

Inaugural Editor’s Introduction: What Have We Learned From ‘The Lost Year’?

Deborah A. Carroll – University of Central Florida

The discovery of COVID-19 in the Life Care Center assisted living facility in Kirkland, Washington in the early part of 2020 marked the beginning of the virus’ outbreak in the United States. And, more than a year later, the Coronavirus global pandemic continues to affect our lives, our economy, and our institutions in monumental ways. So, as the vaccine rollout has given us some long awaited hope that we will see a return to normalcy at some point this year, it is important for us to reflect on some of the important lessons learned during this lost year of being housebound and living virtually.

Institutions Matter

This past year has reminded us, perhaps more than any other year in recent memory, that institutions matter. From a highly contested presidential election, to vaccine development and distribution, to our impending economic recovery, public administrators played a crucial role in preserving and protecting the institutions that comprise the very fabric of our society and will continue to do so going forward, for the implications of strong leadership and good governance are essential for upholding our democratic ideals. In this regard, new JPNA editorial board member Tina Nabatchi and her coauthors have noted the threat to our democratic foundations and sense of “publicness” of public administration as a result of rising distrust, political polarization, and populism (Ventriss et al., 2019). And, the authors correctly suggest that those of us in the field of public administration need to use our voices to strengthen the ties between democracy, public administration, and public values through our teaching, research, and community–engaged scholarship (Ventriss, 2019).

The COVID-19 global health pandemic showed us the importance of leadership and our governing institutions, including coordination among them, to effectively respond to a public health crisis or perhaps any future crisis we might face. Unfortunately, vertical and horizontal collaboration among governing jurisdictions in the United States in the early days of the pandemic were largely drawn along political party lines. New JPNA associate editor Davia Downey and her coauthor suggest this was a reflection of the limitations of American-style federalism; however, the creation and implementation of permanent intergovernmental forums would provide for better organizational capacity for collaboration that is needed for an effective, holistic response to crises such as a global pandemic (Downey & Myers, 2020). At the state level, returning JPNA editorial board member Naim Kapucu and his coauthors examined and highlighted the differences in crisis leadership response to COVID-19 of the governors in the four most populated U.S. states (Sadiq et al., 2020). The authors remind us that, when facing a high level of uncertainty, decisive guidance, effective crisis communication, and collaborations with relevant stakeholders to help build coalitions and mobilize resources

quickly are paramount to effective crisis response that protects frontline workers, instills public trust, and enhances confidence in the ability of leaders to keep us safe (Sadiq et al., 2020).

However, coalition–building and collaborative arrangements for service delivery are not only relevant for government institutions. We have also seen greater collaborative partnerships implemented in the nonprofit sector as a reflection of entrepreneurship and visionary leadership. Returning JPNA editorial board member Hans Peter Schmitz and his coauthors examined the differences in leadership approaches of executive directors of U.S.–based international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) in terms of how they navigate between the internal politics of their organization and the external operating environment (Boyer et al., 2019). The authors discovered that consensus–driven and visionary leadership styles are dominant, regardless of the extent to which they may be involved in collaborative partnerships; however, such leaders are more likely to emphasize motivational leadership and relationship management, as opposed to executive directors not involved in collaboration who were more likely to emphasize task–oriented leadership aspects like decisiveness, cost–effectiveness, marketing, and outreach (Boyer et al., 2019). Effective leadership is crucial in the nonprofit sector, as returning JPNA editorial board member Fredrik O. Andersson (2019) has found that nonprofit entrepreneurs often face financial, information, and regulatory problems when forming new organizations, which can inhibit successful formation (Andersson, 2019).

Looking forward to our return to normalcy and impending economic recovery, we can speculate to some extent about how some of the longstanding institutional features of government finance might help or hinder our efforts. The topic of preemption has been at the forefront of state and local government policy, financial management, and intergovernmental relations, particularly as it relates to local ordinances and other restrictions recommended by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to combat the spread of COVID-19. In some ways, the constraints faced by local governments during the pandemic are reminiscent of tax and expenditure limitations (TEs) often imposed upon local governments by the states. New JPNA editorial board member Christine Martell and her coauthor have examined the impact of TEs on local governments and found that TEs imposed upon a local government's general fund have resulted in rather sizable increases in tax and nontax revenues; however, states in which procedural limits are imposed by voter approval or legislative supermajorities tend to have lower tax revenues, because of restrictions in their abilities to enact new or higher taxes (Kioko & Martell, 2012). For purposes of economic recovery, the authors also found that states with general fund TEs have higher levels of state aid flowing to local governments, while states with procedural TEs tend to have lower levels of state aid (Kioko & Martell, 2012). This is especially important in light of the fact that local governments remain heavily dependent upon property taxation. And, new JPNA associate editor Olha Krupa (2017) has found that costs related to property value assessment are highly elastic and correlated with assessor workloads and wage levels, but not assessment quality, which could prove as valuable information during times like these in which fragmented local governments might consider vertical consolidation.

This spring 2021 issue of JPNA includes two new articles on institutional structure and how it relates to public service delivery and public sector leadership. First, Park and Shi (2021) offer an examination related to the proliferation of special district governments over the past several decades. Using data collected from the U.S. Census Bureau, the authors found that special districts have largely replaced the role of general–purpose governments in terms of their expenditure trends, but tend to be more heavily reliant on user fees, which varies by service function and geography (Park & Shi, 2021). Second, Lee (2021) provides a detailed historical account of the role of Harold D. Smith, who was budget director under Franklin D. Roosevelt (1939–1945), cofounder of the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA), and made important strides in contributing to the professionalization of public budgeting and

nonprofit management during his time at the Michigan Municipal League (1928–1937). Perhaps most importantly, this article draws an important connection between leading a nonprofit during the Great Depression and lessons for doing so today during the severe economic contraction caused by COVID-19 (Lee, 2021). Coincidentally, Dr. Lee was my professor for my first class as an MPA student, so it is my honor to publish his work in this first issue of JPNA with my role as editor-in-chief.

Resiliency

From our institutions and democratic principles, to ourselves as individuals, this past year taught us that we are indeed resilient, but resiliency is not something to be taken for granted. As we watched the swearing in of a new presidential administration in January, a young woman named Amanda Gorman taught us a powerful lesson about how we are “a nation that isn't broken but simply unfinished...but that doesn't mean we are striving to form a union that is perfect...We are striving to forge a union with purpose” (Gorman, 2021).

Perhaps the biggest challenge here is highlighted by returning JPNA editorial board member Aaron M. Deslatte, who examined the biased reasoning of citizens in response to government activity. Deslatte (2020) found that local government sustainability efforts directed at broader and more complex societal problems like social equity goals may receive more intrinsic cognitive resistance to accurately communicating resiliency performance, because of citizens' preconceived notions about the merits of such efforts. On the other hand, new JPNA editorial board member Wie Yusuf and her coauthors tested a participatory approach to resiliency that utilizes stakeholders and found that structured, public involvement through collaborative sessions utilizing dialogic processes can help improve the quality of information produced, as well as better inform planning efforts that use local government resources to build social–ecological resilience (Yusuf et al., 2019). And, returning JPNA editorial board member Itay Greenspan and his coauthor offer some guidance here as they have found that mentoring, translation, and bridge–building help to create a shared perception that socially active individuals hold greater mutual trust compared to socially inactive individuals, regardless of whether such individuals are native–born or immigrants when it comes to volunteer settings (Sportmann & Greenspan, 2019).

Along these lines, returning JPNA editorial board member Nathaniel Wright and his coauthor remind us that community-based nongovernmental organizations have emerged as leaders in local economic development, as they have increased their capacity for undertaking community sustainability projects (Wright & Reames, 2020). Through a survey of 134 community action agencies, the authors found that community engagement, human resource capacity, government collaboration, government funding, and revenue diversification help to determine the effectiveness of community sustainability performance (Wright & Reames, 2020). On the other hand, the authors caution that too much reliance on government funding might negatively impact the ability of community based nonprofits to achieve their community sustainability goals, as well as limit their important societal and democratic roles (Wright & Reames, 2020).

As we move forward toward economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, new JPNA editorial board member Ileana Steccolini and her coauthors also offer some valuable advice by recognizing that governments will need to place a stronger emphasis on the anticipatory role of budgeting, greater involvement of citizens, and more attention to the risks of corruption to help reduce public organizations' exposures to fiscal shocks and help ensure governmental resilience (Anessi-Pessina, 2020). Further, returning JPNA editorial board member Khaldoun AbouAssi and his coauthors examined both local governmental and nongovernmental organizational perceptions of resource scarcity, and found they are associated with the

propensity to collaborate across sectors with respect to local governments' decisions to collaborate, but not for the NGOs in their study (AbouAssi et al., 2020).

In this spring 2021 issue of JPNA, we have four articles that help speak to the need for continual efforts to maintain and ensure sustainability during challenging times like we have seen the past year, as well as more broadly going forward. Propher and Mata (2021) offer evidence to suggest that Colorado's early warning survey system, which was administered to local government officials shortly after the governor imposed their stay-at-home order, was used to inform state government officials of necessary fiscal response policies by identifying local fiscal impacts stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, in an effort to improve decision making when it comes to the state's economic recovery.

Moreover, in this issue, Trull (2021) reminds us that nonprofit boards are instrumental in organizational sustainability, and offers a review of Valerie Jones' book, *Nonprofit Hero: Five Easy Steps to Successful Board Fundraising*, which focuses on the crucial role of nonprofit boards in raising necessary funds for carrying out their missions. This topic is especially timely as we have seen nonprofit organizations struggle to leverage resources during the pandemic. And, while Akingbola and Phaethayanan (2021) note that employee-volunteer interchangeability provides important human and social capital to further drive the competitive advantage of social enterprise organizations, the authors warn this paradox can also hinder organizational strategies and growth. Further, nonprofits that operate as multisite organizations experience some conflicts between their headquarters and affiliate offices are inherently different from nonprofits operating at a single site, so Myer (2021) provides useful strategies for managing these conflicts to help ensure organizational sustainability.

Social Justice

"We've learned that quiet isn't always peace...And the norms and notions of what just is...Isn't always just-ice" (Amanda Gorman, 2021). This year, many of us witnessed an eye opening account of race relations in this country, as it played out on our televisions daily. Although, for many of us, this was not a lesson, but rather a reminder of our repeated failings "to compose a country committed to all cultures, colors, characters and conditions of man" (Amanda Gorman, 2021). To that end, right now must be the time to overcome our propensity to marginalize our fellow people, "because we know our inaction and inertia will be the inheritance of the next generation" (Amanda Gorman, 2021). And, it begins with our institutions, our field of public administration, and with each of us as individuals.

Returning JPNA editorial board member Norma Riccucci and her coauthors remind us that the U.S. Supreme Court's 2013 decision in *Shelby County v. Holder* struck down key provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, thereby making it easier for states to change election laws that perpetuate voter suppression and the disenfranchisement of persons of color (Portillo et al., 2021). More specifically, the authors contend that although public administrators are obligated to function on a nonpartisan basis, there is great need to focus on issues of equity and access to the ballot box, because public administrators are often responsible for policy implementation, serve as stewards of governance, and must help to ensure our democratic ideals are met in the most effective, efficient, and equitable ways possible (Portillo et al., 2021). Moreover, new JPNA editorial board member Rajade Berry-James and her coauthors offer another important reminder that the 2020 Census will determine the demographic profiles of local communities, how seats are allocated in the House of Representatives, the way in which congressional districts are drawn, and the fiscal devolution supporting necessary government programs across the country (Berry-James et al., 2020). These institutions matter a great deal for our much needed pursuit of greater equity, inclusion, and social justice.

Along these lines, returning JPNA editorial board member Brandi Blessett (2020) challenges normative public administration practices aimed at urban renewal to re-prioritize equity and inclusion above the current focus on effectiveness, efficiency, and economy. Blessett (2020) explains that using a race conscious lens to develop and implement urban renewal policies is necessary to make it more accessible to our diverse citizenry and more responsive to the complexities of our current environment. In doing so, we may perhaps take advice from new JPNA Book Review associate editor Nicole R. Elias and her coauthor, who urge the use of pop culture in both public administration scholarship and pedagogy to shape perceptions about public administration by providing important framing of messages both about the field and for the field, particularly during this time of repetitious messaging about COVID-19, police brutality, immigrant detention, and family separation (McCandless & Elias, 2020).

Speaking of law enforcement, new JPNA Social Equity section associate editor Helen H. Yu (2020) noted that much of the academic research on women in federal law enforcement treat women as a homogeneous group in terms of race and ethnicity, although their workplace experiences and perspectives very much differ between white women and women of color, particularly related to promotions, the inclusivity of their work culture, and experiences with sex discrimination (Yu, 2020).

In the nonprofit sector, new JPNA New Voices section associate editor Jaclyn S. Piatak and her coauthor examine the inclusiveness of American museums with public-serving missions and found that Black and Latinx individuals are more likely to participate in art museums for cultural heritage reasons compared to White patrons, which highlights the need to make museums more inclusive, as they are an important part of our cultural landscape (Olivares & Piatak, 2021).

In this spring 2021 issue of JPNA, we have three articles that speak to this broader issue of social justice. Beaty (2021) examines the hollowing of the state when it comes to prisoner reentry programs, which are part of a growing trend of using nongovernmental networks of both for-profit and nonprofit organizations to deliver social services to vulnerable groups of individuals, and for which the line between the two sectors is blurring, as the nonprofit sector becomes more competitive with the private sector for government contracts.

In our Current Issues in Practice section, Jackson & Fashant (2021) highlight the affordable housing crisis in Minneapolis, Minnesota that led to the notorious Tent City encampment for many of the city's homeless population. From the perspective of an Indigenous woman working in the city's social services sector, the article seeks to dispel some of the myths and stereotypes surrounding Native Americans living in the community and offers practical solutions for overcoming barriers to providing safe and secure housing for these marginalized community members (Jackson & Fashant, 2021).

In addition, this spring 2021 issue of JPNA launches our new Social Equity section as part of our commitment to enhancing diversity and inclusion within academic publishing that addresses any number of inequities in the public and nonprofit sectors, as well as topics commonly discounted in government and nonprofit affairs scholarship. For our first article, Rauhaus and Johnson (2021) use the lens of punctuated equilibrium to discuss the inequities created by the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic combined with the lack of paid sick leave in the United States, as compared to other nations that have enacted emergency paid sick leave in efforts to help flatten their curves of infections. By presenting a discussion of best practices globally, the research contributes to our understanding of policymaking in a federal system during times of crisis and how such policies, or lack thereof, can disproportionately disadvantage and further marginalize certain groups of individuals.

Finally, while I cannot speak for others' individualized efforts to promote social justice, I can speak to some of my own. In taking over as editor-in-chief of JPNA, I first noticed that, among

the 10 returning editorial board members in 2021, there would be only two female academics, of which only one is a full professor. And, I knew I had to change that. However, I was rather surprised to discover that my search for greater parity in terms of gender, as well as for greater racial and ethnic diversity of the editorial team, was both difficult to accomplish and invited criticism by some who felt my efforts were inadequate. That is both frustrating and absolutely correct. There is certainly much more work to be done. However, I do believe that adding 10 tenured female scholars representing a variety of races, ethnicities, countries of origin, and scholarship to the editorial team at once is an important baby step. And, a million baby steps still amount to forward progress. So, in that regard, I used this inaugural editor's introduction to the issue to cite the research of every member of the JPNA editorial team, because citations also matter. So, I offer this up as one more baby step to further the cause.

References

- AbouAssi, K., Bowman, A. O'M., Johnston, J. M., Bauer, Z., & Tran, L. (2020). Relations, resources, and costs: Exploring cross-sectoral collaboration at the local level in a developing country. *International Public Management Journal*. DOI: [10.1080/10967494.2020.1853292](https://doi.org/10.1080/10967494.2020.1853292)
- Akingbola, K., & Phaetthayanan, S. (2021). The paradox of employee–volunteer interchangeability in a supported social enterprise. *Journal of Public and Nonprofit Affairs*, 7, 89-107. <https://doi.org/10.20899/jpna.7.1.89-107>
- Andersson, F. O. (2019). The bumpy road of nonprofit creation: An examination of start-up problems encountered by nonprofit entrepreneurs. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 48, 194-207. DOI: [10.1177/0899764018785464](https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764018785464)
- Anessi-Pessina, E., Barbera, C., Langella, C., Manes-Rossi, F., Sancino, A., Sicilia, M., & Steccolini, I. (2020). Reconsidering public budgeting after the COVID-19 outbreak: Key lessons and future challenges. *Journal of Public Budgeting, Accounting & Financial Management*, 32, 957–965. DOI: [10.1108/JPBAFM-07-2020-0115](https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBAFM-07-2020-0115)
- Beaty, L. (2021). Ethics in the hollow state: Distinguishing between nonprofit and for-profit agents of prisoner reentry. *Journal of Public and Nonprofit Affairs*, 7, 68-88. <https://doi.org/10.20899/jpna.7.1.68-88>
- Berry-James, R. M., Gooden, S. T., Johnson III, R. G., Civil rights, social equity, and Census 2020. *Public Administration Review*, 80, 1100–1108. DOI: [10.1111/puar.13285](https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13285).
- Blessett, B. (2020). Urban renewal and “ghetto” development in Baltimore: Two sides of the same coin. *American Review of Public Administration*, 50, 838–850. DOI: [10.1177/0275074020930358](https://doi.org/10.1177/0275074020930358).
- Boyer, E. J., Kolkpakov, A., & Schmitz, H. P. (2019) Do executives approach leadership differently when they are involved in collaborative partnerships? A perspective from international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs). *Public Performance & Management Review*, 42, 213–240. DOI: [10.1080/15309576.2018.1480392](https://doi.org/10.1080/15309576.2018.1480392)
- Cox Downey, D., & Myers, W. M. (2020). Federalism, intergovernmental relationships, and emergency response: A comparison of Australia and the United States. *American Review of Public Administration*, 50, 526–535. DOI: [10.1177/0275074020941696](https://doi.org/10.1177/0275074020941696)
- Deslatte, A (2020). Positivity and negativity dominance in citizen assessments of intergovernmental sustainability performance. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 30, 563–578. DOI: [10.1093/jopart/muaa004](https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muaa004)
- Gorman, A. (2021, January 20). *The hill we climb*. [Speech audio recording]. Inauguration of President Joe Biden. CNN. <https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/20/politics/amanda-gorman-inaugural-poem-transcript/index.html>
- Jackson, J. R., & Fashant, C. S. (2021). Native American homelessness and Minneapolis' infamous Tent City: Dispelling myths and stereotypes to uncover solutions. *Journal of Public and Nonprofit Affairs*, 7, 129-153. <https://doi.org/10.20899/jpna.7.1.129-153>

- Kioko, S. N., & Martell, C. R. (2012). Impact of state-level tax and expenditure limits (TEs) on government revenues and aid to local governments. *Public Finance Review*, 40, 736–766. DOI: [10.1177/1091142112438460](https://doi.org/10.1177/1091142112438460)
- Krupa, O. (2017). Government consolidation in property tax administration. *State and Local Government Review*, 49, 27–36. DOI: [10.1177/0160323X16680270](https://doi.org/10.1177/0160323X16680270)
- Lee, M. (2021). The managerial apprenticeship of FDR's budget director: Harold D. Smith and the Michigan Municipal League, 1928–1937. *Journal of Public and Nonprofit Affairs*, 7, 46–67. <https://doi.org/10.20899/jpna.7.1.46-67>
- McCandless S., & Elias, N. M. (2020). Popular culture informing public administration: Messages and prospects for social equity. *Public Integrity*, 0, 1–15. DOI: [10.1080/10999922.2020.1837505](https://doi.org/10.1080/10999922.2020.1837505)
- Meyer, S. (2021). Understanding conflict in multisite nonprofit organizations. *Journal of Public and Nonprofit Affairs*, 7, 108–128. <https://doi.org/10.20899/jpna.7.1.108-128>
- Olivares, A., & Piatak, J. (2021). Exhibiting inclusion: An examination of race, ethnicity, and museum participation. *Voluntas*, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-021-00322-0>
- Park, H., & Shi, Y. (2021). District reliance by service function: A study of public financing of American special districts. *Journal of Public and Nonprofit Affairs*, 7, 10–28. <https://doi.org/10.20899/jpna.7.1.10-28>
- Portillo, S., Bearfield, D., & Riccucci, N. M. (2021). The disenfranchisement of voters of color: Redux. *Public Integrity*, 23, 111–128. DOI: [10.1080/10999922.2020.1796196](https://doi.org/10.1080/10999922.2020.1796196)
- Propheter, G., & Mata, M. (2021). Local government fiscal early warning surveys: Lessons from COVID-19. *Journal of Public and Nonprofit Affairs*, 7, 29–45. <https://doi.org/10.20899/jpna.7.1.29-45>
- Rauhaus, B. M., & Johnson, A. F. (2021). Social inequities highlighted by the prolonged pandemic: Expanding sick leave. *Journal of Public and Nonprofit Affairs*, 7, 154–163. <https://doi.org/10.20899/jpna.7.1.154-163>
- Ruiz Sportmann, A. S., & Greenspan, I. (2019). Relational interactions between immigrant and native-born volunteers: Trust-building and integration or suspicion and conflict? *Voluntas*, 30, 932–946. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-019-00108-5>
- Sadiq, A.-A., Kapucu, N., & Hu, Q. (2021). Crisis leadership during COVID-19: The role of governors in the United States. *International Journal of Public Leadership*, 17, 65–80. DOI: [10.1108/IJPL-08-2020-0071](https://doi.org/10.1108/IJPL-08-2020-0071)
- Trull, C. (2021). Nonprofit hero: Five easy steps to successful board fundraising by Valerie M. Jones. *Journal of Public and Nonprofit Affairs*, 7, 164–166. <https://doi.org/10.20899/jpna.7.1.164-166>
- Ventriss, C. Perry, J. L., Nabatchi, T., Milward, H. B., & Johnston, J. M. (2019). Democracy, public administration, and public values in an era of estrangement. *Perspectives on Public Management and Governance*, 2, 275–282. DOI: [10.1093/ppmgov/gvz013](https://doi.org/10.1093/ppmgov/gvz013)
- Wright, N. S., & Reames, T. G. (2020). Unraveling the links between organizational factors and perceptions of community sustainability performance: An empirical investigation of community-based nongovernmental organizations. *Sustainability*, 12, 1–21. DOI: [10.3390/su12124986](https://doi.org/10.3390/su12124986)
- Yu, H. H. (2020). Multiracial feminism: An intersectional approach to examining female officers' occupational barriers in federal law enforcement. *Women & Criminal Justice*, 1–16. DOI: [10.1080/08974454.2020.1734146](https://doi.org/10.1080/08974454.2020.1734146)
- Yusuf, J.-E. (W.), St. John III, B., & Rawat, P., Covi, M., Nicula, J. G., & Considine, C. (2019). The action-oriented stakeholder engagement for a resilient tomorrow (ASERT) framework: An effective, field-tested approach for engaging stakeholders. *Journal of Environmental Studies and Sciences*, 9, 409–418. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13412-019-00556-x>