

PROMOTING SOCIAL JUSTICE

Revisiting the Responsibility of Care: Lessons from South Los Angeles

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This article advances a framework of care for public administration as a foundation for promoting social justice and strengthening democratic governance. Drawing on 10 years of community-based research in Los Angeles, the analysis examines how care is enacted in contexts shaped by public sector retrenchment. Across multiple projects spanning affordable housing, sustainable employment, quality childcare, and community-led cultural development, care emerged as a consistent analytic theme and was subsequently examined to distill lessons for public administrators. The findings show that care is practiced through efforts that sustain material well-being, uphold dignity, and facilitate collective agency. Rather than treating care as an informal or supplementary activity, the article demonstrates how community organizations and residents enact care as a form of governance—often compensating for gaps in public systems—while also revealing both the limits of relying on community-based care alone and the opportunities for public institutions to engage care more deliberately.

Keywords

care; organizations; structural inequality; collaboration; community

The Need for Care in Public Administration

Public administration translates government power into the conditions of everyday life experienced by residents. Through the provision of material support, enforcement of laws, and facilitation of civic participation, the profession is charged with delivering essential services while cultivating trust and legitimacy. Yet dominant models of governance have long privileged efficiency and procedural rationality over the emotional dimensions of public service (Guy et al. 2014). While goals centered on objectivity and effectiveness are essential to practice, they offer an incomplete account of how public institutions are experienced by those they serve. Renewed attention to social equity has made these limitations increasingly visible, revealing how ostensibly neutral systems can reproduce exclusion and erode trust (Guy and McCandless 2012).

Situated within the movement toward humanistic public service, this article reasserts care as a framework for advancing social justice and transformative change (Chordiya and Sabharwal 2024; Stivers 2005). A framework of care for public administration originates from

feminist theory and moves the ethical center of governance from adherence to rules and formal deliberation to interdependence, embodied responsibility, and attentiveness to need (Mastracci 2022; Stivers 1991). That is, care directs attention to the substantive conditions necessary for people to live with security and dignity. Furthermore, it highlights the relational work of governance—listening, trust-building, and sustained responsiveness—as integral to effective and legitimate public service.

Revisiting a framework of care is particularly urgent in the current period of public sector retrenchment and intensified reliance on punitive and coercive policy responses. Over several decades, public institutions have withdrawn from direct responsibility for meeting basic needs, shifting care onto households, informal networks, and underresourced communities amid austerity and expanded reliance on punishment (Fraser 2015). These shifts place growing strain on communities least equipped to absorb the costs while simultaneously narrowing opportunities for meaningful engagement with the state (Peake et al. 2021; Stivers 2002).

Drawing on community-based research in Los An-

geles, this article examines how practices of care are already being enacted by residents and community organizations—often in response to gaps or failures from formal institutions. By tracing how these practices sustain material well-being, uphold dignity through accountability, and enable agency through narrative power, the analysis identifies concrete lessons for public administrators seeking to integrate care into public sector decision-making. Care-oriented governance has the potential to open space for healing and build the collective capacity needed to confront structural conditions that reproduce harm and exclusion.

The Evolution of Values in Public Administration

Public administration originated during a period of bureaucratic professionalization with the field built around an image of the administrator as a detached, rational actor (Wilson 1887). From the outset, a divide emerged between “bureau men,” whose work drew heavily on business practices, and “settlement women,” whose social service traditions emphasized government’s responsibility for addressing social ills and engaging directly in community life (Stivers 2002). In this model, qualities coded as “feminine”—empathy, collaboration, and attentiveness to context—were dismissed as obstacles to administrative rigor. These gendered assumptions mirror broader debates across the social sciences, which contrast positivist approaches that prioritize measurement and objectivity against critical or heterodox approaches that foreground lived experience, power relations, and affect (McKittrick 2014).

As public administration has evolved, there has been a consistent focus on positivist values. New Public Management (NPM) emerged as the dominant paradigm of the field amid the fiscal crises and tax revolts of the 1970s and 1980s. This approach reoriented public administration through a market-based lens emphasizing cost reduction, privatization, and performance metrics (Osborne and Gaebler 1993). These principles continue to play an important role in the field despite scholars and practitioners consistently arguing they are not well-suited to address complex social problems and the harmful consequences of past administrative action (Box et al. 2001; Gruening 2001).

A conflicting strand of public administration theory has attempted to position administrators as active and informed agents of change (Frederickson 1980).

Beginning in the 1960s, the framework of New Public Administration emphasized citizen participation and responsiveness to community feedback as corrective forces against bureaucratic detachment. New Public Service (NPS) built upon this foundation to further advance ideals of shared governance and the pursuit of public interest through deliberation (Denhardt and Denhardt 2000). These frameworks centered around listening and designing clear procedures for citizens to engage in dialogue with administrators and other stakeholders. Both frameworks acknowledged social and emotional labor by centering the work of facilitation and remaining accountable to the local community. However, their focus on participatory processes remained grounded in liberal assumptions of capable, autonomous citizens and ignored the baseline conditions required for engagement, such as food, shelter, time, and safety from harm when seeking support and enforcement of rights.

New normative models—most notably the “four Es” of empathy, engagement, equity, and ethics—have sought to further incorporate human connection and emotional intelligence into public service (Meyer et al. 2022). The 4 Es call on administrators to center human experience (empathy), share decision-making power (engagement), acknowledge structural disparities (equity), and act with integrity and responsibility (ethics). While the theory and practices related to the new 4 Es are helpful in moving the field beyond simply treating residents as customers, those commitments continue to focus on procedural justice and service delivery rather than the affective dimensions of public service or durable structures that perpetuate injustice. Furthermore, it remains unclear how deeply these values have been integrated into everyday administrative practice given the ongoing legitimacy crisis facing public institutions.

A related but distinct strand of feminist public administration theory argues that the government’s duty to serve society’s most vulnerable inherently requires managing emotions—listening to distress, working to resolve difficult situations, and sustaining composure amid conflict (Guy et al. 2014). This literature explores the daily, embodied work of care that public servants perform when responding to citizens in need and positions emotional labor as essential to building trust and repairing relationships, which enable collaborative governance (Mastracci 2022; Stivers 1991). Despite robust empirical literature that demonstrates the importance of emotional labor to public sector effectiveness, this

aspect of governance remains largely unrecognized in administrative practice resulting in administrator burn-out, diminished service quality, and inequitable service delivery when workers lack the capacity to respond in times of crisis.

Care as a Framework for Governance

Rooted in the feminist tradition, a framework of care for public administration recognizes that effective public service is fundamentally about the material, relational, and emotional conditions that make democratic life possible (Stivers 1991; Tronto 2013). Rather than treating the public as autonomous individuals engaging with neutral institutions, care-centered administration begins with a recognition that people's well-being is shaped through reciprocal relationships and uneven vulnerabilities (Guy et al. 2014). Through the lens of care, the responsibility of government and the meaning of public interest expand beyond majority preference to include a substantive obligation to sustain human life and dignity even when politically unpopular. By recognizing that certain needs exist by default, care exposes the ethical floor beneath democratic processes (Butler 2016). Furthermore, it reminds us that the purpose of government is to nurture our collective strength and well-being (Lawson 2007).

The framework presented below was developed through a review of interdisciplinary scholarship on care ethics and its application to public administration. This framework of care for public administration organizes past research into three interrelated dimensions: 1) the provision of material sustenance and conditions for well-being; 2) the preservation of dignity through accountability and attentiveness; and 3) the cultivation of agency within administrative systems. Through those core tenets, care foregrounds how administrative policies and practices shape people's ability to feel recognized, supported, and secure. This reorientation is essential to healing collectively from past harms and rebuilding institutional legitimacy.

Adjacent paradigms in public administration—such as collaborative governance and New Public Service—focus on institutional arrangements that facilitate stakeholder participation in decision-making and the democratic provision of services. However, transparent and participatory processes alone do not ensure residents are cared for within systems of governance that were

socially constructed to uphold the status quo and sustain the project of racial capitalism (Fraser 2016; Purcell 2009). In response, a framework of care shifts attention to the relational conditions that enable well-being and centers on the everyday practices through which institutions respond and adapt to community needs over time. In doing so, care emphasizes dimensions of governance that procedural frameworks often leave implicit or fail to acknowledge, such as reciprocity, power, emotional labor, and the ongoing work of repairing trust. To be clear, this pursuit requires an active refusal of the dominant norms of public administration and the deconstruction of current governance systems because they were not built for care and have evolved to manage inequities rather than resolve them.

Material Sustenance and Well-Being

Foremost, care-centered administration treats the provision of material sustenance as a fundamental obligation of governance. This begins from a recognition that human life is inherently interdependent—no individual can endure, let alone flourish, without material and relational support (Butler 2016). As Tronto and Fisher (1990, 40) observe, all humans require care throughout the life course “to maintain, continue, and repair our world so that we can live in it as well as possible.” In turn, a framework of care includes a moral responsibility to guarantee the basic conditions of well-being—particularly for those in vulnerable situations—and engage with the specific contexts that people must navigate to meet their bodily needs. This includes securing necessities such as food, housing, and healthcare, as well as the emotional supports and social ties that sustain dignity and participation in public life (Tronto 2013). Care ethics provide the foundation for this obligation through a recognition that all things have inherent worth and must be maintained, repaired, loved, and protected to thrive (Mattern 2018).

Dignity and Accountability

Building from this foundation, dignity emerges as another central tenet of care through sustained attentiveness to the contexts in which people experience governance. Drawing on the capabilities approach, care focuses on whether people can convert available resources into the ability to live safely, maintain health, form relationships, and participate in the social and political life of their communities (Nussbaum 2000; Sen 1999). In the daily operations of public administrators,

this entails how protections are enforced and how individuals experience interactions with administrative systems across varied social, legal, and institutional settings. Dignity is reflected in the extent to which governance remains responsive to human need within specific and unequal conditions.

As a result, care work does not consist of one-time interventions but ongoing, reciprocal practices that situate accountability at the center of governance. Within a care framework, accountability refers to the capacity of institutions to remain present, responsive, and attentive to people's needs over time. This orientation foregrounds emotional labor as a routine feature of public administration, as administrators must regulate their own emotions while interacting with residents experiencing distress, insecurity, or exclusion (Guy et al. 2014). Empathy is a component of this process (Addams 1902), but care extends beyond recognition of suffering to require proximity, ongoing engagement, and policy adjustment in response to lived experience—particularly where past harm and disparities persist (Schweitzer 2016).

Agency and Narrative Power

A care-based approach to public administration further emphasizes agency, understood as whether governance practices enable people to navigate administrative systems, contest decisions, influence outcomes, and exercise meaningful control over the conditions shaping their lives (Stivers 2002, 2005). At the institutional level, supporting agency requires challenging conventional hierarchies of expertise by treating experiential knowledge as relevant to decision-making and working alongside community organizations to transform the power relations that structure participation (Purcell 2009). Too often, collaborative practices reproduce the same outcomes of the past, and even worse, provide cover for harmful decisions by labeling them the product of democratic processes. Therefore, fostering agency involves remaining accountable and responsive to the public as well as creating conditions in which relationship- and power-building can occur among residents so that they can meaningfully advocate for their needs. In the field, narrative power has also received increasing attention in social justice and organizing scholarship as a key mechanism through which agency is exercised by residents in local governance (Ito et al. 2023). Narrative power refers to the capacity to define problems, name

harms, and articulate solutions in ways that challenge dominant accounts of need and deservingness. When institutional contexts facilitate the development of public narratives, individual experiences can be situated within broader political and historical patterns, transforming personal grievances into collective claims that inform institutional change.

Methods

This article synthesizes insights from a decade of community-based research conducted throughout Los Angeles, undertaken in partnership with a wide range of community-based organizations. Rather than presenting a single empirical project, the article offers a retrospective analysis across multiple studies (see Table 1). Drawing from this body of community research, this paper asks: 1) How is care enacted in practice by communities and local organizations amidst government retrenchment? and 2) What lessons do those community practices offer for integrating care into public administration to improve legitimacy and social equity?

The data informing these past analyses include: 1) more than 30 focus groups addressing affordable housing, fair wages and sustainable employment, childcare, and access to public resources; 2) three community surveys that followed up on initial focus group findings; 3) approximately 130 hours of participant observation at community meetings, public events, and a photography practice that included speaking to people on the street related to those topics; and 4) a content analysis of 451 news articles from the *Los Angeles Sentinel*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Streetsblog LA*, and *Curbed LA* covering the Crenshaw/LAX Rail Line and Destination Crenshaw projects. All materials were evaluated using thematic analysis to label aspects of care identified in the data (Braun and Clarke 2021). For each project, the theme of care emerged inductively through an iterative coding process. Multiple dimensions of care were highlighted in those codes and a final round of analysis was conducted for this article to put them in conversation with the literature and derive the framework presented above.

Situational Context and the Abdication of Care

The retrenchment of public sector support for care has occurred at all levels of government consistently since the late 19th century. In California, the tax revolt of the

Table 1. Overview of Research Projects

Project Description	Issue Area	Geography	Population	Year	Data	Connection to Care Framework
Evaluation of Destination Crenshaw, a community-led cultural corridor developed alongside the Crenshaw/LAX rail line, which embeds Black cultural history, identity, and community priorities into public infrastructure, informed by 15 interviews and 451 archival sources	Community Development	South Los Angeles	Local Residents	2015–2016	News Article Archive; Interviews; Participant Observation	<i>Agency and Narrative Power</i> : public decision-making through community visioning and repair for historical erasure
Collaborative research examining the impacts of rising housing costs and neighborhood change on tenant stability through 17 focus groups and a randomized, door-to-door survey of 402 residents	Safe, Affordable Housing	South Los Angeles	Tenants	2018–2019	Focus Groups; Survey; Participant Observation	<i>Material Sustenance + Well-Being; Dignity and Accountability</i> : responsibility of public institutions to enforce protections and reduce fear and retaliation risks for those seeking redress
Community research examining barriers to quality employment and childcare, with data collection facilitated by local parent ambassadors to conduct 8 focus groups and administer 452 community surveys	Jobs and Childcare	South Los Angeles	Parents	2023	Focus Groups; Survey; Participant Observation	<i>Dignity and Accountability</i> : the needs of local residents are interdependent, and relational support is essential to enduring harmful conditions and improving access to opportunity
Community study investigating housing insecurity among families, with data collection facilitated by local parent ambassadors to facilitate 8 focus groups and collect 1,114 community surveys	Safe, Affordable Housing	South Los Angeles	Parents	2024	Focus Groups; Survey; Participant Observation	<i>Material Sustenance + Well-Being; Agency and Narrative Power</i> : community infrastructures of care enable families to meet some needs through shared resources, relational support, and resistance

1970s and the recession of the early 1980s prompted severe cuts to social programs, disproportionately affecting working-class Black and Latino/a communities (Wolch 1996). In Los Angeles, this resulted in the closure of physical and mental health clinics, food stamp outlets, and welfare offices; virtually all of them were located in the poorest areas of the county. These cuts were not simply budgetary adjustments, but deliberate policy decisions aimed at reducing enrollment and making assistance harder to access and maintain over time (Soss et al. 2011).

Subsequent waves of austerity—including the 1996

federal welfare reform and post-2008 recession budget reductions—further dismantled social protections and hollowed out the public sector, reinforcing a political culture that prioritizes individual responsibility over collective well-being (Pastor 2001, 2018). This ideological shift has profoundly shaped the political and social conditions under which public administration operates. Public stigma developed around those receiving public benefits and a narrative of deservingness has allowed governments to dismantle public care infrastructures and redirect government resources away from social

services toward punitive measures, such as policing and incarceration (Gilmore 2007).

Today, residents with the greatest need for public resources are often the least able to access them due to geographic inaccessibility, administrative burdens, and exclusionary eligibility criteria (Moffitt 2015). Those seeking assistance must navigate invasive bureaucracies that demand personal disclosures, impose behavioral restrictions, and reinforce social stigma (Siliunas et al. 2019). In Los Angeles, city and county programs are unable to provide enough for working-class families to achieve stability and remain above the poverty line because of consistent underfunding and limited enrollment capacity (De Gregorio et al. 2021). These dynamics have contributed to widespread insecurity in the everyday lives of residents as evidenced in the growing proportion of people struggling to meet basic needs related to food, housing, and health (Angst et al. 2024).

Government agencies have increasingly outsourced social and community support to nonprofit and private actors (Bockmeyer 2003). Because public institutions and private markets fail to meet the basic needs of working-class households, communities are forced to rely on one another to survive (Simone 2021). In response, historically marginalized communities have developed their own infrastructures of care—mutual aid networks, faith-based initiatives, and grassroots organizations—that step in where the state has retreated (Lipsitz 2011). Organizations and informal networks among friends, family, and neighbors are essential to residents gaining access to services, employment, and government resources that would otherwise remain out of reach (Allard and Small 2013).

Altogether, these interpersonal ties function as infrastructure, linking people to resources and information that help them navigate systemic barriers and survive conditions of neglect. This community-led infrastructure exposes systemic gaps in current governance models and offers powerful examples of how the public sector can be reoriented toward relational, care-centered policy.

Findings

The findings presented below synthesize insights from community-based research conducted across multiple policy domains in South Los Angeles. The analysis is organized around the three pillars of care: 1) material

sustenance and well-being; 2) dignity and accountability; and 3) agency and narrative power.

Material Sustenance and Well-Being

Across focus groups, surveys, and participant observations conducted before and after the COVID-19 pandemic, participants consistently described unmet material needs related to food, utilities, housing stability, and health (Angst 2022; Angst and Chlala 2025, forthcoming). Residents engaged with the public sector because governmental agencies had material resources and legal enforcement mechanisms that were vital to survival, but those systems were often insufficient and time-consuming to navigate. Participants emphasized the role of community-based organizations in helping to meet the gaps in needs that remained by connecting residents to food banks, utility subsidies, legal counsel, and information about housing and employment rights. Residents also frequently discussed mutual support among friends and family. Those supports were vital and included a wide range of activities depending on the context, such as helping with paperwork or car maintenance, offering childcare or a place to stay, and sharing information, but these practices were often temporary or unable to fully resolve underlying issues.

Additionally, focus group participants highlighted the importance of emotional support provided by friends, family, and local organizations—spaces where they could speak openly about stress, isolation, fear, and the exhaustion of repeatedly seeking help from institutions that felt unresponsive. Residents highlighted the importance of relationships built over time within those settings. Through regular congregation, people exchanged information, shared strategies, and developed a clearer understanding of the structural conditions shaping their lives (Angst 2022; Angst and Chlala, forthcoming). Participants stated how they supported one another during moments of crisis through emotional check-ins and collective advocacy aimed at securing public accountability, such as door-knocking for campaigns or resisting illegal eviction practices. Parent ambassadors also described how learning that their own experiences were representative of so many others helped them feel less isolated and fostered a motivation to act, which they executed upon by developing a resource guide and a set of policy recommendations to share with their communities. These resident experiences indicate that the effectiveness of public assistance depends on increasing the availability of resources as

well as facilitating environments where people can connect and exercise their agency.

Dignity and Accountability

Despite the presence of a robust formal policy environment in Los Angeles, participants consistently described gaps between legal protections and lived experience that undermined their dignity. Los Angeles maintains extensive tenant protections, including habitability standards, rent control, anti-harassment ordinances, and minimum wage enforcement administered through multiple city and county agencies. Yet focus group participants and survey respondents consistently reported widespread violations, including tenant harassment, unsafe housing conditions, wage theft, and job discrimination (Angst 2022; Angst and Chlala, forthcoming). Tenants actively sought assistance from public agencies because they recognized that courts and regulatory bodies were often the only institutions with the authority to enforce these protections. However, participants described public sector responses as slow, fragmented, or ineffective, leaving many without meaningful resolution. Across projects, residents identified significant barriers to accessing public systems, including limited language access, complex digital platforms, bureaucratic procedures, eligibility constraints, fear, and persistent distrust rooted in past experiences of institutional harm.

Participants emphasized that these access barriers were closely tied to experiences of dignity and shaped by whether institutions felt safe and responsive in practice. In focus groups, residents emphasized that asking for help placed them in vulnerable positions—particularly among undocumented residents, LGBTQI+, or those in precarious housing situations—citing fears of harassment, rent increases, eviction, or immigration enforcement (Angst 2022; Angst and Chlala, forthcoming). Even when public resources were geographically close or formally available, residents explained that they were unlikely to engage if they did not believe institutions would act in their interest or protect them from harm. As a result, residents reported needing to verify services through peer networks to understand whether specific providers would respect their identities before risking exposure to potential discrimination or harm—preengagement labor that institutions rarely acknowledged or addressed. These accounts underscore that emotional labor is reciprocal and operates on both sides of administrative encounters. For public institutions, legitimacy

is earned through everyday practices that affirm safety, trust, and respect over time.

Within this context, navigation and outreach emerged as critical functions performed by community-based organizations. Residents repeatedly stated that they only learned about legal protections and public sector enforcement mechanisms through personal relationships or prior experiences shared within trusted organizational spaces (Angst 2022; Angst and Chlala 2025). Community organizations provided culturally competent assistance tailored to specific identities and neighborhoods, helping residents interpret their rights, complete applications, and pursue formal complaints—particularly when systems were difficult to access, were only available in English, or perceived as unresponsive. While these organizations played a vital intermediary role, participants also noted that limited and unstable funding constrained their capacity to meet growing demand, emphasizing the need for greater public sector intervention and resource provision. Ultimately, public administrators can help sustain the dignity of residents by fostering relationships that enable engagement and responsiveness to context while creating institutional accountability mechanisms that make engagement meaningful.

Agency and Narrative Power

When the Crenshaw/LAX rail line was announced in 2011, residents immediately questioned whether the 8.5-mile project would benefit the Black communities it was planned to be built through or accelerate displacement (Angst and Poe, forthcoming). Early planning decisions—including the omission of a Leimert Park station and public renderings of proposed stations that excluded Black residents—were widely interpreted as signals of erasure. In response, longtime residents and community organizations mobilized through sustained public meetings, protests, and media advocacy to demand accountability from the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority. After nearly two years of collective action, Metro approved the Leimert Park station and a developer agreement that mandated targeted hiring, small businesses support, and affordable housing adjacent to the project.

After this success, community leaders shifted to proactive agenda-setting, advancing Destination Crenshaw—a 1.3-mile outdoor museum, park, and community development agreement—as a parallel intervention to shape the corridor's future rather than remain sub-

ject to externally driven development. Archival analysis and interviews revealed the project emerged through grassroots storytelling, collective visioning, and long-term relationship building that centered Black lived experience (Angst and Poe, forthcoming). Participants described how youth, artists, organizers, and professionals collaborated to reclaim public space and invest skills in their own community. Designed by Black architects and featuring works by Black artists, the project seeks to tell the story of Black Los Angeles through public art, gathering spaces, and landscaping informed by African diasporic histories. Through the development of Destination Crenshaw, residents were able to define the corridor's meaning, embed the community's identity into the landscape, and advance an alternative vision for the future. Those outcomes were supported by public-sector actions that enabled residents to counter private-sector dominance through land- and power-sharing agreements so that impacted communities could exert meaningful influence over development narratives and outcomes.

Learning from Community to Center Care

The field of public administration is entering another period of retrenchment marked by shrinking federal support and heightened pressure on local governments and residents alike. In Los Angeles, federal immigration enforcement and militarized responses to protests have compounded insecurity for already vulnerable communities, raising urgent questions about whether care-centered governance is possible when higher levels of government are actively antagonistic to residents' well-being. As in prior eras of austerity, these conditions heighten risks of displacement, exclusion, and democratic erosion. However, the resident experiences examined in this article suggest that a framework of care is viable at the local level and increasingly necessary under such conditions.

The findings presented above demonstrate that a care-based approach to public administration requires renewed investment, enforcement, and power sharing. As a baseline, this entails reprioritizing public budgets to center care through investments in health, housing, and other basic needs. To do so, administrators will need to innovate and use the finance tools available to the public sector to fund those actions—particularly through the reallocation of funds spent on incarceration

and policing. Moreover, focus group participants explained that their engagement with government was shaped by fear, trauma, and prior experiences of harm, underscoring the need for healing-centered and trauma-informed administrative practices to advance social justice and care (Chordiya and Sabharwal 2024).

In addition, this research calls on public administrators to strengthen and complement community efforts by investing in trusted intermediaries and ensuring protections are meaningfully enforced. Community infrastructures of care are essential first responders during crises and require resources to sustain and expand capacity. However, community-based care typically emerges from outside the state to fulfill specific gaps in needs and may exist in tension with formal institutions. Therefore, it is important to note that not all forms of care can or should be absorbed into bureaucratic systems. Nevertheless, a functioning public sector has outsized authority and funding that is essential to protecting rights and addressing structural harm. For public administrators, this means leveraging institutional resources and authority to support community-defined priorities while avoiding co-optation or undermining existing community care practices.

Under increasingly punitive and austere conditions, state and local administrators will play a critical role in resident well-being by fostering regional governance structures that either buffer against the unjust and often illegal actions of the federal government or enhance those strategies of oppression. Administrators and community leaders will need to work collectively to determine how to navigate this new governance context and articulate counter-narratives that offer the public an alternative set of policy options. This will not be an easy task and requires administrators to cultivate resistance within their institutions to refuse the systems of extraction and control that their positions are embedded within. This reorientation also requires that administrators build networks of solidarity with community organizations that operate beyond their institutions and can often be more directly confrontational to ensure downward accountability for local residents (Purcell 2009).

The framework of care and community practices presented in this article offers a roadmap for sustaining trust and ensuring vital resources and protections remain accessible during periods of political instability. To this end, care is presented as both a mode of governance and a form of collective resistance that enables adminis-

trators to pursue transformative change and subvert the institutional logics that have produced consistent harm for marginalized groups over generations. By incorporating relational processes, public administrators can ensure interactions between residents and local government are safe, reliable, and substantive. From this position, they can help reassert the role of government as a trusted guarantor of the conditions necessary for life.

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