

## 2009 School Seminar Series

Waikato Management School  
Te Raupapa



# Who's In, Who's Not: Deciding Who Gets in to Supported Housing for People with Psychiatric Disabilities

Thursday, 5 March 2009  
3.00pm – 4:00pm  
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### Abstract

This presentation examines how written and spoken language is used to categorize potential residents for supported housing designated for people with psychiatric disabilities in order to determine eligibility for inclusion in such housing. It examines the discursive work of agency representatives as they use categories to construct versions of clients as appropriate or inappropriate for housing. I show that what appear to be clear cut criteria for admission such as medication compliance, no history of violent behaviour, and no addictions are in fact contingent, locally negotiated categories that are used by agency representatives in flexible ways to determine worthiness for admission to supported housing. The categorization work of agency representatives in turn produces the meanings of the categories themselves. In doing the discursive work of categorization, agency representatives negotiate a "dilemma of caring" in which they must tread a careful path between the directives of the organizations they work for and their view of themselves as caring professionals.

Barbara Schneider is Associate Professor in the Faculty of Communication and Culture at the University of Calgary, Canada, where she teaches research methods, organizational communication, and communication theory. She has recently completed two participatory action research projects that involved people diagnosed with schizophrenia as co-researchers to investigate their interactions with medical professionals and housing for people with psychiatric disabilities. Her current research is on media representations of homelessness and mental illness. She hopes to work with journalists and homeless people to change coverage of homelessness.

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