In today’s society, the slight mention of the term management may cause someone to subdivide the concept into the roles of management, such as information, marketing, operations, personnel, production, strategic, and financial management. At the same time, someone else may subdivide the term into types of organizations, such as small business, sports, or university management. Then at another level, it may subdivide into theoretical frameworks such as scientific management or management by objectives.

No matter the subdivisions, management of any organization covers an array of viewpoints, approaches, assumptions, and frameworks—about numerous aspects, including strategic planning, organizational situations, leadership, change and innovation, and many others. In addition, literature about management often must engage in the conversation about the differences and similarities between private and public organizations. The question is, can one book capture all of this? The answer is yes.

In Understanding and Managing Public Organizations, author Hal G. Rainey does a thorough job of providing insight, evidence, and analysis about several aspects of organizational life in the public sector. The book is divided into three parts. It may be effectively viewed as having many components of an extensive literature review, because it situates public organizations in various contexts. “The book’s chapters flesh out the conceptual framework by reviewing the theories, research, and practices associated with major topics in the field of organizations and their management” (p. xii).

PART 1
Part 1, “The Dynamic Context of Public Organizations,” has five chapters designed to provide evidence of gaps in research that limit or ignore the public sector.

Chapter 1, “The Challenge of Effective Public Organization and Management,” focuses on the integration of management and organizational literature within the public sector context. Rainey argues that sustained attention to research about organizations and management that incorporates the distinctive characteristics of public sector organizations may contribute to advanc-
ing knowledge and developing quality debates about the effectiveness of public management.

Chapter 2, “Understanding the Study of Organizations: A Historical Review,” exposes the reader to several theoretical frameworks associated with the study of organizations. For example, the history of organizational theories often begins with a machine metaphor before advancing to a focus on human beings. At the same time, a historical review includes systems theory and other approaches. The goal in this chapter is not simply to provide a review but to situate the gap where the analysis of public organizations is excluded or brushed to the side in the study of organizations. According to Rainey, “this historical review shows that most of the prominent organization and management theorists have been concerned with developing the general theory of organizations and have not been particularly interested in public organizations as a category” (p. xvi).

Chapter 3, “What Makes Public Organizations Distinctive,” expands the previous two chapters to demonstrate that a comparison of public versus private management is dangerous. By oversimplifying the distinction, researchers have often overlooked the overlapping nature of the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. Rainey provides the evidence to begin the steps toward understanding literature and research in an effort to expose the viewpoint provided about public organizations.

Chapter 4, “Analyzing the Environment of Public Organizations,” focuses on the literature of organizational environments—“particularly the political and institutional environments of public organizations” (p. xvi). The literature shows both research applicable to the public sector as well as gaps where once again the public sector lacks attention in the literature.

In Chapter 5, “The Impact of Political Power and Public Policy,” the author is clear that several sources of authority and influence by government institutions and entities exert power over public organizations. The chapter effectively sets the stage for a discussion about power and authority relations.

PART 2

Part 2, “Key Dimensions of Organizing and Managing,” has seven chapters. With an emphasis on major topics in organization theory and management, the chapters in this section “describe current research on these topics and discuss how it applies to public organizations” (p. xvii).

Chapter 6, “Organizational Goals and Effectiveness,” focuses on performance and effectiveness. This chapter also includes models for assessing organizational effectiveness. Specifically, the chapter focuses on the goal approach, the systems-resource approach, participant-satisfaction models, and human resource and internal process models. Finally, the Government Performance Project is discussed as an example of an initiative in assessing effectiveness of governments and government agencies.

Chapter 7, “Formulating and Achieving Purpose: Power, Decision Making, and Strategy,” begins with contextualizing a prominent decision-making trend in public organizations. The chapter may be a strong unit alongside a discussion about the Office of Management and Budget and the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993, which requires all federal agencies to create strategic plans. “This chapter describes concepts, theories, and research that experts and scholars on organizations have developed about three of these topics—power, decision making, and strategy—and suggests applications and examples for public organizations and management” (p. 175).

Chapter 8, “Organizational Structure, Design, Technology, Information Technology, and Social Media,” examines the public versus private organization in terms of structure—that is, the ways in which an organization groups its resources to accomplish its mission. The chapter opens with a focus on the “division of opinion about whether public organizations have distinctive structural characteristics, such as more red tape than private organizations” (p. 211). It progresses with research on technology and design, then concludes with a focus on social media and public management.
Chapter 9, “Understanding People in Public Organizations: Motivation and Motivation Theory,” continues with an examination of organizations while bringing people to the forefront. Rainey provides detail about the concept of work motivation and several issues surrounding it within the public organization. He also addresses many of the foundational theories, such as Freud’s Theory X, McGregor’s Theory Y, Maslow’s Theory Z, and many others.

In Chapter 10, “Understanding People in Public Organizations: Values, Incentives, and Work-Related Attitudes,” Rainey teases out these three factors that he views as “distinct from motivation and motivation theory” (p. 297). At the same time, he is intentional about exploring work-related attitudes developed by organizational behavior researchers, such as job satisfaction.

Chapter 11, “Leadership, Managerial Roles, and Organizational Culture,” examines leaders in the public sector and the research surrounding them. Organizational culture is often said to be manifested in the core values and principles of its leaders. Therefore, “this chapter takes the approach of first reviewing many of the theories and ideas about leadership and managerial roles that have developed the field of organizational behavior and organizational psychology, and then examining concepts and ideas about organizational culture” (p. 336).

Chapter 12, “Teamwork: Understanding Communication and Conflict in Groups,” concludes Part 2 with a key focus on group dynamics such as group formation, contexts, and advantages and disadvantages, as well as groupthink. The focus is then shifted to conflict, including types and stages of conflict and the special considerations public organizations must keep at the forefront.

PART 3

Part 3, “Strategies for Managing and Improving Public Organizations,” has two chapters that focus on managing organizational change and development and advancing effective management in the public sector. Specifically, Chapter 13 explores the management of organizational change and development, discussing organizational life cycles, innovation, large-scale planned change, organizational development interventions, and much more.

In Chapter 14, Rainey acknowledges that public organizations continually perform crucial functions and offers an effective discussion related to organizational excellence. In order to advance effective management, all parts of an organization must optimize the use and effectiveness of its resources. Thus, the author reviews profiles of well-performing organizations in both the public and private sectors. Next, he reviews some recent trends in management reform and the pursuit of high performance that have had important influences on public management. Finally, he explores “one of the most prominently discussed and frequently employed strategies for enhancing the performance of government—privatization of governmental services, especially through contracting out” (p. 449).

Each chapter offers a box titled “Instructor’s Guide for Chapter,” which provides a list of what can be found on the text’s accompanying website—including key terms, discussion questions, topics for writing assignments or reports, and case discussions. The book also includes an extensive alphabetical reference section, additional reference materials organized based on the three parts of the book, a name index, and a subject index.

Overall the author successfully uses diverse literature in the areas of organizational behavior, organizational development, and management to situate the public sector in ways that help a reader gain understanding about public organizations. At the same time, the content of the book is effective for any persons who (a) manage public organizations, (b) question the management of public organizations, or (c) study the practice and theory of public organizations.
ABOUT THE REVIEWER

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ERRATUM

JPAE regrets the inadvertent mistype of ‘multicontextuality’ in the Fall 2015 article entitled “Intersectionality, Stereotypes of African American Men, and Redressing Bias in the Public Affairs Classroom” by Richard Gregory Johnson III & Mario Antonio Rivera.