
1 Introduction to the *Handbook of American Public Administration*

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PLUMBING THE DEPTH, COMPLEXITY, AND BOUNDARIES OF US PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Since its inception, the aim of this *Handbook* has been three-fold. We have sought, first and foremost, to assemble a unique collection of chapters that offers our readers a broad yet comprehensive scholarly overview of US public administration theory and practice—to be sure, a daunting task. United States public administration is vast in its domains, covering considerable intellectual terrain. For example, Dimock and colleagues have characterized merely the study of public administration in the following manner.

[P]ublic administration examines every aspect of government's efforts to discharge the laws and to give effect to public policy; as a process, it is all the steps taken between the time an enforcement agency assumes a jurisdiction and the last brick is placed (but includes also the agency's participation, if any, in the formulation of the programme in the first place); and, as a vocation, it is organizing and directing the activities of others in a public agency. (Dimock et al. 1958, pp. 11–12)

Their description covers a great deal of the US's intellectual landscape and captures a number of key elements of the study and practice of public administration, including the importance of the rule of law, politics, policy creation and implementation, bureaucratic engagement, and certain occupational attributes of administration and management. Each of these topics has found a home in our *Handbook*.

Yet, although robust, Dimock and colleague's description also overlooks other, equally legitimate aspects of the study and practice of US public administration. Even a short list of missing topics would include the significance of federalism and intergovernmental relations, the co-production of public policies and programs, enduring questions concerning the balance struck between bureaucracy and democracy, and the normative role of government in democratic societies. In crafting our *Handbook*, we have endeavored to be inclusive and holistic, incorporating to the greatest extent possible a review of such topics without “losing the forest for the trees.”

Moreover, as recent elections and the rise in nationalism—both in the US and internationally in countries such as the UK—clearly demonstrate, the act and practice of public administration are dynamic, constantly evolving in response to changing times, politics, and circumstances. A *Handbook* simply summarizing where we currently stand in the field is unlikely to be of much relevance to future scholars, students, and practitioners. Consequently, the second aim of this *Handbook* has been to provide a forum through which our authors and readers might consider complex, under-explored issues that are likely to shape the development of future research in the field.

2 *Handbook of American public administration*

To this end, *Handbook* contributors were given a great deal of latitude in writing their chapters. They were simply asked to provide a thorough outline of the current research on a topic widely viewed as central to the field and to chart a research agenda for future attention and work in that area. It is our hope that this dual approach will offer readers an in-depth, holistic review of the academic research on US public administration alongside an equally robust and insightful set of discussions on the state and future direction of the field.

Finally, we specifically set out to include a mix of senior, junior, and emerging scholars in the *Handbook*. Our intention, in doing so, was to encourage a healthy dialogue across the chapters and between our contributors about the current and future state of the field. The future of US public administration, we believe, rests not only in a thorough understanding of our past and present but also in those scholarly voices that will guide us—hopefully adroitly—into the future.

OUTLINE OF THE *HANDBOOK*

In the balance of our introduction, we outline the basic structure of our book and briefly describe each chapter. To meet the aims described above, this book is divided into six parts:

- Foundations.
- Managing Organizations and People.
- Social Equity, Publicness, and Diversity.
- Networks, Collaboration, and Participation.
- Finance, Performance Measurement, Program Implementation, and the Public Policy Intersection.
- Conclusion.

Each part contains several chapters covering different topics and subjects, all loosely related. However, as is often the case in handbooks, not all of the chapters fit neatly into a single part or address separate, wholly distinct issues. In part, this is because we have attempted to be as wide-ranging and comprehensive as possible in selecting topics for the *Handbook*; it also partly reflects the nature of US public administration theory and practice, which have often developed in an iterative fashion, building on what came before and upon that which is proximately related. For this reason, readers concerned with specific topics are likely to find points of interest across parts and chapters.

Part I Foundations

The opening part of the *Handbook* tackles a number of topics central to any understanding of US public administration. It begins with a chapter on the importance and use of historical perspectives in public administration. This is followed by a chapter reviewing the legal foundations of US public administration, and then by chapters on executive and legislative power, and federalism and intergovernmental relations. Part I concludes with a chapter reflecting on the relationship between bureaucracy and democracy in the US context.

Chapter 2, “The value of historical perspectives in public administration,” by Peter Stanley Federman, asserts that an awareness and understanding of the history of public

administration is important for scholars, students, and practitioners insofar as it helps provide a contextual understanding of US public administration and because history has framed practice. For Federman, history is simultaneously “a map, a manual, and a tool” for understanding where we are and where we will go. Drawing on the work of Waldo and several other scholars, Federman calls for scholars to both remain attentive to history and to pursue new historical analyses—analyses that consider the philosophical, analytical, and technical implications of history and of historical developments for public administration theory and practice.

In Chapter 3, Andrew Osorio discusses the legal foundations of public administration, paying particular attention to administrative law’s bases and sources. He then turns to a discussion of the field’s “anti-legal temper” and its implications for theory and practice. Osorio suggests this “anti-legal temper” is both misguided and ignores several important contributions that legal studies can impart on an understanding of US public administration and management. To highlight his points, Osorio describes how collaboration studies—particularly those involving interlocal collaborations—could benefit by more fully incorporating the law and legal perspectives.

Chapter 4 turns to an examination of Congress, the presidency, and the administrative state. In it, William G. Resh and Haram Lee Zook examine several views of bureaucratic delegation and control in political science and public administration scholarship. Contrary to much of the existing theory, Resh and Zook suggest (1) Congress tends, for political reasons, to defer power to the administrative state, (2) presidents often attempt to fill this vacuum, and (3) much of the existing public administration and political science research ignores the profound influence—both positive and negative—bureaucrats possess in shaping US policy and constitutional governance.

Ben Merriman then shifts the discussion to intergovernmental relations in Chapter 5. Merriman describes several important changes in state–federal relations over the past decade. He suggests intergovernmental disagreements have become more frequent, conflictual, and partisan, and that, at the same time, the tools for state resistance to federal policy have expanded. This, in turn, has weakened or prevented the implementation of important federal policies and unsettled major judicial doctrines concerning the authority and scope of federal agencies. For Merriman, this trend may signal a shift of important administrative responsibilities from the federal government to the states.

The final chapter in this part, “Bureaucracy and democracy: perils and prospects,” written by Brian J. Cook, addresses an age-old conflict in US public administration wherein notions of bureaucracy and democracy are assumed to be at odds with one another. Drawing on the work of de Tocqueville, Weber, and Friedrich, Cook presents a compelling argument suggesting the relationship between bureaucracy and democracy is far more nuanced than usually assumed and that each has transformed the other throughout US history. Cook then argues public organizations are essential in understanding the bureaucracy–democracy relationship and for any effort to improve its prospects.

Part II Managing Organizations and People

The *Handbook*’s second part turns to a discussion of public organizations and public management. The part begins with a chapter on new public management—a global reform movement touted, in part, to improve the management of public organizations. This is

followed by a chapter on accountability in public administration and then by a chapter reviewing the core tenets of principal–agent theory and the significance of bureaucratic discretion. The next three chapters describe and assess aspects of organizational performance and employee motivation and engagement. The part concludes with a discussion on recent changes to public employees’ work environment and their potential implications for workers.

In the opening chapter of this part, Laurence E. Lynn, Jr. describes (1) the global public management reform movement known as new public management (NPM), and (2) the US’s experience with NPM over time. Lynn argues the US experience with NPM has, in many ways, been unique insofar as several of the core elements of the movement have always been embedded in federal, state, and local public administration. He then suggests a series of reforms under President George W. Bush accord with the logic of NPM and have come, over time, to be a dominant reform discourse—although the impact of this discourse has been limited in practice.

Chapter 8, written by Gene A. Brewer, reviews an age-old dilemma in public administration—a debate involving the balance struck between bureaucratic accountability and performance. Brewer suggests this tension can best be understood through two questions: to whom are public administrators accountable, and for what? He then describes how concerns involving bureaucratic accountability and performance rose to prominence during the Progressive era and why they currently continue to dominate the study and practice of public administration. Brewer depicts these tensions as lasting and evaluates how they will likely shape the future of American public administration.

Next, in “Bureaucratic discretion in public agencies: principals, principles, and agents,” Laura Langbein describes the core assumptions of principal–agent (P–A) theory. Langbein suggests that core aspects of the theory lead, perhaps incorrectly, to the conclusion that public organizations are inefficient. She then uses the P–A framework to explain several common implementation problems and failures in public sector organizations, and concludes that the public sector context is likely to leave public employees with less discretion than commonly assumed—a factor that may harm public sector performance.

In Chapter 10, Sergio Fernandez and Sun Young Kim turn specifically to a discussion of organizational performance. They review and summarize six prominent research programs—both within and outside the field of public administration—to begin identifying and synthesizing key contributions and points of consensus. Based on their summary and conclusions, Fernandez and Kim offer eight propositions for public managers about how they can achieve high levels of performance and long-term success.

Kathryn Hendren and Sanjay K. Pandey then describe the important role motivation plays in shaping organizational performance and employee engagement. The authors review a series of interdisciplinary articles published over the past ten years in six leading public administration journals to provide a synopsis of public administration motivation research. Their overview identifies several common themes that have emerged from the scholarship. They then review the research on public service motivation before describing an emerging body of scholarship on public values and other prominent motivation theories.

Chapter 12, written by Heather Getha-Taylor, observes that an increasingly tight economic climate means (1) public sector leaders must start relying on options beyond financial incentives to foster public employee motivation and commitment, and (2) that many of these options will require government organizations and public employees

work together hand-in-hand. For Getha-Taylor, this suggests public organizations must increasingly focus on developing and nurturing higher levels of employee engagement and collaboration. Getha-Taylor then compares and contrasts the dominant US model with international approaches and offers recommendations for improving US employee engagement.

Part II concludes with a chapter written by Randall S. Davis. In it, Davis argues public administration and public employment are increasingly subject to hostility, negativity, and violence brought on by politicians and a public who are uncharacteristically critical of government and the public sector. Although great strides have been made in understanding the behavior of public employees, Davis suggests the behavioral implications of such hostility remain largely unexamined in the public administration scholarship and could lead to counterproductive workplace behaviors. Davis calls for more research in this emerging area of interest.

Part III Social Equity, Publicness, and Diversity

Part III engages with a body of research concerned primarily with values and a specific set of normative concerns focused on issues of equity and diversity. More specifically, the first and second chapters in this part consider the role of social equity and publicness in US public administration. Next, the part turns to three chapters involving various aspects of diversity. The first of these chapters takes stock of US efforts to achieve social equity through the human resources management function and the second summarizes US scholarship on representative bureaucracy and diversity management. The third chapter in this part applies an institutional lens to examine how race and gender have been treated in public administration scholarship. Finally, the chapter turns to a novel discussion of equity and equity-related concepts in US public administration—an approach that considers the relationship between equity and the logic of sustainability.

In Chapter 14, Richard K. Ghere engages in a rhetorical analysis of H. George Frederickson's work on social equity, particularly in Frederickson's recent book *Social Equity in Public Administration*. Ghere's aim is to assess the prospects for social equity and related concepts in an increasingly contentious and hostile environment. To do this, he relies on the work of Kenneth Burke, Chaim Perelman, and Gerald Hauser. Ghere's analysis leads him to propose five questions worthy of consideration for those interested in social equity.

Chapter 15, written by Cullen C. Merritt and Morgan D. Farnworth, then turns to a discussion of publicness. Merritt and Farnworth suggest the concept of publicness is more than a simple classification tool. Instead, they suggest it has specific implications for public management that scholars have yet to fully consider. They then evaluate how employee tenure, gender, and race are related to managing publicness as well as how these associations influence the actions and activities of public organizations.

Next, J. Edward Kellough reviews the US government's efforts to promote social equity by tackling discrimination based on factors such as race, ethnicity, and sex. Kellough discusses the pervasiveness of discrimination in the US and then turns to a review of several historical developments that have allowed for progress in the alleviation of discrimination, including aspects of the civil rights movement, the emergence of affirmative action, and the integral role of the US Supreme Court in shaping protections for women and

minorities. Kellough distills these developments down into five key lessons and discusses the prospects for continued progress.

Chapter 17, written by Leisha DeHart-Davis, Deneen M. Hatmaker, Zachary W. Oberfield, and Amy E. Smith, reviews and assesses the current status of US representative bureaucracy and diversity management scholarship. In addition to their general survey of the field, the authors consider US diversity efforts relative to the broader body of organizational behavior research occurring outside public administration. Their analysis leads the authors to conclude the field needs to broaden its approach to diversity, drawing more fully on theories and results from other disciplines, and to collect better quantitative and qualitative data.

Shannon Portillo and Nicole Humphrey then turn to a discussion on social constructionism and institutionalism in public administration. They suggest institutionalism with its emphasis on social norms, rules, and roles has become a focal point in modern public administration scholarship and of our understanding of administrative behavior. As such, they trace the development of institutionalism within the field, paying particular attention to recent trends and debates. Next, they underscore many of the ways in which the current focus on intuitionism and development of institutionalist perspectives has been highly normative in its orientation and in ways that may not always account for racialized and gendered assumptions.

Finally, this part concludes with a chapter written by Alisa V. Moldavanova. Moldavanova links notions of equity, particularly social equity, to the logic of sustainability. To this end, she reviews the sustainability research published in the top ten public administration and policy journals over the past 25 years. She assesses the types of research questions considered, the research methodologies employed, and the theoretical developments that have emerged. Based on her assessment, Moldavanova concludes that a number of factors have gradually led to a broader, more expansive understanding of the term sustainability within the field of public administration—an approach that enhances our understanding of the possibilities of applying a logic of sustainability.

Part IV Networks, Collaboration, and Participation

In Part IV of the *Handbook*, we turn to a discussion on networks, collaboration, and citizen engagement and participation. The part opens with a chapter defining and discussing collaboration, followed by another which describes public administration networks and networking behavior. The next two chapters evaluate various aspects of collaboration and its importance for public administration. The first of these chapters discusses the increasing importance of nonprofit organizations in the delivery of public services, and the second addresses the significance of collaborative local governance. The part concludes with a chapter discussing the importance of public participation in the development and delivery of public services.

In the opening chapter of this part, Rosemary O’Leary reviews the history, theory, and research on collaborative public management. She attempts to describe collaboration, its participants, general processes, structures, potential outcomes, and theoretical and practical utility as a tool for public administration and public management. O’Leary also considers what types of skills and conditions are necessary for successful collaborations as well as the likely future of collaboration in the field.

Next, Gwen Arnold and Luke M. Shimek note the increased importance of networks and networking behavior in the field of public administration. Arnold and Shimek argue, however, that the field has too frequently focused on discrete network topics rather than constructing a holistic network paradigm. They further suggest the field can employ the theoretical building blocks from network science to more fully understand and evaluate the role of networks in public administration. Using cases from the field of environmental policy, they illustrate how this might be done in practice.

In Chapter 22, Steven Rathgeb Smith discusses the increasingly significant role nonprofit organizations are playing in the delivery of public services—both in the US and internationally. He describes how—despite a number of innovations—this trend is putting pressure on governments, who must balance increased competition for grants and contracts in the face of increasingly tight budget and fiscal climates. He also considers the complex governance issues these developments create for policymakers and nonprofit and public managers, particularly when citizens' primary public service contact may now be through a nonprofit—rather than a public—organization.

Chapter 23, written by Eric S. Zeemering, draws on Luther Gulick's work to evaluate the ways in which US public administration research has contributed to an understanding of metropolitan governance. To this end, Zeemering reviews what we know about metropolitan governance generally as well as what we know about its significance on interlocal cooperation for the development of community goals and for delivering services specifically. Based on his review, Zeemering calls for scholars to direct more energy to unpacking the individual-level underpinnings of metropolitan governance and provides recommendations for future research avenues.

Finally, in "Public participation in American public administration," Tina Nabatchi, Suyeon Jo, and Matt Leighninger examine the current state of public participation in American public administration. The authors define public participation, clarify the differences between indirect and direct participation, and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of three types of direct public participation: conventional, thin, and thick. Next, the authors examine how participation has been used in public administration and generate a series of recommendations for improving the US's participation infrastructure.

Part V Finance, Performance Measurement, Program Implementation, and the Public Policy Intersection

The final part of the *Handbook* concludes with a discussion of finance, performance measurement, program implementation, and their bearing on public administration and public policy. The part begins with a discussion of public financial management. Next, the part turns to the links between politics and administration and considers how these links affect the policy-making process. This is followed by two chapters discussing performance measurement and its relationship to politics and program implementation, and then a chapter demonstrating how various design principles and strategies can be used to improve program implementation. The part concludes with an example illustrating how organizational structure can influence public health policy outcomes.

The opening chapter in this part, written by David S.T. Matkin, Youngsung Kim, and Young Joo Park, introduces a generalist public administration audience to the subfield, public financial management. Matkin and colleagues begin their chapter by

distinguishing the research traditions of public budgeting, finance, and public financial management. Then, they summarize the dominant streams of research in public financial management and highlight several important developments. They conclude with a call for experts in public administration, public management, and public financial management to collaborate more fully.

In Chapter 26, Sean Nicholson-Crotty and Sean Webeck examine how bureaucratic discretion affects policy formation. The authors begin by noting that we have learned a significant amount about how bureaucrats implement public policy and how elected officials influence bureaucrats, but that we still know little about bureaucratic involvement in policy formation. They review what we know in this area and then highlight three ways in which bureaucrats might influence policy formation: through their policy expertise, by building clientele and public support, and by acting as anchors in policy networks and advocacy coalitions. The authors then discuss several factors that may influence or alter the efficacy of different types of bureaucratic influence.

Next, Carolyn J. Hill describes how public management and program evaluation research communities typically address questions of program effectiveness. She explores how these communities have slowly accumulated an important body of knowledge, but also demonstrates that public management researchers have largely ignored key developments in the program evaluation field. She calls on public management researchers to more fully engage with program effectiveness research and illustrates how this might be achieved.

In Chapter 28, Beryl A. Radin draws on her knowledge and expertise to offer readers a conceptual framework of performance measurement. She notes that performance management reforms are now pervasive, found across the globe and in a wide variety of settings. However, she also indicates that scholars and practitioners have been slow to consider the importance of such diversity in establishing performance management and measurement regimes, too frequently focusing, instead, on the technical aspects of the process. She reviews why this trend is problematic and then presents a checklist which can be used to evaluate performance measurement initiatives. She concludes by outlining three distinct approaches to performance movement, ranging from positive to negative.

Next, Jodi R. Sandfort identifies what she calls “a deep paradox within public management scholarship”—a paradox in which the fundamental conventions of social science research have ultimately crowded out public administration scholars’ desire and ability to provide pragmatic solutions to the problems practitioners confront. In response to this paradox, Sandfort examines the use of a design-based, intervention approach to policy and program implementation as an alternative. More specifically, she draws on a series of practical lessons and her strategic action field framework to explore what might be learned from interventions in complex systems in order to create meaningful change.

Finally, Rebekah L. St. Clair and Kimberly R. Isett employ a novel statistical technique known as fuzzy set/qualitative comparative analysis (fs/QCA) to explore how structural factors can influence the design of public policies. To this end, the authors explore whether and when the characteristics of cities and their political elites influence the passage of innovative, progressive health policies in the US. Results from studies across nine major metropolitan areas underscore the ways in which structural characteristics, such as the demographic make-up of executives, resource munificence, and the distribution of authority within cities, may influence public policy adoption.

Part VI Conclusion

The *Handbook* then concludes with a summary chapter penned by Edmund C. Stazyk and H. George Frederickson discussing the future of US public administration based on the knowledge contained within the chapters and in light of recent political trends—trends that have made the practice of public administration increasingly complex and challenging.

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REFERENCE

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