

Introduction

STATE EFFECTS AND THE POLITICS OF IMMIGRATION IN ARIZONA

Renee fantasized about crashing her truck right into the U.S.-Mexico border fence. The proud thirty-five-year-old Tejana had first laid eyes on the international boundary in 2000, shortly after she moved to Southern Arizona. Before that, she had completed a college degree in California and, much to her father's disapproval, had organized migrant farmworkers in Florida. Once in Arizona, Renee joined the Advocates, a local pro-immigrant non-profit group. By the time we met, Renee had been a member of the Advocates for just over a decade; during that time, she had worked long hours as the organization's director. She had also recently earned her master's degree in public administration. As I watched her run meetings and coordinate events, I could not imagine the Advocates surviving without her.

When Renee confessed her recurring fence-crashing fantasy, we had just arrived in Douglas, a city of seventeen thousand residents in southeastern Arizona. Renee parked her truck close to the tall, rusted metal fence that separated Douglas from the sprawling Mexican city of Agua Prieta. A handmade memorial along the barrier signaled that we were in the right spot. We had come here for a silent vigil organized by the family of Carlos, a nineteen-year-old Latino who had been shot three times in the back by a U.S. Border Patrol agent. Carlos, a Douglas resident and

American citizen, was killed fleeing into Mexico, reportedly transporting marijuana. He bled to death right there at the border.

Shortly after Carlos's family fashioned their memorial, the Border Patrol delivered a letter demanding it be taken down. Agents claimed their makeshift shrine was obstructing their view across the fencing. The Advocates and other pro-immigrant groups encouraged the family to resist the Border Patrol's demands, and they organized a caravan to bring activists to the Douglas–Agua Prieta border for a silent vigil. Everyone gathered there knew that the agents were scheduled to remove Carlos's memorial the following day; his family and community activists planned to videotape the agents destroying it.

I had an eerie sense that I was being watched. Renee pointed at two white-and-green vans parked about a quarter mile away, waiting for the vigil to begin. Next to one of the vehicles stood three uniformed Border Patrol agents. They gazed in our direction. Renee shook her head grimly and expressed doubt that even if they figured out which agent pulled the trigger, they would ever find him guilty of murder. That the Border Patrol could kill an American without fear of consequence and then stop his family from memorializing the young man showed how strong, punitive, even vindictive the state had become.

Renee's group, the Advocates, counseled Carlos's family to grieve publicly as a way to challenge their formidable foes. They would call a series of press conferences and bring a lawsuit against the agency, yet Renee was convinced none of it would mean the agent responsible for this young man's death would face justice. The whole process, she surmised, could drag out for years. Ultimately, it would offer little comfort to the bereaved family. Nonetheless, Renee believed these actions were crucial. Even if the campaign to publicize the family's grief failed to elicit sufficient public outrage, even if the lawsuit failed to exact retribution, any effort to weaken the state was valuable, she explained.

The border fence, a painful symbol of state power for Renee, looked different to Dale. On a ranch forty miles west of the silent vigil's site, I stood with Dale in front of a vehicle barrier marking the U.S.-Mexico boundary. Dale, a thirty-six-year-old white man, had spent his early childhood in Europe before his father was re-stationed to Arizona. He was an "Army brat" who always wanted to be a cop, but a childhood injury had left

him unable to pass the physical exam. Now, Dale worked as a jack of all trades—at least, whenever he could find work.

Manual labor was actually what brought him to the Engineers, a small nonprofit focused on immigration restriction. Phil, their leader, had hired Dale to do some work on the sprawling ranch the group used as its base. The pay was good, and the work was interesting. Dale manned infrared cameras and flew, with other Engineers, in a small airplane to assess the condition of the border fence. Dale was frustrated with how often the group encountered technological bottlenecks and unexpected setbacks, but he stuck around for the camaraderie. Eventually, he became a core member of the six-person group.

When he was a kid, Dale remembered, he thought a “border” meant a tall, sturdy wall, guarded around the clock by armed government agents. Especially when he thought about the U.S.-Mexico border, he had pictured the Berlin Wall. “I was sure that nobody could come across and hurt America.” Working with the Engineers on border issues had taught him otherwise.

“I couldn’t believe it,” he said, shaking his head incredulously. Because the Engineers’ ranch abutted the international boundary, the Border Patrol would sometimes call Dale’s colleague Malcolm for “intel.” “Malcolm’s phone would ring. . . . ‘Can you look over at the wash [river] and see if anyone is there?’” Climbing up onto the barrier, Dale straddled it and touched one foot down on the Mexican side as if to demonstrate its ineffectiveness for me. The Border Patrol was nowhere to be seen, and, for Dale, the flimsy barrier only proved the state’s weakness. The Border Patrol, Dale confided, had needed the Engineers’ help on more than one occasion.

A few weeks later, I watched a livestream image of Dale walking across a field. The image was being projected onto a screen set up in the Arizona State Legislature. At the invitation of a state senator, the Engineers were broadcasting a real-time demonstration of their newest surveillance equipment for a State Senate committee. The Engineers were developing a system of ground sensors; they were not yet ready, but the glitches were being worked out, Malcolm explained to the committee. Up on the screen, Dale began walking. He tripped a sensor. The screen lit up with a map showing Dale’s location. Another Engineer remarked that if their sensor-based system was installed, it could detect people walking northward long

before they even crossed the border. The sensor system would be a vital addition to the Border Patrol's toolkit, the Engineers explained. As it stood, the Border Patrol dispatched agents haphazardly and belatedly. The sensors' early detection promised ample time for agents to be directed to the precise areas where crossers were trying to make illegal entry. The Engineers urged the legislators to focus on creating a comprehensive surveillance system. Dale hoped the Engineers could help the state improve this flawed enforcement strategy.

Dale and Renee had stood a mere forty miles apart. They had gazed at the very same border. But where Renee had felt the state's dominating presence, Dale only observed its impotence and disorganization. When juxtaposed, their experiences indicate how ambiguous the state of the border was. This book explains how activists like Renee and Dale arrived at such wildly different conclusions about the state's coercive power and how they mobilized to change it.

THE PUZZLE

Despite their clearly divergent worldviews, Renee, Dale, and all the other activists I spoke to—whether left-wing, pro-immigrant or right-wing, immigration-restrictionist—shared two characteristics that puzzled me. First, none had any direct connection with the issue around which they mobilized. That is, none of these committed activists struggling for change were *personally* impacted by U.S. immigration and border policies.

Second, perhaps stranger still, none of my respondents really believed that their organizations' work would be successful. Renee, for instance, harbored serious doubts that activists could actually do anything to help Carlos's family or hold someone responsible for his death. Likewise, Dale was hopeful, but in no way certain that the sensor system the Engineers had spent years developing would work, let alone gain a government contract. Many of their previous projects had failed. It was very likely this one would too.¹

Why, then, were these primarily white American citizens flocking to the Arizona-Sonora borderlands? Why were they getting involved in strenuous, frustrating, and, by their own admission, ineffective kinds of activ-

ism? Why did they commit to this mobilization *even though* they thought radical change—building a wall or tearing it down—was wholly unlikely?

To answer these questions, I draw on data collected from participant observation with five grassroots organizations in Arizona. Two of these groups (the Advocates and the Humanitarians) were left-wing and pro-immigrant. The remaining three organizations (the Engineers, the Soldiers, and the Arpaiositos) subscribed to a right-wing and immigration-restrictionist worldview.

My research is bookended by three interconnected events that were the backdrop to the groups' mobilization. When I started this project in early 2011, my respondents were absorbed by the political buildup of Arizona Senate Bill 1070. The previous year, the governor of Arizona, defying the federal government, had signed the bill into law. Its most controversial provision required police to investigate the immigration status of anyone they detained, while also allowing local law enforcement to stop and arrest anyone they thought it "reasonable" to suspect was undocumented.² I continued fieldwork until the summer of 2012, when the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed the constitutionality of this provision.

In January 2017, shortly before the inauguration of the forty-fifth president of the United States, I revisited Arizona. I re-interviewed veteran participants and spoke with newcomers to the activist groups. On my revisit, the elected federal government had shifted sharply to the right, thanks in large part to how Republican candidates leveraged the politics that SB1070 had generated years earlier. For my interlocutors, important political events—like Supreme Court deliberations or presidential electioneering—unfolded in faraway places. I observed how they made sense of these events. What remained unchanged throughout the period of my study was activists' intense frustration with the state of the U.S.-Mexico border.

This book is about why the activists in these organizations were so frustrated and how they acted on this frustration.³ Although it is about the politics of immigration, this book is not actually about im/migrants themselves.⁴ In fact, it has little to say about the experiences of racialized non-citizens living in or crossing through Arizona's borderlands. With the exception of two activists who were naturalized American citizens, none of my interlocutors had immigrated to the United States and experienced the deportability that accompanies noncitizen status. The pro-immigrant

activists I studied were what sociologists call “conscience constituents,” or individuals who participate in a social movement but do not stand to gain personally from the movement’s successes.⁵ Indeed, as conscience constituents they could “easily eschew their activist identity when it [was] inconvenient or dangerous.”⁶ Like their restrictionist opponents, most were white American citizens. And, also like their opponents, few were even originally from Arizona.⁷

This book does not document the experiences of immigrants, but rather the ways citizens *talk* about immigrants. To make this explicit, I often refer to the imagined, composite figure of the “third-world migrant.” In this, I am inspired by a critique about how feminists in the West imagined the experiences of women elsewhere, and how the heterogeneities across such an expansive group of human beings were discursively collapsed into the singular “third-world woman.”⁸ In addition to its homogenizing tendency, this representation was problematic, critics argued, because it essentialized the “third-world woman” as a victim of forces outside of her control. In contrast to this “object status,” Western feminists saw themselves as subjects with agency and the capacity (and moral obligation) to save the third-world woman from her misery.⁹

Similarly, what this book recounts is not the complex ways in which migrants fared. Rather, it is about how an *imagined* third-world migrant fared—in the minds of my interlocutors. As a container, this figure held different meanings for the two sides. On the left, the third-world migrant was reminiscent of the third-world woman: a racialized, powerless, often feminized victim. Americans had the agency and moral duty to provide “her” with relief. On the right, the third-world migrant was a racialized, highly agentic, often (over-)masculinized subject, who wreaked havoc. “His” victims were ordinary Americans and even frontline state actors. However, when committed activists collectively mobilized, they could provide fellow Americans with a modicum of protection from this dangerous Other.

Simplistic and problematic, these discursive, racializing representations are nonetheless powerful. They merit our attention. As this book illustrates, these representations reveal how left-wing and right-wing activists make sense of themselves and their actions. Importantly, understanding the work that the construct of the “third-world migrant” does for

activists also exposes the contrasting ways that the left and the right perceive state power in Arizona's borderlands.

STUDYING THE LEFT AND THE RIGHT TOGETHER

Even if the activists on both sides were American citizens and even if most identified as white, it may still seem odd to compare a politically conservative group of restrictionists with a progressive organization that pushes for a pro-immigrant agenda. Indeed, amid rising hostility toward immigrants, is it even fair to put these two movements on the same plane, let alone compare them to each other?

Comparison does not mean drawing a moral equivalence across the two sides. Indeed, as a noncitizen and a woman of color, my own political sympathies lie with pro-immigrant mobilizations.¹⁰ Assuming that they would be more receptive to my presence, I even considered *just* studying pro-immigrant activists. However, as a mentor quickly pointed out, examining one side of a political conflict was like watching only one team play in a soccer game: I would end up with a very partial picture of what was happening on the field.

Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu relied on a similar analogy in discussing politics. He made the point that politics, like many other domains of life, constitute a *field* of relations, wherein participants engage in high-stakes competition.¹¹ Any position in any field assumes meaning only *in relation* to other positions. For this reason, without understanding the underlying conflict or opposition, the significance of a position is hard to determine.¹² In fact, Bourdieu argued, beliefs and practices once associated with one political orientation, can, over time, be associated with its opposite.¹³ By this logic, to understand the content of a pro-immigrant position at a given historical moment, one must also examine the content of restrictionism. The unique nature of a movement is most evident in relation to its opposition.¹⁴ Understanding the contours of pro-immigrant politics requires an analysis of the countermovement against which it wages a struggle.

I was also frustrated with the stalemate that discussions of immigration reform had reached. When political discourse has calcified into familiar rhetoric and each side preaches to the choir but not beyond it, sociologists

have shown how comparison of oppositional movements can offer fresh insights. This kind of analysis can get at the unspoken, but core issue in a debate.¹⁵ It can expose unexpected similarities and overlooked differences.¹⁶ It can explain a group's mobilization strategy.¹⁷ And it can illuminate the nature of the broader context from which these political struggles spring.¹⁸ Inspired by such possibilities, I set out to replicate this research design.

Observing Renee and Dale's respective organizations drew my attention to the fact that these were not only two separate political groups, but also two distinct social groups. Although most of the respondents in this study were white (77%), and all were American citizens, women dominated the pro-immigrant organizations, while men dominated the restrictionist groups that I studied. Perhaps more striking than the gendered composition of the two sides, was that it was also accompanied by differences in social class—something that I would have missed without a comparative approach.

The pro-immigrant activists I met tended to be highly educated, well-traveled, and on a trajectory of upward mobility. Meanwhile, restrictionists were largely blue-collar white men with far less education, far less income, and far less day-to-day certainty than the leftists. Almost all had experienced downward mobility.

Among participants on the left, the decision to volunteer one's time in causes like immigrant rights advocacy carried a personal cost. Civic engagement meant forfeiting professional opportunities and giving up lucrative career prospects. That activism was often a personal sacrifice and was reflected in the disapproving reactions of activists' loved ones—such as Renee's parents. By contrast, on the right, activism offered restrictionists camaraderie and respite from social alienation. Sometimes, activism even offered right-wing participants a modicum of economic certainty, as it did for Dale. As we will see, these distinct social positions structured activists' politics and participation.

BRINGING POLITICS BACK IN

Divided by the Wall thus advances research on U.S. immigration politics, which has largely focused on one, rather than both sides of the struggle

simultaneously.¹⁹ Past scholarship is overwhelmingly about left-wing, pro-immigrant mobilization.²⁰ It either overlooks right-wing, restrictionist activism altogether or paints this activism as a direct reflection of anti-immigrant government policies.²¹ Moreover, this body of research under-examines the class backgrounds, racial identities, and motivations of those who mobilize.

Studies about pro-immigrant politics in the United States tend to focus on enumerating the factors that facilitate mobilization.²² For instance, some scholars have focused on how religion, conventionally the hand-maiden of *right-wing* politics in the United States, has become a resource for leftist groups that wish to change immigration policy.²³ Albeit meticulous in its level of empirical detail, such scholarship leaves out a discussion of “variation in the political orientation of movements: their ideologies, aim, [and] motivations.”²⁴ In other words, researchers’ focus on movements’ *means* overshadows consideration of movements’ political *ends*.

Research about right-wing restrictionist activism also tends to ignore the actual ideas and goals of these mobilizations. Studies about restrictionist activists are fewer in number. They are also less empirical in nature, often relying on media reports.²⁵ To the extent that they discuss ideology, researchers tend to portray restrictionist groups as taken in by the symbolic power of anti-immigrant laws, uncritically accepting of the state’s ideas.²⁶ This approach *presumes* what grassroots restrictionism is like, employing labels like “vigilantism,” which misleadingly suggest that these are fringe groups with no relationship to the state.²⁷ How activists on the ground actually interpret state practices, let alone how they understand the world, escapes empirical study. Even the lone ethnographic account of restrictionism at the U.S.-Mexico border refuses to engage with activists’ ideologies and political goals.²⁸

The discounting of a movement’s political ends is not unique to studies about immigration struggles, but part of a paradigmatic shift across sociology. Political sociology traditionally asked questions about the *content* of struggles, including why participants adopted certain political orientations and goals. Many such classic works tried to understand these political orientations in relation to social structures.²⁹ In recent decades, however, a new paradigm emerged in which the dominant approach to studying struggles came to focus more on mobilization strategies than political character.³⁰

Today, this proclivity to dismiss the relevance of ideology is motivated by a concern that focusing on the “ends” of a mobilization can undermine the sociological depth of a study,³¹ ultimately “reduc[ing] [research subjects] to stereotypes.”³² According to this view, what merits attention, then, are the *means* of mobilization—the “during” of a movement rather than its “before” (i.e., participants’ ideologies) and “after” (i.e., outcome)³³ or “political process” rather than “specific policy preferences.”³⁴

The impulse to ignore activists’ ostensibly subjective worldviews and to focus on their practices is understandable. However, without delving into their social backgrounds and ideological motivations, let alone their organizations’ political programs, it would be hard to explain why activists participated and *kept* participating, especially when their preferred endeavors were not necessarily the most effective choices available.³⁵

In my research, political orientation was very important to sustaining grassroots struggles around immigration. And, I found that political ideology (namely, ideas about state power) and the strategic collective action that this ideology shaped, was profoundly meaningful at a *personal* level. This was because their state-directed ideas and practices gave activists the tools to manage their own complex, intersectional identities.³⁶

As mentioned earlier, pro-immigrant activists were socioeconomically better off than their restrictionist opponents. Despite this difference, however, members of both sides shared an important attribute: all grappled with a tension or conflict in their identity. These *conflictual identities* were, in part, what rendered particular forms of state-directed collective mobilization attractive.³⁷ I detected two kinds of conflictual identities among my respondents: pro-immigrant activists struggled with being *progressive, but privileged*.³⁸ Their restrictionist counterparts grappled with being *white, but working-class*.³⁹ Hints of both of these conflictual identities are scattered across studies about whiteness.⁴⁰ They can also be found in research on conscience constituents.⁴¹ Each conflictual identity sheds light on why people who otherwise had little to gain personally from changes in immigration policy nonetheless felt compelled to join organizations dedicated to changing immigration policy.

Restrictionists struggled with the disparity between their in-group status as white men and the diminishing sense of control that accompanied their experience of downward mobility. The tension of being white but

working class was a key element in the narratives that emerged when I asked about who they were and why they mobilized on the border. This tension reflects the idea that “real” white people (particularly men), by definition, cannot be economically precarious.⁴² Joining a restrictionist organization and mobilizing to strengthen the state in the borderlands was a way to resolve, or at least manage, this mismatch. It restored restrictionists’ sense of mastery and control in the world. Empowering the state was also about empowering the white-but-working-class self.⁴³

Meanwhile, the main preoccupation among pro-immigrant activists was the tension between their progressive worldview and their privileged backgrounds. Leftist activists grappled with the incongruence between their desire for more equality and the inequality from which they had personally benefited. In most cases, a respondent’s sudden realization of their own privilege in relation to a global “other” initially prompted their awareness of this tension. As one scholar has observed, “Acknowledging one’s racialized privilege is difficult and fraught with contradiction” and can easily lead to “ambivalence, doubt, and ethical struggle.”⁴⁴ There can also be “confusion, [. . .] anger and backlash.”⁴⁵ Together, these feelings reflect another feature of hegemonic whiteness: that white middle-class people (especially women) have an obligation to “do what’s right.”⁴⁶

Among my left-wing respondents, recognition of their privilege spawned the desire to perform what they thought of as moral virtue by volunteering. But it was only by joining a pro-immigrant organization and mobilizing on the border that my leftist interlocutors finally felt at peace with themselves. Their efforts to weaken the state mitigated the dilemma of being progressive but privileged in a way that other forms of civic engagement did not.

Thus, rather than taking activists’ motivations and goals as self-evident—something that previous research has tended to do—this book empirically examines participants’ life histories and the content of their organizations’ political projects. Certainly, the mobilization I observed was “about” immigration and the radically different policies each side wanted to see implemented. However, what initially attracted participants, what sustained their commitment over time, and what made their mobilization profoundly meaningful was the fact that their activism was part of a project of remaking the self.⁴⁷ That is, the borderland served as a

place for American self-actualization as class differences grew starker. Why this was so requires us to attend to how the people in this study perceived the state.

THE STATE EFFECTS AND THE POLITICS OF IMMIGRATION

This book takes insights from whiteness studies and puts them in conversation with a critical variant of political sociology to understand why and how people mobilize even when they harbor serious doubts about the efficacy of such collective action. I contend that scholars must fight the tendency to take the motivations of participants or the goals of their organizations as self-evident, even when considering contentious struggles that seem to have obvious sides.

To suture together participants' subjectivities and their mobilization practices with their organizations' political orientations, this book draws on the concept of the "state effect," first introduced by Timothy Mitchell. Mitchell, responding to earlier work, claimed that the state was not a bounded, structure-like thing that floated above society.⁴⁸ In fact, the apparent boundary between state and society was an illusion, helping legitimate the illegitimate. In the banking sector, for example, one would be hard-pressed to distinguish between public and private, because private banks, central banks, and international institutions like the World Bank together "represent interlocking networks of financial power and regulation."⁴⁹ Nonetheless, the economic order is reproduced when banks assume the appearance of being private institutions, separate from the state.

Mitchell thus urged his colleagues to shift their inquiry from "what does the state do?" to "what practices fostered the *appearance* of 'the state' as a coherent and separate entity?" Social science, he contended, should investigate how the organization of space, time, and bodies created the "state effect" or the "metaphysical" appearance of the state as an autonomous, structure-like thing.⁵⁰

This framework, however, did not account for instances when state institutions *failed* to give the impression that there was a coherent state.

Nor was it clear how the presence or absence of a state effect shaped collective action. Other scholars have begun exploring these questions.⁵¹ In particular, Brissette attends to the ways that “implicit assumptions” about the state can shape political subjectivities.⁵²

Relatedly, this book examines how activists’ perceptions of state institutions—and particularly, their experiences of the state’s coercive capacity—are key to understanding what makes mobilization so compelling to participants and the array of specific tactics movements come to rely on. In doing so, this book makes three interrelated contributions.

Perceptions of State Power Can Vary—Even at the Border

First, this study empirically illustrates that the state does not always appear as a “structure-like” thing and that there can be significant variation across social groups’ perceptions of state power. Mitchell predicted that the state effect would always be the strongest at an international border because that was where “the mundane arrangements” of policing “help manufacture an almost transcendental entity, the nation state.”⁵³ Others have also posited that the border is where the state engages in its most visible kind of policing, communicating its resolve and its sovereignty.⁵⁴ But the state’s intended self-presentation is not the same as its actual effect. Differently positioned groups can and do have disparate understandings of the state’s policing capacity, as I witnessed at Arizona’s border.

To theorize this variation in perceptions of power, I distinguish between the *strong-state effect* and the *weak-state effect*, and I theorize each as a cohesive *worldview*.⁵⁵ As worldviews, these two state effects simplify and render intelligible the complexities of the social world. They give their bearers a way to evaluate what is and is not significant. The strong-state and weak-state effects share an important element, though: both sides saw the state’s central function in terms of its capacity to wield coercive power and believed that this coercive capacity shaped immigration trends. They diverged when it came to assessments of how competent the state was in this function.

Thus, with Renee, we see the experience of a strong-state effect. Everyday immigration enforcement practices were a reminder to pro-immigrant activists like her that a coherent, domineering structure had a

redoubtable hold over society, and particularly, noncitizens. Within the strong-state effect framework, the U.S. Border Patrol agent figured as a highly competent and dangerous figure. The restrictionist countermovement, on the other hand, experienced the weak-state effect. Restrictionists like Dale came to believe that the state was internally incoherent and incapable of policing its jurisdiction. In this view, the Border Patrol agent was an emasculated state actor, unable to carry out his basic enforcement tasks.

Arizona can therefore be analytically described as an *ambiguous* border, a place where radically different conceptualizations of state power coexisted. These state effects functioned as more than mere impressions of the state. They constituted worldviews, or interpretive schema, helping activists make sense of how power was organized in American society, and guiding their political strategy.

Ideology Shapes Tactics

Second, I found that state effects, as worldviews, shaped *how* activists mobilized. Attending to activists' assessments of state power allows us to develop an analytical typology to understand a political movement's strategic choices. In this manner, we move away from merely listing and describing tactics.

That is, the state-effect lens allows us to see the common thread that links together an extensive repertoire of practices among politically like-minded organizations; it also sheds light on how any given tactic confronts an opposing movement. In this study, I found that pro-immigrant tactics intended to *weaken the state*. Undermining the state, pro-immigrant activists believed, would restore agency to the otherwise oppressed, third-world migrant. Meanwhile, right-wing activists mobilized to *strengthen the state*. For restrictionists, the third-world migrant was dangerously agentic, and the lax border made unauthorized entry attractive.

Thus, the state-effect framework illuminates how behind their very different activities, the Humanitarians and the Advocates, as pro-immigrant organizations, both pursued the same strategy of undermining state power. While the Humanitarians made it a core task to put out gallon-sized jugs of water along migrant trails in the desert, close to the Arizona-

Sonora border, the Advocates rarely ventured into the wilderness. Instead, they organized know-your-rights trainings for noncitizen residents in the city. I realized that in order to understand the relationship between these otherwise dissimilar activities—water drops in the desert, know-your-rights workshops in the city—I had to consider how they reflected a shared analysis of enforcement. Both groups' favored strategy undercut state power, but by different means.

The state-effects framework also sheds light on how each organization's tactics challenged those of its opponents. For instance, the Humanitarians distributed water in the very same regions where a Minutemen-type restrictionist group I refer to as the Soldiers assembled for their "reconnaissance operations." On the same trails where the Humanitarians left water, the Soldiers installed cameras, hoping to capture footage of border crossers. When either the Humanitarians or the Soldiers stumbled upon their opponent's objects—water or cameras—they resentfully cleared them.

What distinguished their strategies was the underlying analysis of the state. For the Humanitarians, water drops were as much about critiquing state power as quenching thirst. By distributing water and framing the practice as a form of humanitarianism, these activists contended that the U.S. Border Patrol had created a humanitarian crisis. The borderlands needed to be relieved of state presence, they argued. Meanwhile, by installing cameras, the Soldiers tried to extend the Border Patrol's reach in the desert. The Soldiers relayed any footage of migrants and other "intel" they gathered to the Border Patrol in hopes of shoring up what they believed was an overwhelmed state institution.

Oppositional state-effects and state-directed strategies also shed light on the tactics of the Advocates and the Arpaiositos. In addition to know-your-rights workshops for noncitizens, the Advocates strove to prevent institutions—like local police departments and hospitals—from working with immigration authorities. The philosophy behind both actions aimed to empower different sectors to resist what the Advocates saw as the colonizing pressures of the immigration state apparatus. Meanwhile, the Arpaiositos publicly supported Joe Arpaio, the controversial Maricopa County sheriff who was vocal about his restrictionism, in an attempt to do the opposite: to defend collaboration between immigration authorities and local institutions as laudable law enforcement.