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REFRACTING IMMIGRATION RHETORIC:  
THE STRUGGLE TO DEFINE IDENTITY, PLACE AND  
NATION IN SOUTHERN ARIZONA

by

EMILY DUWEL

A master's thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York

2019

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Refracting Immigration Rhetoric:  
The Struggle to Define Identity, Place and Nation in Southern Arizona

by  
Emily Düwel

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Liberal  
Studies in satisfaction of the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Date

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Michael Blim  
Thesis Advisor

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Date

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Elizabeth Macaulay-Lewis  
Executive Officer

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

## ABSTRACT

Refracting Immigration Rhetoric:  
The Struggle to Define Identity, Place and Nation in Southern Arizona

by  
Emily Düwel

Advisor: Michael Blim

This thesis examines the refraction of immigration rhetoric in a local context through a collection of letters to the editor of Southern Arizona's largest and only daily newspaper, the *Arizona Daily Star*, for the period 2006-2010. The purpose is to further insight into the process by which xenophobic nationalism is both contested and legitimated 'on the ground,' within a violent paradigm of nativist rhetoric and exclusion. Findings reveal essential disjunctures between and within letter-writers' conceptions of moral proximity and the social contract—as delimiting those obligations and expectations that inhere between society, the self and the stranger—as well as competing notions of legitimacy based, on the one hand, on an overarching and at times homogenizing myth of nation and, on the other, in rootedness to the cultural and historic particularities of place. These disjunctures point to a profusion of contradictory ideations, the struggle over which exposes the efforts of community members to contest and redefine the boundaries of societal norms within the context of emergent nationalism.

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Lastly, I wish to dedicate this thesis to the memory of Xóchitl Cristina Gil-Higuchi, whose creative and social engagement in the community of Tucson, New York City and beyond inspired its completion.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iv
LIST OF FIGURES .....	viii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	ix
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
A. Thesis purpose .....	2
B. Methodology.....	9
II. NATIONALIST STRATEGIES, POETICS & AGENCY .....	11
A. Nationalism by any other name .....	11
B. The inclusive and exclusive ‘melting pot’ .....	13
C. Nativism vs. racism.....	15
D. Nationalism and globalization .....	18
III. THE ‘BORDER CRISIS’ IN CONTEXT.....	22
A. The social geography of migration .....	23
B. Place and people .....	26
C. A collapsing desert bubble.....	31
D. Codifying exclusion .....	33
IV. SHAPING THE IMMIGRATION DEBATE.....	40
A. Coalescing interests .....	40
B. Legislating prison profits .....	43
C. Marketing ‘illegal’ immigration .....	45
D. Peddling partisanship.....	48
E. Border insurrections.....	49
V. MEDIATING ‘ILLEGAL’ IMMIGRATION.....	54
A. Conjuring the intruder.....	54
B. Projecting “illegal” as a national brand .....	56
C. Local media representations of the ‘border crisis’ .....	59

VI. REFRACTING THE ‘BORDER CRISIS’ .....	64
A. An overview of the dataset .....	64
B. Having ‘skin in the game’ on the public green .....	72
C. Sentiment and nation.....	77
D. Principal letter themes.....	88
1. The social contract .....	91
2. Legality, criminality and civil rights.....	104
3. The greater good .....	113
4. Security and enforcement .....	127
5. Nation, self and ‘other’ .....	135
6. Rhetoric.....	151
VII. CONCLUSION .....	156
NOTES.....	166
WORKS CITED .....	174



## LIST OF FIGURES

1. County population to land mass comparison.....	27
2. Percentage of different ethnicities, by county.....	29
3. Recurring subjects in <i>Arizona Daily Star</i> 2006-2010 news items .....	60
4. Unique dataset writers and letters, aggregated by stance .....	66
5. Number of dataset letters published per year.....	68
6. Distribution of dataset letters by location .....	69
7. Dataset letter-writers, aggregated by role .....	70
8. Dataset stances broken down by Latino/non-Latino ethnicity.....	73
9. Distribution of dataset letters, by theme and stance .....	89
10. Stance distribution across Social Contract sub-themes .....	92
11. Stance distribution across Legality sub-themes.....	105
12. Stance distribution across Greater Good sub-themes .....	114
13. Stance distribution across Security & Enforcement sub-themes .....	128
14. Stance distribution across Nation, Self & ‘Other’ sub-themes.....	135
15. Stance distribution across Rhetoric sub-themes .....	151

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADSLTE	<i>Arizona Daily Star</i> Letters-to-the-Editor Dataset on the Topic of Immigration, 2006-2010
EGIE	Existing or greater immigration enforcement

## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

Accepting that each and every instance of nationalism arises in response to specific historic contingencies, this thesis is concerned with the ways in which the public refracts forms of nationalism that are predicated on structural and other kinds of violence toward ‘minorities’ or those considered outside of the majority. The process of leveraging populist antipathy toward minorities is as orchestrated as it is organic: many nationalist movements are scripted by a polyvalence of elite interests, whose fulminations against the unwanted stranger are meant both to obscure and abet shifts in the distribution of power and wealth (Hobsbawm 93-121; Anderson 113-14; Wiebe 10). In the United States today, those interests are largely though not exclusively tied to extractive industries and associated with radical free-market ideologies. That said, the hyperbole generated on high is not unquestioningly ingested by ‘the base.’ Instead it is interpreted, re-constructed, argued and ‘refracted’ to the degree that it fits into local frameworks of understanding and explains the contexts of people’s lives.

In the case of Southern Arizona, contestations over the nation reveal within communities (and even within individuals) essential rifts and inconsistencies in regard to those norms and ideals upon which the nation is ostensibly founded, upon which a sense of legitimacy, identity and pride of place is conferred, and upon which the obligations that inhere between individual and society (or social contract) are predicated. Using a dataset comprising 858 letters to the editor focused on the subject of immigration and published in the *Arizona Daily Star*, the Tucson region’s largest and sole remaining daily newspaper, the thesis reveals ways in which disjunctures in reasoning and understanding lend insight into the populist process of violent dehumanization

and exclusion that defines most xenophobic and state-focused nationalist movements, as well as the ways in which a community has attempted to map and debate meaning amidst crisis.

## **A. Thesis purpose**

The thesis explores the ways in which nationalist rhetoric generated at the national level, built on intentional if at times countervailing strategies generated by polyvalent interests, in turn both resonated with and differed from explanations, arguments and concerns expressed by people living in a specific locality that in this instance had been deeply impacted by its position on the border and sense of surrounding catastrophe.

Since the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, some 25 million civilians have been apprehended as suspected undocumented immigrants, one fifth of whom have been arrested in the Tucson sector alone (U.S. Border Patrol, “Monthly Apprehensions”). Nationwide over 5 million civilians have been deported (Pew Research Center, “Number of Deportations”). The numbers deported in fact far exceed the mass deportations of the Great Depression or the post-war Eisenhower years (Ngai, *Impossible Subjects* 72, 155-156). Beyond the millions of individuals impacted have been the millions of families (and particularly children) that have been economically and emotionally devastated, as well as the thousands of individuals who have died attempting to cross into the United States via the brutal expanse of the Arizona desert.

Interest in this project has thus been borne by the question of how people living in close proximity create frameworks of understanding and explanation, as well as attempt at times to justify or protest what is—from an international legal perspective—a humanitarian crisis.<sup>1</sup> At the heart of this question, then, is where people in the community draw the lines of individual and civil obligation when it comes to the suffering of ‘others.’

Using a spectrum of reader responses to the *Star* (as the *Arizona Daily Star* is commonly called), my research into the subject of immigration as screened through the lens of public rhetoric has uncovered ideological tensions surrounding the normative roles and responsibilities that inhere between the nation-state, society and the individual, as well as the ways in which nationalism parlays unifying, homogenizing ‘origin’ myths to counter local idiosyncratic historic and cultural narratives, on the one hand, and ‘universal’ principles (Wiebe 50)—based variously in religion or international wartime, civil or human rights law, including those principles on which the United States was founded—on the other.

Michael Taussig’s proposition that, “The space of death is crucial to the creation of meaning and consciousness, nowhere more so than in societies where torture is endemic” (467), can be applied to the Southern Arizona desert insofar as the U.S. Government directly contributed to the escalation in border deaths through its operations aimed at “funneling” undocumented immigrants away from traditionally safer crossing zones into perilous territory (Rubio-Goldsmith et al., “The ‘Funnel’ Effect”; Cook). In this regard, Arizona’s “space of death” has given rise to countless narratives and images that, in turn, have shaped and sometimes hardened the immigration stances of the people of Southern Arizona. On another level, media portrayals of the desert as a morally fraught and ambiguous landscape have propelled Southern Arizonans in turn to define and articulate their own conceptions regarding the basis of society and its core tenets.

As enforcement agents (or perpetrators), undocumented immigrants and racialized community members (victims), and witnesses to persecution, the people of Southern Arizona form the elements of what Christian Krohn-Hansen (referring to David Riches) calls a “dynamic triangle of violence,” one that foregrounds “the enormous potency of violence as action and as image” (371). That is to say not only are all the players to varying degrees enmeshed and impacted, violence itself serves as a powerful tool of communication or rhetoric—one that has the

power to invert and transfigure familiar spaces into unfamiliar theatres of threat, fear and power. While the employment of violence may have bearing on overt and underlying power shifts (i.e. beyond the level of those being victimized), at the same time its enactment also opens up a zone of public contention—in which the fight to legitimize or delegitimize the performance of violence (Krohn-Hansen 373) in turn not only accompanies shifts in structural power but those shifts in language and utterance that in turn both influence and reflect the emergent “living social conscious” (Williams).

Violent exclusion in this instance has been made possible in part through the construct of the nation-state, an idealized project that according to Ernest Gellner renders the nation as a people coterminous with the geographic boundaries of the state (*Nations and Nationalism* i). In most forms of nationalism, the nation’s legitimacy is derived from a shared, essential and “imagined” (as per Benedict Anderson) sense of identity, history, culture and values (6, 11, 36). As Robert Wiebe observes, nationalism—as a phenomenon isolated from the state—serves to politicize and reinforce the bonds of “kinship that is simultaneously fictional and real” (4-5) within ethno-cultural communities seeking self-determination, oftentimes in the face of perceived external threats. Nevertheless, sometimes in overlap and sometimes in contrast stand those forms of nationalism that conflate the nation with the state, a project that inevitably demands the exclusion of a targeted population: “Peeling off the oppressors, it becomes the oppressor” (Wiebe 10) As legal historian Mae Ngai too notes in regard to the United States, “if the alien lurked as the citizen’s silent double, nationalism was the ground upon which this duality was produced” (*Impossible Subjects* 230).

In considering the relationship of rhetoric to exclusionary nationalism, Phyllis Pease Chock characterizes a set of congressional hearings on immigration reform as “the site of cultural reproduction, as canonical versions of national myths and hegemonic ideology encompass[ed] the

speakers' disparate renderings of events" (280). In this regard, Pease Chock points to the theatrical and communicative aspects of political rhetoric in coalescing, arguing and projecting at times incompatible "canonical" interpretations of the nation. In then looking at the ways in which anti-immigrant rhetoric is shaped, it is important to consider the material's salience in those contests over national identity that generate powerfully unifying fables and commonly prescribed sets of values, as well as define who belongs and who does not.

As a form of power play, nationalist movements and their rhetoric should also be understood within the broader context of hegemonic nation-state and global capitalistic processes that have spurred the rise of variously subaltern, "new social" or counter-hegemonic movements, on both the right and left (Antoni). In this regard, Terence Turner in particular has observed how nation-state boundaries today can serve as a means of furthering the exclusion of those negatively impacted by global capitalism:

"The frontiers dividing state territories, particularly those separating the economically successful state economies from the relatively unsuccessful ones, have become more than ever dialectically identified with the internal class divisions of the social systems that are at once separated and connected by interstate frontiers." ("Class Projects, Social Consciousness, and the Contradictions of Globalization" 48)

Nation-state nationalism further channels the voice of an increasingly insecure middle and working class through the bullhorn of xenophobia and racism, rather than class. While in response global labor remains limited from free movement, other capital flows are increasingly unrestrained by states. Thus, analyzing how diffuse media has been absorbed and re-interpreted within individuals' frameworks of meaning represents an effort to show how the dynamics of nationalism are understood and contested on the ground or, as per Eric Hobsbawm, "from below" (12).

While much of the rhetoric surrounding undocumented or ‘illegal’ immigration has been enflamed by specific political interests (ch. IV), the project aim is to uncover where meaningful though irrational disjunctures occur between a national public discourse on immigration—as a joint product of politics, punditry and media—and a local public discourse in which those who dwell in a fixed place attempt to interpret, explain and frame events, as well as persuade others within their community of their ideas. Much like the pedestrian in Michel de Certeau’s planned urban environment (1988), those who write letters to newspapers may at times follow prescribed rhetorical paths and at other times ignore script, veer off in unanticipated directions, and make unanticipated associations as well as assert their own ‘map’ of meaning. In this way letter-writers too refract the contradictions not just in their own assembly of thoughts, but in and between the multifarious “practices and disciplines” (*pace* Foucault) in which they and society at large are imbricated (Ransom 73).

Of further bearing on the ways in which letter-writers interpolate and refract meaning are the ways that, as per Raymond Williams, not just ideologies but those “meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt” along with emergent “semantic figures” tilt toward and signal changes in social consciousness (132-35). This is to say that the letters themselves signal a plethora of contradictory ideations that in their ebb and flow may negotiate (and ultimately reconfigure) the boundaries of societal norms and expectations. At the same time, they may reference, invert or suppress past articulations, metaphors, lines of reasoning and in this way stimulate new modes of thinking at the same time that they cut off or enshroud others (Williams 132-135).

A complementary approach to seeking out the resonances in rhetoric is suggested by Kathleen Stewart, in reference to what she calls “mood work.” In an article co-written with Jennifer Carlson, Stewart states that:



“Mood work takes shape as a form that is similarly used or co-recognized between agents in a shared scene, a sense that something is happening and an attachment, however inchoate, to sensing out what that something is. The world composed comes apart all the time and at the same time something is (always) coming, and coming together.” (115)

In their work, Stewart and Carlson seek to capture not in categories but in thematic threads and metaphoric resonances the dialogical miasma associated within a given historico-political moment, in ways that relate the microscopic (e.g. jars that line a pantry wall) to the macroscopic (as a historically-imbedded, geographically-specific techno-cultural *zeitgeist*). While Stewart and Carlson focus on everyday reactions to the extraordinary, her formulation can be borrowed to reframe the letters-to-the-editor genre as “bodies of rhetoric” that also both serve and express “how a community throws itself together” (115).

We can moreover understand that what is being addressed collectively is, in Stewart and Carlson’s words, “a singular, affective-material circuit of reaction” (115), in this case to the precarity represented by global capitalism’s periodic eruptions—as manifested in this instance by a declared immigrant “border crisis” that was within two years coupled with the Great Recession and that was specifically experienced in the physical space of home and community. Per Stewart and Carlson, the “landscapes of the living” are however not uniformly shared but plural in their conception, their experience, “existing as a diffusion across fields of incommensurate objects and bodies of all kinds (human bodies, bodies of thought, bodies of rhetoric)” (115). In Southern Arizona, a geographically-situated public debate revolving around undocumented immigration ultimately revealed and expressed conflicting norms and definitions attached to the nation’s ethos and demos (or body of people).

Stewart’s conception of “mood work” can also be applied to the ways in which community members have refracted public discourse in ways that reflect their own meanings and concerns as part of a whole lived process. One may in this regard be reminded of Bakhtin’s

pronouncement on the evolving and interactive heteroglossia of language: “Every concrete utterance of a speaking subject serves as a point where centrifugal and centripetal forces are brought to bear” (*Discourse in the Novel* 272). In this way too, Stewart and Carlson speak of language—“publicly circulating refrains wore into ruts for living, set in motion a range of experiments”—that ultimately expresses a “coming together” and a coming apart (115). In approaching the material, I have then focused on the ways in which community members situated in a specific moment and place processed and refracted the multi-sited heteroglossia (virtual, professional, political, social, idiomatic, idiosyncratic) of emerging rhetoric, as a series of emanations and resonances that reveal concordances and disarticulations, both within and between the writers’ own thought processes and those of others—whether those other voices were locally situated or broadcast from a larger regional and national pulpit.

In the time period under consideration, the sudden take off of social media transformed the world of communication altogether. A sudden meshing between new and old media forms allowed for the rapid regeneration of certain memes and constructs in ways novel and unforetold, so that ideas once sidelined as aberrant might in their proliferation create an overwhelming media hum (Ignatow). The plethora of exchange points and rapidity of transfer became ever more immeasurable. Many of the ideas picked up in the letters originated elsewhere—sometimes at the pinnacles of power, sometimes in a blogger’s basement, sometimes in chance encounters, sometimes retrieved from the store banks of the infinite number of exchanges that make up the lived experience. The analysis to follow then touches on at times but does not ultimately seek to illustrate the chains of causality between writers’ arguments and produced public rhetoric.<sup>3</sup> Rather it examines writers’ arguments in order to reveal both the associative patterns and disjunctures within their ideation that as yet reflect, invert, distort and re-emanate elements borrowed from a

wider discourse—one that both entangles with a somewhat ungraspable and chimeric present while often seeking other correspondences, across space and time.

The analysis hones in on the ways in which individuals adapt and reconstruct rhetorical figures—whether uniquely or in concert—to create their own mosaics of meaning. This thesis then attempts to test whether the process described by Bakhtin—“where centrifugal and centripetal forces are brought to bear” (*Discourse in the Novel* 272)—may, in some small measure, be excavated and understood by studying the exchange of voices that took place in a locally-situated public forum, as represented by the letters-to-the-editor genre.

## **B. Methodology**

Given the challenge of approaching the dataset as cultural artifact, it seemed incumbent to situate the letters within a greater historic and geographic context, one that might lend credence to and/or interface with the textual analysis. In this regard, I have attempted both a diachronic and synchronic approach. In regard to the former, I have included a section that provides historic and cultural background, and an overview of recent events related to immigration and the Arizona border, as well as their representation in both national and local media. In regard to the latter, the letters to the editor comprising the dataset were gathered using keyword searches related to immigration from the online archives of the *Arizona Daily Star* and the University of Arizona Library. Drawing on the letters, I developed a set of thematic “tags” that corresponded to those issues that appeared with regularity in readers’ letters. Aggregating the number of times themes were addressed in letters gave preliminary insight into those issues of greatest concern to writers, and their intersections. These findings were then further reinforced through the use of textual analysis to determine the top 100 word-tokens referenced in the dataset as a whole.<sup>2</sup>

The last section opens with a demographic portrait of the letter-writers drawn from the dataset and a consideration of their relationship to the medium of the newspaper itself. This is followed by a close analysis of a selection of letters that considers writers' different rhetorical stances, strategies, and affect in regard to their understandings of nation and identity. A broad analysis of recurring letter themes throughout the dataset then traces and situates a number of motifs and intersecting threads that concern more often than not “the myth of the social contract” (Wiebe)—or those reflexive responsibilities and obligations attendant on the individual and society, as well as ideas of social and legal legitimacy, and primacy of place.

## Chapter II

### NATIONALIST STRATEGIES, POETICS & AGENCY

#### A. Nationalism by any other name

The term “American nationalism” at the turn of the 19th century connoted an altogether different doctrine, one that espoused a democratic (if centrally orchestrated) form of socialism or (in the words of Edward Bellamy), “the principle of popular government by the equal voice of all for the equal benefit of all” (742). In this same period, historian Gary Gerstle underscores the contradictions built under Theodore Roosevelt into another parallel conception of American nationalism, as a “melting pot—a ‘crucible’—in which a hybrid race of many strains would be forged” (1280). This inclusive conception of nationalism promised civil rights and equal opportunities to all, while simultaneously abetting and perpetuating racism in thought and in deed.

In contemporary U.S. scholarship, *American nationalism* in its most xenophobic connotations however is rarely called that: the preferred subject terms are nativism, racism, and American exceptionalism, all of which separate out the many aspects of a broader phenomenon into constituent parts. Other classifications include white supremacy, paleoconservatism, reactionary tribalism, fascism or neo-fascism, cultural or reactionary fundamentalism, the fairly recent entry of the New Right or Alt-Right, and the classical xenophobia.

Jasper Trautsch for one has underscored the degree to which the idea that American nationalism is ‘exceptional’ has helped to obscure the ways in which it parallels nationalisms elsewhere: “Contrasting an ethnic, ‘natural’ nationalism prevalent in Europe with an ideological, ‘artificial’ nationalism in America, [most historians] concurred that American nationalism was fundamentally different from that of other nations” (296). At the same time, he notes that deconstructionist scholars over the past three decades—including Gellner, Hobsbawm and

others—have amply demonstrated that, “All nationalisms are ideologies, not just the American variant” (296). The common ideology binding most forms of nationalism—as Wiebe notes—is a sense of kinship (5, 41-42), as vested in a select set of histories, traditions, cultural and/or genealogical attributes, and so on, that further expresses “an aspiration with a political objective,” one “that is simultaneously fictional and real” (5). At the same time, Wiebe points out that offering the promise of a “horizontal” brotherhood obscures the “vertical” distribution of power (48).

Following the thinking of Trautsch and Wiebe, I will explain why I have mostly opted to use not just the term but the lens of “nationalism” for the purpose of this thesis. Nationalism per Ernest Gellner is an attempt to render a specific people or nation congruent with territory and, as such, bears a measure of risk: “nations, like states, are a contingency, and not a universal necessity” (*Nations and Nationalism* 6). In spite of various common claims upon ancestry and legacy—of being age-old—nations are multifarious and adaptive in their bifurcations and reformations. In other words, divisions within can be at least as complex as those without. In this regard, Wiebe points to nationalism’s versatility in the face of a population’s “competing loyalties,” which it in part overcomes by representing the nation as an “immortal being” or “Ur ancestor” (6). The United States’ mythical progenitors are often referenced in the dataset as the ‘our original founding fathers’ or ‘the immigrants who built this nation’ or ‘the first pioneers.’

Nations are in this regard an “imagined community,” as formulated by Benedict Anderson: (6); few lands are occupied by a single “people,” and differences found within adapt to unfolding events and opportunities (Wiebe 11). Nationalism’s power of conviction however may in part derive from its shrinking of the distances between the abstract state and that which is local, tangible, and personal or even familial.<sup>1</sup> Here Wiebe stresses in his definition of nationalism, “a sense of kinship that is that is simultaneously fictional and real, that is culturally created, as all kin

systems are, yet based in some measure on an overlapping of customs, histories, and genealogies” (5).

Unlike many scholars of nationalism, Wiebe has argued against necessarily correlating nationalism with mass violence, even if he grants that most nationalist movements seeking to overthrow oppressors in turn visit oppression on the minorities in their midst, in a process he likens to peeling an onion (Wiebe 4-10; cf. Hobsbawm 170). He moreover observes that, “Copying from one another, nationalists developed movements that had specific times stamped all over them” (Wiebe 11). The idea of nationalism’s programmatic aspect—borne of its “political aspiration”—is reinforced by Barbara Fields when she notes that white supremacy (as one iteration of the United States’ race-based nationalism) “was not simply a summary of color prejudices. It was also a set of political programs, differing according to the social position of their proponents” (156). That is to say that, as an adaptive political movement, not just nationalism but its forms of violence and exclusion often in the moment serve an array of disparate interests.

## **B. The inclusive and exclusive ‘melting pot’**

One variant of ‘American nationalism’ that is held to be exceptional when compared to nationalisms abroad is that the nation, rather than being bound by religious, ethnic or linguistic affinities, is a ‘melting pot’ of many peoples, one whose racial superiority (at least in the formulation of Teddy Roosevelt, albeit with certain reservations (Gerstle 1281)) would be achieved through *hybridity*. Ideally though not in practice this conception of the nation as a ‘melting pot’ was understood to provide ‘unalienable rights’ and ‘equal treatment before the law,’ in a ‘land of opportunity for all,’ no matter one’s ancestry or country of origin or status as citizen.<sup>2</sup>

A second—and perhaps unexceptional—variant of nationalism conflates the boundaries of an “imagined” homogenous and sovereign nation with the geographic borders of the state, and in so doing pinpoints the exclusion of whomsoever is regarded as the unwanted stranger (Anderson; Wiebe). While differing in terms of intensity and violence, parallel examples can be found in Myanmar’s ethnocide against the Rohingya; Hindu nationalist violence against Muslims in India; the purging of Haitian immigrants in the Dominican Republic and Roma in Hungary, Czech Republic and France; the calls by *Alternativ für Deutschland* and other European neo-fascist parties for the mass expulsion of foreigners; and the U.S. ban against Muslim refugees and its brutal treatment of Central American refugee families. At times, both inclusive and exclusive forms of nationalism can be expressed in the policies of a single state or even a single leader, as was demonstrated in the case of Teddy Roosevelt who again championed equal rights and ‘hybridity’ at the same time that he impeded the achievement of racial equality (Gerstle 1281).

Perhaps particular to the United States, nationalism is also manifested in a patriotic form of anti-federalism that upholds the rights of regional states to usurp executive and judicial authority and to this end reprises arguments that at one time were used to legitimate the South’s attempted secession from the Union; in other words, states’ autonomy (and concomitant right to disenfranchise and marginalize minority populations) becomes the full expression of national patriotism, “as intended by the framers.” This form of nationalism was re-operationalized in the 21st century’s first decade in order, among other things, to diminish federal government regulation and oversight of public resource management (ch. IV).

Lastly, serving as a counterweight to other forms of nationalism stands transnationalism, inasmuch as it champions visions of global interconnection and comity. Among the various mechanisms associated with attaining this aspiration have been the postwar development model promoted by the United Nations in the so-called ‘developing world’ (cf. Ferguson); the Internet



and economic globalization as forces of transcultural identity-building, as explored by Arjun Appadurai (1998); and religious spirituality and consciousness-raising. The reasoning goes that once peoples come to embrace the transcendence of universalist values across national borders, they will become mutually beholden and seized of each other's rights and welfare (cf. Wiebe xvii, 9).

### **C. Nativism vs. racism**

In comparison to 'nationalism,' the use of the terms 'nativism' and 'racism' reflect the particulars of American history as a land whose constitutional aspirations toward equality and individual rights have been oftentimes deflected by a history of enslavement, genocide, segregation, ethnic violence, and an ethno-racially exclusionary immigration policy. *Racism* in particular underscores the nation's historically long-lived embrace of the concept of difference based on skin color, as a provably false biological typology. Racism has been moreover a dominant facet of U.S. nationalism at least since the Naturalization Act of 1790, which for the most part limited citizenship to "any Alien being a free white person" ("Statutes at Large"). In essence, "white" had little meaning other than in juxtaposition to "black" or "red" insofar as it connoted no uniformly shared ethnic, cultural, religious, linguistic and/or historic heritage beyond that of a vaguely defined, pale-skinned European-Christian identity. The creation of "a more perfect Union" was founded on the principle of protecting the heterodox—except in the matter of race, in which case only one caste was deemed worthy of protection.

Perceptions of race may underlie privilege in the United States, but these have shifted dramatically over time. 'Race' as a marker of difference remains highly unstable, as Ngai notes: "A confluence of economic, social, cultural, and political factors has impelled major shifts in society's understanding (and construction) of race and its constitutive role in national identity

formation” (*Impossible Subjects* 7). Further to this idea, Fields has uncovered how the salience of race evolved from one of commercial usefulness to a defense of slavery’s moral basis to justifying the practices of dehumanization and exclusion that would mark post-Reconstruction into the present (1982). Both Ngai’s and Field’s insights raise questions concerning the intersection of racism with nativist-driven nationalist movements.

It is a point of interest that the Know Nothings—the nation’s first mass anti-immigrant movement—were not racists, in the sense that they were both anti-Irish Catholic and anti-slavery (Schrag 29-34). Those abolitionists and African American repatriates who sought to establish Liberia as a homeland for freed slaves moreover supported an idea of racial separation (Burrowes 34-37). Nevertheless, by the last quarter of the 19th century, the nativist movement had taken on a heavily racist cast. The nation’s first immigration law, the Asian Exclusion Act of 1882, was prompted by a wave of “yellow peril” hysteria aimed at ethnic groups from across the Pacific. With the rise of white supremacy and the embrace of the pseudo-science of Eugenics (Schrag ch. 3), efforts to restrict non-Northern European immigration would succeed with the passage of the Immigration Act of 1924 (Ngai, *Impossible Subjects* ch. 1). This act had the distinction, in the words of Ngai, of drawing a “new racial and ethnic map based on new categories and hierarchies of difference” (*Impossible Subjects* 3) that pointedly excluded Southern and Eastern Europeans, as well as those from equatorial and southern-hemisphere lands.

Of added relevance, Ngai notes how the application of Jim Crow laws in the Southwest created “Mexican” as a distinct racial category, the net effect of which was to impose the “condition of being a foreigner in one’s former native land” (*Impossible Subjects* 8). It is notable that, at the time of the Gadsden Purchase in 1852, Mexicans were legally classified as “white” (Foley) as well as estimated to outnumber “native born Americans” in Arizona by nine to one (Powers 468). Today’s nationalistic animosity toward those deemed unwelcome in the nation—

including immigrants from Latin America—often coincides with their being perceived as non-‘white’ or as ‘people of color’; in this regard, as Fields reminds us, race is invariably “a product of history, not of nature” (152).

A further aspect worth considering is the very concept of ‘*nativism*’ itself, which was first coined in association with the Know Nothings of the 1850s referenced earlier (Schrag 29-31). That group claimed legitimacy by dint of having been ‘native born’ on U.S. soil as opposed to the newly arrived Irish Catholics who had not.<sup>3</sup> While such affinities as kinship or a uniform religion, culture and (for a time) language could not be said to have bound the members of the new American nation to each other, yet this one claim to a rootedness to natal soil has been understood to confer special legitimacy akin to the principle of *jus soli*. Nativists starting in the 1990s have sought however to deny automatic birthright citizenship to the newborns of immigrants, and especially so-called “anchor babies” from the southern hemisphere. In so doing, they have reprised a stance first taken by states’ rights advocates in 1884, in regard to the naturalization of infants born to Asian parents (Meyler).

As Robin Jacobson documents (2006), the latest call to overturn the 14th Amendment—which threatens to assign a condition of permanent and irremediable alienation to those born on U.S. soil to foreign parents—is predicated on equating immigrants and their offspring with an invading force. In the matter of national ascription, the legitimacy of the nation often requires more than the positive assertion of ‘native’ roots but the excision of foreign elements. Brian Fry notes in this regard that:

“Nativism is a positional relationship and posture between self-identified natives and perceived or real foreigners. ... Nativism then turns on institutionalized boundaries, a sense of threat and power.” (5, 7)

While the target is roving, the “sense of threat and power” is continuous and in itself serves to reaffirm the boundaries not just of the nation as state, but of national identity. In the United States,

nativism's chosen 'enemy-other' has evolved from the Irish Catholics to include nearly every successive immigrant wave.

At the same time, as Machiavelli reminds us in *The Prince*, the fear of the hordes beyond the gates often serves to justify expanding mechanisms of power and control not just over outsiders but over society as a whole (ch. XX). In Southern Arizona, the announcement of a 'state of emergency' on the border in turn led not just to the border space's vastly increased militarization (Kil and Menjívar) but it led to intrusive enforcement scrutiny and interference well inside the region's public and residential spaces. Ngai's assertion that "Immigration policy is constitutive of America's understanding of national membership and citizenship, drawing lines of inclusion and exclusion" (*Impossible Subjects* 5) then has broader implications for the nation at large, in terms of extending the modalities of power and control over society as a whole.

#### **D. Nationalism and globalization**

Applying the term 'nationalism' allows the dataset in the end to be situated on not just a national but a global field. Ngai discerns that, "We resist the role that American world power has played in the global structures of migration" (*Impossible Subjects* 11). One ought therefore to bear in mind that the nation-state has taken on new meaning within the paradigm of neoliberal global capitalism, whose accelerating disparity in wealth and power has created some 65.3 million refugees (U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees), along with a resurgence in virulent anti-immigrant nationalisms the world over. While the crux of this thesis is focused on the local, viewing the dataset within this broader context then permits reflection from time to time on the degree to which letter-writers and their subjects envisioned themselves and the nation as situated on a larger stage.

Closed national borders in a supposedly open global economy render a vast quotient of human life vulnerable and marginal. Today it is the nation-state that brands and delimits who among the world's citizens are worthy and who are not. Those who herald from prescribed states or possess advanced degrees in a desirable field or sufficient stores of wealth operate within a global multi-nodal field of speeded-up exchange (Harvey, ch. 23; Castells). For the elect, borders can be permeable membranes.<sup>4</sup> For millions of others the hardening of national borders has reinforced their transformation into 'refugees,' 'immigrants,' 'stateless persons,' and 'illegal aliens'—or “nobodies” in the words of Linda Green (“The Nobodies”).

In the light of recent mass migrations, many avowed nationalist movements hold fast to the state's geographic boundaries as a barricade against globalization's unleashed labor flows (Antoni; Ngai, *Impossible Subjects* 10; Hobsbawm 170-171). In so doing, they aspire to protect the privilege of their own majority 'base' by insisting on national cultural and/or racial ascription as a prerequisite to membership.<sup>5</sup> In spite however of their anti-universalist and anti-globalization stance (and thus opposition to entities such as the United Nations or European Union), nationalist movements share a transnational (and at times even cross-ideological) dimension. Robert Antoni in particular has observed how the right and the left both proffer the theory of cultural preservation as an inherent right—albeit of minorities and heterogeneity in the case of the former and of the majorities and nation-states in the case of the latter (43). He also points to the global networking of cultural-fundamentalist and xenophobic ideologies—some of which harken back to the Nazi era (57-69)—as a feature in particular of late capitalism and Weberian “social rupture” (78).

Among various nationalist strategies employed today are the tested production, marketing and dissemination of anti-immigrant rhetoric. In particular, the rhetoric of blame is employed to inflame popular discontent, building on a pervasive sense of rising insecurity and the perception

that ‘things have gotten much worse.’ As a tonic meant to quell society’s current ills, many if not most nationalist movements offer the return to a prior, mythical ‘golden era,’ along with the resurrection (and re-fabrication) of past lore, traditions and other cultural signifiers (Anderson 136; Hobsbawm 142). As Benjamin Schwartz asserts, most nationalist movements are predicated on “a basically unrelieved ‘happy story’ in which the richness and complexity of the past is sacrificed for the image of the happily integrated whole” (212). Thus is the myth born that, even if the United States has been a ‘melting pot,’ the stew always turned out ‘white’ (or purposefully ‘tanned’), as ‘others’ willingly subsumed their cultural heritages (and truncated their noses and lightened their hair (Lester et al.)) in order to participate in the American dream.

The right of the nation to preserve its essential culture (or cultural fundamentalism) is then posited against the rights of minority ‘others’—not merely to express their ethnocultural difference but to exist inside the nation-state’s territorial boundaries. Terence Turner has notably pointed out that—within late global capitalism—the migrant has come to represent the most tangible embodiment of the very global forces that have visited increasing economic insecurity in the lives of national majorities:<sup>6</sup>

“Foreign migrants and guest-workers are the most visible, accessible and vulnerable extension of the hegemonic and techno-economic system.” (Comment on Stolcke 17)

These same economic processes—if visited in an even more violent form—have likewise created fertile ground for the onset of Mexico and Central America’s drug wars and descent into violent anomie (Organization of American States; Fisher and Taub). In the early 2000s, the combined poverty and ensuing carnage drove ever greater numbers of immigrants to attempt the perilous Arizona desert crossing, as well as provoked a massive anti-immigrant backlash as the United States’ own economy—due to a combination of factors—went into free fall. The section following provides historic and current context for examining the rhetoric of immigration as

refracted through a series of intersecting and conflicting mindsets, among those who made their home near the Arizona border.

## Chapter III

### THE 'BORDER CRISIS' IN CONTEXT

This section provides a multifaceted overview of the context surrounding Southern Arizona's 'border crisis,' with the aim of providing greater insight into the public response to and participation in the generation of rhetoric. To this end, the first part of this section looks at Southern Arizona's cultural and historic foundations and its current geographic and political-economic situation as a border territory; the second part then examines the process by which a purposive strategy of criminalizing immigrants has been put into play as part of a larger hegemonic/counter-hegemonic shift in power relations and resource distribution; and the third section addresses the role of the media in contextualizing events and generating a sense of crisis for Southern Arizona's residents.

Southern Arizona was selected as a site of study because of its proximity to the United States-Mexico border and the extensive, often historic ties that bind families and communities to both sides. The identity of the Tucson region in particular has long been vested in its ethnic and cultural admixture, expressed and reaffirmed through any number of yearly festival events and other cultural markers and practices. The Arizona border region has also in recent years become an extraordinary zone of civilian death and brutalization: over the past 15 years, some 2,530 people are known to have perished on Arizona soil while attempting to cross the Sonora Desert's unforgiving terrain (U.S. Border Patrol, "Southwest Border Deaths"). In this same period, an additional 4.22 million people have been detained in the Tucson sector alone on suspicion of being "illegal aliens," a figure that represents one-fifth of all suspected undocumented immigrants arrested during the same time-frame nationwide (U.S. Border Patrol, "Monthly Apprehensions").



The range of related topics explored in this section lends insight into the context in which local newspaper readers penned their letters on the topic of immigration and/or the border, an analysis of which follows. While the context provided is far from exhaustive, it is meant nonetheless to provide a window onto the development of immigration rhetoric and its overlapping processes of translation and ultimately refraction within a broader public discourse.

## **A. The social geography of migration**

Encircled by four mountain ranges, Tucson (from the o’Odham name, Chuk Son) has been settled for as long as 10,000 years. For about 1,200 of those years, the linked basins of Tucson and Phoenix served as the seat of the vast and complex Hohokam civilization.<sup>1</sup> The first European contact occurred in 1687, with the arrival of Jesuit missionary Father Eustabio Kino. One year before the U.S. Declaration of Independence was issued, Spain established the Presidio San Agustín del Tucsón. It was not until the Gadsden Purchase of 1853 that Arizona came under U.S. jurisdiction and 1912 that Arizona was accepted as a state in the Union.

Today, multiple descent groups lay claim to Southern Arizona: the Piman peoples who are considered Hohokam descendants (e.g. Tohono o’Odham, Sobaipuri, Ak Chin), as well as the Pascua Yaqui, and the Chiricahua, San Carlos and Aravaipa Apache bands. A further notable aspect is that nearly half of the land mass of Southern Arizona’s largest county is circumscribed within the Tohono O’odham Nation, the full extent of whose lands and population of around 24,000 (Arizona Rural Policy Institute Center for Business Outreach) straddle both sides of the Arizona-Sonora, Mexico, border (Kilpatrick).

Added to the list of Native descendants are descendants of the pioneering Hispano-Mexican homesteaders and later so-called ‘Anglo’ settlers, many of whom married into prominent Mexican ranching families. In the 19th and first half of the 20th century, Southern Arizona would

additionally draw in ‘lungers’ (as tuberculosis sufferers were known); an ethnically diverse mix of cowboys and miners; Dust Bowl cotton and citrus farmworkers; tradespeople from all corners; and a rash of gold seekers, hucksters and speculators (Sheridan, *Landscapes of Fraud*). In the postwar years teeming colonies of ‘snowbirds’ would begin to settle in and around the Old Pueblo (as Tucson is affectionately known), along with an influx of military service people, university students, mining and aeronautic engineers, global refugees, and seekers of varied stripes.

Intersecting within the above list is a significant Latino presence<sup>2</sup> that in total makes up some 42 percent of the Tucson metropolitan population and some 39 percent of Southern Arizona as a whole, which largely comprises the counties of Pima, Cochise and Santa Cruz (U.S. Census Bureau, “Pima County, Cochise County and Santa Cruz County”). Of this group, many lay claims to both sides of the border as well as to local indigenous ancestry; others herald from Central and South America’s disparate corners. Yet others number among Tucson’s most prominent pioneer families to this day (Sheridan, *Los Tucsonenses*; “Pioneer Families of the Presidio San Agustín”). The historic connections between and overlapping geographies with Mexico have often meant that the Arizona border as a legal fact has not always coincided with its lived reality. In this regard, the border bisects the cities of Nogales, Douglas/Agua Prieta and Bisbee/Naco, along with the Tohono o’Odham reservation, forcibly dividing once united families and communities.

In Arizona, the 19th century pioneer attitude of ‘all comers welcome’ would change at the century’s close as it did elsewhere, with the emergence of the doctrines of white supremacy, the pseudo-science of Eugenics (Schrag ch.3), the passage of Jim Crow laws and the adoption of the nation’s first immigration laws based on exclusive ethnic quotas (Ngai, *Impossible Subjects* ch. 1). In Arizona in this time, increasing racism and the transformation of Mexicans into ‘non-whites’ paralleled industrialist efforts (and in particular the mining concern Phelps Dodge) to use race division as a tool against unionization (Campbell; Benton-Cohen 85).

In addition to the 2000s surge in cross-border migration—at the height of which some 12 million undocumented immigrants were believed to reside in the United States—<sup>3</sup> other large cross-border migrations have included the years from 1910 to 1930, when a million Mexicans are estimated to have entered the country in order to escape the violence of the Mexican Revolution and/or to seek mining work (García). Arizona's seasonal industries, in ranching and farming, have also led people to cross the border informally at regular intervals, especially with the end of the Bracero guest-worker program's formal mechanisms in 1964. With the United States' increasing its border fortifications and with the escalating violence visited on Central American migrants during their passage through Mexico (Jácome), many former seasonal workers have opted to remain in the United States or to bring up their family members rather than risk the peril of multiple crossings (Alvarez and Broder).

In spite of a checkered history of racism—which at various points and to various degrees impacted Latinos, African Americans, Native Americans, and Asians—Tucson today also invests deeply in its cultural past as a source of local identity and lure to outside tourism. Music festivals feature Mariachi, Waila (formerly known as Chicken Scratch) and various amalgamations of psychedelic cumbia, norteño, techno, hip hop, country, folk rock, and bluegrass. Sacred ceremonies include the monsoon celebration El Día de San Juan, the Pascua Yaqui Lent Ceremonies, and the Día de los Muertos-inspired though ostensibly non-denominational All Souls Procession. The region's mixed heritage is also celebrated through Rodeo Day/Fiesta de los Vaqueros—an official local holiday—and the multi-cultural folkways festival Tucson Meet Yourself. In the Old Pueblo, it is a given that most real cowboys are Mexican; the local cuisine is Sonoran Mexican; the Virgin of Guadalupe is the most venerated icon; and to wander into Tucson's barrios and south side is to sense that Arizona never left Mexico behind. In other ways

there is a marked cultural contrast between the historic and newer communities of greater Tucson, as a glance at regional geography and the subsequent letter dataset will show.

## **B. Place and people**

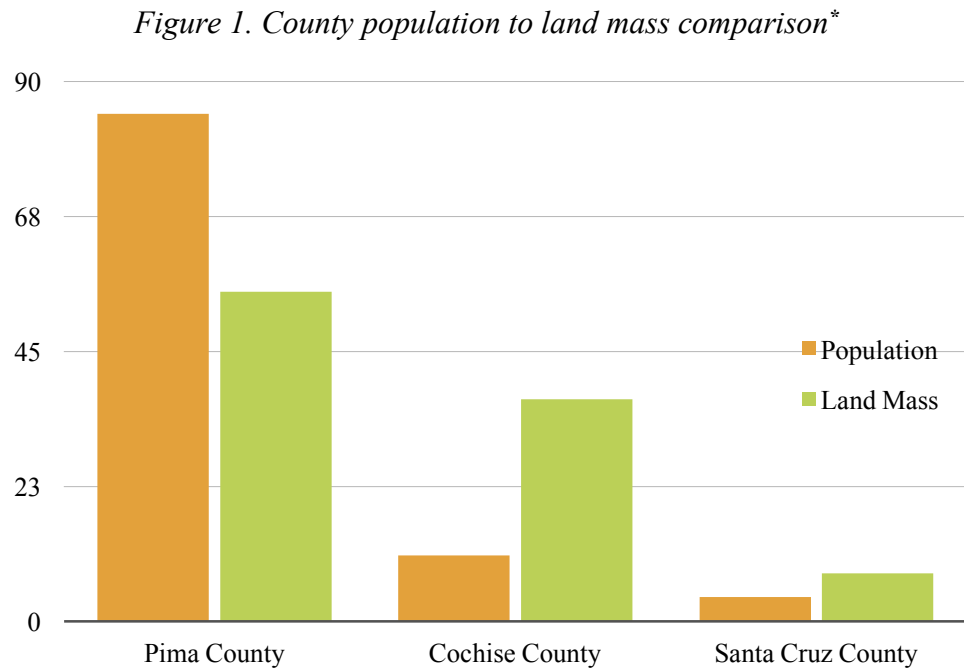
### *Southern Arizona's communities*

While Tucsonans generated the majority of letters to the editor, those who claim “Tucson” as home base in fact live in a plethora of segmented communities. These include the City of Tucson with its historic barrios, downtown business/cultural district, central university setting, and miles of suburban sprawl, ranging from exclusive gated enclaves to trailer parks, from big-box shopping centers to mom-and-pop strip malls. On the city outskirts too are found numerous unincorporated “census-designated places” that count both among Tucson’s wealthiest communities and its poorest.<sup>4</sup>

Recent studies show that during the Great Recession Tucson experienced a far greater dip in median household earnings than the rest of Arizona and the nation, and that Tucson’s median household earnings have continued to lag behind.<sup>5</sup> With a quarter of the Tucson metropolitan population living below the poverty line (U.S. Census Bureau, “2010 Income & Poverty”), the City of Tucson is also poorer than a number of its nearby suburbs, such as Oro Valley, Sahuarita and Sierra Vista.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, the city is widely acknowledged for the vitality of its cultural offerings (Americans for the Arts), a fact that is out of sync with its poor funding base.

Stepping beyond Tucson, Southern Arizona is understood to comprise the three border counties of Pima, Cochise and Santa Cruz.<sup>7</sup> Pima County is the largest in terms of territory and population, a little over half of which lives in the City of Tucson proper (U.S. Census Bureau, “Community Facts”). Figure 1 below provides a quick glance at the distribution of land mass and population in the three counties. All in all, Pima is by far the largest in terms of size and density,

with Cochise claiming two thirds of its land size yet just a tenth of its population base. Santa Cruz County, which occupies a niche on the border below Pima County, is one seventh the territorial size and one twentieth the population size of Pima County. Whereas Pima County slightly favored registered Democrats and Cochise County slightly favored registered Republicans, in the Latino-majority Santa Cruz County voters have weighed heavily in favor of Democratic candidates



\*Derived from U.S. Census Bureau, “Community Facts,” 2010 Census.

(Santa Cruz County Government), even if just 50% have been registered Democrats (Arizona Association of Counties). In addition, approximately one third of voters in all three counties were registered as ‘other’ (e.g. Independent, Libertarian, Green, etc.) (Arizona Association of Counties).

In considering regional diversity, at the time of the 2010 census the City of Tucson was 42% Latino and Pima County was as a whole 35% Latino.<sup>8</sup> While Latino residents experienced greater levels of poverty than non-Latino residents (U.S. Census Bureau, “Poverty Status in the

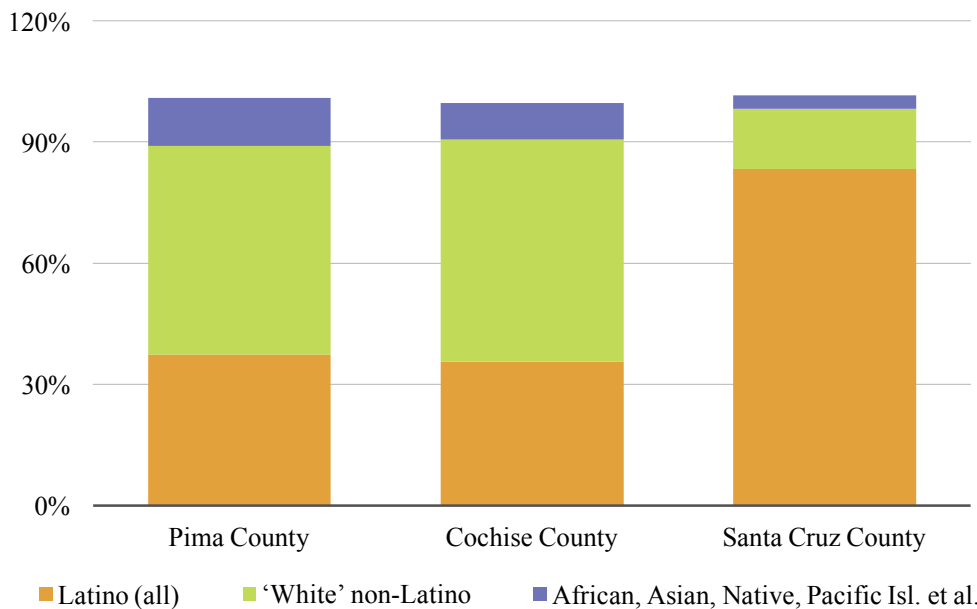
Past 12 Months”), the proportion of minority-owned firms in Tucson also grew from 37% in 2007 to 63% by 2012 (U.S. Census Bureau, Quick Facts, “Tucson City, Arizona”). Not only is the metropolitan Tucson region diverse, the City’s oldest neighborhoods and vital downtown are characterized by an overlap of ethnicities and classes, most notably in the Old Pueblo’s historic core. In the metropolitan Tucson area, one however also finds pockets of “non-Latino white” homogeneity, notably in the city’s ring of unincorporated census-designated places (“Tucson, Arizona Interactive Map”). The latter has included the Catalina foothills, where Latinos in 2010 made up around 10% of the population, and the Saddlebrooke Active Retirement Community, where they numbered a mere 5% (U.S. Census Bureau, Quick Facts, “Catalina Foothills CDP” and “Saddlebrooke CDP”).

Beyond the City of Tucson, burgeoning communities based on newer large-scale development—such as one finds in Oro Valley, Green Valley, and Vail—have also tended to have far smaller Latino populations compared to Southern Arizona’s historic cities.<sup>9</sup> Founded at the turn of the 19th century, the cities of Douglas, Nogales, Oracle, Naco and Willcox for example all have Latino populations that range anywhere from 40 to 95% of the whole. These figures suggest that the many of the region’s oldest communities have maintained some degree of ethnic continuity with the past. (An overall breakdown of ethnicity by county is provided in figure 2 below.)

Southern Arizona has experienced at the same time an extraordinary influx of people from other states, as well as from outside of the country: of the 62% of Arizona residents born outside of the state, 48% were estimated to have migrated from other U.S. states or territories, and 14% from foreign countries (U.S. Census Bureau, “State of Residence by Place of Birth”). The changing demographics of Southern Arizona too have had bearing on the rise of the region’s newer developments, which have been for the most part made up of “non-Latino white” retirees

and relatively few Latinos (i.e. 25% or less), according to the U.S. Census Bureau. By comparison, in communities where Latinos were in the majority, the over-65 population dropped to between 7% and 10% of the total.<sup>10</sup>

*Figure 2. Percentage of different ethnicities by county\**



\*Derived from U.S. Census Bureau, "Pima County, Cochise County and Santa Cruz County."

The data raises the question whether residents of new homogenous enclaves, in which 'white' in-migrant retirees were in the majority, may have been isolated (whether by choice or not) from Southern Arizona's historic settings and populations and as a result detached to greater and lesser degrees from its historically imbedded Mexican, indigenous and mixed cultures. The possible disconnect then between newer homogenous communities and more historic and diverse communities was at times reflected in the discord that arose between those letter-writers who advanced arguments for a broad and uniform nationalist identity that rejected the distinguishable 'other' and those letter-writers who championed and identified with a distinctive, localized sense of place, one borne often by a legacy of admixture rooted in Sonoran and indigenous culture.

At the same time, describing residents of largely “non-Latino white” retiree enclaves as homogenous in this context is in part misleading; although neighbors may have largely shared in common their skin color (and the privilege that imparts), age bracket, and to varying degrees their political persuasions, economic parity, and affinities (for golf, by way of example), they in fact hailed from many corners of the United States. In other words, they might not have shared in common with neighbors their regional particularisms—certain formative socio-cultural traditions and norms, a sense of place-based history, and linguistic turns of phrases—that are this country’s markers of distinction. Moreover, even if they shared a common ‘race’—which as Fields stresses is an imaginary construct that in its believability produces real-life consequences (150)—they did not necessarily share the same ethnicity, religion or culture.

One might then ask, for certain in-migrants, isolated as they were from their own and each other’s socio-cultural backgrounds as well as that of the new landscape into which they had arrived, what “being American” signified: did national identity have a different salience for those who had set down shallow roots in the place in which they lived? At the same time, it is important to consider that other variable norms, beliefs (as untried or unproven ideas (Needham)) and framing narratives—along with individual life experiences—also held sway over any individual writer’s stance on nationalism and undocumented immigration. In this regard, self-described retirees in the dataset submitted some of the most empathic and notably humorous pro-immigrant arguments and there were Latino writers who wrote in opposition to “illegal immigration.”

### *A state divided*

In considering the political polarization of Arizona, it is important to note the ways in which geography and history have equally played a role insofar as the two largest metropolitan centers have evolved along different paths. One cannot understand the Tucson metropolitan region without understanding its fraught relationship with its behemoth neighbor, “Phoenix,” a



synecdoche that Tucsonans use for the more conservative Maricopa County. With nearly four times the population size and a great deal more wealth, Phoenix-Maricopa often dictates to its smaller, poorer and far older sibling at the state level.<sup>11</sup> Among several controversial interventions by the Maricopa-dominated legislature in Tucson affairs have been the state's takeover of the Rio Nuevo urban revitalization project, the withholding of millions of allocated dollars from the Tucson Unified School District (TUSD), and the shutting down of its acclaimed Mexican studies program.<sup>12</sup>

It is a point that most of the state's anti-immigration legislation too was driven by legislators from up north. The gulf between southern and central Arizona would be cast in high relief by the furor surrounding Arizona Senate Bill 1070, the Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act, and a slew of other state anti-immigrant measures. The bills put forward did not merely address but instead helped to foment a mounting sense of crisis and outrage. One must bear in mind that animosity however sprang not just between Tucson and Phoenix but between Tucson and the transplants to its predominantly 'white' ethnic enclaves, whose denizens were often more closely aligned with the voters of Maricopa than Southern Arizona's historic populations.<sup>13</sup> It is noteworthy that as in-migrants, the very group of homebuyers that would benefit the most from undocumented construction labor would then call for its expulsion once the Great Recession had begun to unfold.

### **C. A collapsing desert bubble**

The same period that witnessed the rapidly expanding criminalization and dehumanization of the undocumented immigrant coincided with the expansion and eventual bursting of Arizona's housing bubble, which as one of the fastest growing spots in the nation was closely bound up in those global finance practices such as 'subprime' mortgage bundling that had set the world

economy into a tailspin (cf. Dunbar and Donald; Marazzi; Denning). The collapse in the housing bubble and period of decline in certain respects also fit within a 10-year arc of growing intolerance toward undocumented immigrants.

In Arizona, the collapse of the global economic housing bubble led to a loss of 300,000 jobs, 50% of which were in construction (Hansen). In the aftermath, regional unemployment rose from 3.6% in 2007 to 9.7 percent by 2010. With poverty reaching 26.6% in the city and 20.4% in Pima County overall, Tucson qualified then and now as one of the nation's poorest metropolitan regions (City of Tucson; Persad). The state is estimated to have also lost 40% of its undocumented residents in the same timeframe ("Unauthorized immigrant population trends"). With their loss came the loss not just of labor but of consumers and revenues (Gans). The 'silver lining' if one can call it that was the rise of the private prison industry, which occurred during the long-lasting period of Arizona's non-recovery and was moreover directly tied to the state's push for far more stringent immigration enforcement (ch. IV).

Foreign-born workers were estimated to have made up nearly 30% of the labor force that constructed Arizona's growing fleet of gated communities and mega-malls ("Arizona Struggles to Fill Construction Labor Demands"). Not only did undocumented labor build the homes which could then be offered below market value, undocumented labor also bought homes and kept a pyramidal market expanding (Hoy). It is notable that the anti-immigrant sentiment at the turn of this century gathered momentum in parallel with an expanding market bubble, rather than springing up at the point of economic collapse. In this regard, the declaration of the border as a state of emergency by the governors of Arizona and New Mexico—which unleashed a media frenzy—took place in 2005, two years before the crash and recession (Alvarez). In addition to ensuring Arizona a surfeit of new federal dollars, the border's increasing fortification in turn lent

credence to the impression that the United States was under siege from without; this in turn both triggered a tremendous (if somewhat primed) nativist-nationalist backlash.

In the wake of punishing legislation and economic collapse, Arizona ended up shedding more undocumented immigrants than any other state in the union (Davis). And while public debate has continued to roil over whether this loss was a boon or detriment, Arizona's inordinately slow recovery compared to other states would suggest more damage was caused than good.<sup>14</sup> The question then arises: why would a state willfully direct harm at a substantial population in its midst in ways that would bring no economic relief or benefit? Three operative factors to consider in this regard are the polyvalence of underlying interests that sought to benefit from the collapse, both in terms of reshaping national ideology and achieving short-term ends; the fact of the collapse and the need to direct public blame in a way that would serve those interests; and lastly, the structural role undocumented labor as a "surplus army," one that as per Karl Marx could be expanded, collapsed, liquidated or reconfigured according to the vagaries of free-market capitalism (423). In short, a manipulated tide of nativist-nationalism aimed specifically against undocumented immigrants would provide the vector for instituting broader ideological and structural changes to abet the restructuring of resources and power.

## **D. Codifying exclusion**

### *The build-up to SB 1070*

Pivotal to the transformation of immigrants into dehumanized, extralegal subjects was, as John Salyer illuminates, the passage of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA) and the negated place of mitigation in immigration case decisions (Salyer). Thus no aspect of an immigrant's narrative—her or his length of tenure, contributions to society, role as family provider or caregiver, parent of U.S. child—could be

considered during deportation hearings. At the same time, immigrants were subjected to a higher legal standard than U.S. citizens, as minor transgressions could result in permanent banishment. The title of the act alone serves as an admonishment, stressing as it does the connected state of being an immigrant and irresponsible. The passage of IIRIRA accomplished the sleight-of-hand feat of making the immigrant increasingly negligible as a human being and at the same time increasingly exceptional and accountable before the law. In her examination of race as an evolving construct, Fields notes a parallel contradiction at play: those who are accused of being inferior are then held to higher legal standards of discipline and punishment (*pace* Foucault) (Fields 155).

In 2005, four years after 9/11, the passage of the Real ID ACT<sup>15</sup> was to further this process of legal alienation by using the threat of terrorism as a screen for eroding the *habeas corpus* of immigrants. Singled out in particular were suspected “aliens” found within 100 miles of the U.S. border, for whom normal processes of judicial review were waived, especially in regard to expedited removal. As jurist Gerald Neuman notes, the Real ID Act in effect “[forbade] the courts to reach the merits of the removal decision, or the constitutionality of the procedure” (156).

In this same period, numerous “compromise” bills—seeking a pathway to citizenship for millions of undocumented immigrants along with enhanced border militarization—would fail, among which included the Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act (or the McCain-Kennedy Bill) and the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Acts of 2005, 2006 and 2007. One might be confused into believing that repeated failures to advance immigration reform at the national level then spurred (and legitimated) the drafting of SB 1070 at the state level—except that the same players who dedicated funding and expertise to ensure the defeat of immigration reform were also involved in architecting SB 1070 (as explored below). At the same time, the more draconian Border Protection, Anti-terrorism and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005

(commonly known as the Sensenbrenner Bill), which passed the House but failed in the Senate, was in turn defeated by a consortium of human and immigration rights activists. That which could not be achieved through consensus nationally was then however pursued at the state level—which in any event coincided with the position of a powerful consortium of elite interests pursuing an agenda built on federal deregulation and public-sector privatization, under the cloak of ‘states’ rights.’ (Tabachnick)

The softening of the line between the militarized international-border sector and the civilian sector was facilitated under President Bush’s “Secure Communities Program,” which while conflating foreign terrorism with undocumented immigration sought to enhance cooperation between federal and local enforcement agencies in the matter of immigration enforcement. As Gomberg Muñoz and Nussbaum Barberina have noted, “It is not only the scale of enforcement that is unprecedented—it is also the reach of federal immigration enforcement measures into homes, communities, and workplaces deep within the U.S. interior” (3). That program, along with subsequent efforts to heighten local immigration restrictions—by imposing employer sanctions, denying social benefits to immigrants, and so on—set the stage for the drafting and passage of SB 1070 in 2010.

### *SB 1070 and its impacts*

The passage in April 2010 of the Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act (or Arizona SB 1070) broke new ground in two regards: The first concerned the state of Arizona’s attempt to assert its right to execute existing national immigration legislation to the letter of the law, rather than to adhere to the legal interpretation and policy direction set forth by the presidency (Abrams). In time, the courts would concur with the federal government that the state had overstepped its mandate in regard to foreign policy. The second concerned the requirement that local police forces demand proof of legal residency of any person suspected of

being an undocumented immigrant, which many asserted abrogated the fourth amendment's prohibition against unreasonable search and seizure, promoted racial profiling, and transformed officers of the peace into community adversaries (Nik 94, 100-102; Provine and Sanchez 477). The courts ultimately sided with the state insofar as agents of the law have been permitted to demand 'papers' of anyone stopped during the course of their duties. While evidence of widespread 'racial profiling' in Arizona existed,<sup>16</sup> the presiding judge did not believe the law as written necessitated its use (Del Puerto). Nevertheless, in time Maricopa Sheriff Joe Arpaio would be charged and found guilty of directing agents to employ racial profiling in Maricopa County, until receiving a pardon from President Trump.

At issue ultimately are the ways in which the re-emergence of codified racism via SB 1070 has served to alienate and erode the basic civil liberties of Southern Arizona's centuries-old Latino and millennia-old Native American communities, along with undermining their sense of belonging and primacy of place. In isolating and rendering certain individuals suspect, on account of their darker hair or complexions, laws such as SB 1070 also increased bias by impacting the ways in which those in the majority viewed those who were not. SB 1070 also broke new ground insofar as those regimes of control and displays of force once associated with zones of conflict, disaster and dire threat—where civilians are understood to be subjected to extraordinary scrutiny and control—were now injected into the realm of what had long been considered the 'everyday,' which in Arizona historically had included widespread, socially-accepted undocumented immigration.

### *Enforced attrition*

Between 2006 and 2012 there was a threefold rise in state-level immigration bills and resolutions across the nation (National Conference of State Legislatures), reflecting in essence a second-tier effort to enhance the range of punishments visited on immigrants as a form of inflicted

“attrition” (Nik) or a ‘death by a thousand cuts.’ In addition to strengthening punishment regimes—for example, by felonizing the crime of using a false Social Security number even if no Social Security benefit would accrue to the undocumented worker—many bills sought to deny undocumented immigrants a range of social benefits and permissions, from driving licenses to child healthcare (cf. Horton and Barker). This onslaught of punitive measures in turn reflected the success of a conscious strategy—referred to as ‘voluntary repatriation’—<sup>17</sup> among nativist conservatives to encourage immigrants’ return to their countries of origin, via forms both voluntary and coerced.

While SB 1070 succeeded in expanding the right of states to enforce immigration and moreover inspired a battery of similar bills nationwide, it too represented the culmination of a host of similar efforts both in Arizona and beyond. Notable among these was California’s proposition 187 (1994) which sought and ultimately failed to curtail the access of undocumented immigrants to social protections. A decade later in Arizona, state propositions offered up between 2004 and 2007 would seek to restrict immigrant access to non-federally mandated public benefits; deny jail bonds to immigrants arrested for “serious” crimes; prohibit undocumented immigrants from receiving civil damages; mandate that all government business be conducted in English; and penalize employers hiring undocumented labor.<sup>18</sup>

### *Preempting federal immigration authority*

Although widely trumpeted as the “most draconian” piece of anti-immigrant legislation in the country, SB 1070 in many ways was drafted in order to mimic existing Federal immigrant legislation (Cox 48-49). The Supreme Court would in time overturn large portions of SB 1070 based on the reasoning that, “Congress has put in place a system in which state officers may not make warrantless arrests of aliens based on possible removability except in specific, limited circumstances” (Abrams 49). At the same time the Court upheld the right of local law

enforcement agents to verify an individual's legal residency during the course of a normal stop—but not necessarily to arrest the individual in question (Abrams 628-629).

Beyond matters of jurisprudence, SB 1070 differed from Federal immigration law insofar as it *obliged* local law-enforcement agents to verify the legal residency and arrest those suspected of being in the country without legal authorization. The real-life implications of having more eyes and feet on the ground meant that enforcement stops were more common and more likely to occur at any time and in any context: people running errands, dropping children off at school, driving along highways, seeking government agency advice or benefits, or reporting neighborhood crimes including violent rape and assault suddenly risked their own arrest and the dismantling of their families. Moreover, while Governor Brewer made certain to include language prohibiting the use of “racial profiling” in law-enforcement stops, few other criteria could be said to arouse suspicion other than racial typecasting. The resultant mass questioning, incarceration and judicial processing, as well as mandatory felonization of repeat entrants, further served to alienate and dehumanize authorized and unauthorized immigrants alike as well as the members of Arizona's embedded historic Latino, Native and African-American communities (“Driving While Black or Brown”), not just in the eyes of enforcement but in the eyes of a greater society.

As Meghan McDowell and Nancy Wonders contend, extending mechanisms of control both served and were served by “fetishizing” the undocumented immigrant as an object of illegality (57). Along similar lines, Ngai argues that the creation of “illegal aliens” as a “caste” enabled government “to create, as even the Supreme Court described, ‘rules that would be unacceptable if applied to citizens’” (Ngai, *Impossible Subjects* 2). At the federal level, among the most basic civil liberties denied immigrants and Latinos generally were the Fourth Amendment's protections against unreasonable search and seizure; the Sixth Amendment's assertion of the right to counsel and a speedy trial; and the 14th Amendment's equal protection clause (Ngai,



*Impossible Subjects*; Abrego and Menjivar; Green, “The Nobodies”). In conjunction with federal initiatives such as Operation Streamline which restructured the border between the United States and Mexico so as to produce greater and unnecessary loss of life (Rubio Goldsmith et al., “A Humanitarian Crisis at the Border,” “The ‘Funnel’ Effect”), Arizona’s propositions and bills could all be said to reinforce the devaluation of lives of immigrant and minorities. Popular as these measures were with voters, one might mistakenly then understand the laws as a reflection of deep-seated populist desires and fears. But to understand fully both the impetus for these measures along with the surge in nativist-nationalist sentiment requires refocusing the eye on the distant pinnacles of national power and governance, where a long-planned counter-hegemony among scions of privilege was in sway.

## Chapter IV

### SHAPING THE IMMIGRATION DEBATE

#### A. Coalescing interests

Whether nationalism begins with elite contrivance (as per Hobsbawm (12)) or emerging mass sentiment in the sense of Williams' "structures of feeling" (128-135), in time it becomes a risky marketing campaign, a gamble whose outcomes are unknown, producing both intended and unintended consequences. To borrow from Benedict Anderson,

"...in the nation-building policies of the new states one sees both a genuine popular nationalist enthusiasm and a systematic, even Machiavellian instilling of nationalist ideology through the mass media, the education system, administrative regulation, and so forth." (Anderson 113-14)

As David Keen revealed in *Benefits of Famine*, to understand the rise of nationalist violence one must look for a coincidence of interests extending from the global and national to the local (1994). In the U.S. battleground over the legitimacy of undocumented immigrants during the 2000s was mapped out and provisioned by a subset of interests whose greater game was eroding not merely federal but executive power. Chief among those driving legislation aimed at curtailing "illegal immigration" during the century's first decade was a consortium of select industry executives and legislators gathered under the umbrella of the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC).

Founded by industrialists Charles and David Koch (Mayer, *Dark Money* 7), ALEC brought together conservative legislators with a panoply of concerns in the energy, pharmaceutical, insurance, private education, armaments, tobacco, finance, and other sectors ("ALEC Corporations") to promote conservative policy-making and more specifically to privatize public resources, while reducing federal oversight (Scola). While the connection between nativism and the cause of 'states' rights' may at first seem obscure, challenging the executive

branch's "plenary power preemption" over the matter of immigration (Abrams; Nik 92-93) served as a forward strike against federal regulation and control over all manner of public resources—whether that included timber, oil, parklands, education, prisons, or labor, community and environmental safety.

On the ground, 'States' rights' opposition to the Obama presidency in particular would come to absorb and wield any number of issues—from 'lesser government' and 'gun-owners' rights' to opposition to gay marriage. Among these issues however the fight to allow individual states to protect national sovereignty against the "invasion of illegal aliens" would take precedence for an emerging 'states' rights' populist movement. In a speech given at a meeting of the super-PAC Americans for Prosperity, co-founder David Koch stressed the importance of propelling grass-roots activism aimed at the state level:

"We envisioned a mass movement, a state-based one, but national in scope, of hundreds of thousands of American citizens from all walks of life standing up and fighting for the economic freedoms that made our nation the most prosperous society in history." (Mayer, "Covert Operations")

The same Americans for Prosperity would go on to work hand in hand with the rising Tea Party movement, which would benefit from ALEC's direct strategic involvement in promoting an anti-immigrant agenda (Mayer, "Covert Operations"; Nesbit; Zuesse).

In Arizona the Tea Party, which was to establish some 63 local chapters (Cabiles), would become so entwined with the GOP that their volunteer forms and events would be made available on local GOP websites (Maricopa County GOP; Pinal County GOP). Modeled after the MoveOn.org campaign that helped Obama gain the White House (Good), activism would take the form of a siege of online newspaper comments, bumper stickers and roadside signs, mass digital and postal mailings, and the occasional mass gathering. Even if the Tea Party scope of attack was broad—ricocheting from the Iraq war to government overreach to gun-owner rights to President

Obama's naturalization status—much of its rhetoric was focused against undocumented immigrants. At the 2010 “Stand with Arizona” rally held in Tempe, slogans ran along the lines of “Seal the Borders – Stop the Invasion – Save Our Country.” and “I dont care what *color* you are! If your [sic] ‘illegal’ GO HOME!” (Kennell) Along with the somewhat allied border militia movement, the Tea Party would become one of the most amplified voices and visible faces of U.S. nativist-nationalism.

At the national level, politicians associated with the nascent Tea Party led the charge in accusing the federal government of dereliction of duty in regard to the border. In so doing, states could then challenge jurisdiction over immigration—in essence by asserting their right to enforce national immigration laws to a greater degree than the federal government. In this way, Arizona sought through SB 1070 not just to duplicate but to go beyond federal enforcement actions, using its own local agents (or to undertake what is known as “enforcement redundancy” (Cox)). On-the-ground arguments for state intervention were best summed up by the Cochise and Pinal County sheriffs of the time:

“The federal government refuses to secure the border and leaves it to states like Arizona to bear the costs of its inaction. Yet, when we try to do the job they won’t do, in a manner consistent with federal law, they stop us. You couldn’t make up something this ridiculous.” (Montopoli, “Arizona Immigration Decision”)

On an equal footing, immigrants became a convenient source of blame for the capsizing economy starting in 2007. As but one measure of the way in which the issue of undocumented immigration took hold of the public imagination during the Great Recession, in Arizona two thirds of GOP respondents in a statewide poll during the 2008 primaries ranked “illegal immigration” and “terrorism” as the two paramount issues of the presidential campaign (Fischer 2008). That the number of anti-immigrant bills proposed and enacted nationwide tripled over the arc of the recession (National Conference of State Legislatures) underscores the degree to which

immigrants were in this time a primary focus of blame for the nation's insecurity. In a related vein, Tea Party legislators would be closely assisted by ALEC in introducing a wave of restrictive voter laws aimed at deterring what were virtually non-existent "illegally registered aliens" from voting (Scola). All of this is by way of showing that xenophobic rhetoric, populist agitation and corporatist "grass-roots" funding were interwoven into a single political equation.

Whereas one might be tempted to understand 'states' rights' as an instance of the nation-dismantling process enumerated by Hobsbawm as an aspect of late 20th century nationalism (ch.6), it may reflect instead a specific and strategic power realignment, a counter-hegemonic movement that may recall southern separatism but in this moment was not necessarily operating to achieve geographical division but to loosen the holds of and overtake an existing federal hegemony. The logic of linking the "immigration crisis" with states' rights related less to any neatly segueing normative arguments, as it rested on convincing a broad and varied public that the country was manifestly under invasion by "illegals" and that the Federal Government was too corrupt, inefficient and self-interested to safeguard the nation's sovereignty—or the taxpayer-citizen's checkbook (cf. Rector and Richwine).

## **B. Legislating prison profits**

Between 2006 and 2010, the U.S. immigrant detainee population grew by nearly 30% as did the budget devoted to immigrant enforcement, which by 2012 had reached an estimated \$12 billion per annum (Global Detention Project). The nation's largest private-prison operator of the period, Corrections Corporation of America (or CCA, today called CoreCivic), along with the Geo Group, would come to house vast numbers of these arrested immigrants in its facilities (Kirkham). As pioneers of the for-profit prison industry and as key ALEC members, CCA would have a hand in drafting and promoting SB 1070, which would serve as a test case for ALEC in the

subsequent passage of a surfeit of nationwide legislation intended to increase immigrant incarceration and thus serve privatization efforts (Sullivan).

In addition to contributing some \$16.6 million to election campaign war chests over a 10-year period (OpenSecrets.org, “Annual Lobbying by CoreCivic Inc”), CCA reportedly advised Russell Pearce (R-Mesa state representative and ALEC’s Arizona state chair) on refining the piece of legislation that would become SB 1070 (“CoreCivic”; “Corrections Corporation of America”). It is a further point that two of Governor Brewer’s chief advisors were employed concurrently as CCA lobbyists (Lewis; Ortega) at the very time that Brewer was championing SB 1070 and with its passage would sign it into law.

In one of the states hardest hit by the ‘housing bubble,’ the “immigration crisis” proved to be something of a remedial boon. During the post-collapse economy, Border Patrol agents’ numbers doubled in an 8-year period (Ortega) and suddenly prison guards were in high demand. Policy changes in immigrant arrest and detention procedures moreover lengthened incarceration times (Spagat). Boasting six immigrant detention facilities nationwide—three of which were in Arizona—CCA would moreover by 2015 see a twenty-fivefold increase in share prices (*Mother Jones*) and realize \$1.6 billion in annual revenues (White).

All this is by way of indicating the degree to which the targeted round-up and arrest of those with anomalous visa situations contributed to the build up a profitable industry—and the degree to which ever harsher legislation served this end. In the midst of economic crisis, Arizona transformed what had been a critical labor force during its housing boom into a commodity whose value now lay in its being rendered dormant and imprisonable. With the sudden job contraction of the 2007/08, the forcible removal of undocumented immigrants demonstrated the expedience of Marx’s “surplus” labor force in play (K. Marx; cf. Baumann; Green, “The Nobodies”), while at the same time providing the public a focus for its animus.

What might again have once seemed like an illogical conjunction—between the concerns of anti-immigrant nativists, states’ rights proponents and corporate self-interest—in fact united numerous disparate local, regional and national interests, from a disaffected base threatened by globalization’s increasing disparity and market hiccups to political actors looking to expand their national profile to an industrial clique that would benefit from a reconfiguration of federal oversight and federal resource distribution. Achieving these polyvalent aims however would have been impossible without the development and dissemination of a story line around undocumented immigration that could be supported by a large swathe of the American public.

### **C. Marketing ‘illegal’ immigration**

To address the role of immigration rhetoric requires examining the specific mechanisms by which structural violence becomes normalized in a civilian context and, specifically, to understand the role of hyperbole (Cintron). The transformation of an everyday if informal population of workers and families into a population of “criminals” required convincing a broad American public that this same long-tolerated community was the prime source of society’s ills. Yet doing so would also create a moral conundrum for those who believed immigrants were the backbone of the country, that the “poor...huddled masses” had an innate right to seek a better life, that turning away the stranger constituted (as it does in the four major religions) a sin. One answer then was to employ a team of strategic marketing experts.

The use of marketing firms to cultivate nativist anger was brought to light as early as 1993 in a *New York Times* article that stressed that, “the rise of this industry has made it hard to tell the difference between manufactured public opinion and genuine explosions of popular sentiment” (Engelberg). When it came to the machinery of anti-immigrant messaging in the 2000s, no greater example of nativist-nationalism serving select interests could be found than the leaked

playbook—made up of ‘talking points’—that was created for GOP members of government by Luntz, Maslansky Strategic Research.

Entitled *Respect for the Law and Economic Fairness: Illegal Immigration Prevention*,<sup>1</sup> the Luntz, Maslansky playbook guided lawmakers on the use of strategic language to build public opposition to undocumented immigration by outlining specific terms and arguments that would both accord with—and subvert—such widely subscribed tropes as the ‘melting pot,’ ‘nation of immigrants,’ and ‘nation of laws,’ so as to render their idealized promise of inclusivity exclusive. While Luntz, Maslansky did not necessarily originate many of the talking points, it nevertheless consolidated and tested their efficacy with diverse marketing focus groups. Tapping public opinion then helped Luntz, Maslansky shape their approach. In so doing, they were able to ascertain that “Particularly in border and industrial states with heavy illegal populations, the perception of illegal immigration and increased fear of crime are closely related” (16).

Their success lay in shifting lawmakers’ rhetoric to focus on the issue of illegality in ways that they had determined would be the most effective with audiences: “Always differentiate LEGAL from illegal immigration” (2). Laying stress on those “who came here the right way” (Luntz, Maslansky 1) served to separate out immigrants’ often-heralded motives and contributions (‘creating a better life for their children,’ ‘achieving the American dream,’ ‘building our great country’) from their legitimacy or right to exist on American soil and contribute to American society.

Implying that the vast majority of immigrants from the past were legally vetted—a fact wholly under dispute (Ngai, “Your Immigrant Ancestors Came Here Legally?”)—then accorded target audiences a higher degree of status, as they were now inclined to identify their own families as legitimate, rather than the illegitimate or ‘illegal’: “Illegal aliens should never deprive legal immigrants of the American Dream” (Luntz, Maslansky 20). Placing “economic security” and



“homeland security” (Luntz, Maslansky 1) on equal footing moreover insinuated that those who “burden[ed]” (11) the tax base (i.e. relied on public assistance or paid less in tax) harmed society on a similar scale as a terrorist or violent criminal. This same inference was associated with the stress laid on “safe and secure borders.” Delegitimizing the undocumented immigrant was in turn reinforced by the demand to hold accountable “those who flaunt the law” and “commit a crime” (i.e. by entering and/or staying in the U.S. without valid authorization), along with “those who turn their heads” (Luntz, Maslansky 1). In this way, the playbook made those undocumented immigrants’ advocates as blame worthy as the “illegal immigrants” themselves.

The Luntz, Maslansky playbook in addition recommended that lawmakers display “compassion...lacking in much of the Republican messaging so far” (1), in order to persuade those who might otherwise have been put off by a stance that rejected the common norm of helping those in need. One might conclude for this same reason the authors insisted on the use of the term “illegal immigrants” rather than “illegals” (Luntz, Maslansky 3), the latter having been perhaps judged as literally too dehumanizing. The display of compassion was nevertheless meant to be countered by the argument that Americans were the greater victims when it came to “illegal immigration,” implying that jobs and resources were far too scant to be shared and that Americans should not shoulder responsibility (i.e. by paying more taxes) for the welfare of non-Americans.

Differentiating “legal immigrants” from “illegal immigrants” proved among the most successful of the Luntz Maslansky strategies promoting the “compassionate” dehumanization of undocumented immigrants (Luntz, Maslansky 1, 8, 11). This is not to say the authors invented the trope of the “illegal alien” or “illegal immigrant,” the concept of which has existed in the United States at least since the passage of the Alien Sedition Act in 1798 (Scobey-Thal). Moreover, similar arguments regarding “illegal” immigrants cheating “lawful” immigrants and U.S. workers surfaced in the 1975 congressional testimony scrutinized by Pease Chock (282). The Luntz,

Maslansky directives nevertheless helped to re-shape the rhetoric surrounding immigration, forming the basis of arguments used by GOP leadership at the federal and state level, pervading the media, and ultimately reflected in the voices of community members. In time, their voice would even sway Democrats seeking votes and a bipartisan solution to immigration.<sup>2</sup>

In many ways, the Luntz, Maslansky playbook exemplifies how nationalism's architects were able to craft and put into play a script—that is to say both language and modular performative actions—that were intended to restructure government and society in ways that would remain occluded from the general public. In addition to the playbook, there is evidence that populist furor against unauthorized immigrants was stimulated and channeled by additional behind-the-scene players, who invested deeply in creating on-point think tanks and political action committees, and funding strategic public relations campaigns that in turn informed much of the public media and congressional testimony surrounding immigration.

#### **D. Peddling partisanship**

While Luntz, Maslansky helped to reshape the rhetoric of immigration at the national level, other well-funded and politically-directed research institutions with the imprimatur of academic scholarship were to supply Congress and every facet of the media—from broadcast to the blogosphere—with evidence that was intended *a priori* to prove immigration's deleterious impact on U.S. society.

Over the past two decades, a sizable portion of the data analytics cited by pundits and politicians as evidence of immigration's perniciousness has been generated for one by the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS). While advertising itself as a “non-partisan” think tank, CIS along with its two sister organizations—the political lobby Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) and the “civil forum” Numbers USA—has been revealed to have not just nativist

but white supremacist roots (Beirich). CIS and FAIR moreover have a history of publishing conclusions unsupported by the data. This includes the questionable assertions that immigrants per capita use more public funds (Camarota; cf. Nowrasteh); and that they commit greater rates of crime than members the average population (Camarota and Vaughn; cf. Ewing et al.; “Errors and Extremist Sources”). The influence of CIS on the immigration debate however should not be underestimated, given that according to their current executive director they have testified before Congress and the Senate some 100 times between 1998 and 2018 (Krikorian). Their findings have also found a wide audience via *Fox News*,<sup>3</sup> which by 2009 had become the nation’s most popular news station, as well as via CNN news show host Lou Dobbs, who would help to re-amplify their erroneous crime statistics (Dobbs, “Mounting Debate about Options”; cf. “Errors and extremist sources”).

Other partisan think tanks to contribute to the national dialogue on immigration, albeit with overtly racist profiles, included the New Century Foundation, publisher of *American Renaissance* (“American Renaissance”); the above-mentioned Americans for Prosperity Foundation (Celock); and the National Policy Institute (NPI), which has been credited with launching the fascist alt-right movement (“Richard Bertrand Spencer”). Unlike CIS, NPI has made no pretense of pursuing anything but a racist-nativist agenda, as the quote below from one of its better-known essays illustrates:

“Immigration is a kind a proxy war—and maybe a last stand—for White Americans, who are undergoing a painful recognition that, unless dramatic action is taken, their grandchildren will live in a country that is alien and hostile.” (Kurtagic)

## **E. Border insurrections**

If right-wing think tanks invested deeply in producing the questionable facts that would support greater immigration restriction, there was a great deal about the nativist moment in the

early 2000s that embraced irrational explanation to as great a degree as rational. As public furor over undocumented immigration began to swell, so were ever more fantastical pronouncements on the subject generated.

As Ralph Cintron points out, hyperbolic rhetoric that “astonishes”—that in my own reading is transgressive—succeeds insofar as it renders the opposition speechless (Cintron 140). In this regard, hyperbolic rhetoric establishes its own state of irreality, largely by distorting and upending people’s constructed everyday realities, as well as by skewing commonly embraced norms. Grabbing one of the largest media spotlights in this regard was Sheriff Joe Arpaio whose publicity-seeking effrontery, sadism (forcing prisoners to wear pink jumpsuits and live in tent cities in 120-degree heat (Hagan; Lemons)), and blatant disregard for the law (i.e. instating ‘racial profiling’ as a police policy; prioritizing immigrant arrests over the investigation of sex crimes; and criminally harassing opponents) for some represented individualistic ‘can do’ heroism and for others frightening and ignoble farce.

Arpaio created a theatre of destabilizing fear in part by convincing some portion of the public that he was a lone warrior against a vast swarm of invaders bent on destroying their communities and nation, and taking what does not belong to them. For many Latino immigrants, however, he came to personify the face of evil—the forces bent on hunting them down as unwanted human beings, ripping their families asunder, stealing parents from children, destabilizing their own communities, and destroying all the good that had been so hard won (McDowell and Wonders). No matter where one stood on the issue of immigration, Arpaio’s cruel theatrics served to challenge and invert any sense of the normal. In this sense, they can be seen per Bakhtin as a political form of the “grotesque” and the “spectacle” (*Rabelais and His World* ch. 1).

Other figures who similarly operationalized the grotesque in their speech-acts were Governor Jan Brewer who falsely reported on the presence of headless bodies in the Arizona desert (Haynes 1; cf. “Immigration,” *DiggersRealm.com*); Pinal County Sheriff Paul Babeu whose grandstanding included making unfounded claims that he was the target of drug cartel assassins (Cohn); the neo-Nazi posturing by state congressman and subsequent border militia member J.T. Ready;<sup>4</sup> and the exaggerated pronouncements of border militia movement co-founders Jim Gilchrist and Chris Simcox, who among other things described the border area as a “warzone” over which terrorists were crossing into the United States (Hannity and Colmes, “Border Patrol Agents Forced to Turn to Self-Defense?”; cf. Neiwert, “The Border Security Sham”; Zaitchik; Kil and Menjívar 172-173). Following his success with SB 1070, Mesa Rep. Russell Pearce too would subsequently attempt to push forward legislation denying citizenship to so-called “anchor babies,” a step deemed so repugnant at the time that voters from his largely conservative and Mormon district would in short order recall him from office.

While many border communities opposed the increased militarization of the border (Vanderpool, “Eye of the Storm”; Helmore), the militias’ border theatrics gained greater media legitimacy when a handful of “border ranchers” began provisioning the militias with land, tactical/logistics support and state-of-the-art surveillance technology (Sais). In the end, the militia movement would collapse however under the weight of a number of horrifying debacles perpetrated by members: these involved in the case of J.T. Ready a family murder-suicide; in the case of Chris Simcox a conviction on child molestation charges; and, in the case of militia member Shawna Ford and two associates, the murder of a drug dealer and his young daughter.

Countering the border militias in Southern Arizona—both on the ground and in the media—were numerous pro-immigrant alliances, the most visible of which were No Más Muertes/No More Deaths, Humane Borders, Tucson Samaritans, and Coalición de Derechos

Humanos. It is noteworthy that many if not most of these organizations bear some degree of religious affiliation (Skojberg Eastman 168-70). In fact, members of the country's first Sanctuary movement for refugees fleeing Central American violence under Reagan have continued to stand on Arizona's front lines as advocates for the undocumented (Fife). As Maria Lorena Cook additionally has pointed out, "Because these advocates work with targeted populations, they are likely to become targets of law enforcement themselves" (Cook 564). No more telling example of the same exists than the prosecution and conviction of No More Deaths volunteer Walt Staton for "littering" the Buenas Aires wildlife refuge, with jugs of water meant for border crossers at risk of dying from a lack thereof (Pedersen, "Tucson Man Sentenced in Border Water Jugs Case").

In addition to militia and humanitarian border activism, two mass pro-immigrant demonstrations would galvanize the public and further polarize debate. The first in the spring of 2006 erupted in the face of the passage by Congress of the Border Protection, Anti-terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005 (aka the Sensenbrenner bill), which correlated undocumented immigration with terrorism and rape; mandated greater fortification and militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border; and felonized those attempting to aid undocumented immigrants. The bill's detractors proved legion, with an estimated 1.2 million people participating in demonstrations across the country, including in Tucson ("Over 1.5 Million March"; Engler and Engler). While the bill would fail to pass the Senate, just two years later vociferous public opposition to immigrant "amnesty"—fueled by FAIR and a coalition of right-wing talk-show hosts, among others—would sink a bipartisan comprehensive immigration reform bill authored by Senators Edward Kennedy Jr. (D-Mass.) and John McCain (R-Arizona) (Schrag 10, 73, 77). As the Luntz, Maslansky playbook had already pointed out, the concept of "amnesty" had already become toxic in the public imagination (3; cf. Schrag 173). FAIR for that matter had long

promoted opposition to “amnesty,” disparaging its inclusion within the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 as Ronald Reagan’s one false step.

The second set of mass demonstrations arose in conjunction with the passage of SB 1070. While street protests and calls to boycott Arizona erupted across the country in response to what many would classify as the “most draconian” piece of anti-immigrant legislation, local media focused primarily on high-school student truancy and unruliness (McCombs). In so doing, the focus of the protests became occluded by the largely negative media representation of the protesters. Pictured carrying Mexican flags and shouting slogans such as “¡Si Se Puede!” the local narrative was soon transformed into an invasion of “illegals” flying foreign flags and demanding rights.

All in all, the relation of political and media actors—in industry, government, along the borders and at the grass roots—to the framing of the border as a “theatre of violence” was to profoundly shift the national discourse surrounding immigration as well as contribute to the widening of the political chasm overall. This shift in narrative then abetted the redistribution of power, first and foremost with the ascendancy of a radical right wing bent on inhibiting federal government regulation and on privatizing the public sector. While this section has attempted to situate the letters in the dataset within a confluence of historic events, strategic determinations and public postures, the next section will explore the onslaught of story lines that were to transfigure the border and propel Southern Arizona’s residents into a persistent state of alarm—one that in creating a sense of ‘crisis’ would be essential to questioning executive authority and into providing the public not bread but circus.

## Chapter V

### MEDIATING 'ILLEGAL' IMMIGRATION

#### A. Conjuring the intruder

Numerous instances in U.S. history have knitted the 'outsider' and acts of violence together in the public imagination—from the Tory import of Hessian mercenaries to today's ban against Muslim refugees. According to Sang Hea Kil and Cecilia Menjívar, however, President Ronald Reagan deserves special credit for precipitating a three-decade arc of nativist fear-mongering against southern hemisphere immigrants, which he initiated most notably against refugees from his own Central American 'Dirty Wars' (167). Three decades later 9/11 provided pundits and politicians renewed fuel to associate immigrants with terrorism, as well as to point fingers at the nation's long pregnable southwestern border.

The U.S. border with Mexico had long been portrayed in popular media as a space of license, terror and contagion, over which it was claimed swarms of mythic enemies threatened U.S. Sovereignty—from the Spanish conquistadors, "Yellow Peril hordes" and Pancho Villa's raiders through a parade of negative media tropes (the mustachioed bandito, raven-haired seductress, sombrero-sporting peón resting against a spiny saguaro). As Leo R. Chavez amply illustrates in *Covering Immigration: Popular Images and the Politics of the Nation*, the southwestern border too has been typically depicted as under siege by successive waves of the poor, undesirable, aberrant, unclean, and contagious. In a corollary with the past's forced chemical delousing of Mexican migrants, in 2014 popular media fueled fears that the Ebola virus could potentially enter the United States via "the border" ("Ebola outbreak fuels concerns").

Over-hyping the call of the tiny and marginal Aztlán movement to cede territories back to Mexico and misconstruing phrases lifted from Latino identity movements, such as *La Raza* ("the



people”) or the ironically-used term *Reconquista*, the right and libertarian wings further energized a segment of the public’s apparently atavistic (if manipulated) and millennial fears, this time in connection with the specter of a “Pan America” that would dissolve national boundaries and differences.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, border fears would be fortified by Tucson’s unfortunate association with a number of Al Qaeda operatives, including two hijackers who attended an area flight school (Sherman). Yet, while none of the hijackers entered the United States via the Arizona-Sonora, Mexico, border, it is that border that elicited far greater xenophobic gusto than did the border with Canada, lending credence to the idea that the United States-Mexico border existed as a racist projection in the public mind’s eye, one that divided the ‘white’ northerner from the ‘dark’ southerner.<sup>2</sup>

In 2005, local KVOA-Channel 4 TV garnered an Emmy Award for its coverage of “illegal immigration and the terrorist threat on the border” (Hatfield), in spite of a lack of evidence tying the one to the other. Quickly picked up by the right-wing blogosphere (FreeRepublic.com; Storm2k.org; 24Ahead.com), the same unsubstantiated allegation would subsequently be echoed by the Heritage Foundation (Walzer) and in an opinion piece published by the much-respected *Arizona Capitol Times* (Sen. Sylvia Allen). A further KVOA-Channel 4 news story, broadcast a decade after its first series, reflects an ongoing racist hysteria concerning the vulnerability of the Arizona border to terrorist entry:

“There’s Palestinians, Afghans, Syrians trying to get in. We are trying to stop everything and anything from coming across,” said Tim Foley, the field operations director of Arizona Border Recon.” (“Group patrols AZ border for terrorists”)

In this way one can see how, in spite of a paucity of evidence connecting terrorist threat to the U.S.-Mexico border, the events of 9/11—and its conflation of immigrants ‘of color’ from different parts of the world—served to justify and exacerbate in the media what were already well-entrenched and irrational fears of the ‘other.’ The use of the word “irrational” is not meant as

demeaning characterization but to underscore public investment in unreasoned explanation, irrespective of fact. One can here consider Bakhtin's notion of the public participating in an inverted, fantastical, and theatrical carnival-grotesque, in part perhaps as the ritual of renewal Bakhtin describes,<sup>3</sup> but also to redress the as yet unrelieved trauma of 9/11. Transposed 9/11 fears coupled with a form of latent racism that both conjectured and conflated "brown" Middle Easterners with "brown" Mexicans would also in this time de-emphasize the Arizona-Sonora border's economic role as a vital transit hub between the United States and Mexico, its third-largest trade partner.<sup>4</sup>

A confluence of interests—between those interests that would benefit from the expansion of 'states' rights' and the reallocation of monies from the public to the private sector and a public still unsettled by the specter of 9/11 and by mounting economic insecurity—were served by casting undocumented immigrants into a criminal role. An examination of the letters-to-the-editor dataset to follow demonstrates the ways in which a media-constructed tableau of fear was both reflected and contested in reader stances. While the above discussion of the correlation between terrorism and immigration at national and local levels has been specific in its focus, it is additionally worthwhile to take a moment to look at the large-scale if mosaically composed "battle portrait" of the Arizona border that evolved in both national and local media during the period under examination.

## **B. Projecting "illegal" as a national brand**

Beyond the production of biased and faulty data reverberating throughout the media (as discussed earlier), anecdotal evidence was used to revivify well-worn tropes equating immigrants with aberrant criminality. Relying on lexical appositions and incessant repetition, the sample

headlines below drawn from a Google search of *Fox News* hammered home the idea of the “illegal immigrant” as a perpetrator of serious and aberrant crime.<sup>5</sup>

“Illegal Immigrant Worker Sentenced in Slaying of Actress Adrienne Shelly” (13 Mar. 13, 2008)

“Illegal Immigrant Named Suspect in Teen’s Death” (19 Nov. 2008)

Illegal Immigrant with Criminal Past Named Suspect in Fatal DWI (20 Nov. 2008)

“Illegal Immigrant Accused of Sexually Assaulting At Least 9 Girls Under 8 in New Jersey” (19 June 2009)

“Va. police: Illegal immigrant charged with killing nun and injuring 2 others in car crash” (3 Aug. 2010)

In the above examples, placing the “illegal immigrant” subject at the start of the headline reinforced in the reader’s mind the causality between the fact of the perpetrator’s “illegal” visa status and the action of having committed a mindlessly violent crime. Through the inclusion of provocative details—the “killing” of an actress, nun, the sexual assault of minors—the “illegal immigrant” was transformed into a reprehensible deviant, the embodiment of a portion of the public’s worst fears.

Far-right social media sites too functioned to amplify the alleged deviancy of “illegals,” albeit to a more shocking extent. In a sampling of 2010 headlines from the nativist blog *Digger’s Realm*, one finds, along with the nationally reported Chandra Levy murder, associations between “illegals” and desert beheadings, burned bodies, sex trafficking of minors, Somali terrorists, DUI deaths and most lurid of all, “Mexican Cartel Sews Face Onto Soccer Ball.”<sup>6</sup> The *Digger’s Realm* examples suggest the same line of causality between “illegal” status and crime as that employed by *Fox News*, only the headlines were meant to be more graphically shocking—such as slashings, beheadings, mutilated bodies, sex trafficking, terrorist plots, and so on. Notable too was the deployment of the modifier “illegal” as a noun, for the way it did not just dehumanize but

thoroughly debased the subject (Green, “A wink and a nod”). The effect of calling up graphic images in the mind’s eye is to produce a sense of outsized horror and panic; in this way, monsters appear in the shadows of the everyday. Overwhelming the public imagination then serves as a strategy to shift societal permissions so as to legitimate the nation’s exceptional response toward a specific “surplus” population, (K. Marx), rendered all the more vulnerable by the dispossession of its fundamental ‘human’ or ‘civil’ rights.

Leisy J. Abrego and Cecilia Menjivar have noted that, “The increased trend of passing laws that criminalize an ever-wider range of immigrant behaviors legitimizes and normalizes violence against immigrants” (11). In what might be seen as an endless reverb loop of projected/transferred, codified and enacted violence, a process of ostracism initiated through the conjunction of media and legislation aimed at vilifying immigrants in the mid-1990s then led in the 2000s to far more hyperbolic accusations as well as far more draconian forms of punishment. The latter included the restructuring of the border to ensure greater death rates among entrants (Rubio Goldsmith et al., “A Humanitarian Crisis,” “The ‘Funnel’ Effect”); legalizing unreasonable search and seizure; inflicting cruel and inhuman treatment that included keeping infirm, pregnant, elderly and child detainees in so-called “ice boxes,” while denying them food, water and emergency care (Human Rights Watch); and transforming formerly neutral public spaces into zones of fear and intimidation.<sup>7</sup> As state-imposed violence against immigrants became more pronounced via federal and local laws and policies, as well as via the intimidation tactics of figures like Sheriff Arpaio and the militias, so too did the crimes of which immigrants were accused grow more extreme and senseless.

A logical inversion thus occurred in reassigning violent capacities to those who were the most disempowered, which in turn dehumanized and allowed further violence then to be inflicted on those same individuals. In a similar vein to the findings of Michael Taussig (1984) and

Fernando Coronil and Julie Skurski (1991) in their respective research into violence, one could argue that in this way were grotesque media depictions of violence against individual victims (the immolated cadaver, the slashed female, the face stitched to a soccer ball) then transferred onto the corpus of the nation-state. National sovereignty, held in a state of sacrosanct and symbolically virginal inviolability, likewise was portrayed as imperiled by the intruder's violation of a border. It bears mentioning that the dehumanization and vilification of the 'other' is a classic strategy of the most virulent forms of nationalism, predicated as those movements are on the isolation and excision of the stranger as a means of controlling the whole of the nation.

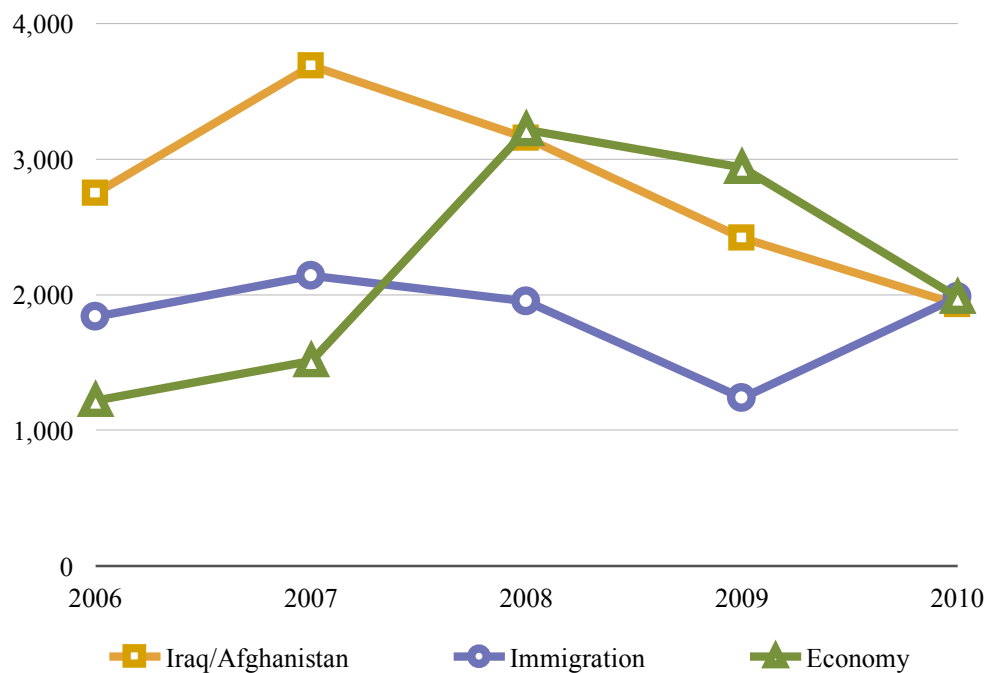
### **C. Local media representations of the 'border crisis'**

If the national public was being inundated with vilifying stereotypes and faulty constructs in regard to immigrants in general and undocumented immigrants in particular, for the southwestern border communities the issue was made all the more vivid by personal proximity to the events portrayed. One should bear in mind not just the escalation in people crossing into and through Arizona and attendant rise in "desert deaths," but the media's positioning of the 'immigration crisis' front and center in the eye of local and national public concern. In other words, the massing nimbus of related news stories and opinions came to overshadow the perceptions of Southern Arizonans' everyday environments, intersecting with their own lived and observed experiences.

As but one measure of local media engagement in both contributing to and reflecting crisis, a keyword search of the *Star*'s online media archive for the dates between 1 Jan. 2006 and 31 Dec. 2010 yielded 9,151 results that touched on "immigration." Figure 3 below breaks down the number of articles per year, in comparison with the two other subjects to garner comparable interest, namely the economy and the combined U.S. war efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq. One can

see how immigration surpassed the economy until the full crisis became apparent in 2008, at which time the latter garners as much interest as the two war campaigns. By 2010 (with the passage of SB 1070) all three items come to generate equal *Star* coverage. The fact that all three items (recession, the immigration ‘crisis’, and two intractable war campaigns) were often attributed in letters to government failure may help as well to explain in part the nativist-

*Figure 3. Recurring subjects in Arizona Daily Star  
2006-2010 news items\**



\*Data retrieved from *Arizona Daily Star* online article search: [tucson.com/search/advanced](http://tucson.com/search/advanced).

nationalist resurgence (*Arizona Daily Star* online article database).

Broadcast and print news deluged the public with stories of ‘crisis’ that reverberated from the initial accounts of fatalities associated with border transit and the increasing numbers of entrants, to the attribution of blame for all manner of crime and for placing a social burden on a society on the brink of economic collapse.<sup>8</sup> What follows in illustration is a selectively curated

and organized, and non-exhaustive list of regional news stories that commanded extensive coverage and arguably took sway over the local imagination.<sup>9</sup>

Of the various news items depicting *border crime and violence* were the fatal shooting of 16-year-old José Antonio Elena Rodríguez by a Border Patrol agent firing across the border; the killing of Border Patrol agent Brian Terry by illegal drug couriers using weapons purchased through the ATF's "Fast and Furious" program; the murder of "border rancher" Robert Krentz, long blamed without evidence on border crossers; depictions of gun battles between police and drug cartels in the neighboring state of Sonora; reports of mass graves with mutilated bodies near the Texas border; the kidnapping-murders of women in Juarez, details of which were broken by regional journalist Charles Bowden (Blake); a number of deadly vehicular accidents associated with the transport of undocumented immigrants; and the interdiction of several large-scale illegal drug shipments and the discovery of extensive underground tunnels used for their transport.

Among numerous related *human-interest* stories were those that concerned the on-campus arrest of a high-school student for drugs that led to his family's deportation; the university hospital's attempts to have an ailing American infant born to undocumented parents deported; an undocumented immigrant who risked arrest in order to save the life of a child; and the withdrawal of a university scholarship from a student who had been raised unaware of her undocumented status. Additional accounts involved the compassionate efforts of groups such as *No Más Muertes/No More Deaths*, *Derechos Humanos*, Tucson Samaritans, Border Watch, and others to provide immigrants crossing the desert with water stations and medical help, as well as the prosecution of two humanitarian volunteers for "littering" in wilderness areas (as touched on earlier).

Dominating news reports on the *societal impacts* of the 'border crisis' were those concerning the expansion of the border's militarization and fortification, including placing official

checkpoints inside of U.S. territory; periodic data-driven reports on the exponential rise in border entrants and their associated deaths; a photojournalistic series documenting detritus left by border entrants; a series of stories covering the high costs borne by hospitals for treating uninsured immigrants; and demographic impact studies such as those warning that “non-Hispanic whites” would soon be in the minority (Fischer, “Anglos no longer a majority by 2050”).

*Political news* covered the state’s innumerable efforts to draft and pass legislation aimed at punishing undocumented immigrants as well as by penalizing their employers and anyone seeking to provide them with transportation, shelter or succor; the mass “student protests” to take place in Tucson and beyond in 2006 and 2010; and the call by Rep. Raúl Grijalva (D-Arizona) for a state boycott in the face of SB 1070’s passage.

As addressed earlier, there were in addition a parade of reports on pundits, public figures and political advocacy groups taking *outrageous or hyperbolic stances* and these deserve special focus for the ways in which the narratives surrounding these figures served to challenge norms, spread fear, and polarize community. It is a point that, at the start of the 2011 new year, the shooting of Rep. Gabrielle Giffords and nine others at a Tucson shopping center would be attributed by then Tucson sheriff Clarence Dupnik to the influence of right-wing radio rhetoric, much of which had been fastened on blaming politicians such as Giffords (a conservative Democrat and border security advocate) for the ‘border crisis’ (Dolnick and Williams).

It should also be borne in mind that, while certain narratives and tropes in a given moment can captivate the public, countless others were either underreported or simply went unnoticed. These included the detainees’ brutal treatment at the hands of enforcement agents, including the denial of food, water, required medical treatment and temperate cells (No More Deaths; Human Rights Watch; Santos); and the subjection of members of Arizona’s Latino and Native communities to constant police stops (“Driving while Black or Brown”), often for spurious



reasons such as a flickering taillight<sup>10</sup> and during which they would then be forced to prove their right to exist in what was for many an ancestral homeland. At the same time, those living on the border—especially on the Tohono o’Odham Reservation—could be made overwrought by the constant arrival on their doorsteps of families in a perilous state of dehydration, a story that was also rarely conveyed in the media.<sup>11</sup>

The welter of stories described above are meant to provide some insight into the mounting sense of crisis generated by the media and fastened to place—meaning not just any place but the audience’s home, a particular locale closer to Mexico than most other parts of the United States, as well as far older and far away from most major U.S. centers of commerce, power and culture. The events depicted can be said to have provided by turns an exhilarating and devastating (if at times not outrightly perverse) “theatre of violence,” one whose intersections between certain lived realities—of death, of the illegal drug trade—with the evocation of assassins, ogres and dead innocents distorted and upended people’s ordinary conceptions of day-to-day reality. As fissures opened up, so too did the possible expand to include that which was not formerly conceivable—the removal and harsh treatment of ‘others’ who were both strangers and at the same time neighbors and visible passersby.

## Chapter VI

### REFRACTING THE ‘BORDER CRISIS’

The following analysis of the letters that comprise the *Arizona Daily Star* Letters-to-the-Editor Dataset on the Topic of Immigration, 2006-2010 (ADSLTE), is divided into three parts. The first part provides a portrait of dataset writers, as well as addresses the tenor of the dataset as a whole through the prism of extremism, in order to gauge the degree to which community members in writing letters to the editor—and in entering into and engaging within a locally-based and to some degree non-anonymous public forum—may have reflected on their audience and voice. The second part teases out the ways in which rhetoric surrounding immigration, as reinterpreted and refracted within four letters associated with sentiment, provides insights into the ways in which nationalism is both contested and gains hold on the ground. The third part then provides a more expansive overview of the dataset by delving into the many facets surrounding the issue of immigration enforcement, as revealed within the letters themselves.

What emerges from the three approaches is a set of intersecting tendencies or “legibilities” (Carlson and Stewart) among those taking opposing positions in relation to differing conceptions of self, nation and moral obligation vis-à-vis the stranger, imbedding as they do occasional glimmers from a broader national discourse, as variously refracted, inverted or distorted, recontextualized and re-emanated in each individual writer’s effort to reassert meaning or render that which is “inchoate .. legible” (Carlson and Stewart).

#### **A. An overview of the dataset**

##### *Dataset compilation and parameters*

Using a series of separate and combined keyword searches of the Arizona Daily Star’s online archive, a total of 858 letters to the editors were collected for the years 2006 through 2010

inclusive. Search terms included ‘anchor babies,’ ‘border,’ ‘desert deaths,’ ‘entrants,’ ‘illegal aliens,’ ‘immigrants,’ ‘immigration,’ ‘migrants’ and ‘1070’. Letters were verified for content, aggregated, and indexed by date, author, self-assigned role, location, and immigration-enforcement stance, as well as writers’ chief areas of concern or ‘themes.’

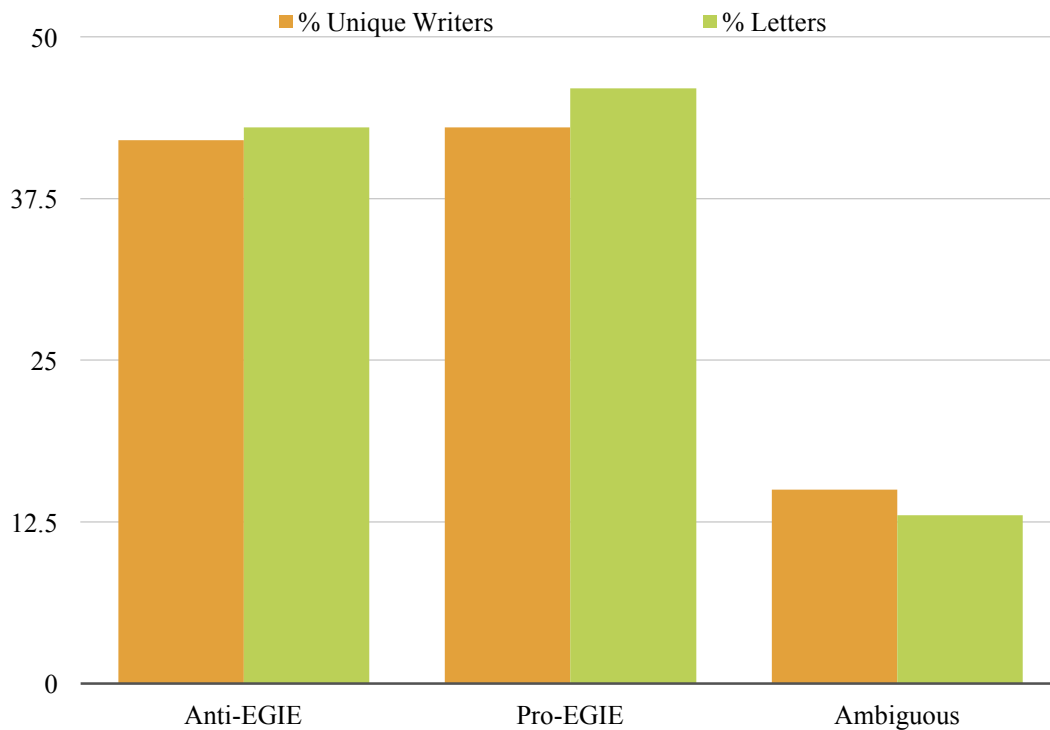
In analyzing the letters, ‘existing or greater immigration enforcement’ (or EGIE) was selected as the stance focus rather than ‘immigration’ alone for a number of reasons. In this time, nativist-nationalist rhetoric stressed opposition to “the crime of illegal immigration,” not “legal immigration,” as enumerated for example by Luntz, Maslansky (16) and Sen. Jon Kyl of Arizona (Truelson), among countless others. Thus, numerous writers who asserted the criminal status of undocumented immigrants claimed to support immigration overall. Moreover, while certain writers would argue that if existing immigration laws were fully enforced at the federal level, there would be no need to pass additional laws, others would champion expanding the state’s capacity to make decisions and carry out immigration enforcement.

A further reason to specify EGIE was that many authors who favored improving circumstances for undocumented immigrants did not reject border enforcement in theory, but in its current-day practice. For example, a number of writers opposed strict border regulations in the face of what was viewed as an unrealistic and draconian visa application process that failed to recognize both the nation’s labor needs and the humanitarian situation created in Mexico and Central America through U.S. intervention. Too, writers who supported immigration reform—including legitimizing the status of undocumented residents—did not necessarily support a policy of open borders or wholly embrace unauthorized border crossings.

### *Unique writers & stance*

Out of 858 dataset letters, there were 766 unique (or individual) authors. Of these 71 wrote multiple letters and another 21 were included in 9 letters with multiple signatures. The chart below compares the number of letters to unique writers, according to stance. In this regard, 42% of writers stood in opposition to EGIE, 43% stood in its favor, and 15% took an ambiguous stance. When the number of letters were tallied irrespective of unique authors, 41% of letters opposed EGIE, 46% stood in its favor, and 13% took neutral or ambiguous stances. That is to say when one looks at letter-writers alone, they are divided nearly equally between anti- and pro-

*Figure 4. Unique dataset writers and letters, aggregated by stance*



enforcement stances but when letters are aggregated as a whole, the balance tips towards those favoring EGIE (see fig. 4). Moreover, taking into account that of the nine letters with multiple signatures, 13 writers opposed EGIE, whereas only 4 favored EGIE and 4 were ambiguous, the

difference in percentages when considering the overall tally of letters would suggest that writers who favored EGIE were more inclined to write in more often on the subject.

Writers who were determined to have taken neutral or ambiguous stances may have not taken a clear stance on the subject of immigration enforcement or they may additionally have taken opposing stances in different letters, rendering their overall position as ‘ambiguous.’ Given that the majority of letters however were not ambiguous, I have elected to focus on the arguments advanced primarily between those favoring and opposing immigration enforcement rather than on those whose stances were indeterminate, even if that indeterminacy on its own presents a separate and worthy line of inquiry.

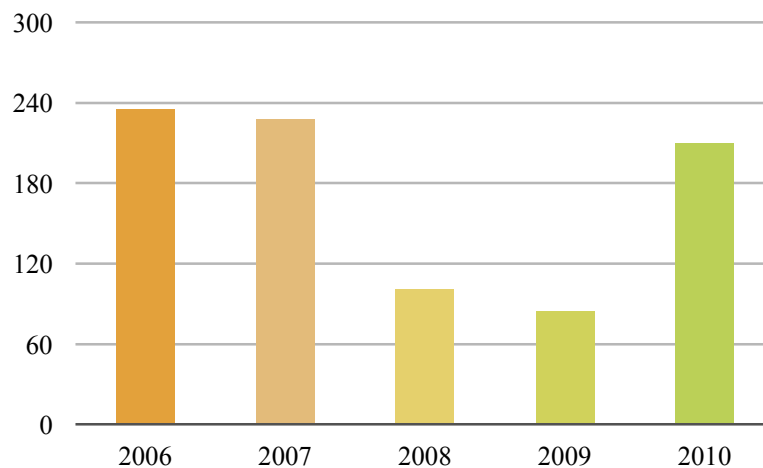
### *Letters published by year*

Another factor worth consideration in regard to the dataset is that the numbers of published letters related to immigration and the border varied substantially—from a high of 235 letters in 2006 to a low of 84 letters in 2009 (see fig. 5 below). While the *Star’s* editorial desk was unable to explain the sudden drop in letters on the subject of immigration between 2007 and 2009, in two email communications dated 20 March 2016, the author was assured by editorial staff that no policy had been put into effect to limit their publication during this time. However, in the event several letters were received on any given day containing identical arguments, only one representative letter out of the set would be printed.<sup>1</sup>

One might reasonably imagine that the tremendous media focus on and resultant public anxiety surrounding the border and undocumented immigration (starting with the 2005 declaration of a “state of emergency” on the Southwest border) might have led by 2007 to a momentary lull in reader engagement. At the same time, the years 2006/07 and 2010 correlated with the promulgation of two pieces of immigration legislation—the Sensenbrenner Bill and SB 1070—

that excited large-scale protests both nationally and locally. A third possibility is that, as increasing numbers of readers invoked identical arguments, the *Star's* editors selected to publish one representative example and culled the others. If this were indeed the case, it would further

*Figure 5. Number of dataset letters published per year*



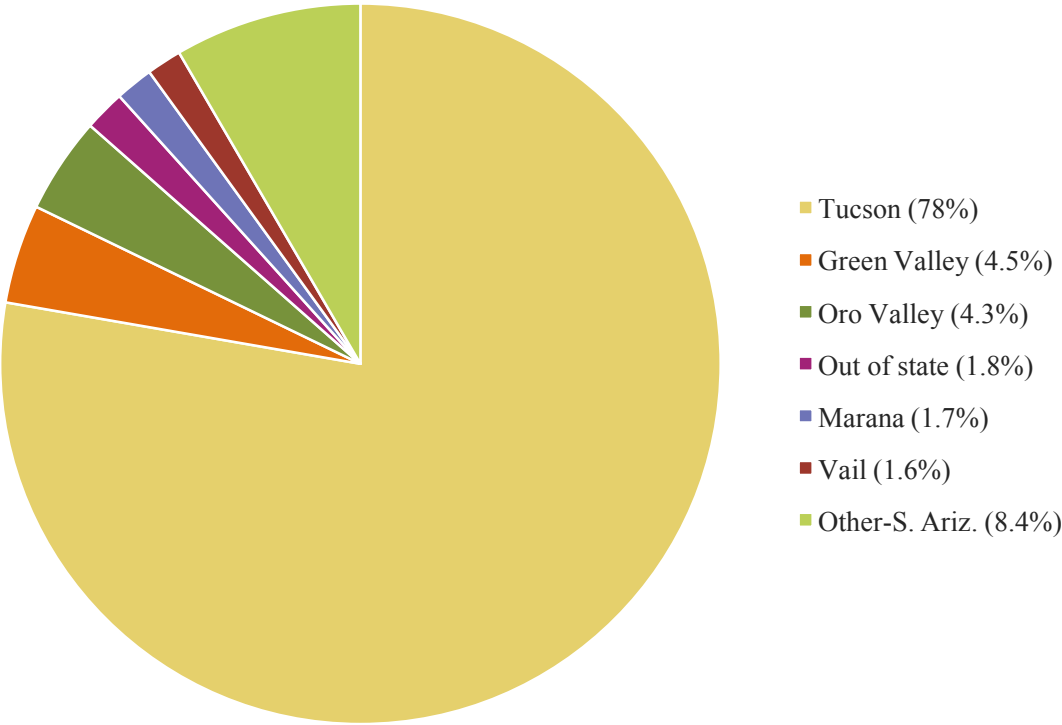
suggest that those who were more polarized in their positions became more univocal in their language. A final simultaneous possibility is that, with the *Star's* launch of an unedited 'online comments' section, a portion of public response may have shifted away from print and onto the Web. As the *Star* did not maintain an archive of its online reader comments, this possibility like the others presented must for now remain conjecture.

### *Writers' locations and roles*

In addition to ethnicity, writers' self-assigned career fields or roles and residential locations provided a secondary lens through which to gain a view on the body of writers. All told 764 members from 38 countable communities contributed letters to the *Star* on the topic of immigration between 2006 and 2010 (see fig. 6). Although 78% of letter-writers listed Tucson as their place of residence, it is almost certain that a quite a few did not live inside the City of Tucson proper, but in one of the city's far-flung ring of unincorporated suburbs or retirement

communities. The two next largest sets of writers came from the incorporated cities of Oro Valley to the north and Green Valley to the south, which contributed 34 and 33 writers respectively (or 4.5% of the dataset each). Thereafter, writers from Marana (in Pinal County to the west), Vail (southeast of Tucson), and from out of state each contributed clusters representing half as many letters yet (or around 13 letters each). The other 64 writers or some 8% of the total heralded from 31 communities as disparate as the fast-growing Sahuarita to the tiny mountainous community of Amado, population 295.

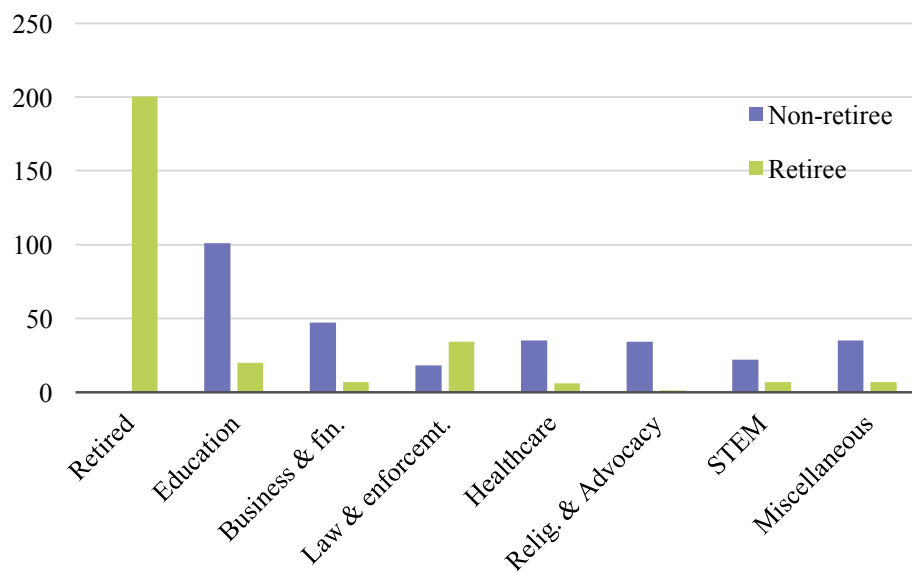
Figure 6. Distribution of dataset letters by location



Nearly 70% of the letter-writers in the dataset moreover elected to include a self-assigned role as part of their signatures. Figure 7 below illustrates the distribution of letter-writers across a spectrum of the top 10 fields, as well as juxtaposes within each domain those who were currently employed or engaged with those who were retired.<sup>2</sup>

Making up over a quarter of all letter-writers, self-declared retirees constituted the single largest segment, although the over-55 population of Arizona numbered around just 15% (U.S. Census Bureau, American Fact Finder, 2010). One must thus take note of the motivation of retirees as a whole and pro-enforcement retirees in particular to contribute to the public debate—albeit via an ‘old-fashioned’ media vehicle but one that has remained in wide circulation. The second largest field represented consisted of those in education (21%), of which nearly half were students. The categories of ‘Business and finance’ and of ‘Law and enforcement’ (e.g. officials, judges, civil servants, attorneys-at-law, members of the police and military, etc.) made up each another 9% of the dataset. It is notable within the ‘Law and enforcement’ group that more than double the number of retirees penned letters (77%) than those who indicated they were still active in the field (33%).

*Figure 7. Dataset letter-writers, aggregated by role*



Thereafter those in the health-care field composed 7% of the dataset, those involved in religion and advocacy accounted for 6% and those in STEM (or science, technology, engineering



and mathematics) commanded 5% of the dataset. The remaining 7% was comprised of those involved in trades and services; creative and media industries; family or heritage roles; ranching and agriculture; and those electing to use political or other types of descriptors, such as “legal immigrant,” “unrepentant liberal” and so on.

While more intensive research into correlations between writers’ stances, locations and assignments is warranted, there are very broad indications that certain divisions among the population may relate to the biases of one’s employment and training, as well as the length and type or quality of contact between community members and immigrants. Whether teaching immigrant students, representing clients in courts of law or acting as agents meant to enforce laws, or as religious leaders helping define a code of ethics and responsibility for communities, roles appear to some degree (but not wholly) to influence stance. Greater statistical and ethnographic research would serve to uncover whether factors related to one’s specific religious persuasion or moral orientation; life experiences, view of one’s own position vis-à-vis society, and life-defining narratives; selection or the happenstance of where one lives; as well as the situations in which one has the opportunity to observe and interface with perceived ‘others’ (and in particular persecuted minorities), have a bearing on writer stance in regard to undocumented immigration.

A preliminary effort to correlate writers’ stances with self-assigned roles (or assignments) and locations—relying in addition on U.S. Census and marketing demographics—suggested that those who lived in newer, fast-growing and more homogenously ‘white’ communities with larger in-migrant retiree populations may have taken more hardline positions in regard to immigration enforcement than did historically-older and more ethnically diverse communities. This research was however constrained due to geographic and size limitations in the dataset. In the first

instance, although most letter-writers listed their place of residence as “Tucson,” many presumably lived in the city’s swathe of outerlying unincorporated zones. Given that these communities lie at variable distances and often have relatively little in common with the city or each other (in terms of residents’ ethnicity, length of residence, age, wealth, and so on), findings for “Tucson” provided little useful insight. Narrowing the focus to non-Tucson communities also yielded limited information as letter samples proved too small. The restricted findings however suggest worthwhile avenues for future ethnographic and statistical research.

## **B. Having ‘skin in the game’ on the public green**

Before turning to an analysis of the letters, pause is needed to consider the medium of the newspaper itself, both in terms of its dimensions and practicality as a dataset as well as the expectations it offers as a public forum to its readers. There were any number of reasons to select what many have predicted is a dying traditional medium—the newspaper, with its letters-to-the-editor genre—as a public forum (or imaginary ‘public green’) where local residents were able to air views.<sup>3</sup> On a practical level, as the thesis was intended to capture the rhetoric of a community in a specific place and time, using letters to the editor rather than social media assured access to texts that could be connected to authentic names and places of residence. The newspaper database also provided a ready source of reader letters, as by comparison little social media had been archived in the 2006-2010 period either on global sites like Twitter or via the *Star’s* online comments application.<sup>4</sup>

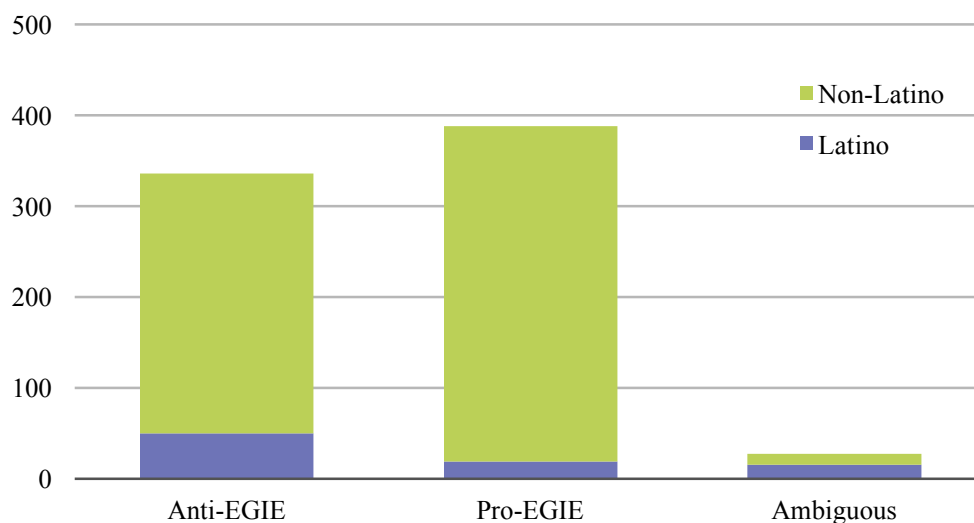
In Southern Arizona—where the national debate came to pivot around events unfolding literally in the theatre of residents’ backyards and neighborhoods—the newspaper moreover provided a rare source of regionally-focused information, as well as a public arena of local debate. In terms of being assured of adequate community representation, the *Star’s* combined print and

online readership during the period under consideration was said to include two thirds (or 66 percent) of the over-18 population of the greater Tucson region.<sup>5</sup> The views of readers could thus be said to represent a spectrum of community voices that—sharing a common news source—were to some degree mutually informed about and engaged in local issues, even if understanding was shaped by additional divergent sources (or what Foucault might call contradictory “practices” and “logics” (Ransom)). The one notable exception was found in the relative underrepresentation of Latino letter-writers within the dataset.

### *The Latino voice*

Using dataset writers’ last names as a measure of ethnicity, it was determined that 10% (or 77 unique writers) had last names of Spanish origin (see fig. 8), even though Latinos made up 42% and 39% of the populations of Tucson and Southern Arizona respectively (U.S. Census Bureau, “Pima County, Cochise County and Santa Cruz County”).<sup>6</sup> This fact suggests that there may well have been stronger local support for undocumented immigrants than a tally of letter

*Figure 8. Dataset stances broken down by Latino/non-Latino ethnicity*



stances has indicated. The reduced amplification of Latinos in the letters-to-the-editor dataset may have also allowed certain other voices more prominence than warranted. The resultant skewing has however important implications in terms gauging the impression that the set of letters to the editor on immigration made on a larger readership; that is to say, what passed then for the choir of public opinion was in some measure lacking an important section.

### *Projecting opinions into community*

Overall, the *Star's* letters-to-the-editor writers were obliged to address a heterogeneous audience, in part made up of those with whom they disagreed *in extremis*. As a point of comparison, social media users often post pithy, outrageous comments to elicit the greatest number of “likes” or re-tweets from the likeminded. For this reason, William Costley asserts that nativist social-media users often end up circulating ideas within an ever narrower and ever more univocal “hyperverses” (24-25). The inverse however proved true of the letters-to-the-editor section, where writers appeared intent on engaging a wider spectrum of readers, including often the unlike-minded.

In order to gauge the difference in volatility between the social-media “hyperverses” and the *Star's* combined print/online letters-to-the-editor feature, the number of letter-writers taking extremist stances—such as are commonly found in social media—were compared to the whole. Stances were determined to be ‘extremist’ if they supported the repeal of constitutional or international laws or ran counter to ‘universal’ or commonly prescribed norms. Examples included calls for insurrection or vigilantism; dissolution of national borders; inflicting grievous harm on others without evidence of direct and immediate threat; deporting all undocumented immigrants without exception;<sup>7</sup> withholding emergency medical care from adults; and withdrawing access to care, education or citizenship from children. Also included in this category were instances of verifiable exaggeration or falsehood, such as unfounded claims that jihadists

had infiltrated the country via the U.S.-Mexico border or that most crimes were committed by undocumented immigrants. Facetious statements were however excluded, such as a letter calling on Arizona to “reverse the immigration into Arizona by ‘Rich Republican Retirees’” (Richard Leland, ADSLTE, 20 July 2007).

In separating out radical from non-radical stances, it was determined that 92% of letter-writers avoided taking extreme positions. Among the remaining 8% (or 67 letters), over 90% were written by those favoring existing or greater enforcement against undocumented immigrants. This finding accorded with what might be viewed as a tendency but should be understood as a strategy among nationalist movements in particular to reject globalization and its universal laws and norms, in their efforts to assert the right of the nation to preserve its cultural hegemony. To this end, nationalist movements have invariably sought to terrorize—often by visiting severe and exemplary punishment on—those ‘others’ deemed to exist beyond the social and legal pale.

At the same time, the fact that the percentage of outliers in the dataset was under 10% suggests that letter-writers on the whole may have exercised a greater degree of moderation than did their social-media counterparts. Rather than framing arguments to appeal solely to their own kind, it appears that the *Star*’s letter-writers reflexively crafted arguments so as to persuade, engage and/or provoke a broader spectrum of fellow readers, including those with dissimilar views. To this end, letter-writers employed an array of stance strategies and rhetorical frameworks, a significant portion of which demonstrated that they not only listened to but borrowed terms and arguments from the opposing side.

In considering the relationship of letter-writer to imagined audience, many if not most letter-writers were likely aware that, by taking a forceful stance in a city of moderate size, they could potentially alienate friends and associates with whom they shared a physical, ‘non-virtual’ space: an office, grocery store, post office, biking club. Taking a stance could thus net letter-

writers various amounts of approval or opprobrium. Of additional bearing on writers' perceptions of their audiences may have been the composition of their immediate community and its degree of diversity. One might surmise for example that those who fraternized within a more diverse community might have anticipated more disparate responses. Likewise, those writers dwelling in more homogenous realms might too have anticipated more singularity of opinion from neighbors.

The idea that the configurations of one's community might influence stance is additionally borne out by a cursory look at those Tucson metropolitan area's larger and more uniformly "non-Latino white" suburbs—namely, Green Valley, Marana, Oro Valley, Sierra Vista, and Vail—where anywhere from 57 to 67 percent of writers favored immigration enforcement. In comparison, the number of letter-writers favoring or opposing immigration enforcement who listed Tucson, Nogales or Sahuarita as their places of residence—all of which are over 30% Latino—were more equally tied between those favoring and opposing immigration enforcement, even bearing in mind the degree of Latino underrepresentation in the dataset overall (discussed above). One might conclude that, not only were writers aware of their community, residents too may have selected communities in which to live based on a generalized sense of affinity. In any event, the match of physical proximity and tangible familiarity of Tucson and its hinterlands—even if to some extent "imagined"—stands in marked contrast to the anonymity and physical dislocation of social media groups, and therefore likely influenced the tenor of writers' letters.

As Bakhtin notes, "All rhetorical forms, monologic in their compositional structure, are oriented toward the listener and his answer" (*Discourse in the Novel* 280). In this regard, the newspaper letters-to-the-editor section represented a space shared by those who did not necessarily share the same value sets or conceptions of nation. As a site of contest, it thus also represented an "imagined community" and a "cruel optimism" (i.e. one that is not fully knowable, in the sense of Anderson, and an aspiration that can never be fully realized, in the sense of Berlant

(33-34)). At the same time, the community of writers occupied a very specific if also segmented geography, one that had been beset moreover by divergent fears: of a loss of national and cultural sovereignty, security of person and property, and the descent into lawless chaos on the one side, and of the loss of individual civil rights, respect for diversity and cultural difference, and compassionate humanity, on the other.

### **C. Sentiment and nation**

If, as the linguist John DuBois declares, a speaker's stance "can be approached as a linguistically articulated form of social action [that] necessarily invokes an evaluation" and thus "becomes fair game to serve as a target for the next speaker's stance" (DuBois 139, 141), can we as yet discern stance-takers' motivations from the words that they have uttered? One assumes that many readers were driven to submit letters by strong sentiment evoked in dialogical response to (and evaluation of) another's postulation. At the same time, Vincent Crapanzano reminds us that emotive expression in discourse serves a strategic purpose insofar as it is intended to lend greater force and therefore legitimacy to argument. Sentiment then signals a kind of extra-rational force majeure, signifying to the interlocutor a greater degree of truth in statement (Crapanzano 81-82). Whether or not the dataset's authors were impelled to write by powerful sentiment, sentiment as expressed in letters can be understood as a strategic gambit, which in conveying overwhelming conviction enhanced credibility. The expression of sentiment additionally lends insight into the "mood work" of writers, as "the contact zone for the strange and prolific coexistence of self and world" defined by Carlson and Stewart (114), a statement that hints at the manifold points of exchange in which "self and world" reproduce each other.

The following section analyzes four letters—each of which consists of an evaluation of a previously published item and was selected out for the phrase "when I read"—in order to offer a

window onto disparate writer motivations, as well ultimately as their affective stance in regard to the nation. While many of the motifs found in this section will reappear under the wider exploration of themes to follow, they do so not as isolated categories but in overlap as intersecting “legibilities” that make up Carlson and Stewart’s “contact zone” (114).

In each of the letter excerpts to follow, the writer declared her/himself impelled to write by a physically manifested sense of outrage or astonishment: “my blood boils,” “I almost fell off the couch,” and in two separate letters, “I could not believe my eyes.” While the source of irritant for each differed in substance—from accusations that the undocumented were “disrespecting our country” and that pro-immigrant student activists supported “the invasion of our country” to outrage that the teaching of “Latino culture” could be questioned in a historically Mexican region or that “tax dollars” would be wasted on teaching the same—all shared a sense of profound shock at not recognizing their own set of values and norms reflected in the words or actions of others, especially others (one might assume) whose published opinions threatened to sway public opinion. In each case, the writers made known that their sentiments were inflamed by a sense of disjuncture between their own conception of a right and just world and the ways in which others did not merely ideate but publicly express opposing conceptions of the same.

In matters of substance, the first of the four letters averred that the “search for a better life” did not take precedence over and thereby render negligible the act of “disrespecting our country and its laws”:

“Re: the Nov. 1 letter ‘A battleground in the desert.’ / My blood boils when I read comments such as these. There is no denying that illegal border crossers are mostly people in search of a better life. There is also no denying that they are disrespecting our country and its laws by sneaking across the border.” (Robert Cocke, Nov. 4, 2008)

The writer of this letter referenced two idealized tropes of nationhood that served to render the United States ‘exceptional’ in the eyes of its citizenry, leaders and occasionally scholars (cf.



Chock Pease, Pei, Trautsch), namely, ‘the American Dream’ (here rephrased as the “search for a better life”) and ‘a nation of laws’ (alluded to in the phrase “they are disrespecting our country and its laws”), a precept that guided the formation of democracy during the Enlightenment but can be traced back and cross-culturally at least as far as Aristotle.<sup>8</sup> Rather than hold both values in equal regard, the writer sought to assert the ascendancy of the one (‘nation of laws’) over the other (‘the American Dream’). In his resort to the opposition of abstractions, no allowance was made for deviation: there were no greater, lesser, unjust or even contradictory laws and no individual mitigating circumstances deserving of consideration. Thus, no wrong suffered by undocumented immigrants (such as the threat of death) justified their actions and no good performed for the benefit of society excused them or rendered less severe the supreme crime of “sneaking across the border” and “disrespecting the nation.”

It is worth noting that the letter to which the writer responded (Hill, “A battleground in the desert,” ADLTE, 1 Nov. 2008) did not in fact concern undocumented immigrants’ “search of a better life” as claimed but the documented mistreatment and abuse suffered by deportees at the hands of federal agents. Here the writer minimized the original issue of ‘cruel and inhumane treatment’ to one of aspirational self-interest. In so doing, he avoided addressing what other readers may have considered the moral obligation of compassion or the upholding of those “natural” or “unalienable” rights that put the good of the individual ahead of that of the nation. If anything, the writer’s “blood boils” directly in response to others’ assertion that compassion and human rights were worthy values.

The threat posed in the abstract to the “country and its laws” by the undocumented immigration, for this author, far outweighed the need to adhere to the substance of certain laws—notably the Constitution’s 8th Amendment proscribing cruel and inhuman treatment. It follows that the law of greatest account was that which barred those without legal authority from entering

into the United States (8 U.S. Code, sec. 1325), i.e. that law which protected the territorial integrity of the nation. In other words, the author viewed the abstraction of the sovereign nation—upheld by individuals’ submitting to the “laws of the country” and respecting (rather than “sneaking across”) its borders—to be of far greater concern than the abrogation of those constitutional laws that protected the rights of the individual.

As in the letter above, the second letter deflected the reader’s attention away from the issue of individual rights, this time to the double-edged sword of national sovereignty and vigilantism, using the threat of immigrant “invasion”:

“I almost fell off the couch when I read the March 31 article ‘Walkouts may signal rebirth of youth activism.’ Let’s see them come out and protest the quagmire war in Iraq, not the invasion of our country. Incidentally, no matter what [*Star* journalist/editor] Ernesto Portillo Jr. may think, the Minutemen and other groups like them have succeeded in waking up the American public. Things are going to change.” (Candace Kломann, Tucson, ADSLTE, 5 Apr. 2006)

To this end, the writer sought to re-arrange the parallels drawn by Ernesto Portillo Jr. in his opinion piece between the student activism of the 1960s/70s and the mass student protests of 2006 in Tucson and beyond to focus on war, rather than civil rights. It is a point worth noting that, while students marched against the U.S. invasion of Vietnam, they also did so in favor of extending civil rights to minorities; likewise, in 2006, students marched in favor of extending rights and protections, this time to minority immigrants. The writer, however, redirected attention away from the corresponding concern with civil rights demonstrated during the two time periods by refocusing on “the quagmire” of war, i.e. by insisting protesters would better spend their energies protesting U.S. intervention in Iraq, a campaign as failed as that in Vietnam, to which she indirectly made reference.

In further reflection, while the writer appeared to oppose U.S. intervention in Iraq, she did not refer to that war as an “invasion.” Instead the Iraq War was referred to as a “quagmire,” in

other words a war that was neither illegal nor immoral, but unresolvable, deadly, wasteful, inefficient. The word “invasion” was reserved to describe the rise in undocumented border crossings in Arizona. Her use of the word “invasion” in reference to immigration resurrected a recurring trope long associated with anti-immigrant nativism in the United States.<sup>9</sup> In this way a word associated with the menace of actual war was turned instead upon a civilian immigrant context. Moreover, as in the previous letter, instances in which the nation-state enacted a wrong were of far less concern than instances in which individuals—and especially perhaps foreign individuals en masse—did so.

While the letter alone did not reveal whether the writer herself once participated in 1960s/70s student activism or supported its flourishing in the moment, it seems apparent that her sense of disconnection from the 2006 youth protests and antipathy toward their cause led her to reject any correlation between present and past, in spite of multiple parallels. One might then ask: Does the instance where logic falls apart signify a rhetorical strategy (one that is often effective, as the axiom “Repeat a lie often enough and people will believe it,” demonstrates) or does it provide insight into the ways in which profound feelings of nationalism arise out of (if exist at odds with) the holding of two inimical truths at the same time (an idea that will resurface under the theme of ‘the greater good’ below)?

The last note upon which the writer concluded her letter revealed her affinities with the anti-immigrant, isolationist and potentially anti-federal stance of the militia movement not simply for the purpose of securing the border against “invasion” but to effect “change” within the country:

“Incidentally, no matter what Ernesto Portillo Jr. may think, the Minutemen and other groups like them have succeeded in waking up the American public. Things are going to change.” (Candace Klomann, Tucson, ADSLTE, 5 Apr. 2006)

Here one infers that the writer felt encouraged by the individualism and ‘can do’ approach of the militias, as well as their implied threat of violence—all this in a bid to “wake up” Americans and create “change.” While the writer was not fully emboldened to spell out what form of “change” she foresaw, many readers would have interpreted her support for the militia movement as signaling a belief that the nation’s right to control its physical boundaries and civil context against “invasion” is separable from (whether complementary to—or not) the authority of the federal government, in line with states’ rights advocacy (ch. IV).

In the first two letters just examined, both writers implied that they shared in and identified with the nation as a construct bounded in the first case by the ‘rule of law’ (as narrowly focused on immigrant accountability and national sovereignty) and in the second by geography. In contrast, the third and fourth examples below demonstrated that writers’ conceptions of a right or just society also diverged over an imbedded sense of heritage and identity—or primacy of place.

Claiming primacy of place often serves as a powerful strategy for asserting one’s validity to speak in the arena of public rhetoric on behalf of the polity. In this regard, both letters referred not to the issue of undocumented immigration per se, but to the closely associated efforts of the state, in the wake of SB 1070, to ban the teaching of Mexican American studies in Tucson’s largest school district, where Latinos incidentally made up 62% of all students (Huicochea). The ‘Ethnic Studies’ ban related to border immigration insofar as it reflected the state’s attempt to conflate and erode the legitimacy of recent immigrants and Arizona’s traditional Mexican communities alike, much in the same way that the de facto law-enforcement use of ‘racial profiling’ eroded a sense of security and belonging within the same community.<sup>10</sup> The program was accused by its opponents of creating social divisiveness by championing the one ethnic group’s history and heritage, while denigrating that of the other (dominant) ethnic group.

Using the lens of ‘Latino culture’ and the teaching of ‘Ethnic Studies,’ the following two letters exposed an underlying contest among those living in the greater Tucson metropolitan area over who had the right to assert primacy of place. On one side of the divide were those who identified with the Old Pueblo’s locally rooted, unique and heterogeneous origin myths—ones whose disparate lines of descent included the dominant influences of the region’s pre-United States Mexican and Native peoples (who were, apart from the Apache, converted and/or colonized by the Spanish).

“I could not believe my eyes when I read the Dec. 5 letter to the editor ‘schools shouldn’t teach culture.’ Are these the kind of people who live in Tucson? / I have lived in Tucson my entire life...I treasure my background and past immersion into Latino culture every day I am away. I believe the Latino culture is a staple of Tucson and that is wonderful. Tucson was, as a matter of fact, part of Mexico.” (Brian Starr, Student, Knox College, Illinois, ADSLTE, 5 Nov. 2007)

On the other side were those who asserted that the overarching and homogenizing myths of nationhood eclipsed local constructions of identity and belonging, as is illustrated by the following:

“I could not believe my eyes when I read letters protecting the teaching of Latino culture in our public schools. Is this where my taxes are going? / My school class consisted of Polish, German, Irish and Greek students, and a few more I could not discern. Were we taught the culture of any student? Certainly not. We were taught American history, not history back to the ‘60s but the history of our forefathers.” (Peter Stotzheim, Tucson, ADSLTE, 5 Dec. 2007)

In the first example given above, the writer not only championed the “Latino culture” in which he grew up but asserted its integrality within the City of Tucson’s cultural and historic make-up; in so doing, he also affirmed his own right of belonging or primacy of place. The full letter reads as follows:

“I could not believe my eyes when I read the Dec. 5 letter to the editor ‘schools shouldn’t teach culture.’ Are these the kind of people who live in Tucson? / I have lived in Tucson my entire life and am going to college in Illinois. I treasure my background and past immersion into Latino culture every day I am away. I believe the

Latino culture is a staple of Tucson and that is wonderful. Tucson was, as a matter of fact, part of Mexico. If people don't like the fact Tucson is influenced so much by Latino heritage and culture, may I suggest they move elsewhere. / To the writer of that letter, may I suggest looking up the complete history to find out how our 'courageous forefathers' acquired the land that includes Tucson?" (Brian Starr, Student, Knox College, Illinois, 12/11/07)

The writer here began by asserting his own primacy of place ("I have lived in Tucson my entire life"), coupled with his claims to inclusion within one of the region's dominant and historic ethnocultural groups, and appreciation at having been steeped in the culture of his forebears—"a staple of Tucson"—now that he has moved away to study at college. There were intimations of both nostalgia ("I treasure my...past immersion into Latino culture every day I am away"), as well as incredulity wrought by what he intimated was the changing temperament of the Old Pueblo: "Are these the kind of people who live in Tucson?" Unsaid but implied was the insertion of the adverb "now" i.e. that growth had brought in "people" without local roots or an awareness that "Tucson was, as a matter of fact, part of Mexico." This point was underscored when the writer stated, "If people don't like the fact Tucson is influenced so much by Latino heritage and culture, may I suggest they move elsewhere." The writer simultaneously inferred that the ignorance of the region's cultural and historic roots—demonstrated by those opposed to teaching "Latino culture" in the schools—delegitimized their very presence, let alone voice.

The writer appeared to reject the concept of nation as a mythically unified entity, binding the many who share in its identity within one sweeping, univocal historical and cultural narrative, and to one set of 'forefathers.' Against this he posited the idea of place—as a separate ethnically, historically and spatially defined location, with its own complex hybrid (not uniform) identity—one that stood both within and without the nation. The latter point was underscored when the writer questioned the national narrative vis-à-vis the inclusion of the place he considered his original home: "To the writer of that letter, may I suggest looking up the complete history to find

out how our ‘courageous forefathers’ acquired the land that includes Tucson?” Intimations of a dark history, one that hinted at violence and exploitation, were suggested but not revealed.<sup>11</sup>

Whereas the first two letters examined at the beginning of this section expressed strong sentiment in response to the perceived threat by undocumented immigrants to the nation’s integrity, as vested in its laws and geographical boundaries respectively, this last letter of the series (here printed in full) was concerned with the peril to the nation as vested in its historic and cultural identity:

“I could not believe my eyes when I read letters protecting the teaching of Latino culture in our public schools. Is this where my taxes are going? / My school class consisted of Polish, German, Irish and Greek students, and a few more I could not discern. Were we taught the culture of any student? Certainly not. We were taught American history, not history back to the ‘60s but the history of our forefathers. The amount of American history taught to our students today is a disgrace to our courageous forefathers. When my great grandparents legally arrived here in Ellis Island, they insisted their children learn English and the history of this great adapted nation as soon as possible. I can understand teaching the black students their terrible history because they have been deprived of the truth for years. But to teach Latino history and culture is idiotic, and this attitude is tearing our country apart.” (Peter Stotzheim, Tucson, ADSLTE, 5 Dec. 2007)

For this writer, history did not serve to build awareness of the intersection of many disparate ethno-historical narratives but to amalgamate those narratives into one: “My school class consisted of Polish, German, Irish and Greek students, and a few more I could not discern. Were we taught the culture of any student? Certainly not.” Disjuncture is found in not just how the nation was conceived, but how it was to be kept whole through the lens of “American history” as “the history of our forefathers”—forefathers that did not represent the distinct trajectories of the “Polish, German, Irish and Greek” but instead stood in for all “Americans” as one mass, invariant and unified concoction that comprised the ‘nation.’ One exception was made for “black students.” Here the writer acknowledged the subjection of one people to a “terrible history” while somehow

imagining that Blacks as victims would have been “deprived” of transmitting their own “truth for years,” but it is possible he meant solely within the context of the classroom.

In writing “I could not believe my eyes when I read letters protecting the teaching of Latino culture in our public schools. Is this where my taxes are going?” as well as “But to teach Latino history and culture is idiotic,” the writer however repudiated the value of a 400-year-old history and culture associated with the landscape in which he lived. In this regard, his choice to use the term “Latino culture”—which broadly could refer to cultures as widespread as those of Argentina, Mozambique or Florida or Spain—and to avoid naming the specific program targeted for censure, the “Mexican American Studies Department,” further dissociated the course of study from its regionally relevant focus. In referring to “taxes,” he too subscribed to the tenets within a current right-leaning conversation in which the “citizen taxpayer” had come to take precedence over the “individual” (cf. Capetillo-Ponce). Lastly, in omitting the word “history,” his letter served to controvert the Mexican communities’ ties of longevity and historic significance to Southern Arizona. The broadside reference to “history back to the ‘60s” further underscored the degree to which the writer ignored a place-based history very nearly as old as the ‘forefathers’ he referenced; in effect, he compressed centuries of Latino history into one decade represented by the 1960s Chicano protest movements.

Whether reflective of a conscious strategy or not, the writer ultimately foregrounded his own claims to primacy of place, as a fully integrated American whose “great grandparents legally arrived here in Ellis Island” and “insisted their children learn English and the history of this great adapted nation as soon as possible,” at the expense of those with deep historic and cultural roots in the very place he has resided. In elevating his own privilege of belonging—through his narrative of ethnic assimilation—he simultaneously rejected the legitimacy of those whose Mexican and indigenous forebears did not join the United States by choice but were forcibly



coopted into the Union. In this way did an Arizona in-migrant (heralding as the writer most likely did from some other part of the United States)<sup>12</sup> attempt to uproot and discard the culture and history of the Arizonans of Latino descent—a population that combined both recent immigrants from Mexico and Central America with those pioneer families have dated back as far as the 1600s, as well as those able to claim ancient indigenous ancestry.

In conclusion, each of the four letters explored above ultimately served to illustrate the chasm that existed between readers with opposing viewpoints in regard not just to undocumented immigration but more generally a conception of the polity as a ‘just and right’ society—one that revolved around that which individual writers perceived to be either an established set of norms and values or an accepted and shared sense of culture and identity. The expression of strong emotion appeared to have been provoked when disjunctures occurred between those values that a reader held most sacrosanct were contradicted by another’s screed having been published and viewed on the ‘public green’ that has constituted the *Star’s* “Letters to the Editor” section, a space that in Southern Arizona was (and is) apt to draw significant attention—from those known to the writer and not—as well as to provide the writer a ‘voice’ or momentary position of influence within the polity.

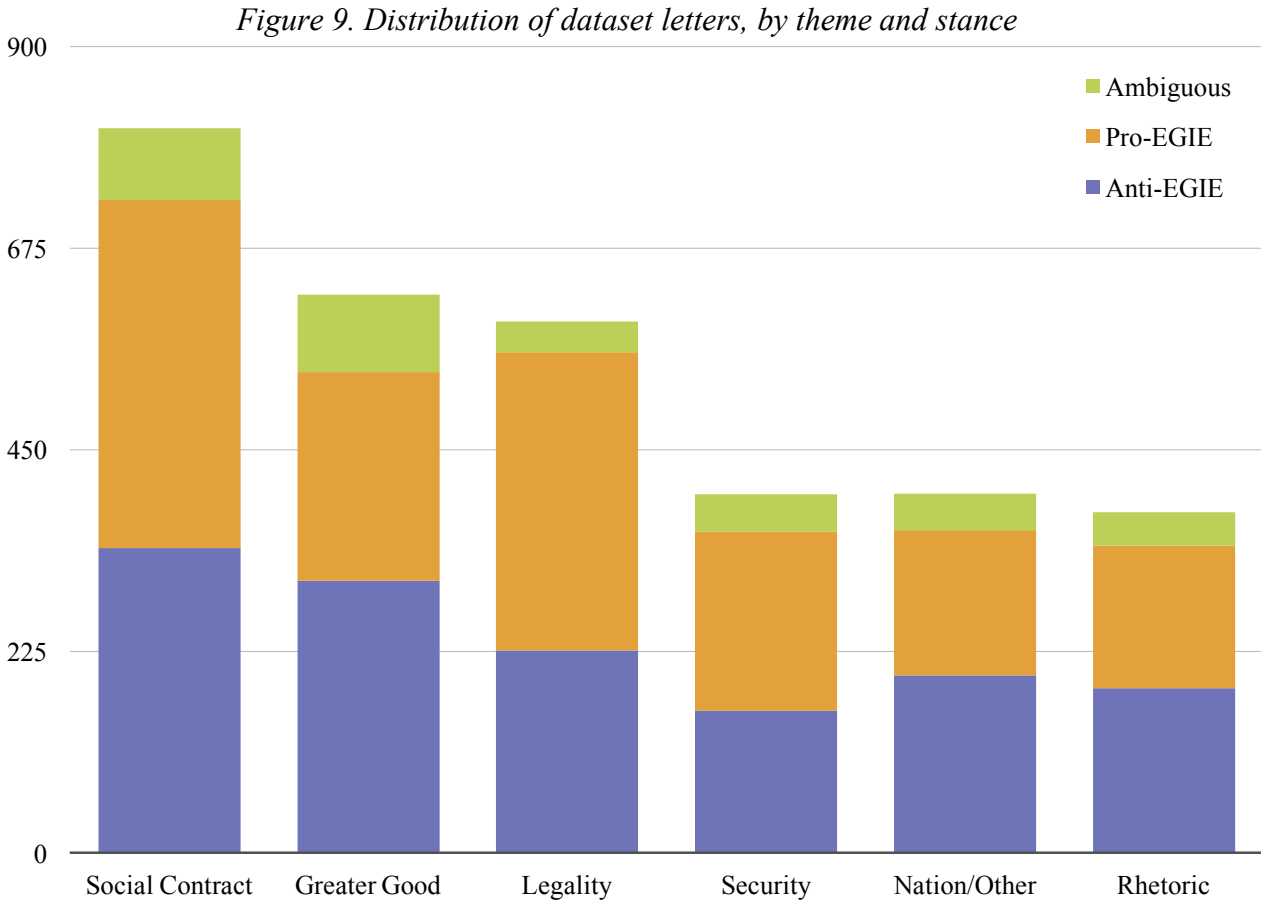
The themes highlighted by the four letters also exposed the primary conceptual rifts to divide the *Arizona Daily Star’s* readership and more broadly the communities large and small that compose Southern Arizona. These have included ideas connected to the perceived supremacy of the nation, as manifested by the inviolability of its legally enshrined, geographically determined boundaries, as well as ideas connected to American ‘exceptionalism’ as manifested by the ‘melting pot’ and a mythico-history surrounding the nation’s first forefathers—in whose East Coast and ‘Anglo’ composition all immigrants have been welcome to participate insofar as they agreed to subsume the particularities of their own ethnic heritage.

In opposition, one finds those stances that averred the moral precept of compassion, which has often been associated either with a ‘higher truth,’ validated by religious belief or enshrined in national and international human rights law, or by heterogeneous, place-based (or locally inscribed) myths of origin and belonging that stand in contrast to the overarching and homogenizing historico-myths of the nation. Beyond the disjunctures that arose between writers’ different conceptions of that which constituted the nation as an expression of a ‘just and right’ society were the fissures that opened up within writers’ arguments. It is within these fissures that further insight has been provided into those sentiments that motivated writers to write. As the examples above show, these were as often as not tethered to the writers’ constructions of their own sense of identity and belonging, and conversely the anti-identities they construed around their prejudices toward or sense of difference with the ‘other’—whether that ‘other’ was another writer; a person of ‘color’ or a different ethnic heritage or generation; or an undocumented immigrant.

#### **D. Principal letter themes**

The previous section introduces a number of motifs and disjunctures—points of schism between letter-writers representing opposing arguments and value sets, but also within individuals’ own ideation—that have been found threaded throughout the dataset, as explored below. The following section then has sought to map out the manifold ‘themes’ or foci of letter-writer interest that was found to have wide resonance. To this end, an effort was made to tag and isolate clusters of letters that shared similar concerns, it being understood that these concerns reflected external perceived realities through which letter-writers interpolated meaning, in their attempts to fasten explanations onto a rapidly unfolding (and thus as yet largely incomprehensible) set of circumstances (see fig. 9). Certain ‘themes’ not only provoked

widespread public commentary but in themselves provided ready-made rhetorical frameworks and vocabularies that interlocutors could strategically re-interpret, invert, and whether by intention or not misconstrue in asserting their stances. Rather than strict categories, the themes—many of which overlap—provided an initial series of prism angles through which to approach letter-writers’ ideation and less formally composed “mood work” associated with their stances.



Individual letters were parsed and tagged with two to seven ‘themes’ related to the writers’ attendant concerns. An initial list of about 25 themes was then condensed into the following set of six, in order of recurrence:<sup>13</sup>

*The social contract* related to individual and societal accountability and mutual obligation, as expressed through social critique and often the assignment of blame for societal ills and expectations in regard to the responsible behavior and actions of community members,

institutions and leadership, as well as the extent of societal obligation toward single or groups of individuals or the nation as a whole.

*Legality, criminality and civil rights* was associated with legislation, legal definitions, adherence to the law, criminalization, presumption of guilt, treatment of the accused, scope of rights, punishment, and so on.

*The greater good* concerned that which was perceived to benefit the social sector, such as economic growth, employment, social assistance, public education, healthcare, environmental protection, population control, poverty reduction, family unity/integrity, child protection, compassion, religion or pursuit of a 'higher' law, etc.

*Security and enforcement* covered national and civil security and safety, including the permissible and justifiable limits of the extension of power and state-mandated violence into civil society, as counter-weighted against perceived risks and threats to the individual, community and national well-being.

*Nation, self and 'other'* related to the legitimating identification of self with nation, including declarations of patriotism; inclusive and exclusive conceptions of membership in the nation; the concept and contested primacy of national sovereignty and cultural preservation; references to culture and history as either canonizing or questioning nationalistic claims; and rejection of the 'other' as manifested through racist, discriminatory and/or xenophobic laws, practices and/or speech-acts. As per many scholars, including Anderson, Giddens, Hobsbawm, Wiebe et al., the identification and rejection of the unwanted 'other' is a concomitant of most nationalist movements, predicated as they are on a binary of inclusion and exclusion.

Lastly, *Rhetoric* dealt with communications, and the role of the media, press and public figures in the transmission of information and speech, and in the framing of public understanding. Also included are references to style and genre, including bias and propaganda (gross exaggeration, falsehood, and logical fallacy), in public media as well as public opinion, as a measure of recursive validation.

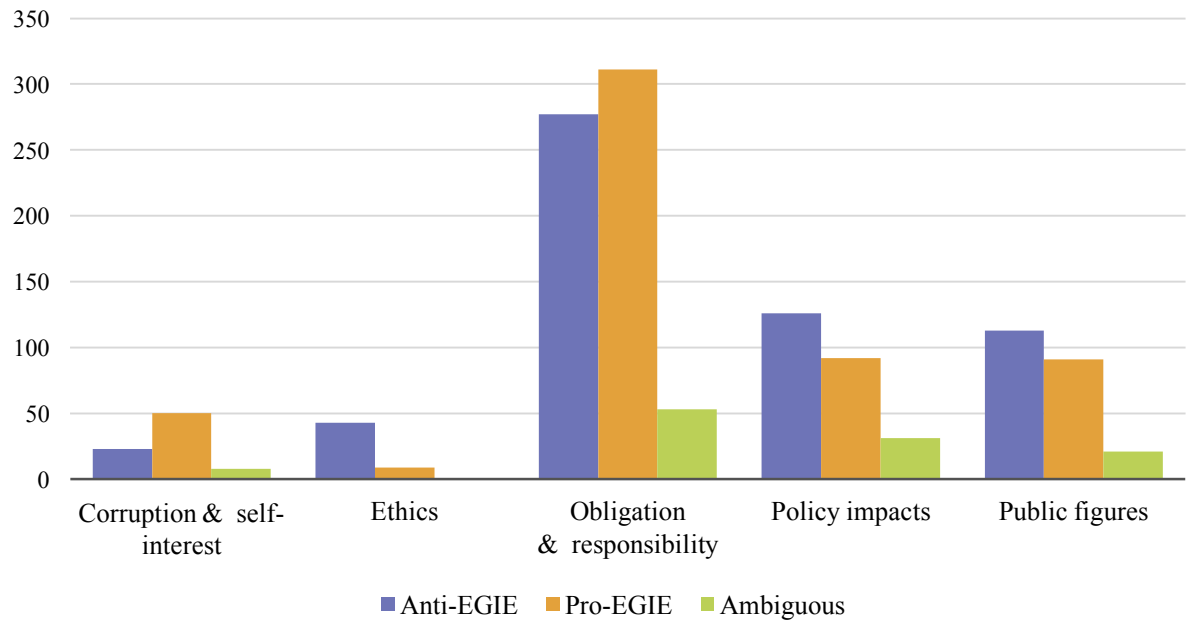
Figure 9 above illustrates the distribution of themes within the dataset, as broken down by percentage of letters as compared to the whole and, within each theme block, the percentage of EGIE stances. What follows is a cursory look at each theme, with letter excerpts serving in illustration that point to aspects if not the sum of a letter-writer's intended meaning. It should be further noted that thematic areas with a broader focus and greater reader engagement are given slightly greater shrift than those more narrowly defined. Many of the motifs explored in the previous analysis of sentiment can be seen to intersect with the themes that follow, illustrating not just a spectrum of letter-writers' concerns but the ways in which different community members have understood and then refracted arguments that reveal a critical dimension of their ideation.

## 1. The social contract

The preponderance of letters forming the dataset (94%) were concerned with some aspect of the 'social contract,' here understood to refer to those understandings of the obligations and responsibilities that were presumed to inhere between the individual and society for their mutual benefit and sustenance.<sup>14</sup> This segment largely encompassed those letters which sought to reinforce some aspect of individual or societal responsibility, as well as to assign blame (and more rarely praise) for the so-called 'border crisis,' as well as to exhort the collective "we" or specific individuals or entities to take responsibility. Overall, letters grouped within this theme

demonstrated strong concern with and division over the *quid pro quo* basis of a just and equitable society.

Figure 10. Stance distribution across Social Contract sub-themes



That most of the readers who were driven to write letters did so in order to address one or more societal issues that they believed warranted attention is somewhat of a given. In this regard, most of the letters (some 94%) embedded ideas of societal obligation and responsibility, whether on the part of the newspaper and its readership, the body politic or individuals and entities (see fig. 10). In so doing writers revealed an expectation that society, its institutions, agents and/or citizens were meant to serve and protect each other’s interests in fair (if not equal) measure. It could thus be said that the very act of writing a letter to the editor revealed the writer’s own perceived participation within not just an ‘imagined community’ but an ‘imagined social contract’, one that might represent for each letter-writer a variable set of *fully unrealizable* expectations and thus again to provoke a form of “cruel optimism” (Berlant 33).

The attribution of fault or praise by writers ranged from individuals within the community (fellow citizens, immigrants or nativist versus humanitarian advocates) or specific actors (whether at the local, national or international level) to larger societal or systemic failings, for example, the United States or Mexican governments, specific agencies or the impact of specific policies. Blame-worthy subjects included “haters,” fellow citizens, undocumented immigrants, humanitarian or militia border volunteers, and liberal and conservatives in general, as well as named public figures. Also castigated were those policies and activities perceived to be especially misguided, such as the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA); increasing border militarization including the building of a border wall and the Border Patrol’s inland I-19 checkpoint; the passage of SB 1070 and the subsequent call for an Arizona boycott; the placement of drinking water in the desert hinterlands; student pro-immigrant protests; racial profiling and the persecution of undocumented immigrants; as well as corruption, self-interest, and the inadequate enforcement of existing national immigration laws.

**Scope of obligation.** One key source of divergence over the social contract concerned the degree to which individuals or societies as a whole should be held accountable for social issues, including the harm suffered by nationals of other nations (such as extreme penury or violence); and whether society had a duty to succor those in need or whether the axiom ‘protect one’s own first’ should prevail, no matter how dire the circumstances borne by outsiders. The following four excerpts provide a capture some of the main variants on the theme of individual versus societal responsibility:

“It is not OK [for an undocumented immigrant] to break the law. Instead of promoting [immigration reform] compromises that will bankrupt our infrastructure, how about demanding personal responsibility?” (Jon Lundberg, Business owner, Oro Valley, ADSLTE, 16 Oct. 2007)

“The fence will not stop people starving to death from finding a way in. We need to take responsibility for what our policies have done to Mexico, to make so many who

would rather stay home risk their lives to come here.” (Susan Jerez, Tucson, ADSLTE, 26 Oct. 2007)

“Judging by some of the letters to the editor I have seen, many Tucsonans seem to be letting compassion for poor immigrants muddy their thinking. / Many seem to feel that because immigrants are poor, the compassionate thing to do is to let all of them come to America.” (James Boren, Tucson, ADSLTE, 15 May 2006)

“Because of the opportunities afforded by my church, I...am able to help feed the poor, house the homeless, visit the sick and dying, welcome the stranger (immigrant and otherwise), and comfort the lonely and afraid.” (Bobby Whipple, Title officer, Tucson, ADSLTE, 3 Jan. 2009)

In the first example, the writer directed opprobrium at individual border crossers needing to take “personal responsibility,” while eschewing expensive bipartisan macro-scale solutions as represented in this instance by the McCain-Kennedy proposal. Like an optometrist changing magnification from far-sighted to near, faulting the individual offered a means to avoid granting the immigration issue broader consideration: one could simply hold each undocumented entrant accountable for her/his own circumstances and the attendant societal issues s/he ostensibly produced, but not those policies and actors that produced the undocumented immigrant.

In the second excerpt, the same lens has been inverted to hold the inclusive “we” collectively to task for injurious foreign policy-making, which was blamed for creating the crisis that would prompt others to “risk their lives.” Here the individual was understood as a product of structural conditions. In the third letter, the writer asserted that the nation-state’s sole responsibility was toward its own citizenry; the pale of obligation ended firmly at the border. In contrast, the last writer suggested that acts of generosity aimed at embracing all those in need, including “the stranger,” were gifts to the giver that served both society and a higher justice.

In stressing the individual accountability of undocumented immigrants—as part and parcel of their physical and legal ostracism—justification was furthered by accusations of a range of perceived moral and other deficits, from demonstrating inadequate “humility” and an unwarranted



sense of entitlement to “rights” to failing to embrace the nation’s “foundational values” or constituent ethos. Countervailing opinions at times attempted to underscore the common values shared by immigrants and citizens alike.

“Maybe Americans feel threatened by millions of Mexicans illegally residing here and telling Americans that they have a right to be here. ... A little humility on the part of those wishing to reside here might cool the flaring tempers...” (Richard A. Stephens, Veteran, Tucson, ADSLTE, 5 May 2006)

“We’ve taught illegal immigrants [in regard to the defeated Sensenbrenner Bill] that it’s unnecessary to respect this country and its legislation since they can circumvent our laws through loud protest. By permitting their complaints to stall legislative measures, we are perpetuating the problem and granting tolerance of criminals while simultaneously ignoring their defamation of our foundational values.” (Christine Pacinda, Power system control intern, Green Valley, ADSLTE, 23 May 2006)

“You like conservative, hard-working, innovative, family-oriented Christian people? Then why treat them as if they were the enemy? Remember how outraged we all were at the Berlin Wall? It’s time to stop rolling over for Bush.” (Susan Jerez, Tucson, ADSLTE, 26 Oct. 2007)

There were rare examples however in which those favoring EGIE also subscribed to lending some form of assistance to non-nationals.

“It seems more logical to train Mexican nationals for these skilled and semi-skilled jobs [required by American and Canadian aerospace industries] in Mexico at good Mexican salaries and benefits, rather than try to give U.S. citizenship to unskilled aliens. / The employees working in Mexico would live with their extended families and feel comfortable in their own culture. We can still offer a legal program with work visas to those who want to work at agriculture and construction jobs here. / The many groups that want to help illegal workers might want to help improve the conditions in Mexico and elsewhere.” (Marvin Clark, Tucson, ADSLTE, 24 June 2007)

“The only right an illegal has in this country is the right to humane treatment and safety.” (Mary Lou Chapman, Medical transcriptionist, Tucson, ADSLTE, 12 Nov. 2007)

The first writer would encourage industries and charities to create more economic opportunities inside of Mexico, in order to lessen the immigration flow north of “unskilled aliens” and (as possibly hinted) to maintain a certain cultural distinctiveness. The second writer also addresses

the extension of assistance in acknowledging that undocumented immigrants were due a certain basic level of compassionate treatment, while insisting that they be denied any and all other “rights.”

**The nation’s obligation.** As the letter samples above might indicate, within the dataset, government was generally understood to represent the collective will in securing the greater good. Keen differences however were revealed between letter-writers’ conceptions of the paramount role of government in addressing society’s ills. For those opposing EGIE, the role of government often included provisioning or caring for those in need, in line with the idea that ‘America as a land of opportunity’ should confer mutual advantage on newcomers, citizens and nation alike. For those writing in favor of immigration enforcement, the lead role of government was to protect the nation from external threat and to ensure its borders’ inviolability, as well as to visit punishment on individual wrongdoers.

“The America that the tea partiers want is not one I want—where individualism is so pervasive that it does not recognize even circumstances of birth as a reason to ‘even things out’ through social programs. / And yes, one person’s ‘justice’ may impinge upon another’s ‘freedom.’ But freedom at the expense of justice is politically unsustainable and morally indefensible.” (Beth Haas, Chief financial officer, Tucson, ADSLTE, 30 Apr. 2010)

“Secure borders and autonomy of this country are the primary functions of our government, both state and federal.” (Dan Hynes, Retired, Tucson, ADSLTE, 5 May 2010)

While several pro-EGIE writers asserted that the protection of “national sovereignty” and the inviolability of national borders justified extraordinary if even extra-legal action, the same consideration regarding self-protection was not extended to the undocumented individual (cf. the theme of ‘Security’ below). That is to say that the degree the national government and its citizenry were not held accountable en masse for the production of circumstances near or far impacting immigration mirrored the extent to which the individual immigrant was held fully accountable for

these same circumstances. This proportional inversion—matching increased responsibility to debased power—connected to another central issue to emerge from the dataset, namely, the degree to which mitigating circumstances should be considered in judging a person’s actions. Among a majority in the pro-EGIE camp, virtually no circumstance could have been said to justify the act of “illegals sneaking into this country” (Ann Woods, Tucson, ADSLTE, 29 Jan. 2006) and thus “disrespecting our country and its laws,” (Robert Cocke, Retired, Oracle, ADSLTE, 4 Nov. 2008). In just one case, for example, did a pro-EGIE writer suggest that the heroism of an undocumented immigrant who risked arrest in order to save the life of a child be rewarded, by “[inviting] him into our national home” (Richard Salem, Retired, Green Valley, 11 Dec. 2007). In contrast, among anti-EGIE writers the disproportional suffering imposed by society on immigrants—whether as a result of impoverishment, the perilous desert-crossing journey, the rending of families or inhumane carceral treatment—weighed heavily in favor of mitigating individual guilt:

“Perhaps it isn’t right for people to be sneaking into this country, but for a lot of them it’s the only way to keep food in their child’s belly.” (Serena Rios, 17, City High School, ADSLTE, 14 Apr. 2006)

“The world is an unfair place, where much is determined by accidents of birth. We should try not to forget this and not to let fear and prejudice trump our powers of empathy.” (Alan Frolich, Physician, Tucson, ADSLTE, 24 Apr. 2010)

**Moral proximity.** In advancing the argument that “we have Americans who are needy” (Laura Leighton, ADSLTE, 21 Mar. 2006) and that “we should take care of our own first,” (Sherri Schamel, ADSLTE, 15 May 2007), numerous letter-writers subscribed to a moral code of obligation based not on geographic or consanguineous but national proximity, one that variously demanded fealty first and foremost to the nation and its members while legitimating the exceptional exploitation, dehumanization and expunging of ‘outsider’ populations. To put this another way, nationalism expels the ‘other’ from the moral pale of obligation along with

delegitimizing the ‘other’s’ claim to primacy of place, even if nation and ‘other’ in fact share the same physical space.

Making the argument of national moral proximity was not coincidentally a key GOP marketing rationale for both appropriating and countering the argument of compassion in order to greater numbers of voters to embrace anti-immigrant legislation (Luntz, Maslansky p. 1). In line with this thinking, letter-writers used the argument of national moral proximity to imply that the nation should and would do more for its own if not thwarted by its already onerous obligations to ‘others.’

“California and Arizona are in a financial crisis. The schools and hospitals are burdened with providing services to non-citizens—illegal residents who are draining the coffers. / I am sympathetic for those who come here wanting to provide a better life for their families. / As a country, we cannot be the savior of all.” (William Dowdall, Retired, Tucson, ADSLTE, 1 May 2010)

The conditionality established—of predicating greater public relief on diminishing numbers of immigrants—was not equated however with increasing social assistance to needy citizens. In line with the conservative value of self-sufficiency (i.e. ‘helping oneself’ is preferable to ‘taking hand outs’),<sup>15</sup> pro-EGIE writers promoted job availability over other forms of social relief. In so doing individual undocumented immigrants could be held directly accountable for illegally taking jobs and wages away from “poor Americans.” Whether undertaken knowingly or not, this line of thinking accorded with both nativist-nationalist thinking and neoliberal strategies to “adopt an entrepreneurial disposition toward life” (Inda and Dowling 4)—or to route responsibilities for societal risk and well-being onto the individual and away from the public sector.

Obviated too in the duality established between deserving ‘Americans’ and undeserving ‘others’ among pro-EGIE authors was any sense of national moral culpability for the suffering visited on the people of other nations:

“Maybe it’s time for the Star to feel some compassion for state’s taxpayers who are required to spend billions to pay for the education, health care, housing and other social costs these illegals require. / As for solving Mexico’s social problems, haven’t we learned anything from our current adventure in Iraq?” (Richard D. Scheuermann, Green Valley, ADSLTE, 13 Apr. 2006)

One hears similar refrains in a Lou Dobbs segment, aired six months later and indicating the degree to which the idea that Americans were being unfairly burdened by illegal immigration was in wide circulation:

“The country has a long and honorable tradition of welcoming legal immigrants to this nation, but in recent years there’s been a huge influx of illegal aliens. By some estimates as many as 20 million live in the United States right now. Those illegal aliens are, among other things, depressing wages for U.S. citizens and draining local and state and federal budgets of much-needed funds for the education and the healthcare and social services of and for Americans.” (Dobbs, “Broken Borders”)

In contrast, numerous anti-EGIE writers blamed the passage of NAFTA and the United States’ role in structuring the poverty and violence that would in turn produce the escalation in undocumented immigration. Yet other writers spoke to the historic advantage conferred on those of ‘white’ ancestry at the expense of all others.

“Let us not forget that immigrants are desperately poor people who are bargaining their lives to support their families. And let us not forget that it is our own NAFTA policies that have forced so many to trek across our southern doorstep in an effort to survive. ...” (Linda Victoria, Office manager, Tucson, ADSLTE, 18 May 2006)

“What many people don’t acknowledge is the United States has offered 300 years of affirmative action that has benefited white people. ... If you are white, your ancestors likely benefited from these policies and passed these assets on to you. To believe that individuals should simply ‘pull themselves up by their bootstraps’ ignores U.S. history and a system of racial advantages that white people have received.” (Cathy Busha, Social worker, ADSLTE, 6 Nov. 2007)

In the face of such arguments, certain pro-EGIE writers resorted to advocating for national isolation, as well as to focusing blame on corrupt foreign nations and their lax citizenry. Where many pro-EGIE writers promoted isolationism, their counterparts argued in turn for a global level of responsibility, in particular toward those nations in which the U.S. historically intervened in service to its own self-interest; anti-EGIE writers too at times championed a transnational perspective, highlighting the comity and mutual interests among peoples sharing a larger geographic realm.

“Where is the outcry and the anger over the most guilty of all perpetrators in the illegal alien issue: Mexico! It seems Mexico’s biggest export is its citizens. ... How about holding Mexico’s feet to the fire? How about demanding that Mexico improve its economy so that Mexicans can get jobs and support their families? How about demanding that Mexico clean out the drug lords rather than blaming America’s appetite for drugs. / How about blaming Mexico and not Arizona?” (Judy Schwartz, Oro Valley, ADSLTE, 9 May 2010)

“Let’s make this very clear. Mexico’s people are not our responsibility, they are Mexico’s responsibility. This is not being mean or uncompassionate. Americans are our responsibility. / We have Americans who are needy. We have Americans without jobs, partly due to illegal aliens getting them at much lower wages and Americans losing jobs. ... Americans had and wanted their jobs.” (Laura Leighton, Tucson, ADSLTE, 21 Mar. 2006)

“For too long, U.S. policies toward Latin American countries have served to undermine relationships, increase poverty, split families, enhance fear and establish barriers (and fences) between people of the Americas. ... We can only hope that the next secretary of state [to follow Bush appointee Condoleezza Rice] has the compassion and wisdom to embrace fully our neighbors to the South.” (David Sampson, Arizona State University student, Tucson, ADSLTE, 20 Apr. 2008)

Restricting the cone of obligation implies separating out and conferring socio-legal protections on one group, while legally and spatially marginalizing the ‘other.’ Looking within the nation, historic corollaries beyond the citizen-immigrant binary to include the idea that democracy was meant to privilege property holders over the landless, “freeman” over “slave,” “the civilized white man” over the “primitive Native”—or those whom expedience demanded be placed beyond

the perimeters of the social contract. At times, these historic oppositions have mirrored other exclusionary narratives that, in attempting to isolate the nation's 'core values,' validated a glorious past over a degraded present. As one example, in the 1980s/90s, fables of societal degeneration juxtaposed the mythic self-reliant hero-frontiersman of yore with the equally mythic 'welfare cheat' and 'gang banger' of that day. In the early 2000s, this fable was repurposed so that the legitimate elect were those "immigrants that built this country, *obeyed the law*, filed the papers, learned the language and became citizens" (Robert E. Smith, Retired pharmacist, Green Valley, ADSLTE, 2 May 2006; my italics) or those who would claim "I am proud to be a citizen of the United States, knowing that my family immigrated here legally like the majority of people living in the United States" (Kara Subach, Student, University of Arizona, Tucson, ADSLTE, 22 Apr. 2006) Pitted against them were those who "become felons as soon as they sneak into the country" (Kate Endersbe, Tubac, ADSLTE, 25 Dec. 2007).

The common (if inexact) truism that the United States has been charitable in all of its foreign involvements to the point that its own people have been left penurious coincided with a second key Luntz, Maslansky talking point, namely that compassion should be re-focused on "everyone here legally pursuing the American Dream" (1). The mythic dichotomy established between legally deserving 'haves' and illegitimate 'have nots' paralleled the idea that the hard-working and productive United States had become economically impoverished and democratically weakened due to its largesse toward others—rather than in the idea that U.S. working and middle classes have experienced declining prosperity due to globalization's capital transfers and increasing structural disparity.

**A space of death.** If the mounting mortality rate of border crossers could be attributed to intentional changes in U.S. policy (as Rubio-Goldsmith et al. have demonstrated ("A Humanitarian Crisis," "The 'Funnel' Effect")), a portion of letters revealed ways in which those

structured deaths were perceived and explained by those living near the border. The manner in which Southern Arizonans explained and variously blamed or justified the inordinate number of ‘border deaths’—a misnomer insofar the deaths occurred well inside Arizona territory—too revealed a widening chasm between residents’ perceptions of their own and others’ obligations. In all, nearly 20% of the letters contained references to words associated with death, dying and dead in the dataset. Of these, twice as many letters took anti-EGIE stances as pro-EGIE stances.

In the first letter below the author blamed the U.S. government for pursuing military solutions rather than immigration reform. The second letter by comparison faulted the border crossers themselves (described not as “desperate” but “foolhardy”), along with criminal elements and the border humanitarians working to prevent loss of life. The decision to pursue enhanced border militarization was exempted however from criticism, again underscoring the degree to which the nation-state was absolved of responsibility for provoking the ‘crisis.’

“The 252 deaths along the Arizona-Mexico border over the past year is more than a record. It is an indictment of U.S. immigration policy. Or the lack thereof. / Militarization has never been a viable, let alone ethical, substitute for diplomacy. / We have mortgaged our civility in the names of security and free trade.” (John Heid, General laborer, Tucson, ADSLTE, 12 Oct. 2010)

“The increase in deaths in the desert cited can be attributed to the following individuals and groups: those adults who attempt such a foolhardy journey, the drug cartels who now control illegal immigration ... and finally the open borders advocates such as the Samaritans who supply food and water to the illegals crossing the border without turning them over to the Border Patrol. By so doing they encourage border crossing, aid the drug cartels to make money and threaten the lives of those who live in the border area.” (Sherman Frey, Professor Emeritus, Northern Illinois University, Green Valley, ADSLTE, 10 Oct. 2010)

As people in Southern Arizona became aware of and grappled to explain the yearly explosion in border deaths, they began to fit their understandings and explanations within rubrics that largely either validated or invalidated the lives lost and in correspondence increased or diminished the amount of obligation owed to those lives. For humanitarian activists (as



exemplified below), invoking religious ideology was meant to remind other believers of the strictures of their faith and that compassionate thoughts and actions contributed to world betterment. The inclusive “we” in this instance however was also likely meant to target those who could be heard to proclaim (under the Bush and Obama years especially), “We are a Christian nation.” The second excerpt by comparison highlighted the degree to which the burden represented by not just the person but the very body of the “illegal immigrant”—even in death—had become so diminished as to represent an unwanted waste (Bauman; Green, “The Nobodies”). The argument of cost efficiency here served to neutralize the myth of opportunity as a validator of the immigrants’ contribution to society (Capetillo-Ponce).

“We hold in our thoughts the person we found, their family and friends and all those who have lost their lives in the desert. / No one would knowingly risk his or her life in this crossing were it not for the economic crisis our government’s trade policies have created in Mexico and Central America, and we see with renewed understanding that there is a humanitarian crisis on our border.” (Molly Little, Annie Swanson, Kevin Riley, No More Deaths, Tucson, ADSLTE, 21 Feb. 2010)

“We’ve heard much about the costs of providing services to illegals. Add to that the cost of autopsies to identify them when they’re found dead in the desert. / I was a small-county coroner in Ohio. My budget would allow a dozen autopsies per year at \$800 apiece. I had to be very careful whom I chose to test. / The Pima County Medical Examiner’s office handled 194 such autopsies last year at a cost of \$388,000. ... The border needs to be secured, so those funds may be put to better use. We don’t have unlimited money.” (Dr. Jim Preston, Urgent-care physician, Oro Valley, ADSLTE, 3 Sept. 2010)

For those opposing EGIE, the desert space was made terrifying by the loss of human life; for their counter-parts it was made terrifying by the presence of that same undesirable human life. As will be re-explored under the themes of the ‘greater good’ and ‘legality,’ in pro-EGIE arguments the most disempowered and vulnerable figures were held to blame (along with their supporters) for the fates that befell them, whereas the nation was held sacrosanct, along with the privileged individuals enclosed within its fortified walls. This aspect of enclosure was reinforced in the use of the metaphor of the house, which appeared in a number of letters:

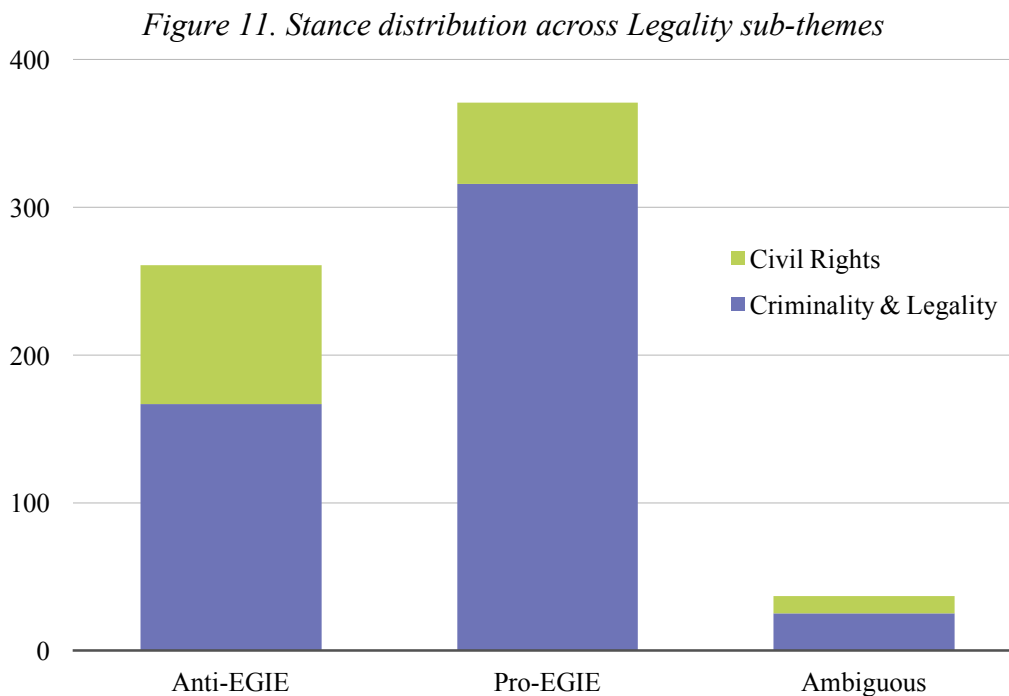
“I have good neighbors. We get along well and help each other, but I don't walk into their house unless I am invited. Even though I live right next door and really like their house, I know I can never move into it. / It is their house, and I am their neighbor.”  
(Shirley Wallien, Tucson, ADSLTE, 3 Apr. 2006)

**Summary.** The key conceptual difference between those letters that supported and opposed EGIE under the ‘social contract’ was that, in the latter case, the gaze enfolded both the spaces within and without, both individual, nation and beyond, as domains worthy of interest, engagement and self-reflection—in the sense of seeing oneself reflected back in the mirror of the other. Most of those favoring EGIE by comparison erected a fortress wall to delineate those to whom obligation was owed from those to whom it was not, by any measure or for any reason. Within the fortress, added dimensions of differentiation however obtained, in a process of regressive exclusion that Wiebe would liken to peeling back an onion (4-10). One might argue that if nationalism represents a people tied by a sense of connectedness with that which is familiar or even in an imaginary sense familial, along with a rootedness to place, this last model has had little truck with, obligation to or exchange with its neighbors. It is in that sense a model of indifference and ultimately enmity.

## 2. Legality, criminality and civil rights

Given the extensive media focus on and marketing of the “illegality” of undocumented immigrants (as covered in prior sections), it is unsurprising that 70% of letter-writers were engaged with the theme of legality (see fig. 11). That over half backed EGIE points to a degree of success of the Luntz, Maslansky campaign in gauging public sentiment and modifying media-borne rhetoric by transforming the undocumented immigrant from an irregular and informal member of the labor force into a “criminal” in flagrant breach of the law. While causality cannot be demonstrated with certainty, in a 2007 study Media Matters ascertained that Prime Time news shows hosted respectively by Lou Dobbs, Sean Hannity and Glenn Beck constantly focused on

asserting the criminality of undocumented immigrants: “On any given weeknight, there is a better-than-even chance that on one of these three programs, someone is discussing illegal immigration and crime” (Media Matters Action Network; cf. Haynes).



The connection in the letters between the themes of ‘immigration’ and ‘legality’ may on its face appear to have been obvious: after all immigration laws has served to render the immigrant a special legal person, subject to any number of requirements and restrictions not fastened upon the citizen; moreover, the laws (supported by the border construct) have further fixed the immigrant subject provisorily within United States territory, as (in the words of Ngai) “a social reality and a legal impossibility” (*Impossible Subjects* 4). The historic connections between immigrant and legal code were traditionally nonetheless more tenuous in border states such as Arizona: not only was Southern Arizona once a part of Spain and then Mexico, following the Gadsden Purchase it remained a convenience to industry, labor and trade to keep the border porous, especially as the border line itself bisected families and communities both.

In spite of this trenchant local historical context, the rhetorical success of tying the immigrant to a state of being ‘illegal’ was corroborated by the finding that nearly three-quarters of the writers concerned with the theme of ‘legality’ favored EGIE. This fact spoke as well to the level at which pro-EGIE writers wrote in a fairly unified voice on the issue: in looking at a raw count of the 100 most common word-tokens in the dataset, the words “immigration,” “illegal” and “border” numbered among the five most common.<sup>16</sup> In this regard, the word “illegal” appeared 536 times in pro-EGIE letters, while appearing 225 times in anti-EGIE letters and 47 times in ambiguous letters. What is suggested then is that the repetitiveness and apposition of these three terms served rhetorically to diminish or displace other contextually embedded meanings related to the history and culture of place.

The constant apposition of the adjective “illegal” in conjunction with “immigrant” or “alien” in the media (ch. IV) in many ways set the parameters for local public debate—even among those writers who did not favor existing or greater immigration enforcement. That this was recognized by EGIE opponents in the greater public sphere was in part demonstrated by left-wing pushback against the use of the word “illegal” in reference to immigrants (cf. “Why Drop the I-word”). It was further revealed in the umbrage taken by those who possibly saw themselves impugned at the local level:

“Recently, as I witnessed mass demonstrations by Hispanics, I pondered the following names: Acevedo, Acosta, Alarcon, Alvarez, Amaya, Andrade, Arellano, Arredondo, Baez, Barrera, Camacho, Castro, Escobar, Esparza, Fernandez, Garcia, Gonzales, Herrera, Irizarry, Jimenez, Lopez, Reyes, Lucero, Marin, Martinez, Mata, Mendoza, Navarro, Nieves, Oliveira, Ortega, Padilla, Perez, Ramirez, Serrano, Sanchez, Tapia, Torres, Urbina, Valdez, Vargas, Ybarra, Zamora, Zapata. / All surnames of illegal aliens? What about the surname Gutierrez? A person named Jose Gutierrez was originally an illegal entrant into the United States from Guatemala. He was wearing a U.S. Marine Corps uniform when he was one of the first American soldiers to die in Iraq. / The rest of the names above? They are all surnames of U.S. service members who gave their lives for the United States. Surnames of illegal aliens? Probably. I choose to call the ones listed above American heroes.” (Jorge C. Valenzuela, U.S. Air Force disabled veteran, Naco, ADSLTE, 5 Apr. 2006)

**Illegal is illegal.** In regard to issues of legality surrounding immigration, deep rifts occurred along three major seams: 1) the degree of criminal severity assigned to the act of entering and/or residing in the United States without formal authorization; 2) whether and to what extent basic civil rights humane treatment (including provision of emergency social services) should be extended to undocumented immigrants; and 3) whether or not children should suffer the consequences of their undocumented parents' actions. Among pro-EGIE letter-writers, "illegal" served as the most common trope, reinforcing as it did the presumed criminal status of undocumented immigrants. EGIE opponents in turn sought to diminish this claim by introducing moral and mitigating considerations. Underlying differences between the stances taken in the following two letters concerned whether the act of unauthorized residency constituted a minor infraction justified by urgency or whether any crime—no matter its degree of intensity or scope of impact—should be understood as conferring serious harm.

"...Illegal is illegal. Breaking the law is breaking the law. Does no one in America believe in this rule?" (Faye Hunter, Retired, Hereford, ADSLTE, 6 Nov. 2007)

"Immigrants from around the world come to this country risking death and permanent separation from loved ones. This does not make them criminals." (Linda Victoria, Office manager, Tucson, ADSLTE, 18 May 2006)

For numerous pro-EGIE writers, the argument of 'criminal equivalency' served to buttress assertions that illegal entry and/or residency constituted remarkable and injurious acts in consideration of which proportionality was not a factor. The equation of undocumented immigrants with those who commit violent crimes then supported their reduction in writers' eyes to a state of essential non-humanity as an "illegal," one to whom no legal protections were owed.

"This is not a racial issue, as I see it. It is a need to secure the borders from any incursions, be they terrorists or peaceful people, all of whom are criminals, under international law." (Gordon Gailey, Design engineer, Tucson, ADSLTE, 14 Apr. 2006)

“We cannot have an open border where illegals can enter anytime and have rights.”  
(Tony Iavagnilio, Tucson, ADSLTE, 5 Apr. 2006)

It bears mentioning that as a first-time offence illegal entry has been considered not a major but a misdemeanor crime; moreover, in spite of constitutional provision, detained immigrants have for some time now been denied “equal treatment before the law” (Green, “A wink and a nod” 165-66; Ngai, *Impossible Subjects* 2), as was reflected in the following letter excerpt:

“Many of us have seen poor immigrants in chains shuffled into our courtrooms, charged with misdemeanors for entering our country simply to improve the lot of their families. Will their rights for legal representation be upheld, or are they ‘throw-away’ human beings with no rights at all?” (Connie Bell, Retired, Green Valley, 3 Feb. 2009)

The actual laws surrounding individual rights and the “crime” of illegal entry however were not considered in a majority of dataset letters that honed in on the issue of legality. What for over half a century had been considered a minor transgression fostered by government and industry alike was instead transformed into a major crime, placed on a par with the worst felonious acts. This equation then buttressed arguments against ‘amnesty’ for undocumented immigrants who had long resided in the country, as an ill-gotten gain that rewarded “lawbreakers”—a message that had been greatly magnified in this period by right-wing radio (Schrag 73, 77):

“When illegal behavior becomes legal and the good fortune of illegal behavior becomes amnesty, does it really matter to the rest of us whether people with such behaviors are granted temporary residence, green cards, pay fines or back taxes and learn English? You bet it matters. Wrong and illegal does not translate into right and legal in any language. Rewarding illegal behavior today will produce more illegal behavior tomorrow.” (Wanda F. Peters, Financial consultant, Tucson, ADSLTE, 24 May 2006)

If pro-EGIE writers stressed the criminality of undocumented immigrants and anti-EGIE writers argued for mitigation, there were those on both sides who maintained that law breaking was at times a virtuous act. As in the first of the following examples, those who called for strict adherence to the ‘rule of law’ in regard to immigration might then proclaim support for law-breaking in matters of perceived national self-defense (cf. Oliviero 681-683). The second letter

provides a contrasting example in which the writer argued that ‘higher’ (or universal) laws superseded the laws of states and humankind.

“There are those who will decide to take up the fight themselves, believing they are doing what the government has not been able to do: protect America from what they consider foreign invaders.” (Thomas Fletcher, Retired, Tucson, ADSLTE, 30 July 2010)

“As Thomas Jefferson, Martin Luther King Jr. and many other famous lawbreakers through history knew, there are laws of men and laws of God. The purpose of man-made laws should be to uphold natural, holy laws. / And I ask our senators, in a question often, ironically, used by the religious right: What would Jesus do?” (Daniel Viehland, Student, Santa Catalina High School, ADSLTE, 22 June 2006)

Both examples intimated that breaking the law was not just morally justifiable but heroic in those instances in which the social contract had itself been compromised. It is noteworthy that the first writer would assert the exceptional right of the nation to self-protection beyond that offered by the elected government; as in previous samples, he did not again however accord this same right of self-protection to the undocumented immigrant escaping poverty and/or violence. In the second example the writer placed the right of the individual—presumably to be sheltered in times of need, protected in times of peril or to “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness”—above and beyond what he perceived to be the invalid laws of the nation-state. In the mind of the first writer, it was the nation that was sacrosanct; in the mind of the second, it was in accordance with his faith each individual life.

There were those letter-writers who insisted as well that the laws of the nation-state remained paramount, apparently without exception. In the following three letters, writers argued that those living under severe oppression or the threat of death were obliged nonetheless to pursue immigration solely through legal channels.

“During the 1970s, I adopted three orphans. I did not smuggle my children into the United States in the dark of night. The legal procedures started with paperwork and ended with paperwork. / The process was agonizingly long and mentally painful. The

children were very ill and needed desperately to get out, but the legal process had to be adhered to. It took more than a year for this process for each of the children. I met the last child in Vietnam at the end of the war. She was war wounded and in great jeopardy of not surviving. I could not take her home to the United States with me. Why? It would not have been legal. I had to return to the United States and start the paperwork. / My point is that I worked through legal channels. What part of illegal do illegals not understand?" (Mary Jordan-Pugliese, Vail, ADSLTE, 22 Apr. 2006)

"My mother was in a Kazakhstan labor camp courtesy of the then-Soviet Union. / Yet when she came to this country in 1950, she received no 'head of the line' privileges when it came to the naturalization process. / She played by the rules. I remember the day she and my father became U.S. citizens. / So all you protesters, convince me that those sneaking into this land are somehow more deserving than my mom." (Mark Moral, Retired, Tucson, ADSLTE, 5 May 2010)

"Re: the April 27 letter to the editor 'Let's all wear yellow stars' [Charles Fleming, Legal immigrant, Tucson, ADSLTE, Apr. 27, 2010]. The letter writer seriously minimizes the Holocaust and exaggerates the potential problems caused by the new anti-immigration law....The writer signed his letter as a 'legal immigrant.' My parents were legal immigrants also. They would never have considered entering this country illegally, even though they were persecuted and had family members murdered in Russia because they were Jews." (Sidney Wolitzky, Lawyer, Tucson, ADSLTE, 7 May 2010)

The first two of the three letters offered above drew on the personal examples of two mothers situated within two separate moments of historic upheaval, raising immediate questions as to whether either individual had in fact sufficient agency to have chosen another 'non-legal' course of escape. The second example too failed to mention that during the Cold War the United States provided extraordinary "head of the line" channels to encourage Soviet refugee expatriation.<sup>17</sup>

In the last example, the writer responded to another letter which compared the isolation and criminalization of undocumented immigrants to the branding and vilification of Jews under the Nazis. Here again the writer prioritized adherence to the law over the right to life, even in the case of his own relatives and forebears. Again, this writer reflected neither on the racism that underlay the 1924 Immigration Act's quotas limiting Southern and Eastern European immigration (Ngai); nor the precedent established under Nuremberg to hold accountable those who committed



crimes as directed by the laws of their nation; nor the right of refugees to “illegal” entry established after World War II (U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees).

These letters also touched on the ways in which history has been often refashioned in order not simply to buttress individual stances but to fit into and accord with current dominant rhetorical paradigms. Suddenly suffering the repercussions of unjust policies or onerous bureaucratic processes would become a valorizing patriotic duty, rather than a sign of a regime’s gross inhumanity and unlawfulness—to the point that two writers might whitewash their own families’ escape from persecution and another might suggest that risking her adopted daughter’s life would be preferable to law breaking. Had the outcomes differed, one cannot but wonder whether these writers would have been enjoined to take a different stance. However, their own family’s good fortune served in this time to fortify their own place as law-abiding citizens, while negating the importance of other people’s comparable suffering. While inserting a measure of agency into their own tragic family narratives, these writers’ arguments also sought to validate those narratives by framing them within the contemporary legitimating context of the ‘legal immigrant.’ At the same time, as narratives they broke with common norms governing the primary obligations to family and children in particular. While similar viewpoints fell at the far edge of the dataset in the period under consideration, less than a decade later they would come to occupy the center, most tellingly with the incarceration of children after their forcible separation from parents under the Trump policy of “Zero Tolerance,” which has been pursued not for reasons of national security but of deterring future immigration (Bump).

**Civil rights.** The related subset of letters concerning ‘civil rights’ predictably garnered more interest among those championing immigrant rights (58%) than those crusading for greater immigration enforcement (34%), with another 9% taking a neutral or ambiguous stance. Within the group of EGIE opponents, writers expressed concern over the withholding of basic civil rights

from immigrants in particular and local ethnic-minority populations more generally; the increasing criminalization of immigrants via unjust laws; the growing intrusion of enforcement into communities and people's lives; the inhumane treatment to which detainees were subjected; increasing racism; and the illegitimacy of immigration enforcement laws, policies and practices.

“Many are very upset because immigrants are breaking the law. Well, it's time to do the humane thing and change the law. / We are talking about families here, not common criminals. Change the law to protect the basic human rights of the immigrants among us. That is the solution, not the hateful punitive tactics being used presently.” (Steve Arechiga, Educator, Tucson, ADSLTE, 10 Jan. 2008)

Further to the issue of the devaluation of life (discussed as well under ‘The social contract’), questions of legality and the presumed right to life surfaced in connection with the state's arrest and prosecution of humanitarian border volunteers. As described by one letter-writer,

“When Walt Staton was recently convicted of providing humanitarian aid to desert crossers by leaving jugs of water in the crossing areas, it was under the guise of anti-littering laws. These laws were never intended to be used for this purpose. Human remains, of course, are biodegradable and plastic jugs are not.” (Tom Jones, Retired federal administrative law judge, Oro Valley, 16 July 2009)

A specific pattern of refraction can be discerned in tracing associations made between “nonbiodegradable trash” left in the desert and undocumented border crossers. Following a series of local photojournalist exposés, the image of desert waste was picked up as a meme and amplified by Minutemen co-founder Jim Gilchrist via Fox News, the *Georgetown University Journal of Law*<sup>18</sup> and the right-wing blogosphere. The cojoining of “trash” and border crossers in the public cultural imaginary would then intersect with the state's prosecution and conviction of Staton for “littering”—not trash but water jugs meant to sustain lives in peril. All in all, one sees the way in which vivid associations drawn from the media were then were transfigured and refracted back into the public domain (including the courts); as the above letter-writer

underscored, the “nonbiodegradable” trash had become the equivalent—or what Katie Oliviero would refer to as the “effigy” or “placeholder” (685)—for the human “biodegradable” lives at stake.

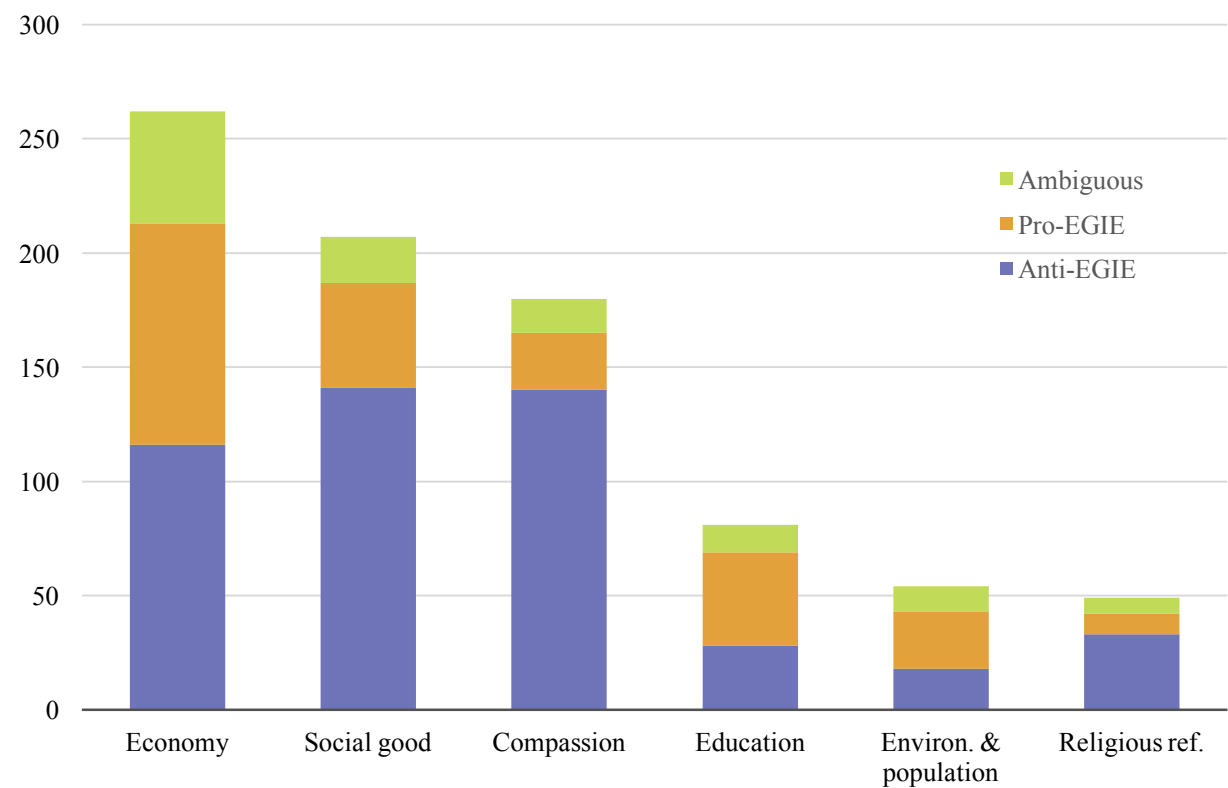
**Summary.** That the intertwining of undocumented immigration and legality became a dominant public concern by the mid-2000s reinforces the idea that Arizona’s socio-political and economic landscape had undergone rapid and extensive change in a period of a decade—not just in terms of population growth and economy but of culture (ch. III; ch. VI, sect. B). In part, this change in the way local individuals perceived undocumented immigrants as criminals reflected a surfeit of national and regional rhetoric devoted to the subject. However, the ways in which the border also came to serve as an aberrant theatre of violence—one structured by the government to sustain significant human casualties as well as projected through an increasingly bombastic, reductive and repetitive rhetoric—was best encapsulated by the tirelessly repeated phrase, “illegal is illegal.” In this sense, the undocumented immigrant as the stranger approaching from the lawless space of the border had become a placeholder for—and the tangible and vulnerable embodiment of—globalization’s depredations, as sensed most keenly through a collapsing desert economy and reports of explosive cartel violence in the land next store.

### 3. The greater good

The theme of ‘the greater good’ encompassed a broad range of topics that were largely concerned with the civic life of communities: these included issues related to family integrity and child education; economic opportunity and disparity; environmental protection, population reduction, and future sustainability; and compassion as a core religious tenet or universal principle (see fig. 12). While the theme of ‘legality’ as a whole commanded greater interest among those in favor of greater/existing immigration enforcement, the inverse proved true of the greater good: of

the 555 letters flagged under this theme, over half consisted of letters written by those opposing EGIE while just one third were written by EGIE supporters. This theme should also, to some extent, be understood both as motivation and as a reflexive rhetorical strategy; writers may have been impelled to write because of a desire to assert their own definition of the ‘greater good’ at the same time that stipulating so overtly might be understood as strengthening their argument’s appeal and the author’s credibility.

Figure 12. Stance distribution across Greater Good sub-themes



**Compassion.** Standing on its own, the issue of compassion (or social empathy) was represented in one fifth of the dataset, out of which 78% opposed EGIE, 14% favored EGIE, and 8% took neutral or ambiguous stances. Among those supporting undocumented immigrants, compassion represented an innate good. Many pro-EGIE writers (again in line with Luntz, Maslansky recommendations) sought to critique compassion by using arguments of national

moral proximity (as discussed above) or by insisting that compassion in excess could in fact hurt the greater good.

“Empathy is a very human emotion. Were I in the ‘illegal’ immigrant’s shoes, perhaps I could better understand the incentive that comes with wanting a better life for myself, my children and my family. / Were I compelled to risk my life in order to have some sense of achievement, perhaps I need to ask myself who are these ‘illegal’ immigrants. Motivated? Hardworking? Willing to do whatever It takes to make a living and a better life? / As a culture we praise these behaviors. Perhaps the option of integration is a more empathetic one.” (Laura Kemper, Tucson, ADSLTE, 24 May 2010)

“Our issue is the illegal entrants into this country and the insane thinking that we should just open the borders. Sometimes compassion is misdirected into idiocy. This is a prime example.” (Linda Collins Lazzeroni, Tucson, ADSLTE, 2 May 2006)

**Tests of faith.** The welcoming and humane treatment of the stranger, a tenet of all major faiths,<sup>19</sup> has been reinforced (if not entirely matched) in the United Nations 1951 Refugee Convention (1967). The fact that many pro-immigrant activists in Southern Arizona were affiliated at the time with religious organizations is in line with findings by Carrie Lee Skojberg Eastman in her research on the relationship of media to border activism (2012). It is thus not surprising that, within the tiny subset of letters to allude to religious teachings (6%), two thirds opposed EGIE, as the first letter below illustrates. Where religious references did appear in pro-EGIE texts, one often found inversions of common interpretations. Thus, in the second letter the writer ignored that it was the state of Arizona—and not ‘God’—that visited punishment on the child, an act proscribed in both Old and New Testaments (e.g. Deuteronomy 24:16; Ezekiel 18:19-20; Exodus 34:7; Numbers 14:18).

“Apparently, during the debate on immigration ‘amnesty’ became a bad word on the lips of those who claim to be Christian. It’s odd. I thought that was the whole concept of Christianity itself.” (Cindy M. Winston, Teacher, Tucson, ADSLTE, 7 Apr. 2007)

“Yes, it is unfortunate that this young lady [an undocumented student whose university scholarship was retracted] can’t do what she wants, but then all of us pay for the sins of our fathers (or mothers, in this case).” (Leslie Daniels, Retired, Tucson, ADSLTE, 2 June 2006)

Given that pro-EGIE writers as a group represented a more conservative population as a whole, there would have been strong reason to expect (as per a Gallup poll (Newport)) that they would demonstrate a greater level of church attendance than EGIE opponents. What one might presume then is that in taking stances letter-writers were confronted with contradictory and at times inimical sets of values—or “disciplines and practices” as per Foucault (“Docile Bodies”). However, a question remains as to whether writers in fact exercised “agency,” as John Ransom would assert in his analysis of Foucault (Ransom); or whether in electing to subscribe to one paramount “discipline” at odds with other held belief systems did they instead enter a collective and dissociative state of *ekstasis*, resembling the kind of irrational and at times violent charismatic moment identified by Emile Durkheim in regard to society as embodied by the “nation.” In this regard, one must consider the role of contradiction, paradox and enchantment in regard to nationalism, which as Durkheim would have it transforms the nation-state (and in the first example below, its commander-in-chief) into a godhead (168-170).

“To the casual observer of the American scene, the nation is proceeding rapidly down the tubes. ... The advocates of anarchy and open borders are in the streets, flying the flag of a foreign nation and worshipping images of the late terrorist Che Guevara. ... Luckily, we’ll still survive, in no small part due to the dependable courage of our indefatigable president. God bless him.” (Glenn Perry, Retired Col., U.S. Air Force, Tucson, ADSLTE, 9 May 2007)

“I say control [Mexican undocumented immigrants] by military force. Our elected officials sure are not protecting Americans. They are worried about votes from an illegal (group). We need to take this country back. It is ours. God bless America against all foreign invaders.” (Edward Gallart, Tucson, ADSLTE, 25 Apr. 2006)

**The economy.** If the “nation” at times evoked powerful and irrational expression, the economy served as yet another, more ostensibly pragmatic basis of argument connected to the greater good. The theme of undocumented immigrants’ economic impact arose in 30% of the dataset letters (or 262 letters) and engaged the most writers among the ‘greater good’ sub-themes. Within this group, one encountered multiple references to the trope that immigrants take jobs

away from Americans and/or drive wages down, as well as overburden taxpayers through their use of social services—an issue that had been broadcast repeatedly over the airwaves. In opposition, one found arguments in favor of immigrants’ contribution to the tax base and to the region’s economic vitality, as well as invocations of the trope that undocumented workers ‘fill the jobs that Americans don’t want’—a strategy that can be understood as diminishing the value of undocumented labor so as to remove the threat of competition in a limited job market.

“We have Americans who are needy. We have Americans without jobs, partly due to illegal aliens getting them at much lower wages and Americans losing jobs. Illegal Aliens lower the wages so much that Americans can’t even get these jobs back because they can no longer support their family on the wage. Americans had and wanted their jobs.” (Laura Leighton, Tucson, ADSLTE, 21 Mar. 2006)

“Work ethic is one of the most highly exalted of human values. Immigrants to this country, by and large, show the purest form of the work ethic: a willingness to do any job for almost any wage. Many such jobs are shunned by the American populace. Yet the work ethic of migrants is ignored and supplanted by the word ‘illegal,’ which is often associated with illegal drugs.” (Richard C. Johnson, Tucson, ADSLTE, 27 June 2007)

It is a widely held axiom that nativism becomes inflamed during times of economic turbulence. The fact that nativist expression, as expressed in the *Star’s* letters to the editor, was no more pronounced during the period of collapse and recession than it had been in the period of excessive expansion does not refute this axiom but rather points to a public sense of growing insecurity, as well as simultaneous inclination to attribute blame to tangible representations of abstract global-economic forces (Turner, comment on Stolcke 17), especially at the crest of a global market bubble. At the same time the letters (except in one instance) avoided mentioning the vicissitudes of the global economy in relation to border immigration. Many voices among those favoring EGIE instead expressed concerns about the spreading thin of too scant resources and in particular the misspending and erosion of those tax allocations meant to serve the common good. In this way, undocumented immigrants were to blame for increasing economic uncertainty.

On the other side were those who tried to convince fellow readers of the economic benefits provided by undocumented workers in shoring up the local or national economy.

“If you think allowing people, illegal aliens and employers, to ignore our laws is a good thing, then you should support amnesty for all these lawbreakers. You should also support the higher taxes that will go along with this employer/employee subsidy. After all, schools and hospitals need money, too.” (Mike Farkas, Tucson, ADSLTE, 3 Apr. 2006)

“Let’s quit the hypocrisy: our way of life and economy are inextricably linked to the undocumented workers who risk all they have to work here. Let’s get to the work at hand and develop compassionate legislation that meets the needs of both sides.” (Dan Chavez, Federal manager, Tucson, ADSLTE, 26 June 2006)

The deeper implications of the stance that immigrants have placed an undue weight on taxpayers and public services was thrown into high relief in a further example, in which the author suggested the life of a “sickly infant” (a U.S. citizen born to undocumented parents and deported to Mexico at the instigation Tucson’s largest and only teaching hospital) was secondary to the undocumented parents’ obligation to pay the exorbitant hospital costs.

“Re: the Nov. 9 article ‘Hospitals deporting legal immigrants.’ / In the article there was a case cited concerning a ‘sickly infant’ who was about to be deported to Mexico. The mother was concerned about her rights. The article also stated that neither parent had made any arrangements to pay the \$28,000 hospital bill. / I think the parents of this child should have been more concerned with their responsibility to pay this bill rather than their rights.” (Howard Brownstein, Retired, Tucson, ADSLTE, 13 Nov. 2008; for article referenced, see Sontag)

In parallel with other letters referenced under ‘the social contract’ and ‘legality,’ the writer in this instance asserted the primacy of cost benefit and individual accountability as untempered by unforeseen or uncontrollable circumstance over any other social or ethical value. In so doing he forefronted the doctrine of cost efficiency as the highest good. In this instance, neither familial, spatial nor (in this case) national moral proximity validated the child’s right to life as weighed against financial accountability and taxpayer benefit. The unavoidable question then is would any qualities or affinities have validated the life of the child in the writer’s eyes, beyond the parents’



financial capacities? What was nevertheless implied was that the pale of inclusion in his and a minority of other writers' conceptions was far narrower than mere citizenship, even given that the life of a child was potentially at stake.<sup>20</sup>

It is notable that, while numerous anti-EGIE letters advocated providing life-saving care to border crossers, only one published letter (by a state representative) responded to the incident of the deported infant. Of the few anti-EGIE letters to address the broader issue of medical care for undocumented immigrants, the following excerpt expresses the author's incredulity that fellow readers would have sought to deny the same:

“It was reported that in answer to the question, ‘Do you believe hospitals should provide emergency care for illegal-immigrant patients?’ 42 percent said yes and 58 percent said no. / I don’t believe that Tucsonans are that uncaring. A person in need of emergency treatment should not be denied care because of his or her citizenship status. / This may be the thinking of a small group of people who took the time to answer the question and not that of many residents living in this area.” (Ralph Perillo, Retired, Tucson, ADSLTE, 16 Nov. 2008)

As the above writer suggested, the silence among the anti-EGIE contingent may have resulted from similar reactions of disbelief or likewise their confidence in a hospital system purported to have served all comers. It may also have reflected, as per Cintron, a response to hyperbolic rhetoric that—in exceeding all reason or in transgressing base moral values—effectively robbed other interlocutors of their voice (Cintron 149). At the same time, the widespread reporting by local media of emergency-care costs borne by hospitals in treating undocumented immigrants too may have dissuaded readers from addressing an issue perceived as ‘toxic.’ Much as the pro-EGIE writers avoided religious references, anti-EGIE writers—working within narrative frameworks dictated by outside media and political forces—may have attempted to pinpoint arguments gauged to be more effective while avoiding subject matter that might have undermined their stances. One can see in writers' reflectivity both the ways in which their arguments were constrained by the

rhetoric surrounding immigration, as well as the agency exercised in crafting stances that would respond to and variously support or subvert dominant ways of thinking.

**Environmental pressures.** The issue of environmental protection served as yet another lens through which opposed sides on the issue of immigration enforcement presented arguments in regard to the ‘greater good.’ In this regard, pro-EGIE supporters tended to stress economic or environmental pressures as reasons to lessen the immigrant population. In this regard, they mirrored positions taken by CIS, FAIR and Numbers USA (Schrag 178-179), as well as congressional arguments from the 1990s (Schneider 87-88) and historic strains of conservationist nativism reaching back to the early 1900s (Schrag 73-74). For those advocating on behalf of immigrants, the issue of environmental protection presented either an argument against border fortification or a metaphor for the plight of border crossers. The first of the following examples casts a macroscopic vision of a nation with diminishing natural resources; the second zooms in on the emblematic figure of the United States’ only known jaguar (which was accidentally killed by Arizona Fish and Game members); and the third concentrates on the singular biohabitat that has united both sides of the border.

“Today, we are a nation of nearly 300 million people. Our growing population is doing serious harm to our rivers, deserts, forests and wetlands. We should be striving to curb our growth, both by restricting immigration and by urging Americans to produce fewer children.” (William C. Flack, Tucson, ADSLTE, 21 May 2006)

“The recent tragic death in Southern Arizona of a Mexican jaguar broke my heart but did not surprise me. After all, the magnificent animal encountered the same fate as do human beings from Mexico and Latin America when they cross a politically-drawn line into a hostile and alien land in search of survival.” (Peggy Hendrickson, Grant-writer and consultant, Green Valley, ADSLTE, 9 Apr. 2009)

“...the federal government [should be pressured] to allow movement of jaguars and other wildlife across the US-Mexico border. There are ways to control illegal human entry to Arizona other than a huge fence that blocks wildlife.” (Tony Povilitis, Wildlife biologist, Willcox, ADSLTE, 9 Apr. 2009)

In addition to being valued as a natural habitat worthy of preservation, the desert space gave rise to anxiety as a corridor of mass undocumented entry. The physical impact of people's passage on the environment in particular—depicted in images of arroyo beds full of detritus—was to provoke very disparate responses. Some saw the belongings abandoned by border crossers as evidence of large-scale human hardship and desperation. For others, harm to the environment was further evidence of the border crossers' lack of consideration and willingness to misuse the nation that they were unlawfully entering.

“I see our beautiful, unique desert becoming a huge garbage dump. Even in the remotest areas, trash is everywhere: plastic, tin cans, clothing, underwear, shoes and human waste in such despicable quantities it would take an army to clean it up. ”  
(Lorraine P. Halvorsen, Retired gift shop and gallery owner, Amado, ADSLTE, 16 Aug. 2007)

“Let's shift migrant traffic away from the remote locations to save lives and stop the environmental destruction. / Let's provide considerate treatment to strangers thereby reducing our own fear and increase peace in our nation and world.” (Scott Morris, Computer LAN support specialist, Tucson, ADSLTE, 7 Jan. 2008)

**Children as the nation's future.** The protection, rearing and education of young people has long been understood to contribute to the greater good and the regeneration of the nation, as is reflected in the Constitution's 10th Amendment and the National Child Protection Act of 1993. Children in the United States have also been (if at times nominally) accorded exceptional legal consideration in light of their lack of agency. Nevertheless, children in the context of immigration became the subject of intense scrutiny (and often vituperation) among letter-writers. The focus on young people was borne out by the fact that derivatives of the words “student,” “school,” and “children” appeared within the dataset's 100 most commonly used tokens.

Within the dataset three related subject areas were to arise: the first concerned whether undocumented children should be granted access to social benefits such as healthcare and education; the second consisted of reactions to three youth-led pro-immigrant protests; and the

third related to the devaluation of the undocumented child's life, already touched on under the sub-section on the economy.

*Child protection.* Within this subset of letters, one found a small group of pro-EGIE writers calling for the arrest of undocumented children in schools and other so-called neutral public spaces; the denial of a K-12 education or college funding (including in-state tuition) to anyone lacking valid residency or citizenship; the withholding of medical care including that which is critical; and/or the rollback of the 14th Amendment's provision guaranteeing citizenship to any child born on U.S. soil. Among this faction, undocumented students might be referred to as "children" in one breath and "illegal immigrants" unworthy of legal rights or social protections in the next, as if their undocumented status had in effect erased the value associated with their child state of being. Among counter-arguments were countless voices that insisted that current constitutional protections regarding children remain in force, as well as that exceptional compassion be extended to children in need irrespective of status, as doing so contributed to the greater good.

"...Arizona taxpayers should not be required to support education subsidies for illegal immigrants in our schools. The U.S. Supreme Court made a bad decision in 1982 and its decision has cost taxpayers billions of dollars to educate children who have no legal right to be in the United States." (Steven Makowski, Sahuarita, ADSLTE, 1 May 2009)

"I will never understand the logic of those who would kick children out of school because of their immigration status. Education of the young, whether they are citizens or undocumented, only benefits society in the long run." (Keith Schaeffer, Technical writer, Tucson, ADSLTE, 6 May 2009)

*The voice of youth.* Three pro-immigrant demonstrations in which large numbers of youth participated were to excite considerable (and largely negative) reaction among the *Star's* readers. The first mass protest took place in 2006 in response to the Sensenbrenner proposal (which sought to expand the felonization of undocumented immigrants and their supporters); the second smaller

event took place in 2007 in response to the arrest on school grounds and subsequent deportation of an undocumented high-school student; and the third—in which there were large-scale school walk-outs—took place in the spring of 2010 in response to SB 1070. While certain writers celebrated the students’ civic and political engagement, others disparaged their motives and thinking. Additional complaints arose from those who felt their taxpayer dollars were being poorly used and disrespected by students.

“I am so proud of the students of Tucson. Even if many of them did not know the entire story of immigration reform before they marched, they all know the story now. This is how change happens, and these young people are participating in this change.” (Kristen Felan, Tucson, ADSLTE, 5 Apr. 2006)

“The kids should stay in school. I doubt they are protesting for illegal-alien rights. Rather, I see them as taking the chance to ditch school. / If they were sincere, the kids would be protesting on Saturdays. Kids interviewed on TV stated they were protesting for the freedom of illegal aliens. They have no clue what they are doing.” (Robert J. Nicolaus, Rio Rico, ADSLTE, 5 Apr. 2006)

“Taxpayers are paying for all of this. / If adults took off work to do such a thing, we wouldn’t have a job to go back to. These teenagers better find out how life works—all of us have to earn everything we get in life.” (Judy Bratton, Tucson, ADSLTE, 6 Apr. 2006)

For numerous writers, the student protests provoked expressions of outrage and fear. For some the threat to ‘peace and order’ was at issue, as in the first example below, which addresses the protests against the arrest at school of an undocumented student (mentioned above). Others felt that the protests signified that the nation had come under siege not by students engaging in free speech and the right of assembly but by “illegals” demanding unearned “rights.”

“...The rule of law has taken a terrible beating in Tucson. We and our children have learned that the Tucson Police Department can be intimidated by a mob, and that schools and churches can be sanctuaries from local and federal law enforcement. / The precipitating event was tragic and avoidable. But no one, no matter how emotionally self-righteous, can be above the law. / We are on the slippery slope to chaos.” (Donald Cain, Financial analyst, Tucson, ADSLTE, 15 Nov. 2007; my italics)

“I just don’t get it. / I see thousands of students protesting nationwide with a Mexican flag draped around them. Did illegal aliens die for the rights to assemble and protest? I must have missed this in school.” (Ibid. Wayno Guerrini, Tucson, ADSLTE, 6 Apr. 2006)

In the first example, making allowances for small infractions (in this case a student’s misdemeanor crime) threatened to precipitate society’s descent into “chaos” and “anarchy,” a line of reasoning that finds a logical correlate in theories that link small events to grand in a chain of unswervable causality. In the second example, the writer equated the protesters with whom he disagreed with the state of being “illegal,” in spite of any evidence that a majority of the protesters were in fact undocumented. The irony of his question, “Did illegal aliens die for the rights to assemble and protest?” was that masses of “illegals” had in fact perished while attempting to reach a land in which “rights” were meant to be constitutionally guaranteed to all “individuals”—but these lives remained invalidated by their presumed “illegality.”

*The mother-child binary.* The intolerance expressed toward undocumented children emphasized the degree to which the far right using the tool of rhetoric sought to transform the image of vulnerable mother and child—both universal and at the same time a central fixture of Christian iconography—into despised social parasites. Much as in the previous example in which cost efficiency served to negate the value of a child’s life (see above), there were a small set of writers who pronounced that—again in dire situations—a child’s life was secondary to the necessity of obeying national immigration laws. The letter excerpt below references an editorial (“Desperation in desert tells tale of reform needs”) concerning a pregnant border crosser who lost her unborn child while attempting cross the desert:

“Why is the Star trying to play on people’s sympathy by running an editorial like this? These criminals should not have been sneaking into this country illegally. / So whatever happened to them is their own fault. That’s what happens when people perform a criminal act — there are consequences. / I do not feel sorry the woman lost her kid. That’s one less anchor baby. / We need to seal the borders so tight that nothing can get in. It’s not the responsibility of the U.S. (meaning the taxpayers) to help

everyone in the world. / Mexico needs to help its own people.” (Ann Williams, Tucson, ADSLTE, 3 May 2008)

In asserting that the pregnant immigrant met with a deserved fate, the writer’s mindset reflects an enchanted worldview, one that mirrors a certain grim genre of child fairytale in which minor misdeeds merit outsized punishment. In the writer’s prescription, the miscarried infant became implicated in crime as an “anchor baby” and thus could be dismissed as one unworthy of life. In this regard, the undocumented mother and child served as negative foils to the image of mother/Madonna and child, the fecundity of the mother now not as something to be celebrated but despised.

In this same period, U.S. Senators Lindsey Graham (R-South Carolina) and Tom Tancredo (R-Colorado), and Arizona state Rep. Russell Pearce had become powerful voices for demonizing the so-called “birth tourism” industry in “anchor babies” (Khimmm), a stance that in turn reverberated among a number of letter-writers. At the time, these positions were viewed by many as aberrant—so much so that voters would recall Rep. Pearce from office, following his attempt to rescind 14th Amendment protections for the newborns of immigrant parents. In cheering the death of an unborn infant, the letter’s author however far exceeded the edge of what might have been permissibly expressed in the public realm. The transgressiveness of the letter must be understood in this regard as a rhetorical ploy—one that in pushing against the boundaries of the exceptional participated in a process by which (again in the words of Cintron) “what might once have been considered unseemly is now released...What was peripheral (unseemly) now moves to the center” (140).

In the one published response to the letter quoted above, the writer castigated not just the author for her inhumanity but the *Star* as well for having broadcast the author’s message. The writer’s remonstrations suggest that she viewed the publication of such a letter as contributing to its normalization—or “a validation for her bigoted views”—in a broad public eye. The letter

shines a light on a community member reflecting on the power of hyperbolic rhetoric to effect not just discord but the normalization of that which was—at this point in time—still commonly abhorrent.

“What kind of person can rejoice in the loss of a child? And what’s wrong with the Star editors that they printed it? / The comment is extremely racist. Similar things were said in Hitler’s Germany in reference to Jewish babies, by the KKK in the Southern United States in reference to black children, and when I was growing up in Arizona in reference to Native American Indian children. / By printing that letter, the Star gave her a tacit approval, a validation for her bigoted views.” (Barbara Young, Book dealer, Green Valley, ADSLTE, 9 June 2007)

As the target of nativist-nationalist rhetoric, the child nemesis was, if not personally known to writers, at the least visible and fully imaginable in the space of their lives—for example every time a motorist might have passed a schoolyard or visited a shopping mall. If moral proximity suggests we are more beholden to those who are close by and tangible, the inverse proved true of the nationalist constructs surrounding immigration: in the matter of proximity the hated ‘others’ were not abstractions isolated in urban ghettos, on remote reservations or in distant foreign lands, but were recognizable as children within the fabric of quotidian society. Of further importance is the degree to which a small selection of letter-writers’ favoring EGIE utilized transgressive ideation in identifying the proportionally least empowered—“illegal” immigrant children and “anchor babies”—as the primary enemies of the nation. In considering the transgressive aspect of extreme nationalism, one may be reminded of Durkheim’s observation—here applied to rhetoric rather than direct action—that, “Under the general exaltation, we see the most mediocre and inoffensive bourgeois become either a hero or a butcher” (173).

**Summary.** In looking at the themes explored up to this point, it is worth noting the degree to which ‘legality’ and ‘social good’ as two of the three most popular issues represented a proportional inversion of each other in reflecting readers’ stances. In this regard, nearly three quarters of writers addressing ‘legality’ favored EGIE, as opposed to nearly the same percentage



of writers addressing the ‘social good’ who opposed EGIE. The apposition of these two categories then lends insight into one of the main fault lines to divide the polity: between those demanding unswerving adherence to the letter of the law in regard to immigrants—no matter the context of that law’s application or the deadly repercussions therefrom—as opposed to those subscribing to belief in a higher inclusive good and to compassion as a core societal value.

In reflecting on the devaluation of undocumented immigrant lives—extending even in certain cases to their children—Fernando Coronil and Julie Skurski have discerned that,

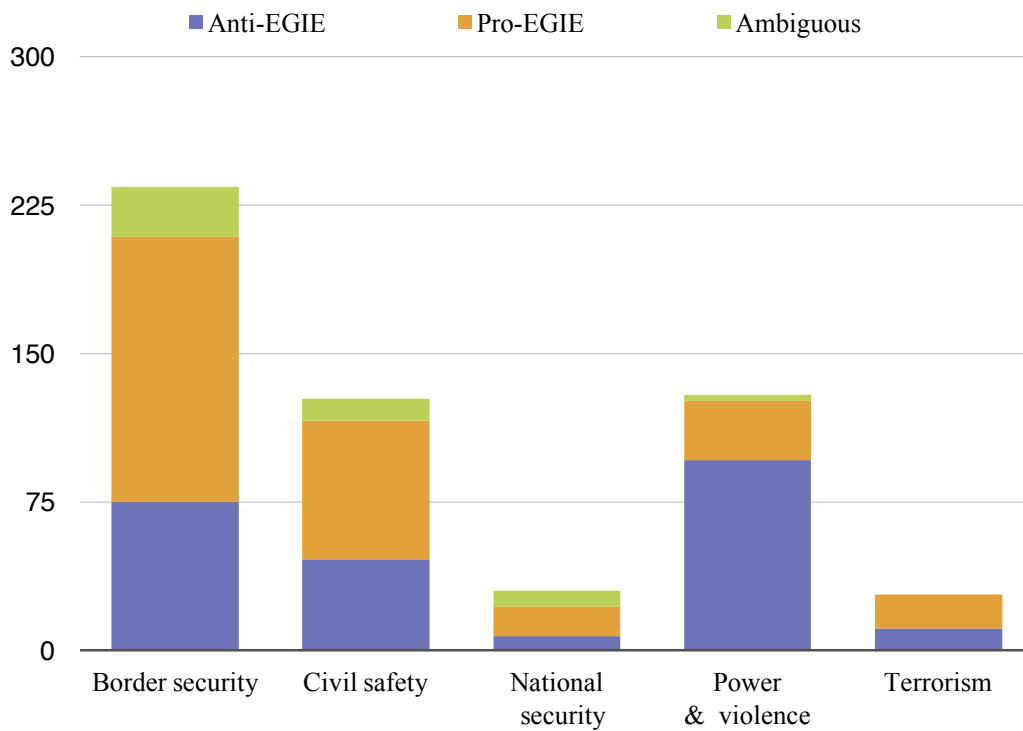
“In the crisis of meaning that violence conceives, the territoriality of nations and the corporeality of people become the privileged mediums for reorganizing the body politic.” (290)

In the context of the Arizona Sonoran Desert, the body of the “illegal alien” became a projection screen on which societal values were re-calibrated on a micro-scale that nevertheless abetted reforms at a macro-scale. In the “crisis of meaning that violence conceiv[ed]” on the Arizona border, not just those directly, physically victimized but too their audience—their family members and a larger community—were impacted and in some way transformed as the moral ground shifted.

#### 4. Security and enforcement

Within the overall theme of ‘security and enforcement,’ 65 percent of writers were concerned with the need to secure the border against intrusion and 50 percent with the need to secure civil society (see fig. 13). Taking their stances into consideration, ‘security and enforcement’ was to garner more attention by those favoring EGIE (51%) than those standing in opposition (41%). The associated issue of ‘power and violence’ however was to occupy 18% of all anti-EGIE letters in the dataset as a whole, as compared to only 8% of pro-EGIE letters. This finding suggests that anti-EGIE letter-writers were far more concerned than EGIE supporters

*Figure 13. Stance distribution across Security & Enforcement sub-themes*



about structural violence, cruel and inhuman treatment, enforcement overreach, and the singling out of a minority population for exceptional ‘discipline.’

**Secure borders & violable sovereignty.** While pundits and scholars have largely attributed a mounting wave of nativist-nationalism to the traumatic aftermath of 9/11, only 11 percent of letters in the dataset voiced fears about future terrorist attacks. This relatively low percentage indicates that, in spite of a surfeit of national and local coverage associating the border with terrorism (ch. V), terrorism rarely served as a vector of anxiety. Instead much of the disquiet associated with security revolved around the perception of the border as a zone of trespass and violent criminality, which was bolstered by any number of media stories on drug cartel activity on or near the border (ch. V), as well as by efforts to associate undocumented immigration with

crime on the national stage. By comparison, anti-EGIE writers for the most part contested the conflation of undocumented immigration with the illicit drug trade and diminished safety.

“There was great urgency to cap the [Gulf of Mexico] oil leak and to attempt to clean up and control the damage resulting from the spill. / Not so with the flood of illegal immigrants, drugs and ensuing violence that flows across the border each day. / Secure our borders!” (Dal Eisenbraun, Tucson, ADSLTE, 2 Aug. 2010)

“...I don’t believe that passing this law [SB 1070] is going to help you or anyone along the border. I’m afraid your house is still unsafe. / This law will only make harassment legal. Yes, we need better security along our borders, but this isn’t it.” (Karen Hayes, Day care provider, Tucson, ADSLTE, 25 May 2010)

For a number of writers, the act of breaching the nation-state’s borders was equated to violating the sovereignty and integrity of the nation-state, and in this sense was held akin to an act of foreign aggression. For this cohort, the historic fact of the U.S. border as a long-tolerated zone of passage, rather than an impenetrable barrier, was neither recognized nor addressed. Instead the nation-state was conceived as a walled edifice whose sovereignty was equated with its impregnability. Oliviero goes one step further in analyzing the militia rhetoric surrounding the border’s “violation” by demonstrating the ways in which it has paralleled the language of rape (691).

“SB 1070 is about protecting our sovereignty. It is not about immigration.” (M.L. Ebert, Tucson, ADSLTE, 16 July 2010)

“This is not an issue of economics it’s one of sovereignty. It’s not an issue of trade, but one of public safety and security of this nation. / Secure borders and autonomy of this country are the primary functions of our government, both state and federal.” (Dan Hynes, Retired, Tucson, ADSLTE, 5 May 2010)

As a point of contrast, references to the word “sovereignty” did not appear once in the anti-EGIE dataset, even if the topic of “border security” was cited in 78 letters. Constructs around the border zone instead varied from a place of transit and an invaluable wildlife corridor to a link between shared cultures and nations. While a few anti-EGIE letters expressed concerns regarding the

border drug trade, several letters stressed the border's positive role—largely to shine light on the ways in which increased border militarization weakened a shared socio-economic fabric or spawned greater violence.

“We have mortgaged our civility in the names of security and free trade. Now our neighbors from the south pay the debt with their lives—252 of them last fiscal year. And counting.” (John Heid, General laborer, Tucson, ADSLTE, 12 Oct. 2010)

“For too long, U.S. policies toward Latin American countries have served to undermine relationships, increase poverty, split families, enhance fear and establish barriers (and fences) between people of the Americas.” (David Sampson, Arizona State University student, Tucson, ADSLTE, 20 Apr. 2008)

**Civil security.** Among writers concerned with national security, a subset deemed that undocumented entrants—subject since 1990 to felony prosecution after repeat “improper” entries (8 U.S. Code 1326)—were by dint of nomenclature violent criminals capable of committing any number of destructive acts.

“Illegal immigrants are comparable to ghosts in the legal system. They can commit crimes without repercussions because we have no way of identifying or tracking them—drug runners being my biggest concern.” (Mason Sharp, Pima College student, Tucson, ADSLTE, 21 Nov. 2009)

“An increasing percentage of illegal immigrants commit crimes beyond the one of their illegal entry.” (Helen Moulton, Homemaker, Tucson, ADSLTE, 2 May 2010)

“Here's the main reason we should secure our border: to prevent the gang bangers, rapists, murderers, drug runners and sex slave traders from coming into our state. ... American citizens living near the border are afraid to venture too far alone.” (Susi Learn, Retired, Tucson, ADSLTE, 10 July 2010)

In the above excerpts, one may understand that the writers' own perceived nearness to the border in conjunction with extensive local media coverage may have excited response. At the same time echoes of right-wing national media can be clearly distinguished, such as the view offered by talk-show host Rush Limbaugh during a segment on NBC Nightly News: “Many [“illegal immigrants”] are child molesters or drunk drivers, they're rapists, they're robbers,

they've got a variety of crimes but they commit a felony by being here" (qtd. in "NBC: 'Ugly Emotions' on Illegal Immigration"). While less inflammatory, the following Luntz, Maslansky talking point also illustrates the presumption that illegal entry was being equated with a broader tendency to commit criminal acts:

"Let's talk about the facts behind illegal immigrants. They do commit crimes. They are more likely to drive uninsured. More likely to clog up hospital waiting rooms. More likely to be involved in anti-social behavior because they have learned that breaking the law brings more benefit to them than abiding by it." (16)

The first crime "fact" (driving while uninsured) barely qualifies as such, the second (using hospital services) qualifies not at all. The last sentence is a hypothesis offered as a proof. One cannot in any event separate out the severe implications of felonizing the act of repeat unauthorized entry (i.e. subjecting non-violent offenders to the extreme brutality of the United States' notorious prison system) from the metamorphosis in the public imagination of the informal migrant laborer into a figure of fear. Those upon whom the nation selected to inflict violent and disproportional harm were in turn transformed in a portion of the public mindset into the nation's 'natural' (that is to say subjective and imaginary) enemies.

As regards the security of person and property (or civil protection), one sees this same pattern of inverse blame extended so as to justify increasing the structural injury visited on undocumented residents through the removal of essential civilian safeguards, such as the ability to report violent crime to the police without fear of repercussion. Anti-EGIE arguments then often attempted to explain how the increased persecution of undocumented immigrants would produce in fact greater community crime levels.

"These [undocumented] people should be afraid to call the police. They are coming into our country illegally. They are breaking the law. When a crime is committed against them it should be investigated yes, but these people should also be deported." (Danielle Milstead, Stay-at-home mom, Tucson, ADSLTE, 21 Aug. 2008)

“The majority of the people impacted by this new policy [SB 1070] are not the ones at the crux of these [border crime] issues, but rather the ones seeking the American Dream. / Meanwhile, police departments will no longer be trusted by those they are supposed to ‘serve and protect’ and therefore will be rendered ineffective as keepers of the peace.” (Shandra Keesecker-Rivero, University of Phoenix online faculty, Lukeville, 22 May 2010)

At the same time that certain pro-EGIE writers advocated diminished civil protections for undocumented immigrants (including police protection), a number of others insisted that the right to security of their own person and property—or that of their “legal” neighbors and fellow citizens—trumped everyone else’s constitutional guarantees, with anti-EGIE writers again supporting the universal application of civil rights protections.

“Why does the Star’s editorial staff assume that those of us who are asking to be protected in our homes and communities from people who become felons as soon as they sneak into the country, are immigrant haters and bigots? / I don’t ‘hate’ anyone. I do ask that my country provide access to the same rights and protections afforded to every other legal resident.” (Kate Endersbe, Tubac, ADSLTE, 25 Dec. 2007)

“On top of cuts in parks, schools and cultural activities, Arizona has now declared war on one-third of its residents. / Are not the proponents of the immigration measure also the ones claiming the current federal administration is ‘taking away their Constitution?’ And are they not the ones who hate mandates from the feds that require state and local expenditures? / Now they gleefully savage civil rights and ask every overburdened local law enforcement agency to become an arm of U.S. immigration agencies. / This is such a sad time for (all) the people of Arizona.” (Joy Nelson, Tucson, ADSLTE, 30 Apr. 2010)

In the first example above, the author’s demand that the “rights” of “legal residents” be protected must be understood as a rejoinder to those anti-EGIE calls to protect the civil rights of Latino community members, whether citizens or immigrants. One must further bear in mind that the writer made her statement at a time when the figure of Sheriff Joe Arpaio was in the spotlight for illegally detaining Latinos based on skin color as suspected undocumented immigrants, a crime of which he would be found guilty (U.S. District Court for the District of Arizona; cf. Hagan), as well as remain unapologetic. Reflecting on surrounding circumstances, one can consider in the writer’s letter the dissonance between championing ‘the rule of law’ in matters of

immigration compliance and demanding the restriction of individual rights, whether in regard to immigrant detainees judged guilty of illegal entry before verdict or in regard to ordinary citizens and “neighbors” finding their rights curtailed, in lieu of being “blown to bits” as another writer would put it (Sonia Maxwell, Retired social worker, Nogales, ADSLTE, 25 May 2010). While certain pro-EGIE writers advocated restricting civil liberties in support of greater psycho-physical security, numerous opposing letters expressed worry about the overreach of military and civic enforcement, as evidenced by the line “now they gleefully savage civil rights,” in the second example given above.

If in this period conservatives and Tea Party activists especially were critical of “federal overreach,” in the matter of immigration enforcement their main accusation was one of federal under-reach. In no instances did pro-EGIE writers then cite the importance of maintaining civil liberties and constitutional protections for all—rather than mentioning unspecified “freedoms” that warranted protection from interlopers or the federal government. Instead arguments were used to justify the broad expansion of government enforcement, whether in terms of warrantless surveillance (as suggested in the first letter below) or exercising violent retribution against suspected terrorists (as is suggested in the second).

“These [terrorist] enemies of our way of life and our freedom are few in number but are well organized and brainwashed with the necessity for our destruction. Our well-intentioned citizens are afraid that our secret service has invaded our privacy and wants us to reveal every detail. I cannot think of a better way to ‘open the door to the henhouse so the fox can slip in.’” (Robert R. Reynolds, Geologist/author, Tucson, ADSLTE, 23 May 2006)

“The moral outrage over the CIA’s alleged ‘torture’ of enemy combatants has its origin in the minds of people who have forgotten the sight of towers crumbling and their fellow citizens perishing in the rubble. You should not have had to lose a family member to feel the hurt and anger to remember.” (Don Day, Realtor, Tucson, ADSLTE, 2 May 2009)

In the above letter excerpts, the “enemies of our way of life” validated intrusive federal surveillance and the “sight of towers crumbling” excused the well-documented “alleged ‘torture’ of enemy combatants,” again in spite of Constitutional and international prohibitions. For some the law was the law except when it concerned those whose rights stood to be the most infringed, most notably those suspected as “foreign agents.” In matters of government overreach related to individual protections, anti-EGIE writers by comparison openly vocalized concern about a loss of a variety of rights—from the right of equality to the right to be free from unreasonable search and seizure.

“If the Republicans are the ‘strict constructionists’ and defenders of the Constitution, why would they pass SB 1070 on a party-line vote which is so clearly in violation of the Fourth Amendment?” (Timothy C. Fagan, Physician, Tucson, ADSLTE, 25 Apr. 2010)

“I am hopeful that the passage of this irresponsibly discriminatory bill [SB 1070] will encourage the federal government to step up and address immigration issues while working with the states to assure that laws such as this, which will undoubtedly lead to the racial profiling of Hispanics, are not permitted.” (Paloma Apodaca, Student, Tucson, ADSLTE, 24 May 2010)

The first two examples cited above again forefront the degree to which those justifying EGIE valued their own protection and “rights” as above and against ‘others’ deemed “illegal” or suspicious. The opposite again proved true of those challenging EGIE, whose greater concern was for the protection of individual liberties as above their own and others’ sense of physical security. Among the former, the United States was at times portrayed as if under siege in an actual full-scale war; such hyperbolic excess then served to justify the escalation in the state-enacted control of and violence against the border communities (and in particular those community members of ‘color’), as well as those attempting passage across as the final example provided illustrates.

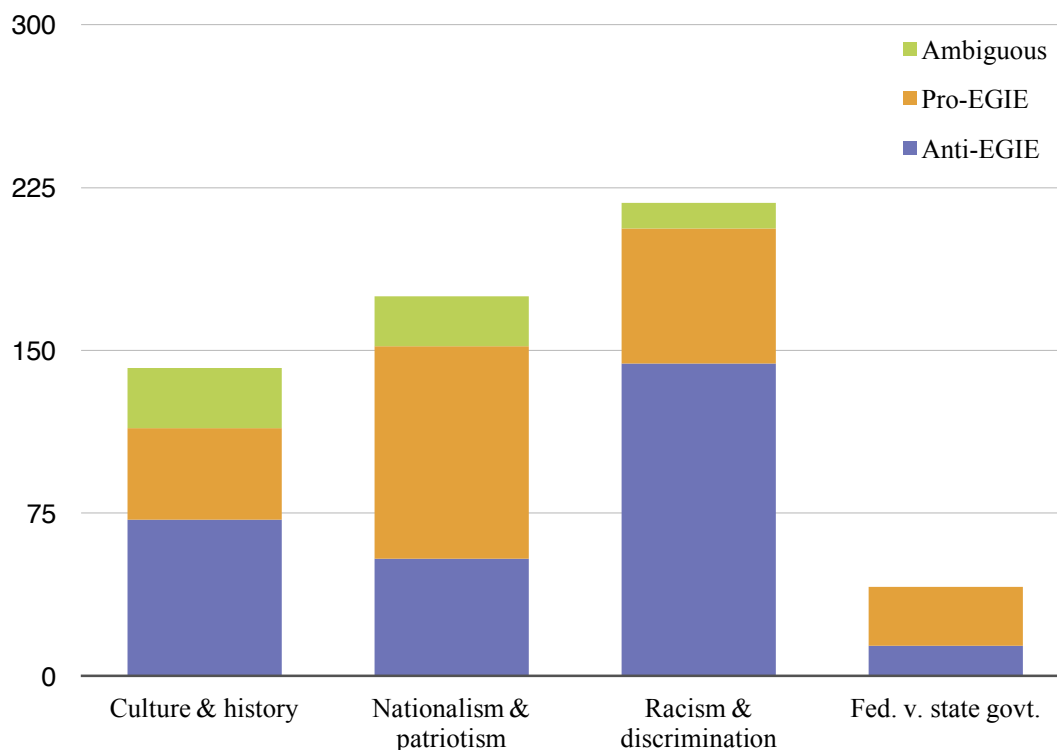
“Our federal legislators now need to take steps toward a new policy on immigration, immediately halt all immigration from our southern neighbor, deploy the National Guard and authorize them to use deadly force as necessary and deport all foreign invaders, no questions asked.” (Brian T. Davis, Tucson, 14 Apr. 2006)



## 5. Nation, self and ‘other’

The theme of ‘nation, self and other’ amalgamated a number of facets of nationalism. These included expressions of chauvinism and patriotic sentiment; references to culture and/or history (whether offered in legitimation of national identity or as anti-nationalist cautionary tale); and mentions or expressions of racism and discrimination, including the vilification of the ‘other’ (see fig. 14). All in all, this theme provided a field on which different concepts of the nation and its core values, legitimating history, and notions of identity and membership were contested. Of the

*Figure 14. Stance distribution across Nation, Self & ‘Other’ sub-themes*



400 writers engaged in this topic, 50% opposed EGIE, 40% favored EGIE and 10% took neutral or ambiguous positions.

**National definitions.** At the crux of nationalism often lies the authority vested in those principles and definitions, symbols, origin myths, heraldic figures, and distinct markers of ethnocultural difference that represent the nation in the cultural imagination. In the case of U.S.

nationalism, common assertions regarding the national composition as a ‘melting pot’ made up of many peoples might commonly be called upon to shore up arguments on both sides of the EGIE equation. That said, of the subset of letters that expressed nationalist/patriotic sentiment or pronounced on related issues, 56% supported EGIE, 31% stood in opposition, and another 13% took neutral or ambiguous stances.

In the first of three examples given below, the author insisted that the precept of ethnocultural submission was essential to creating bonds of national unity. By comparison, in the second and third examples the writers underscored those latent prejudices that have undercut the inclusiveness identified with the nation’s foundational values of equality and freedom of expression.

“Start thinking of what an American is: not an Italian American, African-American, Japanese-American or Mexican-American but just a plain American.” (Richard E. White, Retired, Tucson, ADSLTE, 12 June 2010)

“Creating a pathway to legalization for the 11 million undocumented living in the U.S. is not rewarding them for breaking the law, but acknowledging their contributions as laborers and taxpayers. It is time for all Americans to stand up for our American values—liberty and justice for all.” (Landi A. Smith, Tucson, ADSLTE, 22 Apr. 2006)

“Most of us, save the Native Americans, came from another country. The United States is populated by different nationalities, and the Statue of Liberty welcomes people from other lands. This obviously is a qualified welcome and excludes poor people from south of the United States-Mexican border.” (Sharon Chamberlain, Tucson, ADSLTE, 21 Apr. 2006)

The next example in contrast to the previous three highlights the altogether different issues confronting those whose ancestral lands are both distinguished from the United States and Mexico and bisected by their boundary line, and is offered here as a reminder that the situations faced by families and communities have often proven more complex than many letters would intimate.

“Prior to working with U.S. Customs, I worked for three years as a Border Patrol agent at its Indio, Calif., station. A rule they emphasized at the academy and out in the field was ‘don’t mess with the Indians.’ ... Bottom line: No documents were required of

them if they claimed they were Native Americans. / We encountered the problem at the Tecate, Calif., port of entry when members of the local Indian tribe climbed up to nearby Tecate peak, since they considered it sacred. This usually riled the local Border Patrol because to them they were just Mexicans.” (Reyes J. Rodriguez, Retired customs officer, Sahuarita, ADSLTE, Sept. 29, 2006)

The writer—a former customs agent—appears to have sympathized with the unnamed indigenous nation divided by the border, whose members had been subjected to discrimination by the colleagues of a separate agency. In his approach, the writer relayed his memories of working on the border, point by point, seemingly at first without overt judgment. Noting how the “local Border Patrol” was “riled...because to them they were just Mexicans” and inserting mention of the “sacred” aspect of Tecate peak nevertheless embodied a criticism of Border Patrol operatives. In deriding their lack of consideration for and awareness of Native peoples’ exceptional status and history, the writer has additionally suggested that the concept of “nation” is mutable, embodying as it does different meanings—including “sacred” attachments—for those groups that reside not just within and but among nation-states.

**Myths of the nation.** One hundred and forty-one letters or 16% of the dataset addressed some aspect of culture and/or history in fortifying stances; within this group 51% opposed EGIE, 30% favored it, and 19% were ambiguous. References to traditions and specific historic events—especially when used as sources of comparison to current events—were often imbued with moral gravity and as broadly-accepted signifiers of U.S. exceptionalism.

Among pro-EGIE writers, historic references were often made in order to refute comparisons made between undocumented immigrants and other victims of past persecution (such as those of the Holocaust) or other champions for rights (such as those of the civil rights era). Both those for and against EGIE cited the trope, “we are a nation of immigrants,” often in order to laud those ancestors who “built America.” However pro-EGIE letters almost always counter-balanced their use of the phrase with the statement, “but we are also a nation of laws” or with

warnings about current over-population. References to the Statue of Liberty as a welcoming beacon to immigrants (Hunter) were favored moreover by anti-EGIE writers and eschewed by pro-EGIE writers, in spite of the latter's avowed support for "legal immigration."

Among the confluence of other myths and cultural citations were those invoking the national myth of the 'melting pot' as variously a celebration or blender of ethnocultural difference, and the 'American Dream' as a road of opportunity open to all those 'willing to work hard' and (again in line with the univocal nativist-nationalist stance of the moment) 'who obey the law.' Letters on both sides also made references to individuals' original immigrant ancestors and the nation's "courageous" forefathers, the evocation of which could be said to signal the writer's own claim to the nation's heritage, as in the first two examples below. In addition, there were writers whose avowed claim to a local heritage served to reinforce their 'primacy of place,' as in the third example, in which the writer forefronts her family's Arizona roots in order to lend her assertions greater weight and credibility.

"To continue a true American identity, all immigrants must embrace the American culture, which is made up of people of many lands. What brought us all here if not the opportunities found only here for success from hard work, freedom of religion and speech and feeling safe from intrusion in our homeland from those who wish us ill? / The true facts of our past four centuries must be taught in our history classes. To unite the country, English must be the primary language. If where they [immigrants] came from is so much better, perhaps they should return." (Rita Fjelseth, Retired real estate, Oro Valley, ADSLTE, 12 May 2009)

"Never should we render the study of any subject illegal just because one person or one group of people disagrees with a particular line of thinking. / We live in the United States of America, a free nation. / To our legislators I say, please make decisions that honor our freedoms. Our forefathers sacrificed greatly for such freedoms." (Linda Carrillo, Retired, Tucson, ADSLTE, 24 June 2009)

"I am a native of this state, as was my mother, and have lived here all my life. Our border with Mexico has always been pretty fluid and whole industries have relied on labor from Mexico to operate. / There are two problems that I believe have complicated the immigration issue. One is the criminal activities that are a direct result of our drug problems and the market that creates. / The other is the fear that seems to have overwhelmed common sense since the attacks on 9/11. Punishing our businesses

and the people who just want to work and support their families will not keep us safe.” (Joan McNamara, Joyfully retired, Tucson, ADSLTE, 25 Dec. 2007)

Among several counter-narratives were those that pointed to the U.S. usurpation of Native and/or Mexican lands, as a means of questioning the geographic legitimacy of the majority.

“Arizonans have forgotten that we reside in what was once Mexican territory. / In view of this fact, perhaps the majority of us should consider ourselves interlopers.” (Lynn Ellis, Retired, Tucson, ADSLTE, 24 July 2010)

“Historically, shouldn’t we be harshly critical of the immigrants who came to America on the Mayflower, spoke only English and refused to learn and adopt the Native American tongue?” (Lawrence A. De Lucia, Retired economist, Tucson, ADSLTE 31 Oct. 2007)

Yet other counter-narratives reminded readers of the racism and discrimination historically suffered by Latinos and other persecuted ethnic minorities, and in this way embraced the national precept of equality while contradicting the nationalist myth that “we were once a great nation.” As said one writer referring to an article on the united effort of Maricopa and Pinal County sheriffs to conduct large-scale immigrant sweeps (“Pinal sheriff joins Arpaio sweep”):

“This article reminds me of other armed posses in history who terrorized and dehumanized the most vulnerable in society and justified it by claiming they were protecting their nation. / In a country based on freedom, justice and equality, how can this continue?” (Rene Teyechea, Teacher, Tucson, ADSLTE, 30 July 2009)

**Discrimination, racism & xenophobia.** Discriminatory practices, racist doctrines, and cultivated xenophobia have been core strategic components of the vast number of nationalist movements predicated on the nation-state as ethno-culturally holistic and geographically-circumscribed. The sub-theme of discrimination, racism and xenophobia, which arose in a quarter of the letters, included both allegations of the same in regard to immigration and defensive responses thereto, as well as one or two overt expressions of racism—for example, in a letter critiquing ‘political correctness’ that used the phrase, “Let’s go back to calling a spade a spade”

(Eldon Housley, ADSLTE, 20 May 2009; cf. Gandhi). Within this sub-theme, more than twice as many letters opposed as favored EGIE, with only 5% taking neutral or ambiguous stances.

Several anti-enforcement letters spoke to a history of racism against Latino, Native and other persecuted minorities, as well as the present-day mistreatment of communities subjected to ‘racial profiling.’ Their challengers attempted to turn the mirror by accusing the other side of racism and/or by insisting that undocumented immigration was not an issue of racism but ‘legality.’

“...I’d sooner be arrested for not showing proof of citizenship while out for a run or ride, than succumb to the powers that be who presume me to not be a part of the country I love based on my skin tone.” (Edward Arriola, Self-employed, Tucson, ADSLTE, 7 May 2010)

“For Hispanics who were born in the United States and have lived here for generations, it is distressing because the hatred is thick in the air and, like it or not, it is directed at all Hispanics regardless of citizenship status.” (Robert D. Velasco, Retired computer professional, Tucson, ADSLTE, 5 Jan. 2008)

“It is totally unfair to deem all who do not like illegal immigration as racist. / Many of us would oppose it if they were Polish, French, East Indian, et cetera. / Many do not like the costs of educating and providing health care and service to folks who are not supposed to be here. / We are not against Hispanics. We like Hispanics.” (Grace Rich, Tucson, ADSLTE, 23 July 2010)

Other pro-EGIE responses to accusations of racial profiling at times avoided addressing the underlying question but might, as in the example below, pointedly dismiss concerns by stressing the writer’s own ease and expectation of privilege in dealing with law enforcement.

“Answering the question ‘American citizen?’ is not a threat to anyone’s constitutional freedoms. I have found the Border Patrol personnel to be always professional and polite.” (Edith Lowell, Rancher, Rio Rico, ADSLTE, 23 July 2009)

**Symbols of allegiance.** Ethno-racial markers (as mythic signifiers of innate ‘blood’ differences) have often been invoked by the far right in regard to the nation’s literal body politic or corporeal/DNA constitution. Wresting control over the production of historic narratives and

symbols is additionally key to nationalist movements as it is in these origin myths and visual signs that the ‘shared’ and unifying identity of the nation is located—that is to say articulated, defined, reinterpreted and disseminated—and reaffirmed. The theme of ‘nation, self and other’ then provided a lens onto different writers’ conceptions of the nation-state, the forms and degrees of allegiance it commanded, and the boundaries and makeup of its membership, as well as the ways in which its legitimating signs were then filtered and reinterpreted in the context of immigration enforcement.

The interplay of ethno-racism and nationalist symbolism manifested itself during incidents connected to the pro-immigrant marches of 2006. As a prelude, the United States has a history of ethnic pride celebrations, such as Oktoberfest, St. Patrick’s Day, Columbus Day, and the like. In Tucson, the display of the Mexican flag during pro-immigrant protests however was widely interpreted as an affront to the nation. Media reports of the same then led to a tiny counter-protest at which the flag of Mexico was publicly burned, which in turn sparked more public outcry. Insofar as a set of writers expressed offence at the display of foreign flags, signs in Spanish and the significant gathering of people who were assumed to be ethnic foreigners (in a land that was once under Spain and then Mexico) suggests that the writers in question could not allow for the possibility that protesters ‘of color’ might have been in fact Americans exhibiting their cultural pride and support for immigrants. As touched on earlier, certain letters exposed an elliptical form of racism, one that reaffirmed that true Americans (in the conceptions of several writers) were people of ‘non-color.’ As the second writer below indicates, members of the public were in some respects primed to see nothing but an invasion of foreign ‘others’ brandishing their symbols—which both overlooked the fact that both non-Latino and Latino citizens participated in the marches and conveniently served to diminish the march’s prime message, which was to underscore the beneficial interdependence of the U.S. economy and its undocumented labor force.

“The legals and illegals marching through our streets (waving) the Mexican flag make it very clear where their allegiance is. It’s not to the United States.” (Margaret Adams-Ross, Vail, ADSLTE, 2 Apr. 2006)

“When I attended the protest the very first day, I did not see a single Mexican flag. / I did see at least five American flags at one point. ... We even chanted ‘USA, USA, USA’ and ‘Viva los Estados Unidos’.” (Edward Arriola, Self-employed, Tucson, ADSLTE, 7 May 2010)

In addition to exposing ethno-racial prejudice, the widespread anger expressed toward the display of Mexican flags can also be understood as serving to divide allegiances. In this sense, certain writers, who were themselves immigrants or the descendants of immigrants or Spanish-Mexican colonialists, attempted in their letters to distance themselves from those now considered “illegal”:

“I am a resident alien who immigrated, legally, from Scotland almost six years ago. ... I cannot understand how these illegal immigrants can believe that they can violate a nation’s laws and subsequently gain immunity from prosecution.” (Gordon Gailey, Design engineer, Tucson, ADSLTE, 14 Apr. 2006)

“For the record, I am Hispanic and do not support illegal immigration. I support legal immigration.” (Jon Hurtado, Tucson, ADSLTE, 11 Jan. 2008)

**Contested histories & a national language.** In the United States textbook development had long been a white-hot zone of contention between geo-political factions seeking to redefine the nation’s values, with tensions, reflecting in part still extant North-South animosities (McKinley; Fortin). The anodyne packaging of the histories of enslaved peoples, immigration, labor, genocide against Native peoples, and U.S. imperialism abroad have served at times to reinforce the inviolable moral exceptionalism of the nation-state. Countering this trend, the Tucson Unified School District’s attempt to insert new subject learning and analytical frameworks to address the experiences of Mexican-Americans and other minorities sparked a powerful backlash among those insisting on a dominant singular identity for the nation, as exemplified by its history or adherence to a single national language:



“Uno, dos, were words we studied in Spanish class in school; only English was spoken except in our foreign language classes. We studied the Alamo, and no matter our ancestry, considered ourselves Americans. We were told this is a great country because it was a melting pot.” (Helen and Jim Homer, Retired, Tucson, 1 Apr. 2006)

“We want immigrants to adopt our lifestyle, not vice versa. What happens if we can't talk to each other? One thing will help. That's language. / If anyone can use the English language at the sixth-grade level, I'd welcome them. Gradually deport all others.” (Ivan Bull, Green Valley, ADSLTE, 11 June 2007)

The additional aversion numerous writers expressed toward the pervasiveness of spoken Spanish in Southern Arizona (as was suggested in the second example above) underscored the degree to which many pro-EGIE writers were disconnected from local culture and history. Instead they appeared to identify with an imagined homogenous national “majority,” the reality of which has been somewhat belied by the nation's long-lived history of non-English newspaper publication (Library of Congress, “Chronicling America”) and ethnic heritage festivals.

Among writers championing greater diversity were those who spoke broadly to the nation's history of racism and discrimination (as did the writer below, specifically in regard to the criticisms made against the Mexican Studies program), as well as those who shone a light on the experiences of local populations that had historically suffered discrimination and linguistic-cultural debasement.

“... What many people don't acknowledge is the United States has offered 300 years of affirmative action that has benefited white people. ... If you are white, your ancestors likely benefited from these policies and passed these assets on to you. To believe that individuals should simply ‘pull themselves up by their bootstraps’ ignores U.S. history and a system of racial advantages that white people have received.” (Cathy Busha, Social worker, ADSLTE, 6 Nov. 2007)

“Re: the July 1 letter ‘English was good enough for us.’ / Please know that all was not so great. Yes, some of us succeeded and many survived. But many other students really did suffer. There was the attitude that anything that was not English or 100 percent American was less than good. It was a terrible time for education. It was a terrible time for students who did not survive. Let's not return to those times.” (Armando Bernal, Teacher, Tucson, ADSLTE, 5 July 2009; for letter referenced, see Crawford)

**Follow our lead.** Nationalism predicated on the alienation and discrediting of the ‘other’ additionally manifested itself in those letters that blamed Mexican immigrants in particular for the deleterious conditions found in their home country, while holding U.S. interventionist policies in Mexico blameless. Numerous upholders of this stance in fact exhorted immigrants to take up revolution, inferring that, as Americans were able handily to toss off the manacles of British monarchy, so too should Mexicans rally to rid their country of systemic corruption and pervasive violence.

“When illegals return to their countries, they will be more inclined to force their own countries to take care of their own people and not shunt them off on us.” (Ibid. Laura Leighton, Tucson, ADSLTE, 21 Mar. 2006)

“What Mexico really needs is a revolution. It’s incredibly naive to offer bland prescriptions for eliminating poverty in Mexico (as if there is no longer poverty in the United States) and ignore the reality of Mexico’s profound economic mismanagement and corruption.” (Thomas Plazibat, Student, Tucson, ADSLTE, 26 May 2006)

Rather than offering encouragement, these stances served to lift the writers onto a higher plane than the immigrant by in effect admonishing, ‘we did it on our own, why can’t you?’ In so doing, writers resorted (if unwittingly) to those historic formulations of nationhood that relied on representations of Mexico as the negative foil to the United States’ own positive identity—from depictions of the border as pregnable to Mexican raiders and bandits to the current-day threat represented by Mexico’s condition of anomie. As per Alfredo Carlos (2014), Mexico has served since the 19th century to define the United States’ positive characteristics by negative association, in a sense standing in for the ‘bad guy’ to the United States’ ‘good.’ In repeating similar tropes, the writers (following on their forebears’ paths) simultaneously avoided acknowledging a history of European colonialism and U.S. imperialism, not least of which included the latter’s overweening influence on Mexico’s situation past and present (Streeby; Carlos). In focusing on Mexico in particular, it is moreover worth noting that increasing numbers of border entrants in

this time period were refugees from Central America, a fact acknowledged by anti-EGIE writers but ignored by nearly all those favoring EGIE.

**The traitor within.** Widening the circle of criminalization to include those would defend the ‘other’ is a commonly reprised strategy among nationalistic and other kinds of socio-political movements, insofar as the paranoia visited on the enemy-stranger then is invariably turned on the members of one’s own nation who stand in disagreement (Hobsbawm 42; Boose). Legitimate members of the nation are thus made illegitimate by their empathy with and analogous transformation into the ‘other.’ In the following letter, the act of opposing undocumented immigration rendered any individual—but especially one of Latino ancestry—“illegal,” an idea that the writer sought to reinforce by alluding to Shakespeare’s oft-quoted line from *Hamlet*, “The lady doth protest too much, methinks” (Act II, Scene III):

“Methinks that those individuals who object to SB 1070 and the spokesmen of groups who have canceled or advocated canceling engagements and all of those, along with our esteemed Rep. Raúl Grijalva, protest out of fear of having their own immigration status brought to light.” (Ken Hubbart, Retired, Tucson, ADSLTE, 12 June 2010)

The conflation of “illegal” immigrants with their sympathizers also finds an oblique parallel in the Luntz, Maslansky recommendation that GOP members hold accountable those who abet undocumented immigration—or in their words “who turn their heads and claim there is no problem” (1). Resonances can be heard in Rep. Pearce’s ballot argument for Arizona proposition 300: “It is vital that we spend our tax dollars on helping Arizonans and not aid and abet illegal aliens” (“2006 Ballot Propositions: Proposition 300”). The following writers in turn condemned those activists who were perceived as *abetting* or interceding on behalf of immigrants.

“Our law states that if you enter our country illegally, you have committed a crime. If a person gives aid to an offender, they are aiding and abetting a criminal. That also is a crime. / The No More Deaths group is committing sedition, which is also a crime against the state.” (Jim McGuire, Tucson, ADSLTE, 25 May 2006)

“Not only does HR 4437 [the Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005] propose to make 11 million undocumented residents felons, it proposes to make felons of religious leaders, health-care professionals, humanitarians and people like myself, social workers, who offer any sort of assistance, such as food or first aid, to undocumented people in need.” (Landi A. Smith, Tucson, ADSLTE, 22 Apr. 2006)

The seditious “aid” mentioned in the first letter concerned the delivery of urgent medical care and hydration to border crossers whose lives were endangered. The accusation of sedition however now far exceeds that of simply “aiding and abetting” and implies that the undocumented immigrant is not a mere “criminal” but an enemy of the state. The second letter, in contrast, addresses the inevitable repercussions of widening the net of criminality to include not just immigrant advocates but those members of society—“religious leaders, health-care professionals, humanitarians”—who are normally recognized as serving the common good, including “people in need.”

**Federal preemption, state autonomy & border vigilantism.** Foisting accusations of treason on those with whom one disagreed masked the paradox that many ‘states’ rights’ nationalists in this period (most notably those subscribing to Tea Party ideology) were themselves attempting—much like the Confederate secessionists of another era (McPherson)—to recalibrate the balance of power once they had lost control of the White House, by asserting similar states’ rights arguments. Oftentimes this was done in order to expand the reach of regional state governments over and into people’s lives, including those of minorities and immigrants.

The debate over the exclusive authority of the federal government as opposed to that of states and self-appointed militias to shape border policy captured a mere 5% of writer’s attention, yet warrants scrutiny as a signpost of radical nationalism’s future move to the nation’s political center. The assertion of states and individuals’ right to preempt federal government in regard to immigration was predicated on the asserted incapacity of federal government to fulfil its mandate to protect the ethno-cultural nation as homogenized ‘melting pot.’ The line “Our laws are more

than adequate but need to be enforced” (Laura Leighton, Tucson, ADSLTE, 21 Mar. 2006) is one among many that pointed to writers’ disappointment in the federal government’s performance in securing, as another writer put it, “more jobs, lower taxes, smaller government, less intrusion from the government, immigration reform and an improved economy.” (John Seagrove, Vail, ADSLTE, 20 Nov. 2010) Tea Party doctrinaires had become convinced instead that government had gained too much sway over such “freedoms” as unrestricted gun ownership, an unregulated and untaxed free market, and the freedom of states to enact restrictive social policies, governing for example prayer in school, abortion, marriage eligibility, and immigrant restrictions.

“The tea party is looking for the America that was once the greatest nation in the world. A nation built on individual freedom and liberty. We don’t want the America that the progressives think it ought to be.” (Thomas Sushinski, Sierra Vista, ADSLTE, 27 Apr. 2010)

While the era of the “greatest nation” was not specified by the writer, one might presume that it would have likely preceded that of Johnson’s Great Society, Roosevelt’s New Deal or the rise of unionism.

The criticisms of government for failing in its duty to uphold its end of the social contract segued with those arguing for the right of states to usurp federal authority in matters of national security—at this time a core component of nativist Tea Party activism as well as the posse of self-appointed and self-aggrandizing border militias (Neiwert 42-47; ch. 4). Asserting the existence of extraordinary threat against the nation then emboldened a rare handful of letter-writers to justify the use of extra-legal violence in contravention of federal and international law. In the first two examples given below (the first of which is here reprised from an earlier section), the writers have inferred that what would be considered unlawful vigilantism would be in fact justified, given the federal government’s failure to act and secure the nation. The third letter by comparison seeks to

extend the power of the regional state to enforce border security—again as over and above the federal government.

“There are those who will decide to take up the fight themselves, believing they are doing what the government has not been able to do: protect America from what they consider foreign invaders.” (Thomas Fletcher, Retired, Tucson, ADSLTE, 30 July 2010)

“The Minuteman organization’s plan to use private means to build security fencing along the U.S.-Mexico border would end the needless deaths of misguided illegal immigrants. In time, if such efforts succeed, the era of one group claiming special privilege to cross our borders at will shall end, and immigrants from all countries shall be subject to one and the same orderly process to enter the United States. / The proposed project goes a long way toward showing that citizens cannot and should not over-rely on government to protect the national interest, including the integrity of the nation’s borders.” (Miriam H. Klaiman, Tucson, ADSLTE, 16 May 2006)

“My neighbor Rob Krentz was killed in March. It is dangerous here and the feds must seal the border. But they refuse to act. / Don’t blame Arizona for trying to protect its citizens because of federal inaction. At least they are trying to protect us.” (Richard A. Winkler, Retired, Rodeo, N.M., ADSLTE, 3 May 2010)

A contradiction is underscored once again between the writers’ patriotism for the nation and disavowal of those constitutional laws that vest in the federal government the sole authority to protect the nation against “invaders” as well as to determine foreign policy.

The next two examples by comparison propounded the use of lethal military force against those found crossing the border, irrespective of their civilian status and whether or not they presented a credible threat.

“Our federal legislators now need to take steps toward a new policy on immigration, immediately halt all immigration from our southern neighbor, deploy the National Guard and authorize them to use deadly force as necessary and deport all foreign invaders, no questions asked.” (Brian T. Davis, Tucson, ADSLTE, 14 Apr. 2006)

“Armed Mexican thugs, either corrupt military/police, drug dealers or human smugglers, cross the border into the United States and confront our National Guard troops stationed there. ... These armed invaders should have been immediately fired upon, not run away from. What a disgrace.” (Louis Grippaudo, Retired, Tucson, ADSLTE, 17 Jan. 2007)

While the first letter-writer (whose text has also been repeated here) may have stipulated that “deadly force” should be used only “as necessary,” he goes on to describe all border crossers as “foreign invaders.” In making the last assertion, the writer has evoked the specter of war as justification for unbridled violence, while at the same time ignoring those international definitions and strictures that govern the treatment of civilians under wartime conditions (IV Geneva Convention, Art.147). In the second letter, the writer advocated firing upon border entrants, whom he denounced en masse as “corrupt military/police, drug dealers or human smugglers.” As with the previous writer, mentioning the smugglers’ ‘human cargo’ who too would be subjected to indiscriminate violence was omitted, as well as the fact that the summary killing envisioned has been proscribed by both national and international law and would moreover serve as a declaration of war against the nation-state of Mexico. That is to say neither writer contemplated the larger—international—implications of their prescriptions but instead, caught as they were in a “moment of exaltation” (Durkheim 173), sought out rationales to exercise exceptional and extra-legal violence against a perceived civilian enemy, while critiquing the current governmental hegemony.

Nationalist ascent is often predicated on usurping hegemonic power structures by claiming (as Giddens has averred) the “sanction of force” (7-9). Key to writers’ justifying the use of extraordinary force was the resort to hyperbolic rhetoric that reframed border crossers as a marauding mass: “How long will it be before this Army of One changes our country to the United States of Mexico?” (Helen and Jim Homer, Retired, Tucson, ADSLTE, 1 Apr. 2006) Those demanding fortified borders to guard the sovereignty of a nation that guaranteed ‘individual freedom’ (but not ethno-cultural difference)—while promoting the ‘rule of law’ alongside the autonomy of states and individuals to usurp federal jurisdiction over border security and immigration enforcement—did so paradoxically. Patriotic attachment to the nation and to its

defense in this sense was manifested through calls to usurp the nation-state and the ‘rule of law’ both (cf. Oliviero 682).

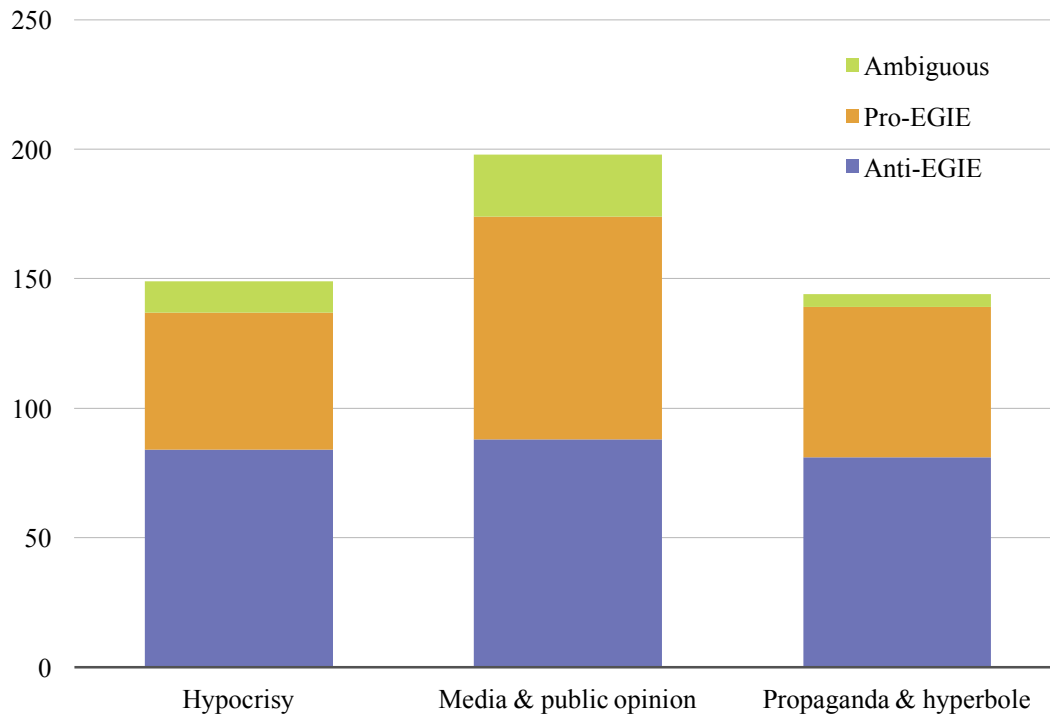
**Summary.** The various facets that are oftentimes associated with nationalist movements—the signifiers of identity as embodied by those historic narratives and myths of origin, visual heraldic emblems (such as flags), and shared linguistic or cultural affinities—whether representing the “imagined community” (Anderson) or an extended sense of kinship (Wiebe) are in any event evoked in order to reproduce a sense of oneness that conflates the shifting parameters of the nation as people with the fast geographic boundaries of the state. In evoking the nation’s “forefathers” or assigning different interpretations to the construct of the ‘melting pot’ (as a vehicle variously for ethnic difference or sublimation), in challenging or reaffirming the fundamental narratives that have served to legitimate the United States as morally and singularly ‘exceptional’ as well as to justify the individual and nation’s claims to primacy of place, writers sought to revisit and contest the very meanings of those same emblems on a field fraught with public debate. At the heart of these contests stood the figure of the undocumented immigrant, the ‘other,’ portrayed as either the sympathetic stranger and a harbinger of the nation’s social, economic and cultural revitalization or as an invasive and parasitic spore, whose growing presence threatened the nation’s integrity and moreover its imaginary ethno-cultural purity and environmental sustainability, as enshrined in its mythic past. These conflicts at times however both touched on and cloaked other underlying sources of national insecurity, including counter-hegemonic processes aimed at restructuring the distribution of power across the land, that nevertheless indicated fundamental disjunctures in conceptions of the nation and its constituent ethos.



## 6. Rhetoric

The last of the letter themes addresses writers' perceptions of the impact and importance of the media and public opinion in framing the immigration debate. Some 44 percent of the letters addressed the role and influence of media producers—whether as groups or individuals—in

*Figure 15. Stance distribution across Rhetoric sub-themes*



shaping and at times misleading the public on the issue of immigration (through the use of propaganda, hyperbole and hypocrisy), as well as in fomenting public reaction and on informing the policy directions taken by leadership. While those opposing EGIE were slightly more engaged with this topic, both sides of the issue criticized the use of propagandistic, misleading, biased or vitriolic rhetoric. In this regard, 49% of writers in this group opposed EGIE; 41% supported EGIE; and 10% took an ambiguous stance (see fig. 15).

The first two letters below address not just the expression of “hatred and bigotry” by others but their perceived greater impact on community.

“The hatred and bigotry aimed at illegal immigrants, and especially at Hispanics, needs to stop because that is what it is, plainly and simply, hatred and bigotry. It has to be when only one group of people are being persecuted, so don’t tell me it’s not.” (Margaret Johnson, Tucson, ADSLTE, 4 May 2008)

“Please stop publishing angry sounding letters that accuse people of racism. / For a publication that espouses to be the community’s best friend and most constructive critic, I find it ironic and quite frankly juvenile that an editorial staff and management would publish a letter accusing people of racism just because they support SB 1070.” (Ken Damschen, Green Valley, ADSLTE, 12 June 2010)

In the first instance, the writer employed a tautology to condemn those who would deny that anti-immigrant laws and rhetoric have intentionally singled out one minority and thus in effect subverted tenets of equality and fairness. The use of tautology in this case was no doubt meant as a rejoinder to those letter-writers who employed the “illegal is illegal” meme. The second letter by comparison took umbrage at the *Star*’s labeling of SB 1070 supporters as racists, by accusing the *Star* in turn of being “juvenile”—which is to say the author resorted to reverse name-calling (in full awareness that name-calling is associated with juvenile behavior), while avoiding the substance of the *Star*’s assertion. His qualification of the *Star*’s position as “ironic” intimates that he perceived that its bias was itself akin to a form of racism.

In the next two examples, the writers expressed rancor at the perceived dissemination of false or skewed information:

“How irresponsible of the Star to refer a suspect in the Arivaca double slaying as being a ‘Minuteman.’ It did not mention that the group to which Jason Bush belonged was not the Minuteman Project founded by Jim Gilchrist.” (Jim Hunt, Sales, Tucson, ADSLTE, 14 July 2009)

“Leadership is not scaring the tourist away with stories of headless bodies in the desert and that all illegals are carrying drugs. / If [Gov. Jan Brewer] keeps showing poor leadership skills, November may be unkind to her.” (Donald Plummer, Tucson, ADSLTE, 16 July 2010)

Again, both letters implied that the irresponsible use of misleading rhetoric had broader implications for society at large. The first writer of this set scolded the *Star* for associating the

Minuteman Project with what he termed the “Arivaca double-slaying” (and which in fact involved the first-degree homicide killing of a drug dealer and his nine-year-old daughter). While for many, the one-time association between Gilchrist and the killers’ ringleader, Shawna Forde (Neiwert), would be sufficient to cast doubt now over the entire militia undertaking, for this writer the distinction between the two remained critical, as he apparently desired that both Gilchrist and the Minuteman Project would emerge untarnished by events. To this end, the writer did not blame Forde for endangering the militia movement’s credibility but the *Star*, as a primary local media source. In this sense, the writer appeared to acknowledge that the media had the power to shape if not the truth itself then the way in which facts were received and ultimately judged in the court of public opinion.

In the second letter of the group, the writer castigated Gov. Brewer for her repeated assertions that “headless bodies” had been discovered in the Arizona desert. As touched on earlier (ch. IV, sect. C), projecting the shocking image of “headless bodies” served to cast a familiar desert landscape—already made for some unsettling and for others tragic by the rising count in dead immigrant bodies—into an even more terrifying dimension, one that borrows on the horror film genre’s delectation in disarticulated bodies. In this regard, the writer faults Brewer’s mediatic gambit (aimed as it was at achieving greater federal assistance while embarrassing the Obama presidency) for endangering the state’s still precarious economy. The writer thus points to a direct correlation between the “irresponsible” use of hyperbolic rhetoric and the production of deleterious consequences.

The role of media in generating public excitement was further addressed in those letters that commented on the media’s portrayal of itself. As discussed previously, the 2006-2010 period coincided with *Fox News*’s rise to become the nation’s most popular news outlet, along with the increasing visibility and notoriety of numerous right-wing radio personalities and online

information sources—from Tucson’s own nativist-populist radio personality, Jon Justice, to the founding of the so-called alt-right media outlet Breitbart News in 2007. Among select figures to gain especial attention among letter-writers was the CNN program host Lou Dobbs, whom a *Star* opinion piece had accused of inciting racist “hatemongering” (“Hispanic Group Right to Stand Up to Hatemongers”):

“Hearty congratulations for the Star’s excellent editorial on Lou Dobbs’ outrageous attacks on our Latino population. As a newsman, Dobbs is obligated to be truthful and accurate in his reporting with his sources fully disclosed. Instead Dobbs indulges in severely slanted reporting and comes close to outright bigotry.” (Sol Littman, Tucson, ADSLTE, 17 June 2008)

“The irony of the Star endorsing a boycott of another media outlet apparently is lost on your editorial writer. It surely is not lost on the Star’s publisher or other advocates of the First Amendment. I respect your right to be ‘wrong,’ as you are so often. / One does not have to agree with Lou Dobbs’ or Glenn Beck’s stands on immigration to understand the folly of your position. Readers weary of your habitual demonizing of critics of our porous borders might easily turn the boycott tactic on you.” (Emmett Smelser, Editorial consultant, Marana, ADSLTE, 14 June 2008)

Both of the above writers notably drew on commonly shared journalistic principles regarding ‘truth in reporting,’ ‘freedom of the press’ and ‘journalistic bias’ to advance contrary viewpoints but, in so doing, accorded each different weights. For the first writer, ‘truth in reporting’ took precedence over ‘freedom of the press,’ insofar as journalists were meant to be held to a higher standard of veracity. For the second writer, ‘freedom of the press’ was paramount insofar as the press did not use its voice to stifle other press outlets; this was valued to a greater degree than the issue of journalistic dishonesty, an accusation that the writer evaded by in essence advancing the argument of moral equivalency—if at the same time noting that the *Star*’s position was “wrong.” While the second writer did not impart an explanation, he apparently judged that the truth lay not in individual facts but in the rectitude of the broader positions taken by both sides to the debate over “our porous borders.”

**Summary.** Both sides to the EGIE debate were alert to perceived instances of hypocrisy or illogic in the stances taken by each other and by political or media figures and institutions, and the power of hyperbolic rhetoric to sway public opinion and excite reaction. One should at the same time bear in mind that, while references to contradiction, logical fallacy, misstatement, and/or exaggeration may have reflected writers' interpretive reading of others' content, at the same time accusing another of rational inconsistency served as a rhetorical strategy.

Pro-EGIE letter-writers more often claimed the “majority” of Americans to be on their side, an assertion that was reinforced through the Tea Party's extensive media coverage, orchestrated ‘grass-roots’ email campaigns (Schrag 177), and visibly committed, on-the-ground activism in this period (ch. V), as well as by the seeming dominance of EGIE supporters in the *Star's* online reader polls.<sup>21</sup> Their argument—that they spoke for a majority—served as a strategy to buttress arguments (as they averred they represented the ‘popular will’). It however also reflected the ethos of their position as populist nationalists, i.e. that they represented the voice of a “weary” and marginalized majority whose right to demand the security, sovereignty, and preservation of the “nation”—as symbolized by the envisioned act of sealing off the border against enemy intruders—was threatened by those in government, in the media and among the population who would put the rights of immigrant-strangers and minorities first.

## Chapter VII

### CONCLUSION

This project has attempted to provide a broader understanding of how xenophobic nationalist rhetoric gains traction ‘on the ground’ as it is both refracted and contested by community, in particular one that has long been defined by its relationship to the United States-Mexico border. In Southern Arizona, the cause of nativism resonated with a large number of local residents, who saw in the figure of the “illegal immigrant” the source of society’s greatest ills—its moral and economic degradation—as well as visible proof of the federal government’s failure to protect the interests of its citizenry. At the same time, the rise of nativist-borne nationalism galvanized an equally vociferous opposition, one that variously championed the lives of those pursuing the American “myth of opportunity” (Pease Chock), embraced the region’s long-lived Latino cultural heritage, and upheld compassion as a core tenet of a ‘just and right society.’

To revisit the basis of my thinking, a number of theorists—among them Anderson (113-114), Hobsbawm (10-11), Wiebe (11), and Antoni—have spoken to a nearly modular aspect of statist nationalist movements, as ideologies, strategies, rhetoric and marketing, and performative actions are coopted and adapted to new causes. In this century’s first decade, “illegal immigration” became the chief rallying cry for a plethora of interests and causes gathered under the banner of ‘states’ rights,’ a counter-hegemonic cause that in its attempt to restructure the distribution of state power, to make claims upon a mythico-history of ‘forefathers’ and ‘framers,’ and to propound “traditional” social values and vilification of the ‘other’ parallels other 20th and 21st century nationalist movements, of the sort found today throughout Europe, in India and beyond.

According to Hobsbawm, understanding nationalism requires analyzing the “dual phenomenon” as generated on high and propelled from below (11). However, he notes that,

“That view from below, i.e. the nation as seen not by governments and the spokesmen and activists of nationalist (or non-nationalist) movements, but by the ordinary persons who are the objects of their action and propaganda is exceedingly difficult to discover.” (Hobsbawm 11)

If Hobsbawm proved over-prescriptive in adopting Hirsch’s three stages of nationalism (12)—whereby an elite maps out a movement that is then vitalized ‘on the ground’—David Keen and Anthony Marx revealed in different ways how racial-nationalist violence has been propelled by polyvalent interests, from national elites to regional opportunists to a marginalized local base (Keen 14-15 and 111-12; A. Marx). In so doing, both Keen and Marx exposed the continually adaptive dynamics of exclusionary movements, as reflective of specific and contingent histories and as made up of disparate players. Wiebe on the other hand has reminded us that nationalism as a form of self-determination “in a fluid world” (xv) should not be automatically anathematized, underscoring a need to separate out minority or indigenous rights movements (for example) from statist nationalist movements that propound ethno-cultural and/or racial exclusivity (Wiebe).

In considering the ways in which nationalism gained traction “from below” in Southern Arizona, it was important to investigate the ways in which members of the general public did not merely parrot rhetoric but contested, misconstrued, subverted and refashioned meaning to accord with their own perceptions and experiences, as well as their own localized frameworks of understanding. The dataset’s letter-writers were neither sponges nor mirrors in this respect—even to the degree that they were persuaded of Utopian aspirations or phantom enemies or latched onto soluble weapons of reasoning or failed to convince others of their point of view. Instead their letters provided insights into forms of ideation and frameworks of meaning that both segue with as well as differ from rhetoric generated on high.

In examining the content of the letters, one can consider Foucault's ideas concerning a "discipline society" in which multifarious disciplines and practices compete and contradict each other—and in so doing produce discordant logics and the potential for agency (Ransom). Another less top-down and limiting approach to understanding refraction and resonance, however, has been suggested by the sentiment analysis of Lauren Berlant and Kathleen Stewart. Berlant in this regard describes what she terms the "cruel optimism" of our attachments to things, people, places—animated as they are by anticipation, nostalgia or the fear of their loss (35). Her focus has been here expanded to include people's attachment to ideologies and specifically the idea of "nation" (cf. Trautsch 296), as manifested through a sense of shared ethnocultural, mythico-historical and geographic identity—whether that geography is the whole of the United States or the contours of the Sonora Desert. For these attachments too are motivated by a sentimental bond that envisions the dissolution of boundaries between the self, place and nation, as an aspiration to that which is ultimately unknowable and unattainable (Anderson).

Kathleen Stewart in turn invites an ethnographic focus on the "precarity" of unfolding historico-cultural moments or paradigmatic shifts (Stewart 518-519), through an examination of what some might call their epi-phenomena; seen in reverse, she proposes it is the events that serve as "catchments of compositional modes of being in the world" (114), placing stress on the latter. The compositional modes in this case refer to the letter-writers' attempts to navigate language to lend intelligibility to the precariousness of the emergent moment (as well as the author's efforts to "write culture" (114; cf. Geertz)). Unlike Stewart, I have not attempted to capture an entire field of micro-attachments as "magnetized" to macro-phenomena (Stewart 524), but instead have focused on those resonances and leitmotifs—or "legibilities"—that in emerging from the dataset suggested patterns of ideation, tendencies and disjunctures, within and among writers, that in part



constituted the refractions of nationalist discourse and more tellingly pointed to junctions of societal exchange, mediation and rupture.

There was ample reason for letter-writers to sense the evolving “precarity” of their world in the early 2000s, as globalization’s perturbations (unleashed by an unregulated finance industry) would soon stimulate widespread economic collapse. At the same time, the most recognizable and proximate manifestation of this phenomenon would present itself in the public imagination as a surge of humanity arriving from out of the desert, figures in a visible state of peril; as a foil, the ‘other’ in this instance also served as a potential augury, the present face of a threatened future fate. In saying “we are full” (Eugene Cole, Retired Tucson, ADSLTE, 14 Mar. 2008), writers spoke not only to their fears of an unsustainable future but to finding themselves in a situation comparable to that of the ‘other.’ While anti-EGIE writers to some degree recognized the undocumented immigrant’s place within global dynamics if not the bubble expansion and collapse, pro-EGIE writers fastened onto the ‘rule of law’ as a mechanism to right a world gone awry. They criminalized the ‘other,’ and agitated for greater levels of enforcement and to legislate away that which was deemed pernicious and threatening, to fasten rules—not upon a global capitalism gone amok—but upon “illegal” immigrants as its most expandable and expendable product.

This was but one instance in which a form of optical inversion occurred, that is to say individuals in the most vulnerable positions—vested with the least degree of potency—shouldered the blame for mass phenomena. In this way was the undocumented immigrant alienated from the legal construct of the “individual” (and most if not all attendant protections) and alienated from society (and often family, as deportees), at the same time as s/he was individuated within a panoptic system of enforcement surveillance and punishment. Thus, was the minor act—of residency without authorization—made flagrant and outsized.

At the same time, the letters of pro-EGIE refracted a well-honed rhetoric that, if not originated than was captured and refined on high, in service to largely unseen counter-hegemonic interests (Mayer). That rhetoric was subsequently multiplied through the mouthpieces of countless radio and cable-TV stations, as well as at the time via a newly mushrooming social media. In this way was the public fed a diet that sample public members (via marketing focus groups) had helped to prepare and vet. The rhetoric in question then contributed to shaping the conversation—particularly in advancing the idea that undocumented immigrants were innately “illegal” and therefore recidivist. Moreover, as their status was deemed illegitimate, they lacked any credible claim—including to the compassion of a presumably over-burdened society or to the exercise of those rights enshrined by the U.S. Constitution. Thus, the term “illegal” became an endless refrain, one that oftentimes was employed in the nearly incantatory, tautological phrase, “illegal is illegal,” the word “illegal” now serving as a constitutive adjective and noun.

Contests in the dataset over the definition of the nation—as self melded to geo-political-cultural spaces, as the progeny of “legal immigrants” and legatees of the “forefathers”—served as avowals of the letter-writer’s own legitimacy, as compared to those whose societal contributions were in a process of being devalued. One’s right to exist and assert ‘primacy of place’ thus was often contingent on producing a negative foil, an ‘other’ defined by her/his lack of belonging. For some this was contingent on de-legitimizing the ‘other’s’ right to exist in place—meaning inside the nation-state’s geographic boundaries, within its pale of legal and social protections, as well as within territories historically dominated by indigenous and Mexican cultures. Thus “in-migrants” from other parts of the country and even other parts of Arizona might very well question the standing of those whose families had resided in Southern Arizona for countless generations, disparaging the use of Spanish in public and worrying “our melting pot is being overpowered with a Latin flavor” (Helen and Jim Homer, Retired, Tucson, ADSLTE, 1 Apr. 2006). In counter-

reaction, other writers asserted the primacy of a local and particular culture and history, the origins of which extend back 400 years if not millennia farther. In so doing, they offered a myth of legitimacy rooted in the local and distinct as a counterpoint to the overarching myth of nation that has limited the locus of the nation's founding and original patrimony to the 13 colonies, while generations "of immigrants" have contributed to the commonweal by subordinating their ancestral heritages to a national master narrative.

For yet other writers, a state of illegitimacy was conferred on another writer or public figure that had stepped beyond the edge of acceptable morality and in so doing was understood to have breached the 'social contract.' For one portion of writers, the tolerance extended in regard to the "lawlessness" of undocumented immigrants threatened the sanctity of the nation and to provoke a state of civil anomie. While a small number of pro-EGIE writers expressed a measure of sympathy for the plight of the undocumented, others regarded them as nightmarish specters (or "ghosts in the legal system" (Mason Sharp, Pima College student, Tucson, ADSLTE, 21 Nov. 2009)), as well as potential terrorists, social parasites and hardened criminals. For their counterparts, it was the gross inhumanity demonstrated toward what was perceived to be a "hard-working" yet vulnerable population of laborers and their families that provoked fear and alarm. It was mass bigotry and societal hatred targeting an ethnic minority that evoked the nightmare specters of World War II, lynch mobs and Jim Crow.

Underlying opposing positions were radically different conceptions of the 'social contract'—or the perceived norms governing individual and societal obligation—in relation to moral proximity. In this regard, many pro-EGIE writers suggested that the undocumented immigrant should be subjected to a higher legal standard and greater enforcement scrutiny than the citizen, as well as denied recourse to publicly-funded assistance. In this way again, those whose positions in society were the most demeaned and tenuous—who were for example the most

likely to be uninsured or subjected to unsafe and exploitative work or living conditions—would be refused the few protections they had once been afforded, such as the ability to visit hospitals, schools, courts, and other public spaces without fear of arrest. In this regard, there were writers who celebrated the imposition of a state of fear over the lives of undocumented immigrants, while denying that other minorities would suffer the consequences of being racialized through the same methods of enforcement. For most pro-EGIE writers, few if any mitigating factors warranted consideration in respect of the undocumented immigrant’s “illegal” presence in the United States.

The need to justify the exceptional punishment of undocumented immigrants then gave rise (in a relatively small portion of letters) to exaggerated declarations of exceptional circumstances—whether these related to the imminent depletion of natural resources, an unbridled and vicious crime wave, or a “state of war” brought about by invasion from next door. For a select few, the gospel of “cost efficiency” as the highest good—one that held paramount the protection of taxpayer dollars from wasteful spending—provided sufficient grounds to deny humanitarian or legal relief. Many hyperbolic assertions (of the threat of “invasion,” terrorism, sedition or “anchor babies”) were not the inventions of writers but had reverberated throughout the blogosphere and in broadcast and print media (Ignatow; Costley; ch. IV, sect. E, ch. V). Too, the promotion of “efficiency” as a paramount value gained renewed force in the Reagan years, in connection with efforts to unfetter monopolization and the “free market” (Lynn 31-32). While these examples drew on existing materials to justify extreme stances, they exceeded to some degree their original sources: few pundits, politicians or media personalities would call for the summary killing of civilians or to place an infant’s life in the balance. At the same time, the writers’ transgressiveness could be said to have signaled a shift in the line of the permissible; that which was widely held as abhorrent—as was the vilification of the “anchor baby” (Ignatow) and the blatant disregard for

children's lives and well-being—would in 10 years, under the Trump administration, become associated with national immigration policy.

On the opposite side of the arena, anti-EGIE writers cited compassion as a supreme social value, one that in exceptional circumstances—such as the extraordinary loss of immigrant life in the Arizona desert—warranted exceeding government laws and policies deemed unjust, as dictated by universal or a 'higher' law. For a number, it was the very tenuousness of undocumented immigrants' claims on society that then merited greater compassion. Other factors for anti-EGIE writers that deserved consideration in respect of immigrants' "illegal" status included the deleterious impacts of U.S. intervention and the U.S. appetite for illicit drugs on Mexican civil society, as well as the disparity in wealth between the two nations.

In respect to 'moral proximity,' for many anti-EGIE writers Mexico and its citizens were near enough to constitute a "neighbor" meriting assistance. This same aspect of proximity however represented a threat to numerous pro-EGIE writers. Stories of violent, nearby drug-cartel wars or the widespread raping of female migrants during their passage through Mexico had the reverse impact of transforming the victims into perpetrators: suddenly the immigrants were the rapists, the drug dealers—those who by geographic association brought a cloak of violence and instability with them. Proximity in this case did not betoken greater solicitude and sympathy, but their very opposite.

In part, media reports concerning the rising numbers of border entrants excited fears that the nation was being overwhelmed by "an army of one" (Helen and Jim Homer, Retired, Tucson, ADSLTE, 1 Apr. 2006), whose existence was seen as imperiling writers' attachments to "our way of life and our freedom" (Robert R. Reynolds, Geologist/author, Tucson, LTE ADS, 23 May 2006)—or to those motley and nearly ineffable collections of rhythms, rituals, habits, tokens, associations, expressions and expectations that somehow represent for different communities in

different places “what it means to be an American.” Moral proximity thus was not spatially conceived but nationally conceived. For most pro-EGIE writers, the one (allegiance to the nation) did not obviate the other (a desire to help others, most notably those close at hand).

While espousing ‘the rule of law,’ many among the new nativism-propelled populists deemed illegitimate those laws meant to guarantee *all* individuals “unalienable rights” or to protect the most vulnerable (for example, children) or to uphold the balance established by the U.S. Constitution between the three branches of government. Those advocating for greater state autonomy in particular derided legal restrictions on “liberties”—including the right of regional states or self-appointed militias to safeguard the nation from what was construed as foreign invasion.

Transforming undocumented immigrants from necessary, long-tolerated and exploited contributors to the economic good into delegitimated and dehumanized “illegals” rendered them exceptional—placing them beyond the pale of legal or moral protections and compassionate treatment. In this way were various forms of structural violence made permissible, from abrogating basic constitutional protections and racial profiling to channeling border crossers through the most dangerous terrains. As undocumented immigrants were increasingly subjected to brutality, so too were they construed as ever more menacing. Threatening to usurp federal authority and constitutional checks on the balance of power then also became tolerable, in the wake of the government’s perceived failure “to secure the border” against the threat beyond. If ‘self-protection’ served to justify the call for extraordinary measures and diminished legal protections, the same inherent right was not extended to undocumented immigrants seeking to escape violent turmoil and severe poverty.

The issue of immigration in general and its enforcement in particular thus serve as an arena of contest, reflecting both aspects of the self and ‘other’ that are as yet essential to both

local and national conceptions of identity and legitimacy, as well as mutual obligation. As Phyllis Pease Chock observes in regard to lawmakers debating immigration, “the contradictions that are inherent even in canons allow speakers to make attempts to break out of the myths’ terms and to undermine the myth-making process” (280). If this is true at the level of leadership, it proved no less true at the level of readership and the tangible realms of the public’s own public discourse—whether in post offices or diners, whether on golf courses or social media, or whether in the *Star’s* widely-read and locally visible letters-to-the-editor section.

## NOTES

### Chapter I

<sup>1</sup> As per the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, “Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person” regardless of “national or social origin,” including the right “to be held equal before the law” and to avoid being “subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile” or “cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.” See articles III and V-VII. While the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees distinguishes between refugees and ‘economic’ migrants (“UNHCR Viewpoint: ‘Refugee’ or ‘migrant’ – Which is right?”), it can be argued that at the height of the 2000s deportations, large swathes of Mexico existed in a state of violent anomie brought on by the drug cartels, which would militate for Mexican migrants’ consideration as refugees.

<sup>2</sup> Methodology based on Bird, Steven, Ewan Klein and Edward Loper 2014. Additional text computation training was provided during a weeklong intensive hosted by the City University of New York GC Digital Initiatives Institute (June 6-10, 2016). Python 3.5.1. and the Natural Language Toolkit (NLTK) were utilized to derive a list of 100 most common word-tokens from the letters-to-the-editor dataset, with guidance from CUNY GC Digital Fellows Hannah Aizenman and Michelle Johnson-McSweeney.

<sup>3</sup> For a study that demonstrates the impacts of different forms of framing language surrounding immigration on public opinion, see Haynes et al.

### Chapter II

<sup>1</sup> See for example Robert Wiebe on nationalism as a “fictive kinship” (41, 82-83); Ivo Banac on the construction of Serbian identity generally and the model of the *zadruga* (79); Sarah Green’s postulations on the “fractal” aspect of Balkan nationalism (2005).

<sup>2</sup> While the United States’ ostensible embrace of ethnic diversity is often understood as making it “exceptional” among nation-states, one might find correlates elsewhere, for example, in France, where traditionally those wishing to become citizens might do so as long as they made an effort to become culturally and linguistically French.

<sup>3</sup> It goes without saying that nativist affinity did not lie with indigenous ‘Native Americans,’ who were being subjected to genocide during this period, as were the Irish in their homeland for that matter. The Know Nothings were however abolitionists (Schrag 33). By the last quarter of the 19th century, a transformed and resurgent nativist movement would take on the cast of racism (Ngai 8; Schrag 77-138).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Jonathan Friedman (2003) for a discussion of the positivist aspects of globalization; and Michael Blim (2005) for an inquiry into the value of equality in a merit-based global economy.

<sup>5</sup> See Anthony Marx (1998) on the use of codified racism to appease a marginalized and potentially threatening constituency; cf. Alex Kurtagic, “The Great Erasure,” published by the



avowedly white-supremacist National Policy Institute in 2013, as an instance of current nationalist rhetoric surrounding immigration.

<sup>6</sup> The same multinational dynamics that have produced the de-investment in worker pay and de-structuring of the public sector have created an increasingly impoverished and devalued labor force in the United States, stimulating the rising rates of suicide and a drug pandemic related to the socio-economic collapse of untold numbers of communities. It is a point of interest that, with rising rates of suicide and drug-overdose death, one sees a phenomenon traditionally associated with inner cities and Native reservations visited across the nation—from Appalachia to former boom towns like Syracuse, New York, which boasts the nation’s highest heroin usage. See Gerald Sider on suicide in Native communities; and the 2017 *New York Times* special series on U.S. opioid drug addiction (Salam).

### Chapter III

<sup>1</sup> The Hohokam civilization which numbered around 40,000 at its height and lasted until the early 1400s is archaeologically notable for its extensive irrigation infrastructure, platform mounds and ceremonial ball courts. For a brief overview, see Archaeology Southwest: <https://www.archaeologysouthwest.org/ancient-cultures/>

<sup>2</sup> The term ‘Latino’ is understood to include peoples in the Americas whose lands were at one time colonized by the Spanish or Portuguese. ‘Hispanic’ is here not preferred as there are many Latin American indigenous peoples who do not speak Spanish as well as nation-states in which Spanish is not the primary language. The de-gendered term ‘Latinx’ holds promise but, lacking authority or full insight into current discussions, I have erred on the side of tradition.

<sup>3</sup> See Bialik for questions related to the methodologies used to count undocumented immigrants.

<sup>4</sup> Examples among the wealthiest metropolitan area CDPs are Catalina Foothills, Casas Adobes and Tanque Verde; among the poorest are Drexel Heights, Flowing Wells, Three Points and Summit (U.S. Census Bureau, American Fact Finder, “2010 Income & Poverty”).

<sup>5</sup> In 2016, eight years after economic collapse, the median household income for the Tucson metropolitan statistical area was 8.9 percent lower than that of Arizona and 15.5 percent lower than that of the United States (Making Action Possible for Southern Arizona). Between the Recession’s onset in 2007 and 2010 unemployment moreover jumped from 3.5% to 9.4% (City of Tucson).

<sup>6</sup> Wealthier smaller cities include Oro Valley, Sahuarita, and Sierra Vista, as well as rapidly expanding Marana and Casa Grande, which lie at mid-way points between Tucson and Phoenix (Pullen).

<sup>7</sup> While Yuma County sits on the border, it is in fact parallel with Central Arizona and not generally recognized as a part of Southern Arizona. For a map of Southern Arizona, see VisitArizona.com.

<sup>8</sup> Latinos “of any race” represent 41.6% of the entire Tucson metropolitan population. People of Native, African, Asian and Pacific Island descent combined represent 8.37%, but some of these combine with Latino, especially given that 4.2% claim to descend from two or more races (U.S. Census Bureau, American Fact Finder, 2010).

<sup>9</sup> Exceptions include the tiny Mormon community of St. David established in 1877 (“Saint David”) and the reinvented ‘artists’ colony’ of Tubac, first established in 1752 (“Community of Tubac”), both of which have very few Latinos; as well as the fast-growing city of Sahuarita, founded in 1994, which boasts both high earnings and a large Latino base (“Sahuarita Economic Development”).

<sup>10</sup> Communities that were less than 25% Latino included Catalina Foothills, Tanque Verde and the Saddlebrooke Active Retirement Community. The exceptions to the correlation between retirement age and ethnicity include Tucson Estates, Arivaca and Catalina. Examples of Latino majority communities were Drexel Heights, Summit and Valencia West (U.S. Census Bureau, American Fact Finder, 2010).

<sup>11</sup> In 2010 the population of Maricopa was 3.826 million and the population of the Tucson metropolitan area/Pima County was nearly 1 million (U.S. Census Bureau, American Fact Finder, 2010). For Maricopa wealth statistics, see Hansen.

<sup>12</sup> The backlash to ethnic studies was chiefly enflamed by then state attorney general Tom Horne, who gained political capital by fostering animosity against Tucson’s Mexicans and Mexican-Americans in part by denying the value of their history. It is an additional point that much of the attendant rhetoric borrowed on the 1990s anti-multiculturalist stances of theorist Samuel P. Huntington (MacLean; Schrag 12) and politician and pundit James Buchanan. The latter ran as the presidential candidate of the American Reform Party in 2000 based on a platform promise to lead a “party that will defend America’s history, heritage and heroes against the Visigoths and Vandals of multiculturalism” (Buchanan).

<sup>13</sup> While somewhat reductive, Tom Barry is not off the mark when he states in an article for the Boston Review that, “Even before the Great Recession, the state’s two wellsprings of population growth—Latino immigration and Midwest migration—were proving a volatile mix. Surges of snowbirds from the north and immigrants from the south have fed Phoenix and Tucson, with brown immigrant labor building the tile-roofed homes of mostly white transplants who previously had little contact with Latinos” (2011).

<sup>14</sup> According to Judith Gans of the Udall Center, “Fiscal costs of immigrants in 2004 were an estimated \$1.4 billion. Tax revenues attributable to immigrants as workers were approximately \$2.4 billion, resulting in a net fiscal gain of approximately \$940 million” (3). Cf. Nowrasteh of the Cato Institute.

<sup>15</sup> The full title of the Real ID ACT is “An Act to establish and rapidly implement regulations for State driver’s license and identification document security standards, to prevent terrorists from abusing the asylum laws of the United States, to unify terrorism-related grounds for inadmissibility and removal, and to ensure expeditious construction of the San Diego border fence.”

<sup>16</sup> Research gathered in 2007 indicated that Arizona Department of Public Safety officers were 3.25 times more likely to search Native Americans and 2.5 times more likely to search Latinos, African Americans and people of Middle Eastern descent, during highway stops, than ‘whites’—in spite of the fact there was no higher incidence of contraband possession associated with the minorities in question (“Driving while Black or Brown” 3).

<sup>17</sup> The term ‘repatriation’ was first employed as a strategy during the Great Depression and resulted in the deportation of 400,000 or more Mexicans and Mexican-Americans (Schrag 135-137).

<sup>18</sup> See Ballotpedia.com for lists of Arizona ballot measures aggregated by year.

## Chapter IV

<sup>1</sup> Daily Kos released a copy of the Luntz, Maslansky report on its website, which has been further cited in Haynes et al. Allen Luntz confirmed his client base and marketing strategies in a PBS interview (Luntz, “The Persuader”).

<sup>2</sup> According to Race Forward’s online journal *ColorLines* (May 18, 2011), the left-wing political action committees Center for American Progress and America’s Voice encouraged democrats to employ the anti-immigrant rhetoric of the right, with the dual aim of attracting voters and achieving bipartisan immigration reform.

<sup>3</sup> In an online search of *Fox News* and the blog site *Fox News Insider*, conducted on 23 Feb. 2017, the term “Center for Immigration Studies” combined yielded 899 results. In this regard, *Fox News* generated 354 results and *Fox News Insider* generated 565 results. An additional search for 2006-2010 period yielded just 24 results. However, a comparative Google search conducted also on Feb. 23, 2017 for the phrases “FoxNews.com” and “Center for Immigration Studies” yielded “about 44,800 results.”

<sup>4</sup> As per J.T. Ready, “Some of us have our fingers on the triggers; Soap box. Ballot box. Ammo box. These were given to us by our founding fathers and mothers. We have just about depleted the first two options.” (“Arizona White Supremacist and Border Vigilante J.T. Ready Identified as Perpetrator In Mass Shooting,”; see also “J.T. Ready”)

## Chapter V

<sup>1</sup> The term *La Raza* or “the people” as used by identity social movements is meant to be inclusive of all the diverse Latino peoples of the Americas (National Council of La Raza). For a right-wing interpretation of the term, see Human Events. The term *Reconquista*, traditionally associated with the destruction of the Iberian Moorish Kingdom by Northern Christian Spain, has been re-applied to a right-wing conspiracy theory claiming that Mexico seeks to re-take those territories ceded to the United States (Costley, p.36). The term has additionally been used tongue in cheek by Latino cultural figures, such as Carlos Fuentes (Jaggi), in reference to the growing use of Spanish in the United States. See McGrath for its use in the context of a New England separatist movement. For

a rightist view of the Aztlán movement, see FAIR, “Chicano Nationalism, Revanchism and the Aztlán Myth.”

<sup>2</sup> Numerous popular right-wing media figures have attempted to connect immigration to terrorism, including the blogger Peter Brimelow (VDare.com), Minuteman co-founders Chris Simcox and Jim Gilchrist, media pundits Lou Dobbs (“Broken Borders”), Pat Buchanan and Sean Hannity (Hannity and Colmes, “Pat Buchanan Defends Controversial Immigration Comments”; “Border Patrol Agents Forced to Turn to Self Defense?”). Local Tucson TV station KVOA also won an Emmy in 2005 for the “best extended news coverage for reports on illegal immigration and the terrorist threat on the border,” which is noteworthy given the paucity of evidence (Hatfield).

<sup>3</sup> As per Bakhtin, “To consecrate inventive freedom, to permit the combination of a variety of different elements and their rapprochement, to liberate from the prevailing point of view of the world, from conventions and established truths, from clichés, from all that is humdrum and universally accepted” (*Rabelais and His World* 34).

<sup>4</sup> On average there were 65,000 Mexican visitors spending some \$7.35 million per day in Arizona, with retail shopping as the primary reason for visiting (Pavlovich-Kochi and Charney viii).

<sup>5</sup> Results were extracted from a Google search results for *Fox News*’ 60 most “relevant” story headlines related to “illegal aliens” for the period 2006-2010. The top 60 results appeared on 20 December 2017, among 10,000 items yielded.

<sup>6</sup> The following headlines were drawn from “Immigration,” *DiggersRealm.com*, on 29 June 2017: “Illegal Alien Ingmar Guandique Found Guilty In Chandra Levy Murder—Where Is The Jewish Outrage?” 18 Nov. 2010; “Crisantos Moroyoqui, Illegal Alien, Arrested For Beheading In Arizona,” 9 Oct. 2010; “Illegal Immigrant Gets 24 Years in Prison for Sex Trafficking,” 7 Apr. 2009; “Illegal Immigrant Accused of Sexually Assaulting At Least 9 Girls Under 8 in New Jersey,” 19 June 2009; “Amy Kortlang – Four Years Later Drunk Driving Illegal Aliens Continue To Create Victims,” 3 Oct. 2010; “Border Patrol In Shootout Northwest Of Nogales, AZ – Burned Body Found In Tucson,” 2 Sept. 2010; “BREAKING: Multiple Ranches In Laredo, TX Taken Over By Los Zetas [Update 4],” 23 July 2010; “23 Possible Somali Terrorists Headed For Southern US Border,” 3 Apr. 2010; “Mexican Cartel Sews Face Onto Soccer Ball,” 6 Jan. 2010.

<sup>7</sup> For reports on immigrant detention conditions, see No More Deaths; Human Rights Watch. Media coverage of immigrant detention conditions includes Bernstein; Vanderpool, “Holding the Line”; Frey; and Ingram, “Healthcare delays, isolation factors in deaths of detained immigrants.”

<sup>8</sup> While more difficult to track with certainty, according to a database search of Internet Archive on 8 July 2018, in 2010 alone some 4,208 television news stories concerning the U.S.-Mexico border appeared on national cable network stations CNBC, CNN, C-Span, Fox News, and MSNBC. See *TV News Archive*: <https://archive.org/details/tv?q=border> 2010

<sup>9</sup> A list of the 2006-2010 *Arizona Daily Star* items to provoke the greatest number of reader responses in the dataset is as follows: “America is a country of immigrants” (editorial); “Boy whose mom died in wreck saved by entrant,”; “TPD [Tucson Police Department] was wrong to involve Border Patrol” (i.e. concerning the student arrested for marijuana possession); “Hispanic

group right to stand up to hatemongers” (editorial); “Business owner group says illegal hire laws will hurt Anglos too,”; “Permanent [Border Patrol] I-19 checkpoint just makes sense” (editorial); “200+ gather to push for immigration bill’s veto”; “Conviction has crossers’ water supplier defiant”.

<sup>10</sup> As reported to the author personally by a number of known associates.

<sup>11</sup> Drawn from an informal conversation with two members of the Tohono o’Odham nation who were witnesses to the events described. In this regard, it should be borne in mind that border crossers, in traveling across the Sonoran Desert, reportedly cannot carry a sufficient store of water to ensure their well-being by the time they reach human habitation. See also Kilpatrick.

## Chapter VI

<sup>1</sup> The *Star*’s policy of selecting out representative letters was also made known in its Letters to the Editor section, as the following introduction to its Dec. 29, 2007 Letters-to-the-Editor section illustrates:

“Hot issues: The Star received 37 letters about immigration issues, most in response to the Dec. 21 editorial ‘America is a country of immigrants.’ Most writers said it is specifically illegal immigration they oppose, with 27 letters. Another nine writers advocated tolerance while wanting immigrants to come to the country legally. One writer said the United States has too many people and should halt immigration.”

What is made doubly clear by the above is the repetitiveness of anti-immigrant arguments and their correlation with the position advocated by Luntz, Maslansky. See: [https://tucson.com/news/opinion/mailbag/letters-to-the-editor/article\\_c23b79e4-670f-58d6-b8b9-8feb0150c348.html](https://tucson.com/news/opinion/mailbag/letters-to-the-editor/article_c23b79e4-670f-58d6-b8b9-8feb0150c348.html)

<sup>2</sup> The greater or lesser percentages affiliated with career fields do not necessarily indicate greater or lesser levels of socio-political engagement, as the fields specified do not attract equal numbers of participants. Additional factors may too have impacted certain outcomes; as an example, the *Star*’s effort to solicit high-school students’ opinions likely contributed to a high number of education participants. That said, isolating certain fields suggested some unexpected insights when correlated with stance.

<sup>3</sup> According to a Pew Research Center report (“Internet Overtakes Newspapers”), in 2008 digital media surpassed newspapers as a source of public news. Typical of opinions foretelling the demise of newspapers is “The End of Newspapers” by Marie B  nilde for *The New York Times* (16 Mar. 2010).

<sup>4</sup> Social media giants Twitter and Facebook did not begin archiving pages and posts in earnest until 2010. While the Wayback Machine’s *Web Archive* is a fairly reliable source for no longer extant anti-immigrant blogs, it does not include past Twitter and Facebook posts or local television media programs posted online. In addition, the Web Archive allows website owners to delete archived pages, in effect permitting those with a conflict of interest to censor and erase their own history. The *Arizona Daily Star* too did not retain readers’ online comments to articles.

<sup>5</sup> According to market data from Scarborough Market/Release, over the 2006-2010 period the *Star's* combined print-and-online readership made up on average 66 percent of the population over 18 years of age. By comparison the paper's subscriber base numbered around 120,000 readers. (Scarborough Market/Release. Data provided by the *Arizona Daily Star* Marketing Department. Permission to reproduce data is required.)

<sup>6</sup> The *Star* readership includes 27% of the region's Latino over-18 population. (Scarborough Market/Release. Data provided by the *Arizona Daily Star* Marketing Department. Permission to reproduce data is required.) While factors such as intermarriage, indigenous Latin American ancestry and immigration to Latin America from other parts of the world suggest that a person of Latino origin need not have a Spanish last name or conversely that a non-Latino individual may possess a Spanish last name, based on census counts in the United States there nevertheless appears to be a high correlation between Spanish last names and Latino origin (Comenetz; Mongabay.com).

<sup>7</sup> Even if government efforts were made in this time to realize mass deportation, in 2005 this position was viewed as extreme and unachievable even by anti-immigration proponents. See for example Luntz, Maslansky on amnesty (5).

<sup>8</sup> *Politics*, book 3, chapter XVI.

<sup>9</sup> For historic references to the "invasion" of immigrants, see Schrag, ch. 1; Taparata; Chavez. For current references, see Beirich, "Getting Immigration Facts Straight"; Saltonstall; cf. O'Reilly.

<sup>10</sup> In time the Ethnic Studies program would be banned by then state Attorney General Tom Horne, based on the accusation that it failed to comply with Arizona statute prohibiting the teaching of courses that promote "ethnic solidarity" or "resentment towards a race or class of people" (Cambium Learning 18).

<sup>11</sup> The writer may possibly be referring to any or all of the following: the United States' invasion of Mexico and land appropriation during the Mexican-American War; the cross-border Apache raiding promoted by local Tucson traders (Jacoby); the Gadsden Purchase (U.S. Department of State Office of the Historian); the illegal confiscation of Native and Mexican-owned lands (Sheridan, *Landscapes of Fraud*); union violence and racism (Mellinger); the Arizona orphan abduction (Regan); or the institution of various state and community miscegenation and segregation laws (Campbell).

<sup>12</sup> Of the 62% of Arizona residents born outside of the state, 48% were estimated to have migrated from other U.S. states or territories, and 14% from foreign countries. See U.S. Census Bureau, "State of Residence by Place of Birth Table: 2010."

<sup>13</sup> Although a systematic effort was made to tag the letters according to the subjects on which authors appeared to focus their attention, allowance should be made for some degree of inconsistency in application and interpretive bias.

<sup>14</sup> The concept of the 'social contract' was first advanced by Jacques Rousseau in his eponymous treatise and further debated by John Locke, among many others to follow. The writings of both

are considered seminal to the rise of democracy as it took shape in England and the United States. It is not within the scope of this thesis to explore the breadth of arguments and considerations brought to bear on the concept of the ‘social contract’ but rather to situate its meaning within letter-writers’ own reflections. Two articles of possible interest however include one by Mira Morganstern (2008), who posits that Rousseau would later on explore the nexus between the ‘social contract’ and nationalist violence/exclusion. The second, by Jens Rudbeck (2012), argues for Rousseau’s influence on the rise of a new form of social movement in 18th century England predicated on a novel conceptualization of sovereignty.

<sup>15</sup> This line of thinking is often embodied by the expression, “Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime.” (QuoteInvestigator.com)

<sup>16</sup> The words “I” and “Tucson” occupied the first two positions in the word-token list, the first referring to the letter writer and the last appearing most often in reference to the writer’s location.

<sup>17</sup> The ostensible purpose of the 1953 Refugee Relief Act per a National Security Council Memorandum was to “encourage defection of all USSR nationals and ‘key’ personnel from the satellite countries.” (Newland)

<sup>18</sup> Per Gilchrist, “Scattered piles of non-biodegradable trash litter the land on both sides of the international border: plastic jugs and glass bottles, clothing, backpacks, tires, rusted cans, and the skeletal remains of stripped vehicles long ago abandoned. The border is a public dump for hundreds of millions of pounds of rubbish discarded by the endless exodus of migrants coming north” (Gilchrist; cf. Oliviero 690).

<sup>19</sup> Variations on the following dictate are found in Judeo-Christian scripture: “When a stranger lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. The stranger living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were strangers in Egypt” (Sacks). In Buddhist and Hindu scripture, hospitality must be extended to the stranger or *atithi*, who should be treated “like a god” (Rotman). See also the Lutheran Federation of Churches, “Welcoming the Stranger: Affirmations for Faith Leaders”; and the “United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, Geneva, 28 July 1951 and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, New York, 31 January 1967.”

<sup>20</sup> In the 2006-2010 period under consideration, Luntz, Maslansky was not convinced that there was adequate support for denying undocumented children healthcare (1).

<sup>21</sup> For example, a *Star* poll found that 70% of respondents supported “a measure authorizing police to check the immigration status of anyone they suspect of being an illegal immigrant,” even if 53% were concerned about civil rights violations (Bodfield). In a second survey, 60% of respondents declared “illegal immigration” to be the most pressing issue of the 2008 elections (*Arizona Daily Star*, “Readers see little hope for immigration reform”)



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