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Editor's Introduction

# From Gentrification, Systematic Racism, Policy Entrepreneurs to the Myth of Expertise in Academia and Community Health Improvement

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**T**his thirtieth volume of the Journal of Public Management and Social Policy presents articles covering multifaceted issues such as gentrification, systematic racism, policy entrepreneurs, including myth of expertise in academia and democratic participation in health policy development in the United States. The volume starts with an assessment of gentrification in two cities in Maryland and Texas, respectively and ends with a discussion on aligning tobacco free living agendas in the United States. The five articles published in this edition express the coverage of topics welcomed by JPMSP.

The first article, "Gentrification and Nonprofit Activities for Neighborhood Development in Baltimore, Maryland and Houston, Texas," by Jesseca E. Lightbourne, Aminata Sillah, and Julius A. Nukpezah examines the role of community-based nonprofit organizations in neighborhood revitalization and community development as well as their influence on the level of housing services. Using data collected from community-based nonprofits from Baltimore and Houston, the study finds that gentrification contributes to financial, economic, and socio-demographic variations in the targeted neighborhood. Nonetheless, the article concludes that while gentrification may be prescribed as a solution to the wicked problems of urban blight, among others, its financial benefits tend to vary based on the neighborhoods, their socio-demographic and economic indicators.

In the second article, "Systematic Racism and COVID-19: Vulnerabilities with the U.S. Social Safety Net for Immigrants and People of Color," Adam M. Butz and Jason K. Kehrberg argue persuasively that while United States is known as a country that welcomes persons from all races and nations looking for reduced material hardships, its social welfare

system is more generally characterized as underdeveloped, restrictive, and exclusionary, especially toward immigrants and people of color. For illustrative purposes, they contend that public health benefits, food assistance programs, rental assistance, and cash assistance are not available to immigrants and racial minorities, making them not only susceptible to material hardship, but disproportionately exposed to pandemic conditions under COVID-19. Overall, the study concludes that government needs to improve its social welfare policy development to remedy systemic discrimination and COVID-19 problems to reduce inequalities due to lack of access to the social safety net for immigrants and other racial minorities in the country.

The third article—“Policy Entrepreneurs and the Advocacy for Vaccination During the COVID-19 Pandemic,” by Julius A. Nukpezah and Latara M. Arterberry—uses John Kingdon’s multiple streams conceptual framework to assess the policy entrepreneurs that evolved, the apparent windows of opportunity, and strategies deployed to advocate for mass vaccination during the COVID-19 epidemic. The article contends that politicians, political officials, including governmental and nongovernmental organizations serve as policy entrepreneurs and perceive findings from evidenced-based research on the COVID-19 vaccination as windows of opportunity for discovering a politically palatable solution that promotes social equity as it pertains to taking care of vulnerable groups and minority communities, and concludes that these policy entrepreneurs’ strategies are likely to prosper if they target groups with high morbidity, mortality and economic challenges resulting from the epidemic.

Staci Zavattaro, Sean McCandless, Pamela Medina, Claire C. Knox, and Esteban Santis, in the fourth article titled “The Myth of Expertise in Academia: A Collaborative Autoethnography,” examine what they call the myth of expertise that ordinarily shows how one can fit into academic spaces and places. This myth occurs when universities are commodified and marketized. Using their own experiences as educators, they share how the myth reinforces exclusionary practices rooted in an ethic of care. The new myth demonstrates how academic places and spaces and the people occupying them can, of course, balance their technocratic expertise with compassion.

In the fifth article, “Aligning Tobacco Free Living Agendas in a Community Health Improvement Plan: A Case Study on Democratic Participation and Economic Interests in U.S. Health Policy Development,” David B. Tataw deploys John Kingdon’s multiple streams approach to explore how local public health departments in the United States collaborate with other stakeholders in their jurisdictions in developing community health improvement plans to leverage community capacity and resources. Although the case study focused on intergovernmental public health policy development to advance tobacco free living in a Mid-Western region of the country performed at the intersection of participatory governance and democratic decision-making framework, the study findings suggest that economic interests and powerful corporate interest groups remain dominant in the public health policy making at both local/regional and state levels. Based on the generalizability problem imbued in a single case study, Tataw concludes that future research should use a multiple case method or survey research to examine health policy development in the United States.

In sum, I would like to thank all the authors and JPMSPP’s dedicated reviewers for making this thirtieth volume (Issue 1 and 2) of the Journal a success. Overall, the ideas and thought-provoking questions raised in the articles presented in this Journal will help our readers to enhance their understanding of issues such as gentrification, systematic discrimination, policy entrepreneurs, myth of expertise in academia and community health policy development plans in the United States.