



# Research Methods in Public Administration and Public Management: An Introduction (Routledge Masters in Public Management)

By Sandra van Thiel

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Research in public administration and public management has distinctive features that influence the choices and application of research methods. Periods of change and upheaval in the public sector provide ample opportunities and cases for research, but the standard methodologies for researching in the social sciences can be difficult to follow in the complex world of the public sector. In a dynamic political environment, the focus lies on solving social problems whilst also using methodological principles needed for doing scientifically sound research.

Research Methods in Public Administration and Public Management represents a comprehensive guide to doing and using research in public management and administration. It is impressively succinct but covering a wide variety of research strategies including among others: action research, hypotheses, sampling, case selection, questionnaires, interviewing, desk research, prescription and research ethics. This textbook does not bog the nascent researcher down in the theory but does provide numerous international examples and practical exercises to illuminate the research journey. Sandra Van Thiel guides us through the theory, operationalization and research design process before explaining the tools required to carry-out impactful research.

This concise textbook will be core reading for those studying research methods and/or carrying out research on public management and administration.

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- Rank: #298096 in eBooks
- Published on: 2014-03-14
- Released on: 2014-03-14
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## **Editorial Review**

### Review

[...A] strength of the book, which truly sets it apart from general textbooks on social science research methods, is that the book is fully embedded within the field of public administration and public management. All chapters contain references, examples, and exercises that are explicitly about conducting research in public administration. The book thus provides an invaluable way of connecting undergraduate students to and embedding them in the world of public administration research [...]

Van Thiel's book [...] is an asset for any undergraduate public administration course on research methods. In addition, its focus on the unique nature of our field of study is an important point of departure for introducing the field to undergraduate students. Between the lines, the book also invites a more advanced audience to reflect on the appropriateness of ongoing methodological developments given the unique characteristics of public administration research.

*Public Administration Review, Vol. 74, Issue 6*

This invaluable book provides a wealth of practical advice and methodological insights. It draws from Professor van Thiel's extensive experience as a leading public administration scholar, and someone who is equally at home in undertaking research for theory testing, issue exploration, or policy development. The book contains numerous worked examples, case studies and a glossary, making it the ideal companion for the public administration researcher at whatever stage in their career.

*Professor Chris Skelcher, University of Birmingham, UK*

Writing methodology books in such a messy field as public administration is difficult. Writing them for beginners is doubly difficult. Sandra van Thiel has overcome these difficulties to give us a book that is concise, accessible and comprehensive. She has also managed to treat the methodology wars within the field in a very even-handed way: even where I disagreed with her I found her account balanced and fair. Highly recommended.

*Christopher Pollitt, Emeritus Professor, Public Management Institute, Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium*

This book is long overdue. Studying and doing research in Public Administration and Public Management has become ever more popular in recent years. In doing that we utilize all modern research methodologies of the social sciences, as we should! But at the same time research in these areas poses unique problems and challenges. At last we finally have our own textbook which explicates these problems and demonstrates how to handle them, using inspiring examples of 'best practice' in public administration research.

*Prof. Dr. Werner Jann, Chair for Political Science, Administration and Organization, Faculty for Economics and Social Sciences, Potsdam University, Germany*

Sandra van Thiel has produced the solution for a problem faced by students and supervisors of research in public administration: how to make a rigorous exposition of research methods relevant to the investigation of problems in public policy and management. Embedded in the problems faced by public and related

organisations, *Research Methods in Public Administration and Public Management* is a thorough, clear and focused exposition which will enable its readers to choose the right research strategy and carry out relevant and useful research.

*Norman Flynn, Centre for Financial and Management Studies, SOAS, University of London, UK*

Many scholars would argue that research in all the social sciences is essentially the same. Sandra Van Thiel demonstrates rather conclusively that there are special issues of research in public administration, and that our methods need to be considered in light of those issues. This is an extremely useful text for students embarking on investigating the workings of the public sector.

*B. Guy Peters, University of Pittsburgh, USA*

This introductory text on research methods has been carefully crafted for students of public administration and management. The book is comprehensive in its coverage, includes relevant cases, an up-to-date literature and sensible exercises all lucidly explained. It is an excellent addition to this quality series of texts in public management.

*John Halligan, Professor of Public Administration, ANZSOG Institute for Governance, Australia*

#### About the Author

Sandra van Thiel is a Professor of Public Management at Radboud University, Nijmegen, The Netherlands. From 2006-12 she was Associate Professor Public Administration, Erasmus University, Rotterdam, and she has been a guest lecturer at Vaasa University, Finland and the Catholic University at Leuven, Belgium. She has published, edited and lectured extensively on Public Management and Public Administration, both in her native The Netherlands and internationally.

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