

# Propositions

Belonging to the doctoral dissertation

## **Uncertainty in Bureaucracy:** *Toward a Sociological Understanding of Frontline Decision Making*

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1. In making decisions about citizens, frontline officials mainly experience action uncertainties involving the need to improvise to keep in control of situations (this dissertation).
2. Since frontline officials need to make judgments based on incomplete information, they actively construct convincing stories to make a case (this dissertation).
3. Frontline officials' decisions on a case are not only determined by substantive considerations, but also by social dynamics within public encounters and collegial interactions (this dissertation).
4. Signals about cases do not have a determinate meaning for frontline officials, but are interpreted in light of the broader picture that has been formed of the citizen (this dissertation).
5. Stereotypes about citizens not only serve as informational signals informing officials' judgments, but also serve as frames affecting frontline officials' interpretation of other citizen signals (this dissertation).
6. Since frontline officials are part of society and do not make decisions about citizens in a vacuum, public administration scholars should go beyond testing psychological and economic theories, to examine the explanatory value of sociological theories of decision making.
7. The adoption of undefined notions such as 'acceptability' or 'trust' within frontline policy delegates difficult interpretation issues to individual frontline officials.
8. Developing 'new' scientific concepts does not contribute to scientific progress if they are old ideas parading as new ones.
9. Instead of using top-down notions of discretion, public administration scholarship would benefit from studying frontline officials' own meaning making.
10. In order to study discrimination by public officials, scholars should not merely look at individual intent, but also at institutionalized practices.
11. Defining practices as 'reverse sexism' or 'reverse racism', denies existing power structures in society and ignores the systematic character of both sexism and racism.