

**NIG Annual Work Conference 2016,
24-25 November, Antwerp (Belgium)**

Panel 9: Behavioral Public Administration: Grasping the behavior of people - leaders, civil servants, professionals and citizens - in the public domain

Panel chairs:

Robin Bouwman, Peter Kruyen, Stephan Grimmelikhuijsen, Lars Tummers, Thomas Schillemans

Panel outline

The behavior of government workers, public leaders and citizens have traditionally been of the interest of public administration and public management scholars (Simon, 1965; Vigoda & Golembiewski, 2001; Whitaker, 1980). However, some have argued that the field of public management is lagging behind other disciplines when it comes to methodological development when focusing on behavioral aspects of citizens and civil servants (Gill & Meier, 2000; Grimmelikhuijsen, Tummers, & Pandey, 2016; Kettl, 2000; Raadschelders & Lee, 2011).

A number of prominent scholars have called for an integration of behavioral elements and social psychological theory in public administration research (See Grimmelikhuijsen, Jilke, Leth Olsen, & Tummers, 2016; Mosher, 1956; Raadschelders, 2011) while adopting methodologically sound methods (Kelman, 2015; Perry, 2012).

We define behavioral public administration (BPA) as: an approach characterized by the interdisciplinary analysis of public administration from the micro-perspective of individual behavior and attitudes by drawing upon recent advances in our understanding of the underlying psychology and behavior of individuals (S. G. Grimmelikhuijsen, Jilke, Leth Olsen, & Tummers, 2016).

Three elements are central to this definition. First, it takes employees, managers and citizens from the public domain as unit of analysis (micro-level). Secondly, it entails the study of how people behave and form attitudes. Thirdly, it does so by integrating insights from psychology and the behavioral sciences into the field of public administration.

Other disciplines like economics, management studies and political science have adopted psychological research, which has led to the rise of fields such as behavioral economics (see Kahneman & Tversky, 1979), political psychology

(Ansolabehere et al., 1999) and organizational behavior (Hersey & Blanchard, 1993). Only recently there has been an increase of public administration studies borrowing and extending theories from the field of psychology.

For instance, Bellé (2013) has focused on the actions of nurses in public hospitals, by creating conditions with low and high Public Service Motivation. Jilke (2015) focuses on competition and choice options in public services. Furthermore, citizens' reactions and judgments of municipalities and the role of performance information is currently being studied by a number of scholars (James & Moseley, 2014; James, 2011; Kroll, 2015). And some scholars use psychological theories as potential explanations of policy processes and outcomes (Vis 2012; Schillemans 2016).

At the same time, experimental research methods are increasingly complementing the methodological toolkit of public administration scholars (Bouwman & Grimmelikhuijsen, 2016; Margetts, 2011). Besides the application of an experimental logic of inquiry, psychological research has developed a reputation for a rigorous treatment of issues of measurement. Most importantly, experimental research enables systematic research of *causation*.

An additional methodological opportunity that arises when working towards a greater integration of psychology within the study of public administration is potential biases such as common method bias, researcher demand bias and confounding biases. A possibility here is scale validation methods. Although in general, public administration scholars do not employ scale development, there are exceptions, such as work on Public Service Motivation (Perry, 1996) and policy alienation (Tummers, 2012). Furthermore, some scholars tested the value of using short scales in survey designs (Kruyen, 2012).

This panel focuses on the use of behavioral insights from the behavioral sciences and social psychology within the field of public administration. This includes attitudes and judgments of citizens, the behavior of citizens and public servants and the interaction of public sector actors at the micro level. Therefore, the central question we pose is: How can we understand the attitudes and behaviors of individual citizens, leaders, civil servants, professionals and citizens in the public domain?

In this panel, we welcome:

- Papers that focus on psychological theories within the realm of public sector organizations
- Papers that employ sophisticated methods using the experimental

logic of enquiry and other techniques of measurement.

- Papers that focus on the discrepancy between (self) reported and actual behavior within the realm of public sector organizations
- Papers that test the validity of macro-level public administration theories with micro-level (individual) data
- Papers that develop and test psychometrically sound scales or meta-analyses

In terms of topics, we welcome papers that focus on:

- Citizen-state interactions
- Judgment and decision-making in public organizations
- Citizen satisfaction and trust in government
- The interpretation of performance information by citizens/ public managers
- The effects of administrative reforms on citizens/ public employees
- The use of behavioral science by public officials (for instance through nudges)

This panel is related to the Public Management sub-theme of the NIG research program. Specifically, our panel is linked to the knowledge goal of Public Management in Professional Organizations as this panel aims to attract papers that study interactions with and attitudes towards actions of public organizations. Moreover, this panel is loosely connected to the Evaluation of impacts of public management reforms as reforms often have impacts at the individual level: public servants and citizens.

References

- Ansolabehere, S., Iyengar, S., Crigler, A. N., Holbrook, T. M., Huckfeldt, R., & Sprague, J. (1999). Going Negative. How Political Advertisements Shrink & Polarize the Electorate. *Political Psychology*.
- Belle, N. (2013). Experimental Evidence on the Relationship between Public Service Motivation and Job Performance. *Public Administration Review*, 73(1), 143–153.
- Bouwman, R., & Grimmelikhuisen, S. (2016). Experimental public administration from 1992 to 2014: a systematic literature review and ways forward. *International Journal of Public Sector Management*.
- Gill, J., & Meier, K. J. (2000). Public administration research and practice: A methodological manifesto. *Journal of Public Administration Research and*

- Theory*, 10(1), 157–199.
- Grimmelikhuijsen, S. G., Gilke, S., Leth Olsen, A., & Tummers, L. (2016). Behavioral Public Administration: Combining Insights from Public Administration and Psychology. *Virtual Issue JPART*.
- Grimmelikhuijsen, S. G., Tummers, L., & Pandey, S. K. (2016). Promoting State-of-the-Art Methods in Public Management Research. *International Public Management Journal*.
- Grimmelikhuijsen, S., Gilke, S., Leth Olsen, A., & Tummers, L. (2016). Behavioral Public Administration: Combining Insights from Public Administration and Psychology. *Public Administration Review*.
- Hersey, P., & Blanchard, K. H. (1993). *Management of organizational behavior: Utilizing human resources*. Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- James, O. (2011). Managing citizens' expectations of public service performance: Evidence from observation and experimentation in local government. *Public Administration*, 89(4), 1419–1435.
- James, O., & Moseley, A. (2014). Does Performance Information About Public Services Affect Citizens' perceptions, Satisfaction, And Voice Behaviour? Field Experiments With Absolute And Relative Performance Information. *Public Administration*, 92(2), 493–511.
- Jilke, S. (2015). *Essays on the Microfoundation of Competition and Choice in Public Service Delivery*. PhD Dissertation. Rotterdam: Erasmus University.
- Kahneman, D., & Tversky, A. (1979). Prospect theory: An analysis of decision under risk. *Econometrica: Journal of the Econometric Society*.
- Kelman, S. (2015). Letter from the editor. *International Public Management Journal*, 18(1), 1–2.
- Kettl, D. F. (2000). Public Administration at the Millennium: The State of the Field. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 10(1), 7–34.
- Kroll, A. (2015). Explaining the Use of Performance Information by Public Managers: A Planned-Behaviour Approach. *The American Review of Public Administration*, 45(2), 201–15.
- Kruyen, P. (2012). *Using short tests and questionnaires for making decisions about individuals: When is short too short*. PhD Dissertation. Ridderkerk: Ridderprint.
- Margetts, H. Z. (2011). Experiments for Public Management Research. *Public Management Review*, 13(2), 189–208.
- Mosher, F. C. (1956). Research in public administration: Some notes and suggestions. *Public Administration Review*, 169–178.
- Perry, J. L. (1996). Measuring Public Service Motivation: An Assessment of

- Construct Reliability and Validity. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 6(1), 5–22.
- Perry, J. L. (2012). How Can We Improve Our Science to Generate More Usable Knowledge for Public Professionals? *Public Administration Review*, 72(4), 479–482.
- Raadschelders, J. (2011). The study of public administration in the United States. *Public Administration*, 89(1), 140–155.
- Raadschelders, J. C. N., & Lee, K. H. (2011). Trends in the Study of Public Administration: Empirical and Qualitative Observations from Public Administration Review, 2000-2009. *Public Administration Review*, 71(1), 19–33.
- Schillemans, T. (2016), *Calibrating Public Sector Accountability: Translating experimental findings to public sector accountability*, Public Management Review
- Simon, H. A. (1965). *Administrative behavior* (Vol. 4). Cambridge Univ Press.
- Tummers, L. (2012). *Policy Alienation Analyzing the experiences of public professionals with new policies*. Rotterdam: Optima Grafische Communicatie.
- Vigoda, E., & Golembiewski, R. T. (2001). Citizenship Behavior and the Spirit of New Managerialism A Theoretical Framework and Challenge for Governance. *The American Review of Public Administration*, 31(3), 273– 295.
- Vis, Barbara (2011), 'Prospect Theory and Political Decision-making', *Political Studies Review*, 9(3): 334-343.
- Whitaker, G. P. (1980). Coproduction: Citizen participation in service delivery. *Public Administration Review*, 240–246.

If you want to present a paper, please submit your abstract (max. 800 words) to NIG before August 25th 2016 via de NIG website.

About the chairs

[Robin Bouwman](#) is a PhD student Public Administration, Radboud University Nijmegen (r.bouwman@fm.ru.nl)

[Peter Kruyen](#) is assistant professor Public Administration, Radboud University Nijmegen (p.kruyen@fm.ru.nl)

[Stephan Grimmelikhuijsen](#) is Assistant Professor Public Administration at Utrecht School of Governance, Utrecht University (S.G.Grimmelikhuijsen@uu.nl)

[Lars Tummers](#) is Associate Professor Public Administration, Utrecht School of Governance, Utrecht University (L.G.tummers@uu.nl)

[Thomas Schillemans](#) is Associate Professor Public Administration, Utrecht School of Governance, Utrecht University (t.schillemans@uu.nl)

Questions about this panel can be directed to Robin Bouwman (r.bouwman@fm.ru.nl).