Introduction

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This special issue on "Ethnicity and Public Policy" explores critical issues in public policy from various vantage points. Its scope is wide-ranging and aims at delineating and analyzing discourse and practices which both inform and constitute public policy on ethnic questions. It includes theoretical, historical and practical studies and represents a variety of approaches to both the definition and discourse of ethnicity and public policy on the national and international level.

ChorSwang Ngin's article "A New Look at the Old 'Race' Language: Rethinking 'Race' and Exclusion in Social Policy" seeks to deconstruct and place into disuse the vocabulary of "race" and "race relations" and the accompanying discourse on social relations. She examines the problems which this vocabulary and discourse pose in the academy, governmental practice and everyday discussion and inter-action, using an analytical framework informed by the work of British sociologist Robert Miles on the social construction of race. Rejecting race as an analytical and explanatory category, Ngin demonstrates how racialization of groups leads to negative structuring of both social relations and public policy.

In their article "Institutionalized Discrimination in the Legal System: A Socio-historical Approach," Michael Hodge, Kevin Early and Harry Gold seek to explain the contradiction between the continuing persistence of high levels of institutionalized discrimination in the US. criminal justice system and apparently decreasing levels of self-reported racial prejudice. To do this, they use a socio-historical analysis which focuses on macro-sociological forms of social control by legal institutions rather than on micro-sociological

expressions of prejudice. Moreover, they argue that contrary to the conventional view that links prior prejudice to discrimination, they also emerge, persist and disappear independently of each other. The authors also contend that an institutional model of discrimination rather than an individualistic one reveals often-hidden ideological roots and structural patterns which exist and persist to determine discriminatory outcomes.

Paul Dauphinais' article, "Local Control of Nineteenth Century Public Policy and the Ethnic Working Class in New England's Mill Towns," reflects on how local industrial structures act as a major factor in influencing both community formation and resultant public policy. He argues cogently that the economic structure of a given locality, by influencing the direction of public policy for its exclusive interest or in the public interest, can create a venue for contestation or cooperation between ethnic groups. This same process, he maintains, can either lead to openness and exchange among various given ethnic groups or to inward focus and hostility.

In her article, "Setting Sun: Popular Culture Images of the Japanese and Japanese Americans and Public Policy," Mary Young takes a critical look at the effect of negative popular imagery of Japanese on public policy. Reconstructing the historical framework in which this interaction of imagery and policy occurs, she traces its multifaceted forms and results. Moreover, she demonstrates the continuity of earlier and later imagery and the evolving public policy stances which are informed and influenced by this imagery.

In their article, "When all the World's a Stage: The Impact of Events on News Coverage of South Africa, 1979-1985," Stanley O. Gaines, Jr., David C. Roberts and Donald J. Baumann use a time series analysis to establish factors contributing to significant news coverage of South Africa between 1979 and 1985. They are interested in determining whether the geographic and/or socio-political impact of events rather than deaths caused the increase in coverage. Also, they discuss the impact of symbolic events on public policy and social change through media coverage.

Charles Henry's article, "Human Rights and National Minorities in the US," examines the challenge of redefining the traditional conception of human rights in the US and laying a foundation for a more grounded and useful conceptual framework in the context of a multicultural country and world. He cites three myths which inform the traditional view of human rights: 1) that rights exists only as individual claims against the state; 2) that political and civil rights should have priority over economic and cultural rights; and 3) that they are natural or "God-given." Challenging each of these designated myths, he poses rights as a political process of empowerment of people and relationships of power within and between groups.

Finally, Ron Schmidt provides "A Selected Bibliography on Race/Ethnicity and Public Policy in the United States." This selected bibliography includes nine areas of public policy: 1) general and group-specific overviews; 2) civil rights; 3) voting rights; 4) affirmative action; 5) political economy; 6) education; 7) language and culture; 8) urban policy; and 9) immigration. It is well-structured and inclusive and offers a valuable selection of essential public policy literature in the area of race and ethnicity.

—Maulana Karenga
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