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# Adminigration: City-Level Governance of Immigrant Community Members

Susan Bibler Coutin and Walter J. Nicholls

*The concept of adminigration provides a much-needed lens in theorizing immigration enforcement, citizenship, and urban geographies. We define adminigration as the governance of immigrant community members through city-level policies and programs, whether or not these explicitly focus on immigrants. Our focus on adminigration involves three theoretical interventions: (1) bridging literature on immigrant bureaucratic incorporation and crimmigration to situate city-level administrative practices within immigration policymaking; (2) a focus on how localized definitions of membership, as enacted by cities, produce citizenship, legality, and illegality, and (3) the argument that these practices play out in space, resulting in variegated urban landscapes that are better characterized as a network than a level. We develop these points through a review of the literature on bureaucratic incorporation, crimmigration, citizenship, and the spatialization of immigration policymaking. To illustrate the utility of this framework, we conclude with a case study of adminigration in a California city that we call “Mayville.”*

## INTRODUCTION

Consider the following scenarios:

- A resident calls the city refuse department to request an extra trash pickup and the person who answers the phone requests a social security number, which undocumented immigrants do not have.
- City council members approve an ordinance requiring that all city documents and websites be published in Spanish, Khmer, and Tagalog in addition to English, as a means of including those of immigrant background in civic affairs.
- City residents who want to qualify for a cheaper “residence fee” rate when reserving a picnic area at a park have to provide a driver’s license or ID card and a recent utility bill, documents that may be difficult for undocumented people to obtain.
- A city’s workforce development plans explicitly include immigrants, the disabled, and the formerly incarcerated.

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- *A digital access outreach worker consults with community organizations to determine what food is culturally appropriate for a neighborhood outreach event, a practice that seeks to make ethnic and racial subgroups, including those of immigrant backgrounds, feel welcome.*

These scenarios are examples of *adminigration* (see also Griffith and Gleeson 2017), which we define as the ways that city-level policies and practices engage immigration policymaking by incorporating and/or excluding immigrant residents. City agencies develop definitions of membership, associated with agency mandates and functions, wider city-level discourse, and city council policies (Marrow 2009a). These definitions highlight facets of social identity, such as language, culture, disadvantage, diversity, and documentation. When put into practice, these understandings of belonging produce competing visions of how, why, and whether immigrant community members are part of urban landscapes and communities. Immigrants may be lauded for enriching city life by introducing new cuisines, art, festivals, and businesses (Balint and Lenard 2022). They may be criticized for practices seen as deviant, such as collecting recyclables from refuse containers, or they may be regarded fearfully, as sources of crime or risk. They may be defined as members of vulnerable groups (non-English speakers, racial or ethnic minorities) for whom the city should develop equitable policies. They may be seen as an asset that helps a city appear cosmopolitan, or as a key workforce sector. Some officials may devise programs to integrate them into the cultural, social, and economic life of the city while others may deliberately or inadvertently exclude them through requests for documentation that they do not have (Marrow 2009a). While they take divergent forms, such policies can be referred to as “adminigration,” the administrative governance of immigrant community members as they are inflected within city-level policies and programs, whether or not these explicitly focus on immigrants.

Our theorization of the role of administrative practices in immigration policymaking is indebted to Griffith and Gleeson (2017, 115), who coined the term “adminigration” to refer to the “administrative (rather than enforcement and employment related) processes of immigration law—and the bureaucratic steps required to grant both temporary reprieves from deportation and work authorizations.” They argue that different mechanisms are at play in the precarity of immigrant workers, depending on their legal status. Unauthorized workers are deterred from filing workplace complaints due to the threat of deportation, guest workers are deterred by visa conditions that, for example, tie them to particular employers, and temporary workers are inhibited by administrative practices, such as the possibility that future administrations may rescind temporary statuses. Griffith and Gleeson’s notion of adminigration helpfully draws attention to intersections between administrative practices and immigration enforcement. In this article, we expand this concept beyond employment contexts and temporary workers to encompass the ways that the work of varied city agencies incorporates or excludes immigrant residents.

This expansive definition of adminigration bridges literature on immigrant bureaucratic incorporation and on crimmigration by situating city-level administrative practices within immigration policymaking more broadly. Work on bureaucratic incorporation has found that immigrants are recognized as part of local communities by interacting “directly with public service workers who, as ‘street-level bureaucrats,’ have substantial discretion to interpret, enact, and enforce government policies through the

execution of their work, even while remaining heavily influenced by rules and bureaucratic processes” (Marrow 2009a, 757; Lipsky 1980; Ellermann 2006; Jones-Correa 2006; De Graauw 2014; Paquet 2015; Belabas and Gerrits 2017). Crimmigration scholarship that highlights intersections between immigration and criminal law and enforcement draws attention to the broader enforcement context that gives such administrative practices legal significance (Stumpf 2006; Eagly 2010; Beckett and Evans 2015). Such intersections take many forms, such as prioritizing noncitizens with criminal convictions for removal, enlisting local police to enforce federal immigration law, prosecuting immigration violations as federal crimes, broadening the range of crimes that have immigration consequences, and criminalizing communities of color through racialized policing practices (Morawetz 2000; Eagly 2010; Alexander 2012; Dowling and Inda 2013). While valuable in highlighting the securitization of immigration law, this focus on crimmigration overlooks the broad range of city-level administrative processes that, as scholars of bureaucratic incorporation have recognized, govern immigrants’ lives. The term “adminigration” bridges these literatures by highlighting the ways in which city-level adminigration practices are a counterpart to crimmigration.<sup>1</sup>

Studying adminigration contributes to theorizing citizenship by highlighting its *localized*, *uneven*, and *processual* nature. Citizenship has generally been defined as a form of national membership that confers civil, political, and social rights (Marshall 1950). This definition centers the distribution of rights, obligations, and entitlements on the basis of governmental classifications of community belonging. Though the federal government has tried to assert a monopoly over citizenship, municipal, county, and state governments also develop their own classifications of belonging, as do the various departments and agencies constituting these jurisdictions (Holston 1999; Glick Schiller, Çaglar, and Guldbrandsen 2006; Isin 2013). They develop distinctive understandings of community belonging, some of which overlap and others of which do not. Rather being defined by a clear insider-outsider boundary, citizenship is an entanglement of interconnected norms, classifications, rights, and procedures that shape people’s lives. Moreover, citizenship not only confers membership and rights but also is a source of social exclusion, given that *lack of* citizenship is often cited as grounds for denying benefits (Bosniak 2008). We see citizenship as *uneven* in that even those who officially enjoy legal citizenship face discrimination (Turner 2016), while departments and agencies develop and act on different definitions of membership and belonging. Such localized understandings of citizenship are the counterparts of transnational ones in that long-term unauthorized

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1. In the United States, the federal “Secure Communities” program was launched in 2008 to enlist local police agencies in enforcing US immigration law, and in 2014, it was replaced by the Priority Enforcement Program, which attempted to do the same thing while sharpening the program’s focus on noncitizens with serious criminal convictions (Chacón 2017). Some cities and states sought to go further, seeking to make the lives of undocumented immigrants so difficult that they would leave the United States of their own accord (García Hernández 2013). States also sued the federal government over immigration policy, most notably, through *United States v. Texas* (2016), the case that led President Obama’s 2014 effort to expand deferred action to parents of US citizens and lawful permanent residents to be enjoined (Wadhia 2015). Similar dynamics play out internationally as localities express hostility toward asylum seekers, enact sanctuary policies, endorse nationalism, provide humanitarian support, interdict migrants so they cannot reach national territory, or extend the right to vote in local elections (Bauböck 2003; Griffiths, Sigona, and Zetter 2006; Mountz 2011; Griffiths 2014; Bauder 2017; Cabot 2020; De Graauw 2021).

residents occupy a liminal status, as physically present but potentially excluded as outsiders (Hammar 1990; Bauböck 1994; Glick Schiller, Basch, and Szanton-Blanc 1995; Mountz et al. 2002; Menjívar 2006; Chauvin and Garcés-Mascreñas 2012; Hallet 2014; De Grauw 2021). We argue that as localized understandings are enacted, membership is determined *processually*, both as a technical matter (How does one prove eligibility for city programs?) and philosophically (For whom are cities responsible? To whom are they accountable? On whom does city welfare depend, and how?). Studying adminigration addresses these questions, revealing how localized definitions of membership reinforce and/or contest national ones and how, rather than being a static status, citizenship is actively produced over time.

To assess the processual and uneven character of citizenship, our analysis privileges the local. We conceptualize the “local” as dense, distant, and proximate networks that shape everyday life rather than as part of a hierarchical scale below the “national” and the “global” (Hyndman 2004; Marston, Jones, and Woodward 2005). The local sits at the intersection of a variety of governmental, political, and ideational networks that overlap and shape the categories used to govern immigrants. The local is a concrete site where networks of varying strength (from strong to weak) and distances (from near to far) intersect to produce definitions of belonging. Belonging is consequently *spatialized* (Beckett and Herbert 2008; Soja 2010) as decisions about zoning, licensing, and the location of parks, recreational facilities, and so forth offer differing degrees of protection, forms of livelihood, and access to amenities. In recent years, local immigration policymaking has increased through what Gulasekaram and Ramakrishnan (2015) refer to as the new immigration federalism: the current polarized political context that links federal legislators to local party members who oppose compromising on immigration. Urban geography is thus a fluid network of nodes and circuits in which policies and practices shape how administrative categories are constructed and enacted by municipal government officials.<sup>2</sup>

In sum, our focus on adminigration involves three key theoretical interventions: (1) bridging literature on immigrant bureaucratic incorporation and crimmigration to situate city-level administrative practices within immigration policymaking more broadly; (2) a focus on how localized definitions of membership, as enacted by cities, produce citizenship, legality, and illegality, and (3) the argument that these practices play out in space, resulting in variegated urban landscapes that are better characterized as a network than a level. Below, we elaborate on each of these interventions and present a brief case study of a California city that we call “Mayville” in order to illustrate the insights generated through a focus on adminigration.<sup>3</sup>

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2. Though adminigration is about governance, its complex and multivalent character creates openings for resistance. For example, career staff may have norms that conflict with those of elected officials, or public demands may conflict with officials’ political ideologies (Jones-Correa 2006; Chauvin and Garcés-Mascreñas 2012; Marrow 2009b). Through such openings, some localities have pushed back against such restrictionist strategies by adopting sanctuary ordinances, issuing local identity documents, and treating undocumented residents as valued constituents (Armenta and Alvarez 2017; Lasch et al. 2018).

3. To prevent interview participants from being identified, we have anonymized the name of the city where we conducted research. Throughout the article, we have altered quotes to rename this city “Mayville.” To protect the anonymity of our research subjects, published city reports are not cited here but are available from the authors by request. Original, nonanonymized materials are available from the authors, upon request.

## BRIDGING BUREAUCRATIC INCORPORATION AND CRIMMIGRATION

A 2007–2008 project designed to assess and mitigate the impacts of a freeway on bordering neighborhoods in Mayville, California, generated a *Community Livability Plan*.<sup>4</sup> To develop this plan, the plan team members not only gathered GIS data and reviewed public documents but also conducted outreach and assessment with the council districts in four areas of a freeway corridor: North, Central, South, and West. In each of these areas, plan team members held *Neighborhood Design Workshops* in order to solicit input. City council district leadership and staff from city agencies such as *Development Services* and *Parks and Recreation* met with residents and community organizations to hear local concerns. Belonging and being a constituent whose needs the city was to meet through this plan were based merely on where participants lived, not on any formal legal status.

Our understanding of adminigration bridges literature on immigrant bureaucratic incorporation and crimmigration, a concept that emerged in the early 2000s to capture the convergence of immigration and criminal justice enforcement policies that made legal status salient to a wider variety of government transactions. We argue that attending to administrative processes as a form of subfederal policymaking provides a more complete picture of the roles that cities play in governing immigrant communities than would a focus on bureaucratic incorporation or crimmigration alone. For example, the *Community Livability Plan* discussed above put forward a localized definition of belonging, one that did not take federal immigration status into account but instead based membership—for the purpose of determining community needs—solely on residence within city boundaries. In so doing, this planning process put forward a definition of membership that differed from the securitized notions of boundaries that are central to crimmigration. The bureaucratic governance of immigrant residents is given legal significance by a broader national context in which unauthorized immigrants are criminalized and illegalized. Moreover, such governance can take multiple forms, ranging from excluding immigrants on the basis of legal status, language, or other criteria to explicitly including them through targeted outreach and consideration of barriers to attempting to shape behavior by distinguishing between “desirable” and “undesirable” qualities. “Inclusion” and “exclusion” should not be seen as a binary, as even integrative policies can be exclusionary, while policies that are designed to be restrictive may not be fully implemented (Nicholls 2020).<sup>5</sup>

Focusing on adminigration brings out the broader legal dimensions of bureaucratic incorporation. Helen Marrow (2009a) developed the notion of immigrant bureaucratic incorporation as an alternative to political incorporation theories that argued that newcomers had to become politically involved before

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4. Copies of this plan are available from the authors. Accessed October 29, 2021.

5. Our analysis of adminigration focuses on social inclusion and exclusion rather than integration and segregation, but it is worth noting that the relationship between integration and inequality is complex. Tommie Shelby (2014) points out, for example, that African Americans may choose to live in neighborhoods with a critical mass of Black residents as a form of solidarity and self-protection.

elected officials would pressure bureaucrats to adopt welcoming policies.<sup>6</sup> In contrast, Marrow found that bureaucrats who had a strong service ethos, such as school officials, supported newcomers even when politicians ignored them. Williamson (2018, 2020) refined this concept by studying how exposure to federal policies influences incorporation. For example, if cities are involved in refugee resettlement, they are likely to promote welcoming policies, whereas if cities host a detention center or collaborate in immigration enforcement, they are more likely to perceive immigrants as lawbreakers and to be less welcoming. De Graauw (2016) further emphasized the roles that community organizations play in influencing city bureaucracies to implement welcoming policies. The current context of new immigration federalism has made local immigration policymaking more common as federal polarization has given states and local governments greater discretion to set immigration policies (Gulasekaram and Ramakrishnan 2015).<sup>7</sup> Jennifer Chacón (2012b) points out that increased state and local involvement in immigration policymaking came about not through court rulings, but rather through shifts in federal policy that encouraged collaboration between police and the Department of Homeland Security, while Siemiatycki and Saloojee (2002) note that neoliberalism has given cities an even greater role in distributing goods and services and in policymaking.

Work on crimmigration delineates the broader context that gives bureaucratic incorporation legal significance. Juliet Stumpf (2006, 376) developed the concept of “crimmigration” to refer to the “criminalization of immigration law” through the expansion of the range of criminal convictions that make residents ineligible for legal status, the criminal prosecution of immigration violations, militarization of the US-Mexico border, increased involvement of local police in federal immigration enforcement, and expanded use of detention.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, Teresa Miller (2002, 2005) has highlighted the ways that crime control and immigration regulation have become intertwined as authorities treat immigration as a risk to be managed. Crimmigration

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6. Based on an analysis of immigrant political incorporation in Toronto, Siemiatycki (2011) points out that immigrant-friendly policies may not actually result in political inclusion if members of new immigrant groups are not able to successfully run for city-level offices.

7. Gulasekaram and Ramakrishnan write, “The bottom line is that subfederal policy proliferation and federal legislative silence (or action) are not independent phenomena; they are inextricably linked by the structure of our federalist system and correspondingly federated party structures. In our model, restrictionist positions that find traction in particular subfederal jurisdictions will necessarily tie the hands of national lawmakers of the same party” (2015, 91).

8. García Hernández (2013, 2016) attributes the rise of crimmigration policies in the United States to the decline of overt racism following the US civil rights movement; by the 1980s, he argues, US “policymakers turned to criminal law and procedure to do what race had done in earlier generations: sort the desirable newcomers from the undesirable” (2013, 1457). Indeed, Vázquez (2015, 2016) points out that in the United States, crimmigration practices disproportionately target Latinx immigrants and therefore are a form of racial subordination, while Armenta describes crimmigration as a form of “colorblind institutional racism that is structural and systemic” (2017, 92). Crimmigration is not only racialized but also gendered, as men are more likely to be targeted for deportation (Golash-Boza 2015), while women may be apprehended at a workplace raid or when they call the police to report domestic violence (Hartry 2012; see also Menjívar, Gómez Cervantes, and Alvord 2018). Mary Fan points out that not only is there a “complex” of agencies and actors that carry out and benefit from crimmigration, in addition, there is a fantastical element to crimmigration, “the notion of a complex in psychoanalytic theory, referring to how memory, emotions, perceptions, and wishes in tension can distort behavior” (2013, 80). The framing of immigrants as deviant, irredeemable, security risks, and outsiders (García Hernández 2013; Jiang and Erez 2018) is a component of this complex, as is treating immigration as a moral failure (García Hernández 2013) and adopting a narrow temporal framing, judging only the moment when someone commits a crime rather than the totality of their lives (Stumpf 2010).

practices are not limited to the United States. In the United Kingdom, a “cimmigration control system” began developing in the 1970s, coupling hostility toward immigrants with domestic and global policing and surveillance (Bowling and Westera 2020).<sup>9</sup> In Europe more broadly, citizens who are regarded as “bona fide travelers” have been able to travel freely within the European Union, whereas the movement of “criminal others” has been restricted through border checks (van der Woude and van der Leun 2017, 28). Fears of terrorism, transnational crime, and exhausting the welfare state have fueled anti-immigrant sentiment (van der Woude, Barker, and van der Leun 2017).

By using the term “adminigration,” we highlight the broader legal context that informs bureaucratic incorporation while also suggesting that the administrative governance of immigrants is an important counterpart to cimmigration. Linking these literatures generates four insights that are useful in conceptualizing adminigration. First, highlighting framings of immigrants as security risks and outsiders raises questions about what *other* framings might exist in administrative processes and whether these put forward more inclusive and localized notions of membership.<sup>10</sup> Second, work examining how cimmigration has reshaped not only immigration policy but also criminal justice policies (Eagly 2010, 2013) suggests that adminigration may resist or work in tandem with practices that criminalize immigrants. Third, studies of the political implications of sanctuary ordinances note that these can either leave crime control policies intact or can denounce logics shaping both immigration and criminal enforcement (Lai and Lasch 2017, 543). Likewise, adminigration may challenge or reinforce policing. Fourth, Rachel Rosenbloom (2018) points out that cimmigration practices not only increase the severity of immigration policies but also use a racialized crime lens to define favored and disfavored groups. This raises the question, how does “race” work in adminigration? Just as cimmigration relies on colorblind racism, are there also senses in which adminigration relies on status-blind illegalization? These questions are particularly timely, as globally, a politics of expulsion has narrowed avenues of legalization (Sassen 2014; Morawetz 2000), thus giving rise to large populations of long-term unauthorized migrants and positioning cities as key actors in contests over their status.<sup>11</sup>

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9. As in the United States, administrative violations are criminally prosecuted, noncitizens convicted of crimes may be deported, and those who “help” the unauthorized may also suffer criminal consequences (Bowling and Westera 2020). In Australia, asylum seekers who arrive by boat have been held in offshore detention facilities to prevent them from entering Australian territory (Mountz 2020). Citing examples in Latin America, the Middle East, Canada, Indonesia, and the European Union, Menjivar, Gómez Cervantes, and Alvord (2018) argue that cimmigration has been globalized. They attribute this development to neoliberalism and the war on terror, both of which have fueled securitization, made public benefits a scarce resource, and sharpened distinctions between insiders who are considered deserving and outsiders who are seen as risks.

10. Note as well that these framings have temporal dimensions. Stumpf (2010) critiqued cimmigration practices for being temporally narrow in that they focus on a moment when a crime is committed rather than on the totality of an individual’s life. Administrative practices may adopt a more expansive temporal framing, especially as “settled” versus “recent” immigrants has also emerged as a dichotomy that is used to assess moral worth (see Chacón 2017).

11. The UNHCR (n.d.) estimates that 89.3 million people have been forced to leave their countries of origin worldwide, and the Pew Research Center (Budiman 2020) has estimated that in 2017, there were 10.5 million unauthorized immigrants in the United States. Longtime undocumented residents forge relationships at the local level (Eaton 2016), yet, these localized relationships can be sites where slurs are voiced or where undocumented community members have to hide their status to “pass” as citizens (García 2014). Authorities have attempted to enlist localities in enforcement initiatives, even as the immigrant rights movement has resisted such efforts (Chin 2010; Anderson and Solis 2014; Chacón 2016).



## CITIZENSHIP, RACIALIZATION, AND ADMINISTRATION

*It's more than just neighborhood and income that shape your [life] outcomes. But it really has to do with race, ethnicity, immigration status, all of that is interwoven.*

—Quote from “Clara,” a Mayville city official, about the importance of adopting an equity lens in formulating city policies

As this quote suggests, citizenship is not only a national form of membership but also a localized one, produced through administrative practices that define community members as insiders who are deserving of services, or as outsiders who can be denied services and even subjected to policing practices. City agencies make these determinations differently, resulting in a variegated urban landscape. Sociolegal scholar Marianna Valverde coined the phrase “seeing like a city” to describe cities’ “pragmatic approach that uses both old and new gazes, premodern and modern knowledge formats, in a nonzero-sum manner and in unpredictable and shifting combinations” (Valverde 2011, 281). One example of “seeing like a city” is determining city-level membership, what De Shalit (2018, v) refers to as being recognized as “city-zens” or “citizens of cities.” Indeed, Bauböck (2010, 848) argues that citizenship is best understood as a “constellation . . . in which individuals are simultaneously linked to several such political entities, so that their legal rights and duties are determined not only by one political authority, but by several.” Likewise, Kaufmann (2019) points out that there are models of urban citizenship that base membership on *jus domicili*, that is, living, working, studying, and/or raising a family within city boundaries. Yet, citizenship is also an exclusionary system in that it establishes boundaries around those who are officially deemed deserving (Bosniak 2006). Moreover, those who have full legal citizenship may be marginalized on other grounds, such as race, gender, poverty, disability status, national origin, or sexual orientation. Indeed, as social safety nets have weakened with austerity measures and work has become less stable and more exploitative, wide swaths of residents have undergone precarization, defined as “the loss of grip over a future that once seemed under control, as more and more areas of life are subordinated to the needs of the economy . . . [leading to] increasing insecurity in both subjective and objective respects, which can be identified across modern capitalist economies including in ostensibly privileged strata” (Alberti et al. 2018, 449). Racialization intersects with citizenship in complex ways, as Clara suggests above, and nation-based notions of citizenship can reproduce racialized definitions of belonging (Haney López 1996; Brubaker 2009).

These complex dynamics suggest that instead of being “statuses” that people have or lack, citizenship, legality, and illegality are *produced processually* (Siemiatycki and Isin 1997; Aust 2020), and that localities—and officials such as Clara—can play a role in such production (Chauvin and Garcés-Masareñas 2012). Citizenship is produced through contests over rights and policies, contests that Bourdieu (1989, 21) refers to as symbolic politics: “In the symbolic struggle for the production of common sense or, more precisely, for the monopoly over legitimate naming, agents put into action the symbolic capital that they have acquired in previous struggles and which may be

juridically guaranteed.” Issuing IDs, treating undocumented residents as constituents, and providing translation are ways to challenge the nativist “common sense” that the undocumented are outsiders, and to instead symbolically define them as insiders while also providing tangible benefits. A processual account of citizenship highlights the symbolic classification struggles that contest the state’s claimed monopoly on legitimate naming.

Exploring local symbolic politics of belonging reveals ways that citizenship is the *end result* of such politics rather than merely the position from which people act. The view that citizenship is a position from which people act is grounded in definitions such as that of T.H. Marshall (1950), who detailed the social, economic, and political rights that stem from citizenship, as well as the work of other scholars, such as Linda Bosniak (2008), who emphasized the importance of citizenship in guaranteeing national membership. Additionally, as Hannah Arendt famously noted, the condition of statelessness means that, as a practical matter, rights that are not backed by state power are essentially meaningless (1966). In contrast, in line with Bourdieu’s understanding of social positions as something that is “put into action,” practices that allow people to position themselves as belonging produce citizenship, rather than it only being the case that citizenship produces belonging.

Examining the contests through which citizenship is produced provides an alternative to citizen-noncitizen binaries that reinforce securitized notions of deservingness.<sup>12</sup> Some scholars have sought to reclaim the term “citizenship,” treating it as performative in that “acts of citizenship” can define individuals as members regardless of their formal citizenship status (Schwartz and Schwenken 2020). Others, in contrast, have critiqued the concept of citizenship as intrinsically exclusionary (Boyce, Launius, and Aguirre 2019). In an immigration context, scholars have looked particularly at city-level initiatives, such as sanctuary practices, as alternatives to national forms of membership (Nyers 2010; Bauder 2016; Jeffries and Ridgley 2020). Yet even these forms of solidarity can be problematic. For example, arguing that immigrants are “deserving” because they are “not criminals” can reinforce the legitimacy

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12. For example, abolitionist theory emerged as a means of denaturalizing racialized carcerality and suggesting transformative ways of being (Rodríguez 2018; Hales 2020; Mofette 2021). Abolitionism is indebted to the anti-slavery movement in centering race and challenging dehumanizing forms of confinement. As a mode of practice and form of scholarly inquiry, abolitionism has advocated shifting power from state entities to communities of color, defunding prisons and police, reinvesting resources in social justice projects, and pursuing transformative solutions to social harm, such as restorative justice, instead of incarceration (Claire and Woog 2022). Though it is associated with dismantling the current carceral order, abolitionism is also generative in that it seeks to bring more just futures into being (Rodríguez 2018; Hales 2020). Abolitionists often critique reformist projects (Rodríguez 2018), such as reducing prison sentences for nonviolent crimes, for leaving existing carceral logics (like incarcerating violent offenders) intact. One connection between abolitionist analyses and immigration scholarship is that racial profiling treats citizens of color as noncitizens, regardless of their formal citizenship status (Schilliger 2020). Likewise, as was explored in the previous section, criminalization affects communities of color, regardless of immigration status. Abolitionism is therefore attentive to intersectionality, to the ways that people are targeted due to race, income status, gender, and other characteristics, rather than simply being based on offending (Aiken and Silverman 2021). While it emerged in a criminal enforcement context, abolitionist theory has been productive for analyzing punitive policies directed toward immigrants. Just as abolitionist scholars and activists have called for abolishing prisons and for denaturalizing carceral logics, so too have they sought to dismantle immigration detention on the grounds that it causes suffering and does not serve its stated rationales (García Hernández 2017; Hales 2020; Aiken and Silverman 2021).

of punitive policies toward those who are labeled as criminals, and can leave the forces of criminalization intact. At the same time, solidarity can be transformative, for instance, by grounding belonging in localized territorial presence rather than national membership, or by establishing solidarity among members of the precariat regardless of immigration or citizenship status (Kirchhoff 2020). Solidarity practices therefore have temporal and spatial features: they may be localized, they redefine spaces of exclusion in potentially inclusionary terms, they remember past oppressions, and they seek more just futures (Tazzioli and Walters 2019).

Therefore, instead of seeing citizenship and noncitizenship as a binary, we see citizenship as uneven, partial, and produced through the sorts of practices that we are calling adminigration. Formal citizenship is an ambivalent category, one that is tied to exclusionary forms of nationalism even as “acts of citizenship” may overcome such exclusions (Schwiertz and Schwenken 2020). Cities are key places where these alternative forms of citizenship and subjectivity are worked out (Kaufmann 2019). As Jeffries and Ridgley note, “Cities are, after all, where more and more of our lives are lived, and for the last four decades, urban struggles around the world have expanded the terms of citizenship beyond nationhood” (2020, 549).

Examining citizenship as processual and uneven contributes to theorizing how adminigration engages racialization. The rhetorical lens used by city officials and community organizations matters (Kirchhoff 2020; Balint and Lenard 2022). Such groups may implicitly or explicitly reinforce mainstream middle-class tropes of deservingness, or they may produce transformative understandings by appealing to other logics, such as equity or social justice (Mezzadra 2020). Even when it aspires to be inclusionary, adminigration may be reformist (e.g., appealing to anti-Blackness by citing notions of law-abidingness and “hard work”) or transformative (e.g., caring out protective spaces by basing membership in territorial presence) (Bauder 2016; see also Yoo 2008; Aiken and Silverman 2021). As Yukich points out, in activist circles there is a “model movement strategy: the practice of lifting up ‘model’ members of a group to transform negative stereotypes associated with the group as a whole” (2013, 303), a strategy that implicitly defines others as undeserving. Xenophobic political rhetoric can harm minoritized populations, regardless of their immigration status; likewise, more inclusive policies can potentially mitigate such harm (Chavez 2021; see also Lee 2019). Furthermore, due to the multifaceted and intersectional nature of identities, immigrant community members may be included in programs due to other aspects of their positionality, for instance as tenants, parents, patients, or residents. And, they can be targeted for outreach due to race, gender, income status, disability status, or other characteristics, in addition to or instead of on the basis of immigration status. Such forms of inclusion can be empowering in that they create forms of solidarity that transcend distinctions between citizens and noncitizens. At the same time, an “immigration status-blind” approach to social inclusion may be as problematic as “colorblindness.” For instance, ignoring immigration status may overlook ways that immigrant community members are disadvantaged by documentation requirements or due to language skills, and may fail to interrogate the racializing practices, such as policing, to which they are subjected. Clearly, understanding the implications of adminigration for racialization requires nuanced analysis of on-the-ground practices.

An example of the ways that administrative practices engage notions of citizenship is provided by Els De Graauw's 2016 analysis of the role of nonprofits in fomenting bureaucratic incorporation in San Francisco. De Graauw introduces the concept of "administrative advocacy" (2016, 3) to refer to the ways that nonprofits, which are barred from political lobbying, can pressure city administrators to interpret and implement policies in ways that include all city residents, regardless of immigration status. For example, cities can provide translation for limited English speakers, set minimum wage standards to provide a higher standard of living for immigrant and other workers, and issue municipal IDs so that noncitizens can open bank accounts, get library cards, and engage in other transactions for which an ID is required. As De Graauw notes, even though it falls to the federal government to establish immigration policies in the United States, "immigrant rights and integration policies are predominantly local policies" (2016, 7). The symbolic and institutional fragmentation of citizenship limits the hegemony of any given definition of citizenship while fueling symbolic contests over citizenship's meaning. Studying adminigration requires examining how classifications of belonging are constructed, how these become administrative categories (and vice versa), and how local officials use such categories in their relations with the public. Doing so creates uneven patchworks rather than clear boundaries.

## LOCALITY AS RELATIONAL

*We cannot be a country where we shut our doors and look away from the suffering and dreams of people outside our borders. I stand here today, the proud son of a woman who came to this country so her immigrant son could succeed. This country is at its best when it gives other kids the same shot that this country gave me. We can and we will do better. And cities like ours will show this nation how it's done. Thank you for your support over these last seven years. Thank you for loving our city. Now let's go out and do the most good. God bless our city and our country. And as always, Go Mayville. Thank you very much.*

—Mayor of Mayville

In January 2022, the Mayville mayor concluded his final state of the city address by positioning the city of Mayville, California, as an example that would show the rest of the United States how to "do the most good" by welcoming those who are outside of the borders but whose suffering and dreams suggest that the country should give them a shot. Significantly, the mayor singled out the most sympathetic group of immigrants, namely, kids, citing his own history as an immigrant son. In these final words, the mayor moved adeptly between the city and the nation, signaling his own national political ambitions—he had announced his candidacy for a congressional seat—but also defining Mayville as a locality in relation to other places. For instance, in addition to highlighting immigration, the mayor also asserted that it was possible to overcome "a dark moment in our history" through pursuing truth, science, and democracy, instead of lies, fear, and demagoguery. Through these comments, the mayor sought to position both his own administration and the city of Mayville as exemplary within a broader network that included the national government.

Our exploration of adminigration is grounded in the notion that locality is deeply *relational*, that is, instead of being a fixed level within a hierarchy of scale, locality is produced within a network of other entities. These networks imbue particular practices or claims with national, global, local, and embodied dimensions at the same time. As Aust and Du Plessis (2018, 5) point out,

City structures inevitably operate in global, regional and national contexts which determine the leeway and scope for manoeuvre in their governance operations. No city nor its government function as an island. When we thus speak of the globalization of urban governance, the real world picture comprises a fragmented matrix of institutional arrangements, political regimes and sources of governing power that transcend real and virtual administrative boundaries.

Viewing the production of scale as relational makes it possible to analyze the political nature of such processes without presuming a fixed or pre-given hierarchy of levels (Mountz 2002). For example, adminigration involves interjurisdictional contests and collaborations between cities, states, community organizations, the federal government, and international entities and associations. Through such contests and collaborations, locality becomes a condition of social and spatial life: localities take on a particular ethos, are produced through a set of practices and institutions, and are marketed in particular ways to attract business, tourism, and investment. Locality is variegated, as localized offices and individuals have crosscutting relationships within their own broader networks. Thus, like citizenship, locality is constituted through the administrative processes, including adminigration, that define local communities.

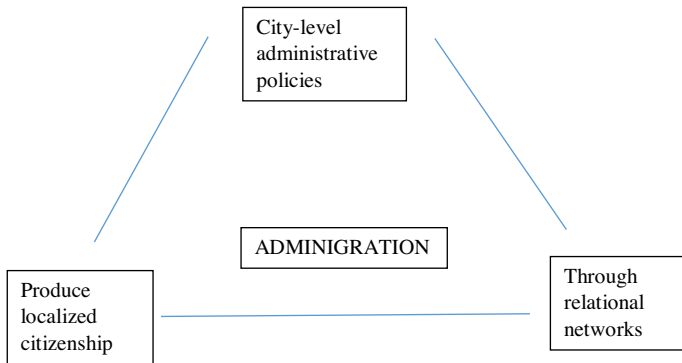
Our understanding of locality as relational applies insights from critical geography to the study of adminigration. Critical geographers insist that power and inequality are key to the production of space and scale (Mountz 2002; Massey 2005), a point that is also pertinent to examining how mundane city-level administrative practices produce and contest notions of membership. A key feminist insight is that power dynamics undergird not only formal politics, but also more ordinary relationships and transactions (Hyndman 2001; England 2003; Dyck 2005; Sharp 2009; Coleman and Stuesse 2016). Similarly, an examination of adminigration directs attention to mundane but nonetheless potentially exclusionary municipal practices such as establishing ID requirements needed to reserve a park facility or secure a housing voucher. Studying the ordinary reveals that the state is “messy, with conflicting views and roles among different people working for government” (Mountz 2002, 191). For instance, officials may support or resist policies that open up city procedures to immigrant community members, even as local immigrants are part of family networks that transcend city boundaries. In contrast to the static hierarchical models employed in mainstream geography, critical geographers have highlighted the dynamics through which locality is produced (Marston 2000; Hyndman 2001; England 2003; Marston, Jones, and Woodward 2005; Mollett and Faria 2018). As Williamson (2018, 2020) notes, there are policy feedback loops through which national policies constrain urban initiatives, but city-level innovations may also be communicated to national actors. In the case of adminigration, city officials may carry out administrative policing (e.g., by checking

identity documents before rendering services) or may perform a kind of administrative carework (e.g., by developing an equity model of governance).

These relational dynamics can be seen in the United States, where recent contests over immigrants' status and membership have positioned localities within immigration policy networks (Varsanyi 2008), often in ways that support immigrants (Williamson 2018). Federal initiatives such as the Secure Communities and the Priority Enforcement Program have pressured local agencies to enforce federal immigration laws (Chacón 2012a). Some communities have embraced such opportunities by adopting restrictive measures. For example, the city of Hazelton, Pennsylvania, passed an ordinance that prohibited landlords from renting to undocumented immigrants (McKanders 2007), the state of Georgia restricted undocumented immigrants' eligibility for in-state tuition, employment, and driver's licenses (Flores, Escudero, and Burciaga 2019), and the state of Arizona required police to check individuals' immigration status at traffic stops (Nill 2011). Such measures attempted to make immigrants unwelcome so that they would "self-deport" (García 2013; Park 2018). States have also sued the US government to block forms of temporary relief. At the same time, some cities, states, and counties have adopted supportive measures such as allowing undocumented residents to pay in-state tuition, providing state-based financial aid, making individuals eligible for driver's licenses regardless of immigration status, and prohibiting police from collecting or sharing information about immigration status. Whether restrictive or inclusive, such measures shape localities by positioning them in relation to the federal government, other localities, transnational families, immigrant-serving organizations, and international associations and governments. And of course, agencies have jurisdictional and territorial boundaries that are organized hierarchically (for instance, federal, state, county, city), but these hierarchies are contested through interjurisdictional struggles. Thus, administrative practices that govern immigrant groups take on meaning and produce material effects within a web of relationships.

The relational dynamics that produce locality play out internationally as well. In Europe, animosity toward asylum seekers has been fueled by fears of terrorism and cultural dilution, making cities key sites where global, national, and EU tensions and policies unfold (van der Woude, Barker, and van der Leun 2017). At the same time, there has been a recent outpouring of support for Ukrainian refugees, and cities have organized housing, food, and collection drives for these new arrivals (BBC 2022). Such practices define cities in relation to global conflicts, regional (EU) identities, and national policies. "Border struggles" can occur away from the border, such as within an Athens hotel that was occupied by protesters (Mezzadra 2020). Likewise, when health centers in Ottawa considered whether their "everyday intake, registration, data collection, and data storage processes might create barriers and risks for people with precarious status" (Jeffries and Ridgley 2020, 560), they positioned Ottawa as a welcoming space within a network that was simultaneously national, international, and provincial. Pressures, whether to participate in interdiction efforts (Mountz 2020) or to extend the right to vote to noncitizens (Hammar 1985), define localities within broader processes and relationships.

Social movements also play key roles in producing locality. As Arturo Escobar notes, there are a "number of struggles and social movements that, to a greater or lesser extent, take place and place-based modes of consciousness as both the point of



**Figure 1.**  
**Diagram of Adminigration.**

departure and goal of their political strategies” (2001, 153). Immigrant rights movements have developed strategies of emplacement that seek to localize immigrant community members by stressing their ties to place (Vigh and Bjarnesen 2016; Coutin et al. 2022). Examples include US immigrant youths’ claims to be “undocumented and unapologetic” (Seif 2011), a framing that stresses their belonging to the United States and the justice of their parents’ decisions to immigrate: they have nothing to apologize for. Solidarity between the Black Lives Matter and immigrant rights movements also stresses belonging by highlighting the commonality of struggles against racism, colonialism, dispossession, and criminalization (Terriquez and Milkman 2021). Labor movements promote local measures that would improve working conditions for immigrants and other workers (Bauder 2016). In short, justice movements challenge hierarchical or static models of scale by demanding localized actions in order to diffuse social justice initiatives throughout networks.

To summarize, the concept of adminigration is useful in examining citizenship as a process for defining group membership and ascribing rights and services to members, rather than simply as a boundary between insiders and outsiders (see Figure 1). Different levels of government and different agencies have their own distinctive ways to classify membership, and immigrants move through the intersections of these schemes. The result is a highly uneven and tangled citizenship regime. In exploring this citizenship regime, we seek to elevate the local, because that is where citizenship is most frequently enacted. Our concept of locality is highly relational, instead of one that views locality as one “level” in a hierarchy of scale. Indeed, adminigration is a core component of city governance.

## CASE STUDY: MAYVILLE, CALIFORNIA

To demonstrate the utility of adminigration as an analytical concept, we turn now to a brief and preliminary case study of the local governance of immigrant community members in Mayville, California. Our analysis is based on three sources: (1) qualitative and quantitative *document analysis* of reports issued by city agencies, coverage of immigration issues in local newspapers from 1990 to 2020, city agencies’ Facebook pages

and websites, and applications and forms posted by select agencies. The qualitative analysis of these documents examined how agencies defined membership and the policies through which they sought to put these definitions into practice, while the quantitative analysis focused on frequency of key words (such as “immigrant” or other identity categories) in documents over time, as well as on the nature of claims made by key actors (pro-immigration, neutral, pro-restriction). To protect the anonymity of our research subjects, reports are not cited here but they are available by request. (2) *Observations* of recorded and live city events, including city council meetings, racial reconciliation listening sessions, webinars, festivals, and housing commission meetings. We wrote fieldnotes summarizing immigration-related policy discussions and ways that immigrants and other communities were represented in these events. (3) *Interviews* with city officials and community organizations. Interviews were designed to trace the ways that city policies regarding immigrant community members unfolded over time as well as to learn about future initiatives.

The composition, history, and location of Mayville make it an appropriate case through which to examine adminigration. Mayville has undergone dramatic demographic change. Historically, it was a predominantly white city, but, as we show in [Figure 2](#), from 1980 to 2019, the white population decreased from 68 percent to 28 percent while the Hispanic population grew from 14 percent to 43 percent and the Asian population grew from 5 percent to 14 percent. Over this period, the Black population remained relatively constant, changing from 11 percent to 12 percent and the American Indian population shrank slightly, from 0.8 percent to 0.3 percent. Many of the new Asian American and Hispanic residents were of immigrant backgrounds, as the number of foreign-born residents grew from 51,411 to 117,414 over this period, creating new pressures for the city to respond to these community members. These demographic changes were associated with political shifts. Like certain other Southern California cities (Hytrek 2019) Mayville had historically been a relatively conservative community with city leaders who supported business interests and opposed unionization, and with 59 percent of Mayville voters voting in favor of Proposition 187, a 1994 anti-immigrant statewide ballot measure, eventually declared unconstitutional, that required health care workers, teachers, and others to check individuals’ immigration status before rendering services. Yet, by 2020, over 70 percent of Mayville residents voted for Democratic candidates for governor and president. Geographically, Mayville is located on the border of two counties, one of which generally has immigrant-friendly policies, is a place of first settlement for many new immigrants, and has a strong network of immigrant-serving organizations, and the other of which historically has been conservative and anti-immigrant, though the more conservative county is also undergoing demographic and political changes. Several freeways run through Mayville, making it both heavily polluted and a popular place of residence for people who commute elsewhere. Mayville policies—including in relation to immigrants—are therefore constructed in relation to the Southern California region.

## Policies and Practices

Our first theoretical intervention to examine adminigration is to bridge theories of bureaucratic incorporation and crimmigration to consider the broader legal significance



Mayville - population (%)

	Total	White	Black/African American	American Indian and Alaska Native	Asian	Other	Hispanic
1980	100.0%	67.7%	11.1%	0.8%	4.9%	1.5%	14.0%
1990	100.0%	49.5%	13.2%	0.5%	12.9%	0.2%	23.6%
2000	100.0%	33.1%	14.5%	0.4%	13.1%	3.2%	35.8%
2010	100.0%	29.4%	13.0%	0.3%	13.7%	3.0%	40.8%
2019	100.0%	28.2%	12.2%	0.3%	13.6%	3.1%	42.6%

**Figure 2.**  
Demographic changes in Mayville over time.

of city-level administrative practices that address immigration. In the case of Mayville, there are policies that do so formally as well as policies that do so implicitly. Two policies that explicitly address immigration are the Language Access Policy and the Values Act. The Language Access Policy was adopted in 2013 after a coalition of community organizations, including immigrant rights groups and Cambodian, Filipino, and Latinx associations, urged the City of Mayville to make public events and city materials accessible to residents with limited English proficiency. The rationale for the policy is stated as follows: “The Mayville City Council hereby finds and declares that there are people who live, work, and pay taxes in the City of Mayville, who are unable to communicate effectively in English because their primary language is not English. It is of importance that residents, regardless of their proficiency in English, have access to City programs and services.”<sup>13</sup> The Mayville Language Access Policy goes beyond California state law, which requires that materials be provided in Spanish and English, by also translating key city meetings and materials into Tagalog and Khmer. Our review of the city council meetings where this policy was debated reveal that Language Access was framed as a means of integrating immigrants into the Mayville Community. As the executive director of a Cambodian-serving nonprofit organization stated to city council members on November 1, 2011, when the motion to create such a policy was first introduced, “Language access is the number one barrier to success of immigrant integration and every day we help people, connecting, and our mission is to bridge that language, cultural, and intergenerational gap between the Cambodian community and the mainstream.” This policy is therefore grounded in multicultural narratives of deserving immigrants who *desire* connection and civic engagement (see Balint and Lenard 2022). Extending language access to immigrant community members pushes

13. This quote is from a Mayville City Council Resolution, available from authors upon request.

back against “English-only” ballot measures that valorize English, while also recognizing Spanish, Khmer, and Tagalog speakers as valued community members. Advocacy around language access has continued to the present, due to implementation gaps, mistranslations, and continued lack of access for those who speak other languages.

A second policy that explicitly addresses immigration was the Values Act, adopted in 2018, at a time when the Trump administration had rescinded the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program benefiting immigrant youth, banned immigrants from certain Muslim countries, forced asylum seekers to remain in Mexico while awaiting a hearing, increased interior enforcement, and pressured local law enforcement agencies to join federal enforcement efforts. Immigrant-friendly states, including California, resisted these efforts by restricting information sharing. Some California cities—such as Mayville—joined the state effort by passing their own immigrant-friendly resolutions whereas others sought to opt out of state initiatives. Concretely, the Values Act required city authorities, including the police, to protect sensitive information such as individuals’ legal status and to establish a Justice Fund to provide legal representation to city residents who were in deportation proceedings. The Values Act resulted from pressure on the part of a local sanctuary coalition, community organizations, colleges and universities, and allies on the city council. City council debates over the Mayville Values Act indicate that there were competing framings of immigrants at stake. Supporters argued that immigrants were community members who enriched the city through their contributions and cultural diversity and who deserved protection from the “deportation machine,” as one speaker put it. Opponents saw immigrants as a security risk. On March 13, 2018, the Mayville chief of police stated:

I want to make clear in this room and anyone who is listening: if you are committing violent crimes, serious crimes, or you are impacting this community negatively, I’m going to allow any agency to assist us in making sure that that individual, whether they are documented or undocumented, gets the full force of the law, because at the end of day, and something I didn’t say earlier, people have said it over and over, I’m the son of an immigrant too. I grew up in an immigrant community. I know first-hand what it is like to be victimized by individuals who I’m always looking around saying “Boy, someone needs to do something about these individuals.” I live with that . . . you know who I am. We don’t go after the ice cream vendor. But I will tell you that there will be no sanctuary for anybody who is committing serious crimes, in this city. I don’t care what your immigration status is.

This passage contrasts the harmless ice cream vendor with those who may be undocumented who may commit violent crimes. The chief stressed his opposition to any policy that would encompass the latter—and indeed, in 2020, press coverage revealed that the Mayville police were sharing license plate data with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).<sup>14</sup>

In addition to policies such as Language Access and the Values Act, which explicitly promote immigrant integration, the City of Mayville also has developed a

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14. News article available from authors upon request.

broader approach to social equity. In an interview, the director of the Office of Equity recounted this history:

Our Health Department director . . . had been using health disparity data to talk about differences from one side of town to the next. We then participated in the Government Alliance on Race and Equity, which I think helped us name that it's more than just neighborhood and income that shape your outcomes. But it really has to do with race, ethnicity, immigration status, all of that is interwoven . . . . I think over the years, public health has really narrowly focused in on health disparities, which you can't really do, honestly, without talking about racial disparities, injustice, and getting to the heart of white supremacy and systemic racism as a means to creating oppression that results in poor health outcomes. So that is a little bit about where we started with the Office of Equity.

The Mayville Office of Equity originated in the Department of Health and Human Services and began working with Mayville city agencies to promote equity, defined as “when everyone can reach their highest level of health and potential for a successful life, regardless of their background and identity.”<sup>15</sup> The Office of Equity works closely with community organizations and has developed an equity toolkit, conducted equity trainings for city officials, and recruited equity champions in multiple city agencies. The equity model is attentive to race, ethnicity, immigration status, and other disparities, as the Office of Equity's director indicates in the above quote. And the Office of Equity was a key player in implementing language access and developing the Values Act. By focusing on a multiplicity of disparities, this model blurs the sharp focus on immigration that characterized debates over language access and sanctuary; nonetheless, the Office of Equity's work can be understood as an example of adminigration.

## Membership

Our second theoretical intervention is to consider how adminigration produces localized definitions of citizenship. In the case of Mayville, policies that explicitly and implicitly address immigration generally practice social inclusion, consistent with agencies' service orientation (Marrow 2009a), in that they define local membership in terms of residence within city boundaries, and sometimes also include working within the city as a form of membership (for instance, eligibility for COVID-19 vaccines was extended to those who worked in the City of Mayville, even if they lived elsewhere). Yet, our analysis of application forms used by two city agencies, the Department of Parks and Recreation and the Housing Authority, reveals a mix of evidentiary requirements: many forms only request an address with a utility bill for verification, whereas others require additional evidence, such as a driver's license, California Identification Card, or social security number. Undocumented residents may not be listed on utility bills (for instance, a household may take out the utility account in the name of a resident who

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15. Office of Equity website; link available from authors upon request.

has legal status) and social security numbers are not available to the undocumented, but the state of California has extended driver's license and identification card privileges regardless of legal status. Some city agencies explicitly assure residents that they will not collect information about immigration status. A "Know Your Rights" notification distributed to Mayville schoolchildren and their families on March 23, 2022, assured parents that "[a]ll children have a right to equal access to free public education regardless of their or their parents'/guardians' immigration status" and "[i]nformation about citizenship/immigration status is never needed for school enrollment. A Social Security number is never needed for school enrollment."<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, the school district's "Know Your Rights" notification includes contact information for compliance officers with whom families can file a complaint. The City therefore strives for social inclusion, using definitions of membership that are grounded in local residence and that ignore citizenship status, even though evidentiary requirements are more mixed and may contribute to illegalization by requesting forms of identification that the undocumented may not have.

In the equity model that the City has implemented as a key component of service delivery and strategic planning, residence-based definitions of membership are coupled with analyses of disparities. These analyses are shaped by agency priorities and often focus on categories such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, language skills, and income level, more than immigration status. As a recycling specialist from the city's Environmental Services Bureau told us during an interview:

I never really thought about our work in the framing of the term like "immigrants." . . . We are trying to reach more people and the way that we think about it at this point, honestly, has been by zip code . . . . We have conversations with our staff, many of whom are not white, talking about their shared experiences of being a nonwhite person in the City . . . and so we had to you know, think about . . . well, "Where are we serving our residents and where are they coming from?" . . . And then that's when we started collecting the zip code data . . . . We have a sense of awareness that we have a huge gap of where we were reaching people.

Though this interviewee did not think of her work in terms of "immigrants," she stressed to us that, in accordance with Mayville's Language Access Policy, her agency goes to great lengths to ensure that their recycling guides are available in Spanish, Khmer, and Tagalog, in addition to English. Moreover, in discussing recycling participation gaps between different zip codes, she identified low-income areas that have a high concentration of multifamily units as more challenging. Thus, this specialist's efforts to promote recycling target categories associated with language skill, income, and dwelling type, all of which, from an intersectional perspective, also target immigrant community members who are less likely to speak fluent English and more likely to have lower incomes and live in apartment complexes. Akin to "seeing like a state" (Scott 2020) and "seeing like a city" (Valverde 2011), these categories, along with a view of the public as people who hold refuse accounts, are instances of "seeing like a city agency."

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16. Email communication obtained by authors, available upon request.

Local definitions of membership not only adopt an equity model but also prioritize forms of historical disadvantage even as they deprioritize specific identity categories. In Mayville, the Black Lives Matter protests that occurred after George Floyd was killed by police officers in Minneapolis in 2020 gave rise to a racial reconciliation initiative. In June 2020, the Mayville City Council adopted a Racial Reconciliation Framework “**acknowledging** the existence and longstanding impacts of systemic racism in our America and in Mayville.”<sup>17</sup> In June and July of 2020, listening sessions were held, and in August 2020, a Racial Equity and Reconciliation Initiative initial report was sent to the city council.<sup>18</sup> This report prioritizes anti-Black racism and “centers race in our equity efforts because all other dimensions of identity — income, gender, sexuality, education, ability, age, and citizenship — have inequities based on race.”<sup>19</sup> The term “immigrant” appears only once in this report: “Historically, Mayville and many other cities have a legacy of racism and anti-Black attitudes along with the exploitation of immigrant and non-white labor and wealth.”<sup>20</sup> In this framing, immigrants appear as labor, as sources of wealth, and as racialized community members. In February 2022, the city manager delivered a 136-page one-year report on the Racial Equity and Reconciliation Initiative, reporting on progress to date and continued challenges. The term “immigrant” does not appear in the one-year report. Nonetheless, the initiative impacts immigrant residents as racialized minority groups indirectly by establishing “Racial Equity Champions” in city departments, conducting “Racial Equity 101” trainings, and addressing racial equity in strategic planning. For example, the 2022 Parks and Recreation ten-year strategic plan acknowledges the fact that the Mayville Park system is built on Tongva land expropriated through settler colonialism and that parks were established with the interests of developers and affluent white homeowners in mind. Further, this strategic plan establishes goals to promote equitable access to green spaces in the City of Mayville through future investments. The term “immigrant” appears twice in this report, first as a source of diversity and demographic change,<sup>21</sup> and second, in relation to disparities, noting that “Cambodian refugees . . . and other Southeast Asian immigrants were driven towards poorer, more crowded areas of the city.”<sup>22</sup> Indeed, when we compared the frequency of words associated with identity categories across four iterations of the Mayville Housing Element, a component of the city’s general plan, from 2000 to 2021, we saw a decrease in terms associated with race, ethnicity, and immigration and an increase in more generic terms, such as “people of color” and “inclusion.” Such shifts suggest that attending to the rights of minoritized community members may be seen as an alternative to, rather than as consistent with, working on behalf of noncitizens (see also Eisenberg 2015).

While the motivation for equity work and for inclusionary approaches to immigration stems from progressive politics, “diversity” is also a quality that the city can market to attract business, investment, and tourism. Through marketing, diversity becomes a form of multiculturalism (Balint and Lenard 2022), something to celebrate as

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17. Emphasis in original. Memo available from authors upon request.

18. Available from authors upon request.

19. Racial Equity and Reconciliation Initiative initial report, page 9.

20. Racial Equity and Reconciliation Initiative initial report, page 7.

21. Racial Equity and Reconciliation Initiative one-year report, page 30.

22. Racial Equity and Reconciliation Initiative one-year report, page 32.

it enriches Mayville with multiple cuisines, traditions, and forms of entrepreneurship. As explained in the City's "Everyone In" economic development plan, "equitable growth is not only a moral imperative, but ultimately the superior growth model. Research proves that inequality and racial segregation hinders growth, prosperity, and economic mobility in regions, while diversity and inclusion fuel innovation and business success. Indeed, inequality hinders growth but greater economic inclusion corresponds with more robust economic growth."<sup>23</sup> Equity approaches to adminigration oscillate between being politically progressive and a facet of neoliberal governance. A case in point is the City's response to the influx of unaccompanied minors along the US-Mexico border in 2021. The mayor and city council made the Mayville Convention Center, which was unused due to COVID-19, available to the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement as a shelter to house children while they were waiting to be reunited with their families. The City depicted this effort as a humanitarian gesture, but some Mayville community organizations were outraged by the City's collaboration with US immigration authorities. During an interview, the director of an immigrant rights organization commented, "The emergency intake facility that happened in Mayville, as soon as it came out, we, you know, we voiced some concerns and a lot of different questions that we had about the facility opening up and the lack of oversight for the facility." Opponents of this initiative pointed out that convention centers are not designed to house children and that community groups that sought to verify conditions were restricted from accessing the facility. The Convention Center, in this instance, was simultaneously a local site that became part of national immigration policymaking to house migrant children from outside of the country within the Southern California region, generating protests from some local community organizations. Clearly, the spatial dynamics that underlie adminigration are complex and cannot be neatly characterized as one level in a hierarchical scale. Moreover, consistent with Williamson's (2020) argument that the nature of cities' exposure to federal policies matters, the fact that officials *defined* this initiative as a welcoming and humane gesture may have reinforced Mayville's generally supportive stance toward immigrants, even if in actuality, the Convention Center was temporarily a place of confinement.

## Networks

Our third theoretical intervention is to consider how adminigration produces locality through a series of networked relationships. The practices that make up adminigration define Mayville as an entity in relation to other sites. Strikingly, these networks involve both local and distant actors, government officials, and advocacy groups. For example, the Mayville Values Act and the Justice Fund define Mayville as a city that supports immigrant community members in relation to a state that is also supportive (in fact, the Mayville Values Act in many ways replicates the California Values Act), a federal government that sought to enlist cities in immigration policing, other cities that adopted different stances, and national and local nonprofits that

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23. Report on "Everyone In" economic development plan (available from authors), page 4.

promote immigrant rights. The director of one Mayville nonprofit described the local network that promoted these initiatives:

We had to do something after Trump got elected, right? We knew our communities were going to suffer deeply. They did, you know. And so we wanted to do something about it. And we got together with a pretty diverse group of folks, different organizations, that came from different backgrounds that came together in solidarity, to fight for the Mayville Values Act and ultimately, the Justice fund . . . . We had groups from the Filipino community, from the Cambodian community . . . . In Mayville, you know, there's a huge Southeast Asian community, and they're also very impacted by deportations, and family separation, and criminalization in general . . . . And another unique thing that we have that we advocated for that it's not the case for other cities is that we have an Oversight Committee for the Justice Fund . . . . It's through the Mayville Office of Equity.

This quote demonstrates how a network of community organizations mobilized in response to the election of Donald Trump, working with the Office of Equity, a Mayville city agency. The Office of Equity, in turn, is part of its own networks within and outside of the city. The director of the Office of Equity told us how a city council member created this office in 2017:

These were fairly new concepts in government, but other cities had undertaken it like Seattle, and a handful of others. What was different about his [the council member's] proposal, though, was that he wanted to realign programs under the Office of Equity, that were seen as equity focused programs. So, for example, the Human Relations Commission, Language Access Program, at the time, my Brother's Keeper, and Government Alliance on Race and Equity, the cohort that we were leading through that.

Creating an Office of Equity aligned Mayville as part of a network of cities that were also developing such offices and strengthened the city's connections to the Government Alliance of Race and Equity (GARE), a national network. The director of the Office of Equity looked to other cities for examples of sanctuary policies, spurred by jurisdictional contests between the state and federal government. To add a further layer of spatial complexity, the Mayville Justice Fund is run by the Vera Institute of Justice, a national nonprofit headquartered in New York. A senior program associate at Vera explained how this works: "I am responsible for all of our sites, which are the cities that we work with, where we have a collaboration [involving] a city, a legal service provider, and a nonprofit community group. We see it like a triangle, all those partners are critical to making this sustainable in the long run."

The complex relationships that undergird the Mayville Justice Fund are further variegated through the city agencies that participate in equity work. Our research suggests that the politics of city agencies have been transformed not only through administrative advocacy on the part of nonprofits (De Graauw 2016) but also through a network of "insurgent bureaucrats" (Nicholls and Coutin *n.d.*) whose experience with

progressive politics led them to adopt a critical lens in their work for the city. Recall that historically, Mayville city leaders promoted business interests and opposed unionization, while Mayville voters supported restrictive immigration measures. As we noted above, in the 2010s, the Director of Health and Human Services (HHS) spearheaded progressive change by using an equity model to identify and critique health disparities in the City of Mayville. In collaboration with allies on the city council who were active in GARE, the Office of Equity was created in 2017 as part of HHS. During this period, the office was understaffed and funding was insecure, as a staff member recalled: “Actually, for a long time, the Office of Equity was one-and-a-half people, the whole person being . . . the equity officer. And then we also had a part time language access person.” With the emergence of the Racial Equity and Reconciliation Initiative in 2020, the Office of Equity moved to a more central location, the City Manager’s office, received structural funding, and expanded in size. The Office’s work focused on three tasks: listening to community voices, using data and narratives to make inequities visible, and capacity building of city staff through trainings and use of an equity toolkit. To carry out this work, the Office of Equity recruited “equity champions” in city departments, as mentioned previously, but the nature of and commitment to such work varied from department to department, and these champions had to take on equity work on top of their other assigned duties. Adminigration plays out through these internal and external networks and their associated symbolic politics.

## CONCLUSION

In this article, we have adapted Griffith and Gleeson’s (2017) concept of adminigration to analyze the ways that city-level administrative practices govern immigrant populations, and we have developed a framework through which these practices can be conceptualized and studied. The first element of this framework bridges work on bureaucratic incorporation and crimmigration to tease out the broader legal implications of city-level policies and practices that implicitly or explicitly govern immigrant residents. To do so, we focused on the framings these employ, whether these practices resist or reinforce criminalization, how these engage racialization, and how adminigration varies within and between localities. The second element examines how city-level administrative practices produce localized forms of membership. This processual approach to citizenship defines membership not as a status that someone has or lacks but rather as a subject position that is produced over time, has gradations of belonging, and creates commonalities between minoritized and immigrant residents, regardless of formal citizenship status. The third element is to study how adminigration networks produce locality. This relational approach to spatiality provides an alternative to static and hierarchical models of scale while recognizing that locality is internally variegated, transcends boundaries, and is linked to alliances between social movements and insurgent bureaucrats.

Our preliminary case study of adminigration in Mayville, California, illustrates the utility of this framework. We identified formal and informal policies that engage immigrant residents, ranging from the Mayville Values Act and the Language Access Policy to enacting an equity model of governance. These policies employed multiple



framings of immigrants: as valued workers, as vulnerable community members, as sources of ethnic and cultural diversity, and less frequently, as security risks. Defining immigrants as constituents challenges criminalization and illegalization, while equity models are attentive to race but also deemphasize specific racial and identity categories in favor of more generic terms such as “people of color.” While city policies promoted social inclusion, our examination of forms and applications found unevenness within and across city agencies, with some applications merely requesting an address while others required forms of documentation that immigrant community members may not be able to access. City policies generally based membership on *residence* rather than on *immigration status*, thus adopting inclusionary definitions of citizenship and pushing back against illegalization. Such definitions categorized immigrant community members intersectionally, as workers, members of ethnic and racial groups, entrepreneurs, and family members. We found that these definitions of membership were put forward by a network of city agencies, under the leadership of the Office of Equity, and in collaboration with national organizations such as the Vera Institute and GARE, as well as with transnational movements and local community organizations. These networks put forward immigration policies that help to define Mayville as a locality.

Adminigration can, of course, play out in ways that differ from our case study of Mayville, California, so there are quite likely to be divergent examples of adminigration. It is possible for city-level immigration-related processes to take explicitly restrictionist, xenophobic, or nativist forms, seeking to bar immigrants’ participation in everyday life. Such policies may target immigrants’ abilities to rent apartments, secure business licenses, or participate in community events. Conversely, city policies may be more inclusive, extending voting privileges to all residents regardless of immigration status, targeting noncitizens in outreach efforts, providing city-level identification documents, and reviewing forms and processes to ensure that they are accessible to those who may not have legal status in the country. Comparative research is needed to assess the impacts of being “status-blind” versus “status-conscious,” whether such approaches reinforce or undermine racialized discourses of deservingness, and intersections and divergences between neoliberal marketing strategies and progressive politics. We hope that by directing attention to city-level administrative policymaking, processual notions of citizenship, and locality as a relational construct, we have highlighted the significant roles that cities can play in forging and contesting immigration policies.

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