

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	vii
<i>Foreword by Steven Maynard-Moody</i>	ix
<i>Preface to the English Edition</i>	xiii
Introduction	1
Analytical framework and research methods	6
Bureaucratic encounters: from the social problem to the sociological object	6
Roles, identities and institutions	13
Bureaucratic relationships and power relations	15
Fieldwork and methodology	16
Part I The Social Conditions of the Administrative Relationship	23
I. The public	25
Dealing first-hand with social transformations	25
Social differences in the relationship to the institution	29
Diverse institutional careers	31
Expressing social discontent	34
II. Organising face-to-face encounters	37
Organising the reception	37
Of spatial and human divisions	42
III. An unequal relationship	47
Producing deference	47
Institutional answers to ordinary demands	52
Surrendering to the institution	58
IV. Administrative exchanges, normative exchanges	60
Identity control	61
From administrative to social goodwill	65
Part II The Agent's Two Bodies	73
I. The post and the role of the agent	75
An isolated post	76
A loosely defined function	77
Disputes on the definition of the agent's role	80
II. On becoming an agent	82
Integration by accident	83

Reception work as an escape	86
How to learn what cannot be taught	89
III. The agents as individuals	92
Personal dispositions, relationship to the job and definition of the role	92
Of 'instinct' in reception work	98
IV. Facing misery	100
Suffering of the client, suffering of the agent	101
Individual involvement and social vocations	104
V. Managing social inequality	107
Adapting to the public	108
The social conditions of compassion	112
VI. The agent's separate identities	116
The ambiguity of personalisation	117
A necessary self-division	123
When self-division fails	127
Self-division strategies	131
Part III Questioning the Institutional Order	137
I. Flaws in the system	139
Irregularities	139
Injustice	145
The uses of discretion	150
II. Putting up with the institution	154
A strategic docility?	154
Silence: between deprivation and self-protection	157
Distance, defiance, distrust	160
III. The return of the repressed individual	163
When visitors get personal	163
Deterioration of the exchange	165
The difficulties in dealing with violence	169
IV. Adapting the institution	176
A place to talk	177
New uses of the institution, new institutional roles	179
Conclusion	183
<i>Appendix 1: Biographical Notes on the Reception Agents</i>	<i>185</i>
<i>Appendix 2: Glossary of Acronyms</i>	<i>189</i>
<i>References</i>	<i>191</i>
<i>Author Index</i>	<i>201</i>
<i>Subject Index</i>	<i>205</i>