather than in other candidate devices (such as 'perversions', 'crimes', or 'sexuality'). In so locating these objects and predicates, CAMP also claimed the ethical right to administer them—to establish and contest the boundaries of how they might be used. In other words, CAMP staked a claim to be the proper body to determine what may count as a plausible 'proper social understanding' of homosexuality: of how one may 'assist in the development' of such an understanding and of what such activity may or may not be.

Interestingly, although CAMP deployed a new category of knowledge concerning homosexuality ('a proper social understanding'), the nascent organisation did not elaborate on the substance of this understanding. In other words, CAMP put into play a term that could be used for many purposes. One of these purposes *may* have been to act as a means of identifying instances of a 'proper social understanding' (that is, of attending to substantive issues), but clearly, this was not the point of the advertisement. Indeed, in that the invitation was to 'assist in the development' of this new category of knowledge, it seems that, when it came to exactly what a 'proper social understanding' may look like, CAMP was very much making it up as it went along. The critical aspect is CAMP's claim that 'proper social understanding' (*whatever* that may turn out to be) is an understanding administered by CAMP (cf. Sacks, 1979). In other words, CAMP started to create a lay sociology, in which it could and did claim expertise.

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The sole surviving response to Widdup's advertisement is from a Perth doctor who does indeed treat CAMP's claim in such a way<sup>6</sup>. The body of the letter, sent to CAMP on 29 June 1971, reads:

*Recently my attention was drawn to an advertisement in the press concerning CAMP INC.*

*I am training in Psychiatry and it would be of value for me to know something of your aims and operations. As a medical practitioner I have often uncovered maladjustment problems related to homosexuality and frankly there is very little a doctor can do to assist. Reorientation of a person's sexual motivation, when attempted, is usually disastrous. I know there are many homosexuals who lead a fulfilling occupational and social life without medical or psychiatric treatment. I have found the most distressing aspect of homosexual life is the intense loneliness. It is very difficult to direct lonely male or female homosexuals anywhere for social activity. Usually they have to resort to the Shaftsbury Hotel or Swanbourne Beach.*

*With some insight into your activities I may be in a position to assist some people.*

In what is akin to a conversational turn, we see the doctor formulate and respond to (use) CAMP's claim as a legitimate provider of a proper social understanding. The point of the doctor's letter is to acquire usable, proper, appropriate information for application in his medical practice. We also know, from notes written in the margin of the letter (probably by Graham Douglas, who would go on to be the organisation's secretary), that CAMP responded, in the next 'conversational turn', to the doctor. Possibly, the organisation included him on its mailing list or urged him to send his unhappy clients to CAMP. That at least some of the replies to Widdup's advertisement may have disputed CAMP's claim to be a plausible (if lay) expert body or supplier of a proper social understanding is irrelevant at this point. The point is that the claim was intelligible as an uptake of an existing, but as yet widely unused, device (for CAMP purposes).

I cannot stress strongly enough the historicity of the moment we are considering. While Widdup's advertisement may sound antiquated to contemporary hearing, the 'development of a proper social understanding of homosexuality' was not only the proposed *outcome* of CAMP activity, it was a means by which CAMP was able to operate





in the first instance. In other words, '*a proper social understanding*' was both an outcome of and a tool for sociopolitical intervention, by which it could 'solve' a host of sociological problems, such as *how* to go public, *how* to make knowledge claims, and *how* to administer such claims.

## Conclusion

It is evident that social change of some consequence was taking place in Western Australia in the early 1970s. The question is, though, what is the specific nature of this change? And what, exactly, was it that was being transformed? I again take my lead from Sacks and McHoul. Sacks (1992, p. 226) contends that 'culture' is 'an apparatus for generating *recognisable* actions'. What this suggests is analytic terms such as 'social change' or 'cultural change' may simply be a gloss for changes in the apparatus. In this paper, I have tried to explicate instances of apparatus change, including change in methods/solutions and development of new sociological 'problems'. For my purposes, Sacks's categorisation work, especially via McHoul (1996), provides a means of investigating the routine, methodic grounds of everyday activity, including the production, recognition, and use of new forms of person, knowledge identity, and other social facts *as* constitutive aspects of these activities. More importantly, it allows a means of investigating the ways in which these routine methodic grounds can be amended or transformed in and through the very activities to which they give rise. In other words, MCA provides a means of investigating how it is that the doing of some deed or other may change the stock of procedural possibilities for what can happen any next time.

Technically, then, I propose that social change may be a gloss for a bundle of transformations of methodic practices, including transformation in the properties and application (or use) of particular collecting devices; a bundle of transformations in problems to which solutions are found; and the way these problem-solution doublets become the conditions for further activity. To use a very brief shorthand, social change is change in the possibilities of what may happen next and the practices for bringing this about.

The form of analytic work undertaken in this paper is, then, partially reconstructive. It involves not only investigating the ways in which social actors undertake and achieve accountable social action (including social ordering) 'for another first time', but how what is done and redone *can* be changed or *can* be altered. In other words, the task is

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not only to catch 'the work of fact *production* in flight' (Garfinkel, cited in McHoul, 1996, p. 104), but to see how a line of flight may be altered by the very fact of flying.

## Notes

1. For histories of CAMP, see Plunkett (2005), Willett (2000), Reynolds (2002), and Thompson (1985).
2. The Homosexual Law Reform Society (HLRS) and the Australasian Lesbian Movement (ALM) both predate CAMP. However, the HLRS was not avowedly 'homosexual controlled' and the ALM was not 'out' in the sense that its spokesperson was an avowed heterosexual woman. See Willett (2000) for a detailed account of the differences between these organisations and CAMP.
3. I am aware that calling CAMP a 'lesbian and gay' organisation is somewhat anachronistic. At least in its early days, CAMP was more properly a homosexual or 'camp' organisation, with 'camp' being the 'insider' term prior to the take-up of 'gay' then 'gay and lesbian', 'lesbian and gay', 'lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender', 'queer', and so on, as the political movement developed. Although space does not permit the matter to be considered here, there is detailed consideration in my longer study (Plunkett, 2005). Likewise, the relationship between CAMP as the organisation's name and 'camp' as a term of avowal for the otherwise 'homosexual' is considered only briefly here. A fuller explication is also available in Plunkett (2005).
4. Men wanting sex with men were by no means the only or even most frequent users of the personals-as advertising-for-sex. The Sunday Times (12 April 1970, p. 121) carries advertisements for heterosexual 'massage' and 'escorts' as well as couple-to-couple sex. For instance, '*Married couples to meet other married couples for swinging party*'. Sex for money, sex with someone of the same sex, or sex with more than one person at once are common predicates found in the 'Personal' columns.
5. The letter is held by the Gay and Lesbian Archives of Western Australia (Murdoch University Library) in the Douglas Collection.





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