



## Rationing Relationships: Street-Level Bureaucrats and the Search for Professional Status?

# Geoff Page

PhD Student – Institute of Criminology

Institute of Criminology PhD Public Seminar Series

Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2011, 4.30pm

Seminar Room B3, Institute of Criminology,  
Sidgwick Avenue, Cambridge, CB3 9DA

This PhD seminar precedes the seminar to be given by Professor D. Wayne Osgood at 5.30pm.

Using empirical data from nine months of participant observation and 70 semi-structured interviews, I will look at the role of therapeutic relationships in the work and identity of Drug Interventions Programme (DIP) case managers. DIP is theoretically a criminal justice organisation, working with class A drug-using acquisitive offenders. However, many case managers choose to identify their work as primarily health or social welfare rather than criminal justice related. I will argue that this emphasis is shaped by the role of the therapeutic alliance, which acts as a key repository of credibility, status and job satisfaction for frontline DIP workers. It supports claims to professional standing and expertise, and the lack of managerial oversight (in a field riven with file audits, paperwork and checks on process) leaves therapeutic relationships and client time as one of the only remaining sites of professional discretion. In line with Lipsky's model of *Street Level Bureaucracy*, I venture that demand for these relational resources outstrips supply, and that professionals' conceptions of their roles, perception of clients, and constructions of shared stereotypes shape their use of discretion to ration access to their time, therapeutic support, and willingness to 'go the extra mile.' I will draw on case studies to illustrate this contention.

This seminar is part of the IoC Public Seminar Series, and is open to all interested in attending.  
If you wish to be added to the seminar mailing list, please contact: Joanne Garner, on:

[jf225@cam.ac.uk](mailto:jf225@cam.ac.uk)