

INTERNET AND U.S. CITIZEN MILITIAS

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Smelser's theory of collective behavior holds that people join radical social movements because they experience strain. Among the most serious strains are anxieties that relate to one's social status and the roles that correspond to it. A social movement arises as a means of coping with these anxieties. Militia presence and activity on the Internet (especially Usenet) is a phenomenon that can be studied within the framework of Smelser's theory. Militia watchers contend that those who join the militias have experienced the kinds of strain to which Smelser refers.

A content analysis of Internet traffic of U.S. militias provides a test of the general thesis outlined above. By analyzing Internet sites it is possible to examine whether militiamen have experienced strain, and whether the strain, together with other factors, influence an individual's decision to join the militia. This dissertation was the first sociological study of American militias on the Internet and the first in which militias from all regions of the country was studied. Information was gathered on 171 militiamen who joined 28 militias.

A qualitative analysis of militia web sites and Usenet traffic (N = 1189 online documents) yielded answers to 7 research questions. Most militiamen studied experienced some form of stress or strain prior to joining the militia. Within this context, three generalized beliefs arose to help explain this stress among those militiamen. Bureau of Alcohol, Firearms and Tobacco (BATF) raids at Ruby Ridge, Idaho and Waco, Texas were mentioned most often as movement precipitants. Based on the militiamen studied,

the militia movement was Internet-driven, although a number of alternative media played a joint role in movement mobilization. On the basis of the cases studied, increased social control following the Oklahoma City bombing affected the direction of the movement as many militias went underground. Yet, Usenet traffic by and about militiamen rose significantly. Constitutionalism was the primary philosophical orientation of the militias in this dissertation; however, Christian Identity militias were growing in number and visibility.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	iii
LIST OF TABLES .....	vii
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Problem Statement	
Significance of the Study	
Assumptions	
Definition of a Citizen Militia	
Conclusions	
2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE .....	8
Evolution of Citizen Militias	
Early Militias of the Modern Era	
The Militia Movement of the 1990s	
Smelser's Theory of Collective Behavior	
Smelser's Model	
Criticisms of Smelser's Theory	
Weaknesses of Alternative Theories	
Summary	
3. DATA AND METHODS .....	25
Research Design	
Research Questions	
Data	
Methods	
Structural Strain	

	Generalized Beliefs	
	Precipitants	
	Mobilization for Action	
	Social Control	
	Status Displacement	
	Orientation	
	Limitations of the Study	
	Summary	
4.	RESULTS .....	41
	Structural Strain	
	The New World Order	
	Ruby Ridge, Waco and Gun Control	
	The Internet	
	Oklahoma City Bombing	
	Status Displacement	
	Constitutionalism versus Christian Identity Interests	
	Summary	
5.	DISCUSSION .....	62
	Corroborating Evidence	
	Structural Strain	
	The New World Order	
	Ruby Ridge, Waco and Gun Control	
	The Internet	
	Oklahoma City Bombing	
	Constitutionalism versus Christian Identity Interests	
	Internet and Non-Internet Militias: A Comparison	
	Differences between Groups	
	Comparisons along Smelser’s Dimensions	
	Status Displacement	
	Constitutionalism versus Christian Identity Interests	

	Summary	
6.	CONCLUSION.....	77
	The Adequacy of the Internet as a Data Source	
	Future Research	
	APPENDICES .....	86
	REFERENCE LIST .....	101



## LIST OF TABLES

	Page
1. Militias Studied by Region .....	32
2. Internet Militia Cases Studied by Region .....	33
3. Comparison of Internet Militias Studied by Region with SPLC Militias .....	33
4. Structural Strain Reported by/for U.S. Militiamen .....	43
5. Occupational Data Reported by/for U.S. Militiamen .....	44
6. Militiamen Introduced to Concept of New World Order Before Joining Militia ..	45
7. Precipitants of U.S. Militia Movement Mentioned by/for U.S. Militiamen .....	49
8. Media of Choice Reported by/for U.S. Militiamen .....	50
9. Internet Mentors of the U.S. Militia Movement .....	51
10. Growth in Usenet Traffic on Three Militia-Oriented Newsgroups .....	53
11. Growth in General Usenet Traffic on Three Militia-Oriented Newsgroups .....	54
12. Status Displacement Versus Collective Action by U.S. Militiamen .....	57
13. Primary Orientations Reported by/for U.S. Militiamen .....	59
14. A Typology of Militia Organizations and Representative Militias .....	60
15. Internet and Non-Internet Militias by Region .....	72
16. Non-Internet Militias Studied by Region .....	73
17. Criminal Involvement of Internet and Non-Internet Militias .....	74

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Sociologists have virtually ignored the rise of the U.S. citizen militia movement in the 1990's. Serious study of this movement and most of the data collection and analysis was done by specialists within civil rights organizations and by "extremist watchers" whose intentions were good but who were not trained sociologists. So, despite the militia phenomenon's close affinity to such sociological specialties as the sociology of revolution, political sociology and collective behavior, research into this phenomenon has not been framed (for the most part) in sociological terms. Sociological questions have not been posed, nor have hypotheses been developed that test sociological theories. In general, militias have not even been sociologically defined, either conceptually or operationally. (For an exception, see O'Brien and Haider-Markel, 1998). Clearly there is much basic sociological research to be done on citizen militias.

Consequently, sociologists had relatively little insight to offer when militias burst upon the public scene following the Oklahoma City bombing. After the New York Times linked Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols to a citizen militia in northern Michigan, the public immediately made a strong linkage between the bombing suspects and the citizen militias. The militia movement subsequently was scrutinized in great detail by the press, politicians, law enforcement agencies, legal scholars and others. Legitimate concerns were raised that the militia movements' strong anti-government rhetoric contributed to an environment that may have encouraged the bombers to act

(Berlet and Lyons, 1995; Stern, 1996). Connections between certain militiamen and various hate groups were exposed (Swomley, 1995), and militia members committed several terrorist acts after the bombing (DeArmond, 1996). However, despite the significant impact of militias upon American society during the 1990's, they have yet to become the subject of sociological study.

### Problem Statement

The lack of sociological interest in militias is surprising, given that sociologists have long been interested in the role that “anomie” or feelings of powerlessness play in peasant rebellions, urban uprisings, protest movements, revolutions, and related phenomena. Merton's (1938) classic argument was that anomie is a normal result of the pressure that social structures exert upon certain persons in a society to engage in nonconforming behavior. Faced with this pressure, some individuals choose illegitimate means of attaining social and cultural goals. A rebellion or social uprising is just one of the normal responses to social strains produced by social structure. According to Merton, the radical social movement seeks the replacement of both social and cultural goals and the means of attaining them.

Similarly, Smelser's (1963) theory of collective behavior explained social phenomena based upon the concept of social strain. According to his theory, people join radical social movements because of social and economic strain that comes from rapid social changes over which individuals and groups feel that they have little or no control. Among the most serious strains are uncertainties and anxieties that relate to one's social status and the roles that correspond to it. A social movement arises as a means of coping

with these anxieties. It reassures participants that something is being done to redress the underlying source of strain.

Smelser's (1963) model proposes that six conditions are necessary and sufficient to produce any given form of collective behavior. That is, each condition is a precursor to the next condition and must appear for subsequent conditions to appear. The six conditions are 1) structural conduciveness, 2) structural strain, 3) the development of a generalized belief, 4) precipitating events, 5) a mobilization for action, and 6) social control that shapes the direction of the movement once it has started.

Militia presence and activity on the Internet is a phenomenon that can be studied within the framework of Smelser's theory. Militia watchers contend that those who join militias have experienced the kinds of social and economic strains to which Smelser refers (cf., Berlet and Lyons, 1995; Junas, 1995). According to them, the socioeconomic power and position of these affected individuals are threatened. Joining a militia group is a way to regain social status and power that has been lost.

The purpose of this dissertation is to analyze the content of Internet traffic of U.S. militias and to provide a test of the general thesis outlined above. It is argued that militiamen have experienced social and economic strain, and these strains, together with other factors specified by Smelser, influence the individual's decision to join the militia.

### Significance of the Study

This study uses web sites and militia messages posted to Usenet as primary data to test Smelser's theory of collective behavior and, thus, will help to fill a critical research gap in our knowledge of citizen militias. It is also unique because it is the first sociological study of militias that have an Internet presence, and the first sociological

study in which militias from all regions of the U.S. are studied. The only previous study examined a group called the Christian Patriots in Idaho (Aho, 1990), and only a small proportion of those Patriots – 15 percent – were actually militiamen. The militias there were basically the terroristic “action arm” of the more radical Patriot groups.

Aho’s (1990) study was qualitative, using a triangulation of methods including phone and face-to-face interviews, questionnaires, and content analysis of movement literature. Because of the detail and depth that this work involved, he was restricted to studying a single case study within a small geographic area. Although this dissertation also uses qualitative methods, this study is able to examine militias from throughout the United States that appeared on the Internet. In order to triangulate various methods, archival data was used (for some of the research questions) to supplement the primary data.

#### Assumptions

A basic assumption of this study is that use of Internet data can provide answers to the research questions posed. That is, web sites or messages posted by militiamen to Usenet will provide answers that will reveal the underlying source of social strain, will tell us about precipitating factors or how social control affected the direction that the movement took after the Oklahoma City bombing.

A second assumption is that messages posted to the Internet are truthful indications of the militiaman’s state of mind and do reflect how that individual thinks and feels about issues considered important to militias in the United States. Militiamen sometimes sign their messages with a code name or may use an Internet address to hide their identity. It is assumed here that Internet messages may give a more accurate picture of militiamen

attitudes than a face to face interview, because of the freedom of expression that anonymity allows.

#### Definition of a Citizen Militia

A basic flaw of previous studies of citizen militias is the lack of an operationally useful definition of a citizen militia. In other words, researchers assumed they knew a militia when they saw it and did not see the need for a definition. Aho (1990) for example never defined the term “militia” in his classic study of Idaho patriots.

Militiamen were a relatively small subset of the patriots he studied and he referred to them simply as “terrorists,” a distinction that seemed clear to him and to his audience.

Similarly, the Southern Poverty Law Center (1996, 1997) defined or labeled a group as a militia (with no elaboration or explanation) when they placed it on their watch list.

In this study, a citizen militia is conceptually defined as a private army that meets regularly to practice combat scenarios or skills and to discuss weapons. It may identify targets against which weapons could be used. A citizen militia may have an offensive, paramilitary orientation (seek and destroy) or a defensive orientation (e.g., protecting Americans from the New World Order) or both, depending upon circumstances (Stern, 1995).

A further distinguishing mark of a citizen militia is its reactionary, nostalgic, preservative nature. It tries to turn back the clock to a point in time that is perceived to have been better than the present. This kind of thinking has branched out in two different directions. First, the militia may see the “organic” constitution of the United States (the original articles plus the first ten amendments) as the “real” constitution, the one worth

preserving at all costs. This is known as the Constitutional Republic that the militiamen want to protect (Sherwood, 1994).

A second line of thought, influenced by white supremacy and Christian Identity, is that the white race originated in the Garden of Eden and is now being preserved as part of a “new covenant” with God. Aryans replaced Jews as God’s chosen people. (In contrast, minorities, gays/lesbians, liberals, and Jews are satanic enemies.) The role of the militia here is pro-active, to spark apocalyptic-like actions that will restore white men to their privileged position vis-à-vis their Creator (Aho, 1990; Mullins, 1993; Barkun, 1997).

Since this conceptual definition being used here is very broad, militias can be viewed as existing along a continuum in terms of their violence, tactics, and ideologies. At one end are well-organized and criminally effective terrorist groups such as The Order. This group specialized in covert action and was philosophically compatible with Christian Identity, neo-Nazism and kindred ideologies (Smith, 1994). The Order dissolved during the 1980s, but one militia studied here, the Aryan Republican Army, has been compared to The Order (Macko, 1996). At the other extreme are public entities such as the Michigan Militia, whose orientations are primarily constitutionalist.

Furthermore, a citizen militia is operationally defined in this study as a group that:

- 1) puts combat scenarios/skills and weaponry plans into minimally mock action, including in some cases going on maneuvers;
- 2) has an identifiable territory in which its members belong;
- 3) bases its organizational philosophies on anti-government rhetoric;
- 4) develops contingency plans in case of government provocation;
- 5) considers at least the viability of extreme measures to protect the organic constitution and/or white race such as bombings, kidnappings, separatism, and “paper terrorism”; and
- 6) considers, at

minimum, the viability of criminal activity to gain weapons and explosives (Stern, 1995; George and Wilcox, 1996; Halpern and Levin, 1996; Duffy and Brantley, 1998). This definition insures that militias are social groups that practice skills within a distinct territory, are anti-government in outlook, and have definite opinions regarding use of terrorism to further militia goals.

### Conclusions

The purpose of this dissertation is to test, using a content analysis of the Internet traffic of U.S. militiamen, the thesis that social strain and other factors specified by Neil Smelser account for the rise of the most recent militia movement in the United States. Smelser's theory of collective behavior has been selected as the theoretical frame of reference because extant literature about U.S. militias indicate that factors identified by Smelser played a role in the genesis and direction of this militia movement. This study will view web sites and messages posted to the Internet as primary data to test Smelser's theory of collective behavior, helping to fill a critical research gap.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature on the evolution of citizen militias and also presents Smelser's theory of collective behavior in greater detail. Chapter 3 describes the research design, enumerates the research questions, and describes the data sources and methods that will be applied to the data. Chapter 4 presents the results of the study. Chapter 5 presents, in the first half, a discussion of the results and corroborating evidence from the literature that supports the main findings of this study. The second half of Chapter 5 compares Internet and non-Internet militias among the dimensions suggested by Smelser's theory. The concluding chapter, Chapter 6, summarizes the dissertation and focuses upon the most important aspects of the findings.



## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Evolution of Citizen Militias

The roots of the modern day militia movement lie in the revolutionary role of the militia in U.S. colonial history and the precedents for militias that appear in the Articles of Confederation, the Constitution, and subsequent federal legislation. Militias gained visibility and stature by fighting at Lexington and later helped to repel the British advance on Concord. The value of militias to the developing republic of the United States was shown in the Articles of Confederation, where the early Congress was given the authority to call up the militia to quell invasions and the power to organize, arm and discipline militias as needed to fulfill this purpose. After formulation of the U.S. republic, this authority and power was forwarded to Congress in Article 1, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution. The Second Amendment further justified militias, stating that they were necessary to ensure a “free state.” This amendment has been interpreted by some to mean that an important republican function of the militia is to safeguard against the tyranny of standing armies and government incumbents (Kates, 1983; Halbrook, 1984; Williams, 1991).

#### Early Militias of the Modern Era

Precursors of today’s militias drew upon this classic republican tradition of an unorganized, armed populace. Militias of the late 1950’s to early 1960’s, for example, viewed themselves as Patriots protecting America from a global collectivist takeover (Salsich, 1961). Beyond this basic similarity, however, early militias diverged philosophically along two different lines of thought. Some were constitutionalist in

outlook (denoting a particular perspective and not a specific group) while others were influenced by Christian Identity, an ideology that first appeared in the U.S. in the 1870's. These are best viewed as ideal-typical philosophies or perspectives and not rigid categories.

Constitutionalists believed in the sanctity of the United States Constitution and contended that certain groups are conspiring to destroy America. They were reluctant to blame a definite ethnic, racial or religious category, favoring instead categories like "Bilderbergers," "Trilateralists," or "Force X" (Aho, 1990). Important in the early stages of constitutionalism was the encouragement and support it drew from tax protestors, the Posse Comitatus, the John Birch Society, and the Mormon Church.

Marvin Cooley's seminars in the early 1970's are often cited as the start of the tax protest movement. Cooley's seminars attracted future militiaman Robert Mathews, who would lead the terrorist militia The Order on a lawbreaking rampage a decade later. Formed by William Gale and Mike Beach in the late 1960's and later known as Posse Comitatus, the posse movement recognized the county sheriff as the highest legitimately elected official in the country and hoped to form local armed units that would compel government agents to obey the law of the U.S. Constitution. Gordon Kahl joined the Posse in the early 1970's and his death at the hands of North Dakota lawmen in 1983 was a precipitant of much militia-induced terrorism during the 1980's. The John Birch Society and the Mormon Church influenced the early lives of prominent constitutionalists, Robert DePugh, Robert Mathews, and Gordon Kahl. DePugh, for instance, belonged to the John Birch Society in the early years of the militia that he formed called the Minutemen. Mathews was motivated to attend Cooley's seminars after

joining the Mormon Church and the John Birch Society while living with his parents in Phoenix (Jones, 1968; Aho, 1990; Corcoran, 1991; Flynn and Gerhardt, 1995; George and Wilcox, 1996).

Originating from the second line of thought, the Christian Identity ideology is built around three premises (Barkun, 1997). First, white Aryans are descendants of the biblical tribes of Israel and thus are on earth to do God's work. Second, Jews are completely unconnected to the Israelites and are actually children of the Devil, the literal biological offspring of a sexual relationship between Satan and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Finally, the world is on the verge of a final apocalyptic struggle between good and evil, in which Aryans must do battle with the Jewish conspiracy – an international conspiracy designed to destroy the United States – so that the world can be redeemed.

The American version of Christian Identity developed through C.A.L. Totten, Howard Rand and William Cameron, following a period of consolidation from 1936 until 1946. It grew rapidly on the West Coast with the preaching of Gerald L.K. Smith. Southern California was the vanguard of this ideology as several of Smith's proteges, including William Gale, preached and expanded upon the Christian Identity doctrine (Barkun, 1997).

Gale founded one of the early Christian Identity militias of the 1960's, the California Rangers. The Attorney General of California referred to the Rangers as an underground network for the conduct of guerilla warfare (State of California, 1965). It was Gale who introduced Richard Butler to Christian Identity leader Wesley Swift in the early 1960's. Butler was mesmerized by Swift's lectures and soon became a Christian Identity follower. He rose through the ranks quickly, leading a militia called the

Christian Defense League. When Swift died in 1970, Butler took over Swift's congregation in Lancaster, California. Later, Butler would leave for northern Idaho, where he would help to establish a racially "pure" settlement around Hayden Lake and serve briefly as a mentor to Robert Mathews of The Order (Barkun, 1997; Flynn and Gerhardt, 1995).

Though some of the early militias could be classified as "constitutional," the predominant ideology of the early phase of the movement (from 1958 to 1991) was based on that of Christian Identity. This was largely due to a popular and influential book (among militia members) by William Pierce called The Turner Diaries (1978). The book is a fictional account of a racist, anti-Semitic underground militia that, through a series of violent acts during the 1990's, gains power in America and eventually the world. The book describes the bombing of FBI headquarters in Washington, a mortar attack on the Capital building, the destruction of public utilities and communication systems, and the "liberation" of the nation after atomic bombs have been dropped on the East Coast. In the end, the U.S. population is reduced to 50 million Aryans (cf., Anti-Defamation League, 1995).

The Turner Diaries had been read by many that attended a 1982 meeting of right-wing organizations in northern Idaho, the purpose of which was to sign a document called the Nehemiah Township Charter and Common Law Contract (Barkun, 1997). Believing that the "Zionist Occupational Government" had perverted the U.S. Constitution and the Declaration of Independence and that those two documents were no longer "covenants between God and Man," the Nehemiah Charter was considered the new covenant. It would become the Constitution under which the new government

would rule after Armageddon. According to the Charter, Jesus Christ would lead the new government, whose purpose is to safeguard and protect the Christian faith. There would be no legislative body, no taxation, no governmental laws and only freemen (i.e., whites) would have personal freedoms according to a “Common Law” that is enforced by Posse Comitatus (Aho, 1990; Mullins, 1993).

Robert Mathews and Posse Comitatus leader Gordon Kahl were killed in shoot-outs with police during the 1980’s. Later that decade, ten militia leaders were charged with sedition and put on trial in Fort Smith, Arkansas. Essentially, this rendered the movement financially and ideologically bankrupt. Consequently, there was a lull in militia activity until after the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (BATF) - Branch Davidian standoff at Waco in 1993. Though some note a continuity between the early phase of the militia movement and the one to follow – due largely to a meeting at Estes Park, Colorado in October, 1992 (cf., Dees and Corcoran, 1996) - there is literature which also suggests that the 1990’s movement is something new and different, and is not influenced by the earlier phase (Schneider, 1994; Berlet and Lyons, 1995; Wills, 1995). Either way, whether or not Christian Identity doctrine or constitutionalism is the leading paradigm guiding the most recent movement is in question.

#### The Militia Movement of the 1990’s

Despite problems in determining the predominant ideology of the 1990’s movement, it is possible to draw out some themes with respect to the origins of this most recent phase of the militia movement. Underlying the movement are distrust of and a general dissatisfaction with the encroachment of the federal government into the lives of American citizens, and the perceived erosion of constitutional republicanism. For

instance, John Trochmann of the Militia of Montana said that his mission was to make people aware of the “military takeover” of the U.S. and how constitutional freedoms were being eroded, especially the right to keep and bear arms (Barkun, 1997).

Beyond the general dissatisfaction noted by Trochmann and other militiamen, the new militia (or neo-militia) movement draws its strength from and is supportive of a number of right wing causes. In general, militias oppose the U.S. Federal Reserve and federal tax system, are protective of property rights, believe in “judicial purity” (e.g., juries should not allow judges to instruct them, because jury members have power to determine points of law and evidence) and object to the bullying of the politically unorthodox by police agencies (Dallas Morning News, 1994; Helvarg, 1995; Wills, 1995). Thus, there is some carryover of the constitutionalist themes that were evident in some of the early militias of the modern era. Furthermore, these neo-militias object to government interference in education, abortion policy, and the environment, and believe that it is time to roll back the clock on these issues. Interestingly, mainstream conservative views on these issues are quite similar to those of the neo-militias (Schneider, 1994; Halpern and Levin, 1996).

In the minds of many militia members, two events seem to hallmark the shift in the winds of change, altering the role of the U.S. federal government in the lives of average American citizens. These are the standoff at the Randy Weaver home in Ruby Ridge, Idaho, and the one at the Branch Davidian complex in Waco, Texas. These events will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

However, even before these two important events, two others are cited by militiamen as being significant. First is a 1990 speech by President George Bush in

which he declared a new world order in which all countries of the world would compete economically but cooperate in peacekeeping missions under the authority of the U.N (Walker, 1994; Halpern and Levin, 1996).

Others point to Pat Robertson's The New World Order (1991) as a key turning point (Church and State, 1995). In this book, he argues that a tightly knit international cabal, beginning with the Illuminati and Freemasons and continued with communism and late-capitalist high finance, is trying to establish a new order of the human race under the domination of Lucifer and his followers. This new order today is guided by the same "evil" influences that has guided it for centuries (Aho, 1990).

#### Smelser's Theory of Collective Behavior

As noted at the outset of this dissertation, most of the literature on the evolution of U.S. militias, and in particular that on the neo-militia movement, has been authored by journalists, historians, and others who are not sociologists and, therefore, the research has not been formulated or interpreted from a sociological point of view. The literature reviewed in the previous section bears the imprint of this influence, being mostly socio-historically descriptive and putting emphasis on the development of certain key leaders of the movement and their impact upon the movement as a whole. Sociologically, Smelser's theory of collective behavior provides a more useful paradigm because it helps explain the underlying factors that might have lead to the genesis of the neo-militia movement in the early 1990's.

Smelser's theory is over thirty years old and the question could be legitimately raised as to why an old theory can be considered relevant to a recent phenomenon such as the citizen militia movement. Garner and Tenuto (1997), in their review of the social

movement literature describe Smelser's theory as a bridge between an initial phase in the literature that emphasized irrational aspects of collective behavior and a second phase that was more sociological in outlook. Currently, a third "postmodern" phase has emerged. So, the question again might be posed as to why Smelser's theory could be relevant now if it is part of a tradition in social movement theory whose most productive days are in the past.

Smelser's theory seems to be the best fit between what observers have seen (empirically) of the movement and a logical explanation for the movement's genesis. In other words, it is the best match between current data and a theoretical explanation for it. Furthermore, there are similarities between the current movement and the kinds of right-wing extremism that existed when Smelser wrote. Considering these factors, Smelser's theory appears to be the most powerful explanation that we have for the rise of the 1990's militia movement.

### Smelser's Model

Smelser's (1963) model proposes that six conditions are necessary and sufficient to produce any given form of collective behavior. The first condition is structural conduciveness. Conduciveness is, at most, permissive of a given type of collective behavior. It can be thought of as implicit rules and standards of a society that allows a given episode of collective behavior to occur. In the United States, the rights to freedom of assembly and freedom of association that appear in the Constitution are conducive to the formulation of militias as well as other kinds of social groups or movements. More specifically, modern day militias draw upon colonial history and the precedents for militias that appear in the Articles of Confederation, the Constitution, and subsequent



federal legislation – the Militia Act of 1903, the National Defense Act of 1916, and Section 10 of the U.S. Code (U.S. Senate, 1982; Hardy, 1985). Militias today see themselves (and not the National Guard) as the militia mandated in these laws and as protectors of the people against an arrogant, tyrannical government.

The second condition is structural strain. This refers to tensions and anxieties introduced by social changes, ones that are seen as being unfair and structural in nature (Smelser, 1963). For example, global corporate restructuring has led to distress and strain in certain economic sectors. The number of employed Americans whose incomes fell below the poverty line rose 23 percent from 1978 through 1987. The principal losers in this trend, who felt a real decline in their earning power, were those workers engaged in routine production services (e.g., farming, manufacturing) and those who provide routine personal services such as truck drivers, custodians, restaurant employees, and barbers. Weinberg (1993) contends that the radical right recruited many members and sympathizers from whites employed in these increasingly distressed economic sectors.

Furthermore, some whites believe that their status in the world is declining relative to other racial categories in society. In particular, there is an undercurrent of resentment against what are seen as the unfair advantages the government gives to people of color and women (Berlet and Lyons, 1995). In the eyes of these whites, these advantages are the result of the feminist and civil rights movements; civil rights legislation and court decisions; welfare; affirmative action programs; and educational programs for the economically disadvantaged that exclude nonminorities. They believe that the hegemony of the traditional male headed, two parent household has been damaged by these

developments, and by the growth of secular humanism and increasing acceptance of alternative lifestyles (Davidson and Moore, 1996).

Third, there is the development of generalized beliefs, in which people seek an explanation for the hardships and strains they have experienced. Smelser (1963) holds that a generalized belief identifies the source of strain, attributes characteristics to this source, and specifies certain responses to the strain as possible or appropriate. For example, among those who would later join militias, a generalized belief referred to as the “New World Order” began to circulate around 1990, buttressed by numerous conspiracy theories. According to this belief, a U.N.– led new world order was poised to take over the United States and administer a totalitarian, collectivist government (McLemmee, 1995; Ridgeway and Zeskind, 1995; Stern, 1995, 1996; U.S. Senate, 1997).

This new world government, according to militiamen, is being formed by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and multinational corporations that will be administered through the United Nations. International trade agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade are cited as proof of the global conspiracy. Once the new government is in place, its agents, including the President of the U.S., will impose martial law, suspend the U.S. Constitution, institute totalitarian rule, and seize all weapons from individuals. Under collectivist control, governmental control over the lives of the citizens will be complete and the government will crush all that resist. Fear of collectivism is the militias’ “call to arms,” and devotees think that they must bear arms and train to resist an impending takeover (Schneider, 1994; Cockburn, 1995; Kovalski, 1995; McFadden, 1995).

According to this view, the new world order is strongly supported by liberals who have sponsored the various social movements (e.g. civil rights) leading to the erosion of social status and power among whites. Thus this generalized belief 1) provides an explanation for the situation in which the future militiamen find themselves, 2) puts the social changes going on around them into a context, and 3) identifies an enemy for them to fight (Aho, 1994; Gibson, 1994).

Fourth, Smelser (1963) argues that there are precipitating factors that support the generalized belief and set the episode of collective behavior into motion. In this case, events at Ruby Ridge, Idaho, and Waco, Texas, together with passage of gun control legislation, lent support to the generalized beliefs and crystallized calls for action. To these future militiamen, the perceived heavy-handed government tactics at Ruby Ridge and Waco confirmed that the U.S. government is preparing for totalitarian rule (Barkun, 1997; Hamm, 1997). Gun control, they believed, would disarm the populace and ease the transition (Roland, 1994a).

Personal involvement in the Ruby Ridge and Waco cases led some to form militias. John Trochmann's involvement in the Weaver case led to the creation of the Militia of Montana (Walter, 1995; Hamm, 1997), one of the militias included in this dissertation. Others personally involved in that case lent support to a 1992 conference at Estes Park, Colorado, of persons interested in forming militias (Dees and Corcoran, 1996). In Indiana, a then-unknown lawyer, Linda Thompson, was so enraged by the Waco standoff that she produced two films, Waco, The Big Lie (1993) and Waco II: The Big Lie Continues (1994). These films purport to show that government agents intentionally killed ATF agents and Branch Davidians and that the media helped to cover it up.

For others, weapons legislation has been a major precipitant. Texas Constitutional Militia leader, Jon Roland, believed that the Brady Bill and assault weapons legislation were a major assault on the constitutional rights to keep and bear arms, and part of a more sinister preparation for depriving citizens of still more constitutional rights after they have been disarmed (Roland, 1994a).

Fifth, Smelser (1963) contends that mobilization for action occurs when one or more leaders emerge to give a sense of direction. He believes that movement leaders are charismatic and that a strong commitment to the movement develops among the followers. Evidence suggests that certain charismatic neo-militia leaders were able to mobilize quickly via short-wave radio, e-mail, fax, computer bulletin boards and the Internet to give the fledgling movement a sense of direction. For example, Jon Roland's (1994a) publication of the Texas Militia Papers on the Internet helped galvanize support for the formation of militias throughout the United States.

Finally, Smelser (1963) notes that social control mechanisms initiated by elites in power affects the direction of the collective behavior or movement once it has started. Social control as defined by Smelser can be thought of as the counter determinants that prevent, interrupt, deflect, or inhibit the movement, including the response of official agents of social control such as the police, public administrators and elected officials. For example, according to some analysts, anti-terrorism legislation together with negative publicity and negative public opinion following the Oklahoma City bombing encouraged a portion the neo-militia movement to "go underground" (Southern Poverty Law Center, 1996).

Smelser's theory of collective behavior was designed to explain any kind of collective behavior or social movement. In general, the citizen militia movement is considered a right-wing radical movement and, thus, has certain special characteristics. Smelser recognized this, citing a right wing movement as an example of a "value oriented" movement that seeks a restructuring of society. Extending Smelser's analysis, Lipset and Raab (1978) argued that the restructuring sought by right wing movements such as a militia is "preservative" and has a "backlash" quality to it. Participants in the movement want to re-establish the past because it looks better than the present. With position in society and power being eroded, participants are experiencing status displacement. Inflicting their ideology on others becomes a way of regaining self-esteem. (See discussion of malicious harassment in DeArmond [1995]).

In short, Smelser's theory is supported by secondary data but has yet to be tested with primary data with respect to the militia phenomenon in the United States. Lipset and Raab's (1978) concept of status displacement also has not been tested with primary data with respect to American militias.

#### Criticisms of Smelser's Theory

Though Smelser's theory is arguably the best to explain the rise of the militias today, it is not without its critics. This theory has been criticized for its "managerial" perspective and for its emphasis on control of collective behavior. In other words, Smelser's inclusion of "social control" as a step in the process by which collective behavior occurs was interpreted by some to mean that the theory would be used by elites to control the collective behavior of groups that were politically unpopular or otherwise outside of the mainstream. His inclusion of social control was also interpreted as

implying that the behavior to be controlled was somehow irrational or harmful to society (Brown and Goldin, 1973).

Furthermore, Smelser's theory was said to be ill equipped to explain protest movements such as the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley in 1964, in that the serious and rational political goals of the actors were trivialized (Brown and Golden, 1973). Smelser once again was painted as an "elitist" who, along with the likes of Lipset and Seabury (1965), carried an implicit bias against student protestors as immature adolescent "rabble-rousers." Smelser's critics pointed out that the explicit need in Smelser's theory to apply "control" to such activity went against the idea that the students could be rational social actors seeking constructive goals and legitimate changes in the operation of the university. For example, several researchers found that the students in the Free Speech Movement scored exceptionally high in such areas as intellectual disposition, autonomy, flexibility and liberalism, and they exhibited qualities of individuality, social commitment, and intellectuality not observed among more representative samples of college students (Trent and Craise, 1967). They were "atypical" Berkeley students not in the sense of being troublemakers, but in that they represented some of the University's most able and intellectually dedicated students.

Additionally, scholars have pointed out that generalized beliefs are not always a necessary condition for collective behavior as Smelser had proposed. For instance, Gary Marx (1970) argued that some riots are "issueless," hence appearing to refute Smelser's argument. Similarly, Quarantelli and Hundley (1969) reported a case of collective behavior in which college student protestors apparently did not perceive a danger with drastic consequences, nor did they identify a responsible agent as usually is attributed in a

generalized belief. In other words, in this case, there was no generalized belief intervening between strain and the collective behavior, again possibly refuting Smelser's argument.

### Weaknesses of Alternative Theories

Several scholars who participated in, or were sympathetic to some 1960's social movements constructed competing theories. These theories sought to correct the inherent biases and weaknesses of Smelser's theory. However, these new theories appear to lack the explanatory power of Smelser's, at least with respect to explaining the neo-militia movement. For example, resource mobilization theory is relatively weak as an explanation because the most recent militia movement is Internet-driven (Meador, 1996). The Internet is a cheap and effective resource, rendering the mobilization of expensive human and capital resources relatively unimportant. The Internet has become a platform that has created and sustained this militia movement, and is relatively inexpensive to obtain and maintain.

Marxist theories have argued that the formation of social movements is tied to capitalist social structure (cf., O'Connor, 1973). However, this approach would have difficulty explaining the lack of a class base to the neo-militia movement, and is ill equipped to address the question as to why a broad based movement that appeals to the working class has not developed. The current movement is primarily a middle class citizen's movement (Snow, 1999).

Finally, the current movement could not be considered a "new social movement," despite the fact that the Internet, a relatively new medium, has played a role in starting the movement. The major concern overall in new social movements is with how one's

identity is constructed through participation in a movement and with the possible interference of the state in private decisions that relate to control over the body (e.g., abortion, gay rights, sex education; see Klandermans, 1986 and McAdam et al., 1988). However, the identities of these militiamen were constructed well before participating in the movement. Many are middle aged (Smith and Morgan, 1994). Rather than being concerned with private matters such as sex, these militiamen were concerned largely with collective rights, such as the right of all Americans to bear arms and to defend themselves against a collectivist onslaught (cf., Karl, 1995).

Nor does the current militia movement really appear to be something new and different, thus qualifying as “postmodern” when that term is defined as a distinct period in time such as the 1990’s (Jameson, 1991; Mills, 1959). Much of the literature suggests that the ideology of the current movement is primarily constitutionalist in nature and similar in tone to that of the Superpatriots of the 1960’s (cf., Schmuck and Chesler, 1963). The difference now is that the great international communist conspiracy of the early 1960’s is gone and in its place is a new generalized belief about the “New World Order.” Given the similarity in these generalized beliefs, it is difficult to describe the current movement as having ideological content that is “new.”

#### Summary

Early militias of the modern era (1958-1991) drew upon the classic republican tradition of an armed populace as represented in the U.S. Constitution and subsequent federal legislation. Though sharing this common background and organizing theme, the early movement gave rise to two different philosophies, constitutionalism and Christian Identity, with the latter predominating. The movement in the 1990’s is more difficult to



characterize according to its primary ideological content, drawing themes from both constitutionalism and Christian Identity.

Though having its critics, Neil Smelser's theory of collective behavior remains the most useful explanation for the rise of the 1990's citizen militias. There is documented support for each of the six necessary and sufficient conditions that are the keystones of his theory. There is also support in the literature for Lipset and Raab's concept of status displacement, in particular malicious harassment, which is germane to the most aggressive of the militias' tactics. Alternative, competing theories are relatively weak explanations of the genesis of the neo-militia movement. Smelser's theory is also supported by secondary data but has yet to be tested with primary data on U.S. militias. Furthermore, the same can be said for Lipset and Raab's concept of status displacement.

## CHAPTER 3

### DATA AND METHODS

#### Research Design

The purpose of this dissertation is to test Smelser's theory of collective behavior by examining the use of the Internet by U.S. militias. Implicitly, this suggests that U.S. neo-militias do constitute a social movement and that the Internet has become a tool facilitating the emergence of this new movement.

An important assumption here is that Internet messages have sufficient content to test Smelser's theory. Based upon a lengthy exploratory stage of this research that began in 1998 and extended into 1999, there is sufficient content to test Smelser's theory and to answer the research questions that flow from that theory.

A second important assumption is that the messages are genuine and reflect the state of mind and the opinions of the militiamen who are posting. For those who use an e-mail or Internet address as a "shield" to disguise their identity, there is a significant likelihood that the postings are genuine, just as one assumes the responses to confidential surveys are honest and true. As for those who publish their names openly, their postings are likely to be genuine because of the careful screening that was done to ensure that each militia met the sociological definition of a militia. This selection process was intended to screen out imposters or those pretending to be militiamen.

However, as with surveys, there is still a risk of dishonest responses. For example, it is impossible to determine if a "militiaman" who posts messages to Usenet is actually a federal agent. Second, a well known tactic of Christian Identity adherents is to lure individuals initially to their meetings under the guise of discussing mainstream issues

such as education, taxes, or abortion. Then, as newly interested ones learn more, the source of the problem is traced to the Zionist Occupational Government, the “forces of darkness,” or similar generalized belief (Stern, 1996; Aho, 1994). Consequently, in this study it was important to pay attention to what a message was saying but also the intent of the person who posted the message.

Each document in this study was carefully scrutinized for its manifest and latent content, that is, for its visible surface content as well as its underlying meaning (Babbie, 1995). Documents were coded only when it was determined that the manifest and latent content of the document was consistent. For example, just because a militiaman used the term “black helicopter” in a Usenet posting does not necessarily mean that the person is expressing his belief in the idea of the New World Order. (The posting may be from a disgruntled ex-militiaman who is expressing an anti-militia viewpoint). Additional examination of the context of the communication is necessary before one can conclude that the term has a substantive meaning in that person’s body of ideas.

No data chunk (a sentence or group of sentences in which a keyword appears) was counted as being relevant to answering of a given research question until both the manifest and latent content of the chunk was confirmed. Once this was done, the SPSS count relevant to any given code was adjusted manually. When a posting was reviewed for manifest and latent content, and it was determined that the content was adequate to answer at least one of the research questions, the posting was subsequently referred to as a valid posting or a valid message.

For a research question to be answered, it must be answered by the research data of this study and must be corroborated by secondary data. This secondary data included

books and journal articles about the U.S. neo-militias as well as the writings of the militiamen themselves. The purpose of using this data was to assist in evaluating the representativeness of the findings of this study.

### Research Questions

Based on Smelser (1963), Lipset and Raub (1978), and the interests of basic research, the questions to be considered are these:

- (1) Smelser (1963) identified strain as a precondition for collective behavior and social movements to emerge. Considering that extremist watchers have identified strains similar to those mentioned by Smelser, (cf., Berlet and Lyons, 1995; Junas, 1995) the question to be answered is: Did the militiamen experience strain prior to joining the militia?
- (2) Smelser (1963) notes that strain alone is not sufficient for a social movement to appear. There must also be a generalized belief that places the strain within an identifiable context. Given that the literature documents the appearance of a belief called the New World Order, the relevant question is: Before joining the militia, were militiamen introduced to the idea of the New World Order?
- (3) According to Smelser (1963), strain together with generalized beliefs is not enough to produce an episode of collective behavior or a social movement. There must also be precipitating events that confirm the generalized belief and crystallize calls for action. Some writers contend that certain important events precipitated the rise of the neo-militia movement, so the research question is: Were events at Ruby Ridge and Waco, together with the passage of gun control legislation, important reasons why participants joined the militia?

- (4) A fourth necessary element in Smelser's (1963) model is a mobilization for action. After the appearance of strain, generalized beliefs and precipitating events, there must be a mobilization for action in which leaders play a key role. Given that the Internet has been recognized as a platform for militia leaders to gather support (Meador, 1996), the related research question is this: Did the Internet play a more important role than other media in helping to mobilize the movement?
- (5) The final condition in Smelser's (1963) model is social control. Such control affects the direction of the movement once it has begun. Negative public opinion and anti-terrorism legislation has influenced some militias to limit their activities or even to "go underground" (Southern Poverty Law Center, 1996). A reasonable supposition is that as militias went underground, they would abandon public forums such as the Internet for more secure kinds of communications. Thus, the research question of interest is this: Following the Oklahoma City bombing, did social control influence movement participants to use the Internet less and "underground" kinds of communications more often?
- (6) Lipset and Raub (1978) recognized that right-wing social movements had distinct characteristics that other kinds of social movements did not have. Such movements try to restore a past state of society that looks better to the participants than does the present. Additionally, they work with particular zeal in this task because of a process that Lipset and Raab (1978) called "status displacement." Given that some observers have noted this process at

work in the neo-militia movement (DeArmond, 1995), the question is: Did militiamen experience status displacement at the time they joined the militia?

- (7) The primary ideological orientation of the neo-militia movement is in doubt, with some observers claiming that the orientation is constitutionalist (Berlet and Lyons, 1995), while others claim that this orientation is better described as Christian Identity (Ridgeway and Zeskind, 1995). To assist in resolving this debate, the research question is: What is the primary orientation of the movement (constitutionalist or Christian Identity?)

The first five questions relate directly to Smelser's theory of collective behavior and deal specifically with the five necessary and sufficient conditions that Smelser posited were essential for any given episode of collective behavior to occur. The sixth question is derived from Lipset and Raab's concept of status displacement, which was developed in order to specify the distinctive qualities that are found in a right wing social movement such as the citizen militias. The seventh question is a basic question that is of great interest to extremist watchers and concerned citizens who track the growth of militias, and particularly the white supremacist makeup of the militias. It was a question that was left unresolved by the literature review.

#### Data

The data for this study were drawn from a preliminary list of 244 militias identified during August, 1998 from a number of sources: the Southern Poverty Law Center (1996, 1997); John Whitley (1998); and a systematic browsing of the Internet, the New York Times Index (January-May, 1998) and First Search (the keywords "statename militia" were used in these data base searches).

The final list of militias included in this study was determined by screening each of the militias on the preliminary list against the operational definition of a citizen militia as it was defined in this study. Then, for each militia that met the operational definition, that particular militia was checked to see if it had a web site or if it had generated a significant amount of Usenet traffic (defined as 15 or more messages recorded between 1994-1999 in the Deja News archive). This procedure identified 28 militias. (See Table 1). All regions of the country are represented, including 7 militias from the Southeastern, 9 from the Western, 7 from the Midwestern, 3 from the Southwestern and 2 from the Eastern United States. Data were collected on 171 militiamen who belonged to the 28 militias. (See Table 2). Nineteen of the militiamen were from the Southeast, 33 from the West, 42 from the Midwest, 69 from the Southwest, and 8 from the East. Each militiaman was assigned a case number.

Table 3 compares the militias studied in this dissertation, by region, against the militias identified by the Southern Poverty Law Center (1998) as active militias in 1997. Comparing these two data sources, there is a close match between the proportion of militias studied in the Southeast U.S. and in the Southwest. This dissertation is slightly overrepresented by Western militias and is somewhat underrepresented by Midwestern and Eastern militias. Overall, however, there is a reasonably good fit between the militias studied in each region in this study and those documented by the Southern Poverty Law Center on their watch list.

During this phase were identified the final list of militias and militiamen to be studied. Relevant information from web sites and Usenet postings by and about the selected militias was downloaded from September 1, 1998 to February 28, 1999,

followed by a shorter but intensive systematic data collection phase from March 1, 1999 to June 11, 1999. About 80 percent of the data were collected in this systematic phase.

Entering the name of the militia or militiaman into the search box of Yahoo, Infoseek, Lycos and Alta Vista, and then perusing the information on that page and related first-level links obtained information about web sites. If the information at the site appeared to be relevant to any of the research questions in this study, it was downloaded for further analysis.

A similar technique was used to identify relevant information on Usenet, a world-wide discussion system available through Internet service providers. (See Appendix A for an expanded discussion of Usenet.) The name of the militia or militiaman was entered into the search box of the following Usenet newsgroups: miscellaneous-activism-militia; miscellaneous-survivalism; and talk-politics-guns. (Meador [1996] recommended these discussion groups for study because they contained the highest traffic by or about militias). These groups were monitored twenty-four hours a day for twelve weeks, beginning March 15, 1999. Actual physical monitoring was not necessary during this intensive phase because the postings remained in the Deja News archive. (A posting is a unique message that is sent to a newsgroup by an individual or group that resides at a singular Internet address). Overall, 5,291 on-line documents were downloaded to disks for analysis. Of these, 1,189 had sufficient content to answer one or more of the research questions.

The downloaded information was converted to Microsoft Word files, then NUDIST (Nonnumerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorizing) was used to assist with the data analysis (Qualitative Data Solutions, 1994). This software package is



Table 1.  
Militias Studied by Region

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Southeast	Alabama Constitutional Militia	Gadsden Minutemen (AL)
	Sons of Liberty (AL)	Florida State Militia
	Georgia Militia	91 <sup>st</sup> Brigade (NC)
	Northwest Florida Militia	
West	Militia of Arizona	Viper Militia (AZ)
	Colorado Minutemen	Colorado 1 <sup>st</sup> Light Infantry
	Militia of Montana	Washington State Militia
	San Diego Militia	Cascade Brigade (WA)
	Southern Oregon Militia	
Midwest	Aryan Republican Army	Michigan Militia Corps
	Ohio Unorganized Militia	7 <sup>th</sup> Missouri Militia
	51 <sup>st</sup> Missouri Militia	North American Militia
	Northern Illinois Minutemen	
Southwest	Texas Constitutional Militia	Oklahoma Const. Militia
	New Mexico Militia	
East	Blue Ridge Hunt Club	W.V. Mountaineer Militia

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Table 2.  
Internet Militia Cases Studied by Region

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	<u>Cases</u>	<u>Case Numbers</u>	<u>% of Total Cases</u>
Region			
Southeast	19	1-19	11.11
West	33	20-52	19.30
Midwest	42	53-94	24.56
Southwest	69	95-163	40.35
East	8	164-171	4.68
Total	171		

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Table 3.  
Comparison of Internet Militias Studied by Region with SPLC Militias, by Region

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<u>Region</u>	<u>Internet Militias Studied</u>		<u>SPLC Militias*</u>	
	N	%	N	%
Southeast	7	25	32	24
West	9	32	28	21
Midwest	7	25	44	33
Southwest	3	10	9	7
East	2	7	19	14
Total	28	100	133	100

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\*Source: Southern Poverty Law Center (1998).

designed to look for keywords and chunks of text that pertain to the research questions; these keywords appear in Appendix B.

NUDIST searches for the relevant keyword and then generates a report. The report lists the files in which the keyword appears along with a printout of the data chunk, that is, a number of sentences before and after the keyword appears. Each message posted is considered to be a unique file. In this dissertation, these reports became part of the raw data. There were 97 keywords relevant to the research question (see Appendix B) and thus subsequently 97 reports were generated and reviewed.

## Methods

The reports generated by NUDIST indicated the files that might have relevance to each of the research questions. Each file was then checked and each document that helped to answer any of the research questions was examined for its manifest and latent content. (A complete description of this process appears in Appendix C, Data Gathering Procedures). The paragraphs below describe how the variables were operationalized and how specific messages were coded. The variables coded are those suggested by the research questions, i.e., structural strain, generalized belief, precipitant, mobilization for action, social control, status displacement, and ideological orientation.

### Structural Strain

Smelser (1963) notes that structural strain is a precondition for the development of a social movement. He delineates four different types of strain that he believes is most common as preconditions for a social movement; however, he concedes that any kind of strain can produce any kind of collective behavior, including social movements.

Consequently, in this study the decision was made not to exclude any kinds of strains that

might be reported by the militiamen. Particular attention was paid to the militiamens' occupations as some of the literature suggested that downward occupational mobility is an important strain that may have preceded the appearance of the neo-militia movement.

Nine kinds of strain emerged from the content analysis of the web pages and Usenet messages. These strains were coded as follows: (1) fear of federal and/or international police forces; (2) fear of federal government (general); (3) fear that the U.S. is becoming more like the former Soviet Union; (4) rapid social change; (5) distrust of government and/or discontent with government; (6) economic distress or stress (general); (7) shrinking or declining standard of living; (8) globalization and/or loss of jobs; and (9) other strains not classifiable.

Militiamens' occupations, as revealed in Internet messages, were coded according to U.S. Census Bureau (1996) categories as follows: (1) professional and managerial; (2) sales/technical; (3) manual labor; and (4) service and low skill. See Appendix D for a full description of the occupations coded in each of these four categories.

### Generalized Beliefs

To Smelser (1963), strain alone was not sufficient for a social movement to appear. It must be accompanied by at least one generalized belief that put the participant's stress into a context and gives an explanation for the kinds of stress being experienced.

Messages whose manifest or latent content indicated that the militiaman had heard of the New World Order and accepted the concept as a frame of reference for explaining their stresses prior to joining the militia were coded 1. This includes explicit remarks by individuals indicating acceptance of the NWO prior to joining the militia and support as

inferred from individual remarks or group statements (declarations). In all cases it must be surmised or inferred from the messages that this support occurred prior to joining the militia.

A code of 2 was assigned those messages that indicated the militiaman had not heard of the New World Order, or if having been introduced to the concept prior to joining the militia, did not believe in or accept the idea as a frame of reference for understanding the kinds of stresses they had been experiencing. This includes explicit remarks that the NWO is not important or that other concepts are more important, or the same result as inferred implicitly from remarks posted.

### Precipitants

According to Smelser (1963), the existing strains accompanied by generalized beliefs are not enough to produce an episode of collective behavior; in his value-added theory he specified that precipitating events are crucial. These events confirm the explanations for stress generated by the generalized belief and crystallize calls for action. In this study, there were seven coding categories for precipitants. The categories, and the code assigned, are as follows: Waco (coded 1); Ruby Ridge (coded 2); Brady Bill (coded 3); Assault Weapons Bill of 1994 (coded 4); 1992 Estes Park Meeting (coded 5); President George Bush's New World Order Speech of 1991 (coded 6); and messages about the L.A. Riot of 1992, the MOVE bombing or Desert Storm (coded 7). Militiamen could mention more than one precipitant in a given message.

### Mobilization for Action

Given the appearance of strain, generalized beliefs, and precipitating events, there is still a possibility that no social movement will emerge, unless there is a mobilization for

action in which certain key individuals take the lead (Smelser, 1963). Because it has been suggested that the Internet provided a platform for leaders to move quickly to mobilize the movement, the variable, “mobilization for action,” was concerned with the type of media that the militiamen believed were most helpful in mobilizing the movement. These media were coded as follows: bulletin boards or Usenet or Internet (coded 1); FAX (coded 2); short-wave radio (coded 3); talk shows, cable TV or videos (coded 4); e-mail (coded 5) and direct mail (coded 6). Militiamen could report more than one favorite media in any given message.

### Social Control

Social control in Smelser’s (1963) terms referred to the mechanisms that affected the direction of a movement once it had begun. It is the sum total of mechanisms that disrupt or inhibit a movement in progress (and not social control in the sense of enforcing norms.) In this study we are primarily concerned with the electronic implications of the Oklahoma City bombing and specifically, from an electronic standpoint, if Internet traffic was abandoned for more secure kinds of communications such as encrypted e-mail messages or the confidential communications within small leaderless cells. This variable was measured by traffic as recorded in the Usenet archive Deja News.

Deja News is the repository of messages posted to the Usenet groups studied in this dissertation. A specialty feature of this archive is the Deja News Power Search function that allows researchers to search for messages by author, by date of posting, and by newsgroup. Using Power Search, a researcher can determine how many messages have been posted to miscellaneous-activism-militia, talk-politics-guns and miscellaneous-survivalism for two time frames after the Oklahoma City bombing. For talk-politics-guns

and miscellaneous-survivalism, it is necessary to use the screening word “militia” in the Power Search in order to count those messages that had specific content relevant to militias. Both of these groups have many discussions that are only peripherally related to militias (e.g., second amendment and survivalism issues), so use of the screening word helped to screen out this mostly irrelevant discussion.

The two time frames were selected in order to grasp the long term trends in militia traffic after the Oklahoma City bombing. The first time frame is 1-20 months after the bombing and the second is 21-40 months after the bombing.

#### Status Displacement

Lipset and Raab (1978) contended that a general theory such as Smelser’s does not capture the unique elements of a right-wing extremist movement such as a citizen militia movement. They believed that the zeal of the militiamen is due the declining social status of an entire category of individuals and that the ideology of the militia group becomes a weapon used to regain status that had been lost. Lipset and Raab called this process “status displacement.” Therefore, status displacement was measured in this study by the number of messages that alluded to joining the militias as a means of regaining lost social power and status. Examples of such messages can be found in Appendix E.

#### Orientation

Left unresolved by the literature review was the issue of the ideological orientation of the neo-militia movement. There was a difference of opinion among writers who stressed the constitutionalism of the militias and those who believed that Christian Identity beliefs underlay most all of the militia rhetoric. Therefore, in this study the

variable “orientation” was concerned with whether the primary ideology of the militia was constitutionalist or Christian Identity. Messages with constitutionalist content were coded 1 while those with Christian Identity content were coded 2, as noted in Appendix F.

### Limitations of the Study

Because this study strives to be unobtrusive, the data are limited to the examination of recorded communications on the Internet. These communications are mostly the written word or graphics. There is no way to follow up or to probe deeper for a more complete understanding of what any given phrase or sentence meant to the person writing or posting it. Furthermore, there is no way to validate the information published on the Internet by comparing it with questionnaire data or interviews without introducing the problem of respondent reactivity. Militiamen are known for their distrust of academic research and do not interview well (Metcalf, 1998; Lindstedt, 1997). Because direct validation of results introduces the problem of reactivity, in this study the findings will be validated indirectly by comparing the results of this study with similar findings of other researchers (mostly non-sociologists).

A legitimate question could also be raised that this dissertation studies a socioeconomically more affluent subset of the militia movement because it is limited to militiamen who own a computer and have the technological capability to post to the Internet. This suggests a higher level of intelligence and possibly more income than other militiamen. To attempt to address the possibility of bias this might introduce into the study, in Chapter 5 the results for the 28 “Internet” militias are compared with a group of militiamen who belong to 28 “non-Internet” militias. Informally at least, the



non-Internet militias are a control group in the sense that the absence of the Internet is being measured.

### Summary

This dissertation uses content analysis to study the Internet postings of U.S. militiamen and to determine with primary data whether Smelser's theory of collective behavior is an adequate tool to explain the rise of the militia movement in the U.S. during the 1990's. Seven research questions, five of which relate directly to Smelser's theory, were proposed to guide the data collection.

The data for the study were drawn from a preliminary list of 244 militias identified in August, 1998 as candidates for study. After this list was screened against an operational and conceptual definition of a citizen militia, only 28 militias remained. Essentially, only these 28 militias had a Web or Usenet presence that was sufficient enough to study. Using the software program, NUDIST, to search for keywords in the textual documents (i.e., Internet messages), information relevant to the research questions was coded and prepared for the data analysis.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

This chapter presents the analysis of the documents that had sufficient content to answer at least one of the research questions. There was considerable cross posting of messages to the three newsgroups studied, Miscellaneous-Activism-Militia, Talk-Politics-Guns, and Miscellaneous-Survivalism. Of these three newsgroups, Miscellaneous-Activism-Militia and Talk-Politics-Guns were the most likely groups to be cross-posted, that is, to have an original message posted simultaneously to both groups. This meant that there was frequent duplication of postings. After eliminating the duplicate postings, and upon review and coding of the messages, it was determined that 1,189 messages had sufficient content to be analyzed. One hundred messages were from web sites and 1,089 were from Usenet.

#### Structural Strain

The first research question asked if the militiamen experienced social structural strain prior to joining the militia. Based on the literature review, it was anticipated that rapid social changes, in particular the globalization of the economy, would be the major source of strain and that the specific impact would be upon the employment of the militiaman. It was expected that the average militiaman would be a worker displaced or marginalized due to global economic changes. There was also an expectation that the militiamen would be experiencing a decrease in social status.

There was indeed strain upon militiamen as recorded in Table 4. Almost 63 percent of the messages expressed fear of the U.S. federal government (Chi-Square = 67.468; Asymptotic Significance = .000). Within this 63 percent, 30.6 percent

feared that federal and/or international police forces were growing in power; 19.4 percent mentioned a fear of government without elaborating in more detail; and almost 13 percent felt that the federal government with its harsh and repressive policies was becoming more like the former Soviet Union.

The remaining 37 percent of the responses were as follows: 8.1 percent indicated that they experienced economic distress; 6.5 percent had experienced rapid social changes; 6.5 percent said that their standard of living was declining; 5.6 percent said that globalization had affected them, or that they had lost their jobs; 5.6 percent indicated a distrust of government or a discontent with it; and 4.8 percent listed strains other than those mentioned above.

The results in Table 4 show only a residual concern about jobs and/or economics. Only 20.2 percent of the messages indicated such a concern. In general, then, the strains mentioned by the militiamen were not job related. There was very little evidence to suggest that the militiamen were displaced workers and that the displacements were due to global economic restructuring. In fact, occupational data in Table 5 show that 52.54 percent of the militiamen for whom data were available could be classified as professional and managerial; 16.95 percent as sales, technical, or administrative; 22.03 percent as manual labor; and 8.47 percent as low skill or service. Comparisons in the table with the U.S. population as a whole indicate that militiamen are overrepresented among the professional and managerial group and underrepresented among the other groups when compared with the general population of the United States. The occupational data, based upon a limited number of cases, does not suggest economic

Table 4.  
Structural Strain Reported by/for U.S. Militiamen

	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Cumulative %</u>
Strain Reported			
Fear federal/global police force	38	30.6	30.6
Fear federal government	24	19.4	50.0
Fear U.S. "Soviet" State	16	12.9	62.9
Economic distress (unspecified)	10	8.1	71.0
Rapid social change	8	6.5	77.4
Shrinking standard of living	8	6.5	83.9
Globalization or loss of jobs	7	5.6	89.5
Distrust of or discontent with govt.	7	5.6	95.2
Other	6	4.8	100.0
Total	124	100.0	

Chi Square = 67.468, Asymptotic Significance = .000

marginality or that the militiamen are under any particular economic strain due to their current occupations.

A cautionary note is warranted given the low response rate to this particular question. The data may be reflecting the "pride" of the employed militia members and the "embarrassment" of those not employed or underemployed. It is impossible to measure this given that probe questions cannot be asked.

Table 5.  
Occupational Data Reported by/for U.S. Militiamen

	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Compared with U.S. Population*</u>
<u>Occupations Reported</u>			
Professional/Managerial	18	52.54	26.5
Sales/Technical/Admin.+	20	16.95	31.0
Manual Labor	13	22.03	26.0
Low Skill/Service	3	8.47	18.5
Total	54	100.00	

Note: \*Source: U.S. Census (1994)

+ includes reports by/for militiamen of “middle class” social standing without further elaboration. See Appendix D.

#### The New World Order

Were the militiamen introduced to the idea of the New World order prior to joining the militia? Implicit in this question is the assumption that once militiamen were introduced to the New World Order (NWO) they readily accepted it as an explanation for the kinds of stress they had been experiencing. Question 2 should be answered overwhelmingly (and obviously) in the affirmative, according to the literature review. In particular, the “extremist-watcher” literature suggests that even hard line anti-Semites learned the NWO language and used it to recruit newcomers to Christian Identity

Table 6.  
Militiamen Introduced to Concept of New World Order Before Joining Militia\*

	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Heard of NWO/Accepted Message	56	51.38
Had Not Heard/Did Not Accept NWO	53	48.62

Note: \*Data was not available for 49 of the militiamen

Chi Square = .083, Asymptotic Significance = .774; Binomial Test: Asymptotic Significance (2-tailed) = .848

oriented militias. Lurking behind the NWO metaphor was the militiaman's true belief in the Christian Identity concept of the Zionist Occupational Government or ZOG (Stern, 1996).

Data in Table 6 show that there was no significant difference in the number of militiamen who accepted, or did not accept, the concept of the New World Order prior to joining the militia. Forty-nine percent of the militiamen for whom information was available reported that they had not been introduced to the New World Order prior to joining the militia, or, if introduced to the idea, did not accept it (Chi Square = .083, Asymptotic Significance = .774; Binomial Test, Asymptotic Significance = .848).

Based on the messages studied, some of the militiamen, such as most of those in the Alabama Constitutional Militia, simply did not believe in the New World Order. This lack of belief was usually expressed as omission of references to the NWO, as in the Alabama Declaration (post 31, a statement against racism in the militia movement).

Others were more to the point:

“New World Order” is probably not the term used by the shadow government to refer to their strategic plan. It appears to have been invented by conspiracy theorists, and its use detracts from our credibility (post 111).

We do not think about the NWO, this is an urban myth perpetuated by the media (post 238).

Members of other militias acknowledged the NWO but did not perceive it as something important enough to be incorporated into their core belief system. For example, case number 72, the founder of the Ohio Unorganized Militia, was very concerned about the growing police presence in the African American community and by the 1985 MOVE bombing in Philadelphia. Thus, the unchecked growth of local police power was a major factor for him and not the NWO:

Yes, I was outraged (by Ruby Ridge and Waco), but I was equally outraged when government forces fire-bombed an inner-city neighborhood of Philadelphia in 1985, killing 11 ... and then there are the countless murders and cover-ups by “law enforcement” that have become common-place in my community ... long before the first shot was fired at Waco (post 297).

Similarly, other militiamen were unconcerned with the NWO. For instance, the Cascade Brigade (Washington) works openly with law enforcement and within the political system to bring about changes in government. It is anti-government in the sense that it believes the government is too large and should be reduced in size and scope.

Cascade's leader, case number 48, knew of the NWO but did not think that it was an important concept. He states:

[The New World Order and other issues] are valid concerns by various individuals, but for the most part, I think that most are mainly concerned with getting the Federal Government down to a manageable and constitutionally relative size. Most are folks that want to be able to talk to the people that have control over the things that concern their daily lives, without having to buy a ticket to Washington DC and stomping through the bureaucratic halls of a bloated and convoluted government where no one seems accountable for anything (post 298).

Additionally, some of the Christian Identity inspired militiamen did not come across the term until late in their militia careers. However, even after they were introduced to the idea, they did not think that it was important. They were much more likely to see the global conspiracy through the lens of Christian Identity, in terms of ZOG (Zionist Occupational Government) rather than New World Order. A communique from the Aryan Republican Army stated:

We call ourselves the Aryan Republican Army because in some of our tactics, and some of our goals, we have modeled the organization after the successful and yet undefeated Irish Republican Army ... The Irish, another tribe of the Aryan people, have fought off the Jewish-inspired elite of the English (post 250).

An observer of the group noted:

It [the ARA] is committed to the overthrow of the U.S. government, the extermination of America's Jews, and the establishment of an "Aryan Republic" on the North American continent (post 284).



## Ruby Ridge, Waco and Gun Control

The purpose of question 3 was to see if events at Ruby Ridge and Waco, together with the passage of gun control legislation, were important reasons why people joined the militia. The expectation based on the literature review was that Ruby Ridge and Waco would be mentioned most frequently but that overall, all the potential precipitants would be important determinants or events that precipitated future involvement in a militia.

According to Table 7, Waco and Ruby Ridge were the most frequently mentioned precipitants. These two events were mentioned by a total of 76.4 percent of the individuals posting a message relevant to this research question. Chi-Square analysis showed this result to be significant at the .000 level of significance (Chi-Square = 389.450; Asymptotic Significance = .000).

Both events appear to be very emotional issues to the militia. At Ruby Ridge, the FBI shot and killed Randy Weaver's wife and, in Waco, 17 Branch Davidian children were burned and killed at the end of the Waco standoff. To the militia, these events show the extent to which government would go to maintain its power. However, an unexpected result here is that the Brady Bill was mentioned in only 11.5 percent of the messages and the Assault Weapons Bill of 1994 was mentioned in only 6 percent of the messages. Therefore, the relatively even distribution of percentages expected among the various precipitants did not occur.

Wills (1995) notes gun control as the keystone of the militia belief system, while Roland (1994b) called gun control legislation the "last straw" that convinced many militiamen to join. However, the evidence in Table 7 suggests that gun control issues might be far less important to militia members than previously thought. Furthermore,

Table 7.  
Precipitants of U.S. Militia Movement Mentioned by/for U.S. Militiamen

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	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Cumulative %</u>
Event			
Waco	133	40.2	40.2
Ruby Ridge	120	36.3	76.4
Brady Bill	38	11.5	87.9
Assault Weapons Bill	20	6.0	94.0
Estes Park Meeting	7	2.1	96.1
Other (LA Riot, MOVE, Desert Storm)	7	2.1	98.2
Bush's NWO Speech	6	1.8	100.0
Total	331	100.0	

---

Chi Square = 389.450, Asymptotic Significance = .000

a 1992 meeting at Estes Park, Colorado, aimed at forming militias was mentioned in only 2.1 percent of the valid posts. This suggests that, at least for the militiamen studied, the impact of the 1992 meeting on the movement may have been greatly exaggerated (cf., Stern, 1996).

#### The Internet

The new militia movement has been described as Internet-driven (Meador, 1996), and the data in this study support this statement. Question 4 asks if the Internet was more important than other media in mobilizing the movement. Nearly 48 percent of the

Table 8.  
Media of Choice Reported by/for U.S. Militiamen

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	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Media		
Bulletin boards/Usenet/Internet	70	47.6
FAX	31	21.1
Short-wave radio	17	11.6
Talk shows/Cable TV/Videos	11	7.5
E-mail	9	6.1
Direct mail	9	6.1
Total	147	100.0

---

Chi-Square = 115.571, Asymptotic Significance = .000

messages indicate the Internet, Usenet, or computer bulletin boards as the preferred media compared with only 21 percent who preferred faxes, according to Table 8. This result was significant at the .000 level of significance according to the Chi-Square analysis. Furthermore, as Table 9 shows, key movement mentors made important and timely use of the Internet during the crucial phase of movement mobilization from early 1993 to the first anniversary of the end of the Waco standoff on April 19, 1994.

A key point gleaned from the Internet messages is that the Internet together with all the other kinds of media listed in Table 8 were mentioned by numerous individual militiamen as an alternative source of information. To both mentors and mentees, the mainstream media was not credible, especially after what they considered the

Table 9.  
Internet Mentors of the U.S. Militia Movement

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Mentor	<u>Internet Contribution</u>
Jon Roland, Texas Constitutional Militia	Authored Texas Militia Papers; webmaster of the Constitution Society page
Bob Fletcher, Militia of Montana	Webmaster of the Militia of Montana web site
Bo Gritz	Personal web page featured information on paramilitary training courses
J.J. Johnson	Major contributor to E Pluribus Unum web site affiliated with Ohio Unorganized Militia
Martin Lindstedt, 7 <sup>th</sup> Missouri Militia	Editor and Publisher of the Internet Magazine, Modern Militiaman
Linda Thompson	Her BBS was one of the first Patriot bulletin boards; published the Michigan Militia manual in 1994

---

“misinformation” and distorted coverage of the movement following the Oklahoma City bombing. Importantly, these alternative militia-backed media were not in competition with one another at all. They worked together to get the militia message out to their public and to other militiamen. However, the results of this study indicate that the Internet was the most important of these different kinds of media for disseminating information related to the militia movement.

### Oklahoma City Bombing

Question 5 asks: Did neo-militia movement tactics change after the Oklahoma City bombing? From an electronic standpoint, did the militia use the Internet less often and more secure, “underground” kinds of communication more often? As suggested by Smelser, the implication here is that social control (sometimes informal control through public opinion) changes the direction of the movement. It was anticipated that social control, in the form of increased policing and/or adverse public opinion, would force militias underground and that they would abandon public communications (such as the Internet) for more clandestine kinds of communication.

The results indicate that Usenet, a public form of communication, was used much more after Oklahoma City – this despite the fact that many militias did go underground, and, according to messages posted and reviewed in the study, did in fact use more secure kinds of communications. These more secure communications included computer bulletin boards, encrypted e-mail, heavily coded messages, and the confidential talk of small leaderless cells. So while social control did play a role in the direction that the movement took, it was not in the direction suggested by the literature review. Social

control led to increases in Usenet traffic because militiamen respected Usenet as an acceptable form of alternative communication.

There was a large increase in Usenet traffic on the three newsgroups examined in this study. Table 10 looks at only the Internet traffic in the three newsgroups that is by or about the militias or militiamen studied in this dissertation. Traffic in the category, Miscellaneous-Activism-Militia, increased 102.5 percent in time frame 2, a period from 21-40 months after the Oklahoma City bombing. Overall, traffic in the 3 newsgroups increased by 66.7 percent in time frame 2. To see if this same trend holds for all the traffic in the three categories, the data in Table 11 show all of the traffic in the three

Table 10.  
Growth in Usenet Traffic (Militia Traffic Only) on Three Militia-Oriented Newsgroups

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Newsgroup	Time Frames		<u>%Increase/Decrease</u>
	1* 4-95 - 11-96 <u>number of messages posted</u>	2** 1-97 - 9-98	
Misc-Activism-Militia	1444	2864	+102.5
Talk-Politics-Guns	542	596	+ 10.0
Misc-Survivalism	200	135	- 32.5
Total	2156	3595	+66.7

---

Note: \*exact time frame is 4-20-95 to 12-31-96

\*\*exact time frame is 1-1-97 to 9-11-98

newsgroups, including the traffic that is not by or about the militias of militiamen studied in this dissertation. The data here follow the same general trend as the data in Table 10: there was an overall increase in the three newsgroups of 110.8 percent in time frame 2.

A comparison of the traffic in Tables 10 and 11 shows that the traffic in Table 10 is only a small proportion of that in Table 11. The number of messages by/about militiamen studied in Table 10 during time frame 1 is only slightly more than 4 percent of Table 11.

Growth in General Usenet Traffic (All Traffic) on Three Militia-Oriented Newsgroups

Newsgroup	Time Frames		%Increase
	1* 4-95 - 12-96	2** 1-97 - 9-98	
	<u>number of messages posted</u>		
Misc-Activism-Militia	41,811	81,978	96.0
Talk-Politics-Guns	7,642	23,027	201.32
Miscellaneous-Survivalism	808	1,174	45.29
Total	50,361	106,179	110.8

Note: \*exact time frame is 4-20-95 to 12-31-96

\*\*exact time frame is 1-1-97 to 9-11-98

#Using the Deja News Power Search function, the Deja News archive was checked for messages that included the word “militia,” thus screening out messages that were not militia-related

the total traffic during that time frame. The number of messages by/about militiamen in Table 10 for time frame 2 is just over 3 percent of the total traffic.

There was a distinct change in the ways the militias studied employed Usenet as one compares the content of messages in time frames 1 and 2. In the first time frame, Usenet was utilized mostly to exchange information, to build consensus and to generally render aid and assistance to fellow militiamen, most of whom were under attack for their alleged participation in (or encouragement of) the Oklahoma City bombing. For example, post 18 from case number 83 in 1996 illustrates an amicable tone:

In May 1996 I went with some fellow Missourians to Gadsden, Alabama for a militia rally called the Good 'Ol Boys Roundup ... It was an excellent militia gathering. People who I had formerly known only by means of e-mail I met in person and vice-versa. They are good people who will find themselves having to do hard things in the future, if they are to hold true to their vision of freedom and justice under a government limited by law.

By 1997, following a very difficult year in which federal agents infiltrated several militias, bitter divisions were developing within the movement. The constitutionalists separated themselves ideologically from the Christian Identity faction. In turn, individuals posting messages from Posse Comitatus and the Common Law movement criticized both groups. Throughout 1997 and most of 1998, there were angry, personal exchanges between individuals in all four of these camps. For example, this 1998 message from case 83 to a former ally notes:

Frankly ... you hate White People.  
You really hate those of us who are  
fighting to restore White America for



White People. I point out that if you hate us so much, you simply have no right to live as a parasite off of us and among us. We neither want nor need to have you around. Go live among those you serve. Practice what you preach (post 78).

Case 83 had shorn his early constitutionalism for Christian Identity.

Finally, there are anti-Patriot and anti-militia posters who are critical of most everything discussed in the groups by all parties in all discussions. This increase in participation by all of these groups contributed to the rise in the number of postings reflected in Table 10.

From 1997 through most of 1998, these parts of Usenet were employed less for information exchange and more as a forum to comment on current events and/or to expound on the differences between different factions posting to the newsgroups.

Consequently, though many groups went underground after the Oklahoma City bombing, Usenet traffic increased as militiamen closed ranks to defend themselves in the early post Oklahoma City period, and in the volume of users posting by/about other (opposing) groups in the latter time frame. This traffic in which militiamen debated one another often developed into bitter personal exchanges and generated lengthy discussion threads as militiamen and observers took sides in the debate. Occasionally these exchanges spilled over into discussions of current events such as the Littleton, Colorado shootings and the war in Kosovo, with the warring parties invariably taking opposite sides in these debates of current events. Some militiamen or militia sympathizers even went on to produce electronic magazines that were typically several times longer than even the longest individual postings by or about individual militiamen.

A final contributing factor in the rapid growth in Internet traffic among neo-militia members was that some militias continued to use the Internet even after going underground. For example, the 7<sup>th</sup> Missouri Militia told interested persons or newcomers to form leaderless cells, while at the same time, it continued to publish its web site as a political education tool and its leader continued to post prolifically to the Miscellaneous-Activism-Militia category. Web sites and Usenet postings function as political education and propaganda while the leaderless cells serve as the “action arm” of the organization.

#### Status Displacement

The point of question 6 is to determine if there is evidence that militiamen experienced status displacement at the time they joined the militia. As defined by Lipset and Raab (1978), status displacement refers to a situation where the cultural trappings of

Table 12.

#### Status Displacement Versus Collective Action by U.S. Militiamen

	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Responses Indicating		
Status Displacement	13	11.6
Collective Action (from Question 1)*	99	88.4

Chi Square = 66.036, Asymptotic Significance = .000

Binomial Test, Asymptotic Significance (2-tailed) = .000

Note: \*These responses were originally recorded as Strain in Table 3 (codes 1-3, 5, 8-9).

a group stand in for the group and become invested with special significance. These trappings are both the measure and battleground of the group's waning dominance. As applied to militiamen, it was expected that as social status and power were eroded in the lives of the future militiamen, the act of joining the militia becomes a way of regaining self-esteem and power that had been lost. In particular, status displacement would explain the zeal and aggressive intimidation tactics of some militiamen, especially those who harass public officials and others they hold responsible for the social stress that they have been experiencing. Joining the militia helps to restore lost power but also, for some, metes out punishment through intimidation. Thus, a score is settled with opponents.

There was very little evidence in the data of status displacement. Only 13 messages were posted that indicated that such displacement had occurred. On the other hand, revisiting a portion of the data that was used to answer Question 1, we see that many militiamen expressed fears regarding the government. A consistent element of these messages was fear, not only for themselves and their families, but for the United States as a whole. Thus, the militiamen were preoccupied with the collective rights of a large public group being eroded and not with issues pertaining to their own self-esteem or social status. Comparing the volume of messages indicating status displacement or collective concern in Table 12, only 13.3 percent of the total valid posts indicated status displacement while 88.3 percent expressed a concern for collective rights of a large group of Americans. This result was significant at the .000 level according to the Chi-Square analysis.

## Constitutionalism Versus Christian Identity Interests

The seventh and final question asked if the primary goal of the militia is to restore the Constitutional Republic or to further Christian Identity interests. The literature review identified the two lines of thought as competing ideological orientations but was inconclusive about which orientation was dominant. The question is answered in the extremist-watcher literature by saying that Christian Identity ideology underlay most of the constitutional militia's rhetoric and agenda. Stated another way, Christian Identity is the hidden ideological "motor" that drives the neo-militia movement.

The data in Table 13 show that 65 percent of the relevant messages demonstrated that the purpose of the militia is to further constitutionalist aims, while 35 percent indicated that the militia's purpose is to further Christian Identity goals. (Chi-Square = 47.610, Asymptotic Significance = .000; Binomial Test, Asymptotic Significance = .000). Individual militiamen who composed messages portraying a constitutionalist orientation often went out of their way to separate themselves ideologically from

Table 13.

### Primary Orientations Reported by/for U.S. Militiamen

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	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>%</u>
Primary Orientation		
Constitutionalist	345	65.0
White Supremacist	186	35.0

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Chi Square = 47.610, Asymptotic Significance = .000

Binomial Test, Asymptotic Significance (2-tailed) = .000

Christian Identity militiamen. The difference in orientations was clear and the coding of the messages was uncomplicated. Based on the data collected in this study, constitutionalism is the guiding ideological paradigm of the movement.

While all orientations could be generally classified as Christian Identity or constitutionalist, the messages did suggest a rich variety in the orientations of the militias, consequently it was appropriate to designate a typology of militia organizations. This typology is presented in Table 14, along with a listing of representative militias.

Type 1 is the open constitutionalist militias that work freely with law enforcement and are completely open to all who want to participate. The anti-government rhetoric of this type of militia resembles that of mainstream conservatives. Type 2 is the open constitutionalist militias with a command structure. Here, there are small regiments

Table 14.

A Typology of Militia Organizations and Representative Militias

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<u>Constitutionalist</u>	<u>Christian Identity</u>
1. Open Constitutionalist Cascade Brigade	5. Terroristic/Irish Republican Army Model Aryan Republican Army
2. Constitutionalist/Command Structure Michigan Militia Alabama Constitutional Militia	6. Sinn Fein/Irish Republican Army Model 91 <sup>st</sup> Brigade 7 <sup>th</sup> Missouri Militia
3. Constitutionalist/Cell Structure Militia of Montana Texas Constitutional Militia	
4. Underground/No Public Contact Sons of Liberty (Alabama)	

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usually organized at the county level and have a hierarchical military style command structure.

Type 3 is the constitutionalist militia/survivalist/cell structure type, with a correspondence structure. Here, there are small regiments usually organized at the county level. Constitutionalist goals and philosophy are expounded, but survivalism is the encouraged or preferred tactic, along with the formation of leaderless cells. Publicly identified commanders may serve as information sources for regiments/cells. Type 4 is the militia that is completely underground and has ceased almost all contact with the public. Type 5 is the Terroristic/Irish Republican Army Model of terrorist cells without an organized political wing. Here the production of propaganda is a part time pursuit of members of cells. Type 6 is the Sinn Fein/Irish Republican Army Model, where there is a political education wing and terrorist leaderless cells that are the action arm.

#### Summary

Although the general outline of Smelser's theory is confirmed by the research, some of the research questions were answered in ways that were unexpected. For example, more than one generalized belief was present, which was not expected prior to the study. Furthermore, social control did not force militiamen off Usenet but toward it.

About two-thirds of the messages pertaining to the militiaman's orientation indicated a preference for constitutionalism. Therefore, constitutionalism, based on the limited evidence of this study, is the predominant intellectual paradigm of the militia movement. The influence of Christian Identity, however, is growing within the movement. Lipset and Raab's concept of status displacement did not find support in the documents studied.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

This chapter has two purposes. The first is to discuss the findings of this research and to provide corroborating evidence for those findings. This is the independent test mentioned in Chapter 1, a test to see if any of the findings of this study might be considered highly unusual “outliers.” The second is to compare Internet and non-Internet militias along the dimensions suggested by Smelser’s theory, i.e., structural strain, generalized beliefs, precipitating events, mobilization for action, and social control. The concept of status displacement developed by Lipset and Raab will also be examined in the two groups, as will the primary ideological orientation. The rationale for these comparisons is to determine whether selection bias occurred in this study when militias with an Internet presence were selected and those with no presence were excluded from analysis.

#### Corroborating Evidence

In this section there is discussion of the research findings and also evidence is accumulated from the research literature to support the findings of this dissertation. For the most part this is literature not reviewed in Chapter 2 because it did not fit well with Smelser’s theory. The discussion of this corroborating evidence will be organized around the key concepts that were the focus of the seven research questions.

#### Structural Strain

It was anticipated that structural strain had occurred prior to a militiaman’s decision to join a militia, and this was confirmed by the current study. The kind of strain most

often articulated was a fear of the federal government, especially the fear that the federal and/or international police forces were taking away constitutional rights and liberties.

Other researchers have found fear among the militiamen (Karl, 1995; Kushner, 1998), emphasizing it as a precondition for the growth of the 1990's militia movement. Historian David Bennett (1995) refers to the militias as "the new party of fear," with fear as the organizing theme of this new movement (p. 446). He quotes a Missouri Militia license plate he believes reflects the concerns of many militiamen: "I love my country but I fear my government." He continues with a quotation from Norm Olson of the Michigan Militia: "it is not anger we feel, it is fear, fear of the federal government" (p. xi.). Elaborating upon the source of this fear, Olson said: "it's not a Government by the people anymore . . . we are ceasing to be a Republic. The people's fear is a response. When people sense danger, they will come together to defend themselves" (p. 456).

The fear militiamen feel can be total, affecting their whole lives. As Harold Sheil of the 51<sup>st</sup> Missouri Militia noted: "One of the things that people really fear from the government is the idea that the government can ruin your life, totally destroy your life. I don't mean kill you. But they can totally destroy your life, split your family up, do the whole thing and walk off like you're a discarded banana peel, and with a ho-hum attitude" (Snow, 1999: 27).

Because the kinds of circumstances that can generate this total fear can come from multiple sources, it was not surprising, then, that when Bennett (1995) asked militiamen what they feared the most from government, there were a variety of fears mentioned. Beyond the many references to gun control, the militiamen mentioned higher taxes, environmental regulations that threatened their property rights, and some protested the



need to carry social security cards. The militiamen perceived all of these as things that take away rights from individuals and that make the U.S. government less than a government by the people.

There was also fear expressed in some of the messages in this study that the United States was becoming more repressive and totalitarian, modeling itself after the former Soviet Union. Bennett (1995) notes this concern among militiamen he studied. If the Russian menace was no longer there, and there was genuine peace in the world, why was it that a huge, centralized federal bureaucracy was still needed?

McAlvaney (1990), who operates a Patriot research service, wrote an entire book on this theme. The basic idea of the book was that the Russian “Bear” lives on, that it has conquered the United Nations and the New World Order, and that it is still bent on worldwide domination and the establishment of a worldwide socialist government. By aiding this menace and not challenging it, the U.S. is lending tacit approval to the Soviet takeover and is acceding to Russian methods of social control. John Trochmann of the Militia of Montana spoke of this idea in his visit and speech at Yale University (Cheong, 1995).

Prior to this research, strains upon the militiamen were expected to be mostly economic and that militiamen would be displaced workers who were forced from good-paying jobs into low-skill and service jobs. Instead, the data revealed the militiamen to be a mix of solidly middle class people (with occupation being the major determinant of social class in this instance) together with some lower skill and service workers. The data also run counter to the common image that the public has absorbed from television and movies; i.e., of all militiamen as a struggling group of lower class “trailer dwellers.”

Similarly, other research confirms that militia membership crosses class lines. An anthropology doctoral student who joined a Florida militia later wrote how the militia was a mixture of “solid citizens” and a few that were marginal. He wrote that membership cut across traditional class boundaries and included business owners, corporate executives, lawyers and doctors intermingled with “rednecks,” the unemployed and menial labor (Keen, 1998).

Snow (1999) and Kushner (1998) also found that militiamen were solid citizens who hold jobs, have families and have rarely been in trouble with the law. They believed that membership lists of the citizen militias cut across all of America’s socioeconomic classes to include ministers, real estate developers, veterinarians, police officers, attorneys, gun dealers, war heroes, accountants, plumbers, teachers, auto mechanics, preachers, and carpenters.

### The New World Order

A surprising finding of this study was that there was not a singular totalizing generalized belief guiding the militia movement. Prior to the data collection, the New World Order was assumed to be the single overarching generalized belief that helped to spur the neo-militia movement. Acceptance of the NWO doctrine was assumed to be automatic: once a militiaman was introduced to the belief, he or she automatically adopted it. Based on a limited number of cases, the data in this study contradicted that notion. About equal numbers had been introduced to and accepted the NWO as those who had not. Thus, two or more generalized beliefs could and did operate simultaneously.

Support for the idea of dual generalized beliefs was found in the literature. Jonathan Karl (1995) for instance pointed out how the Texas Constitutional Militia has nothing about the New World Order at its web site but instead tells of a “shadow government” that runs the country. This has in the past been a favorite argument of both leftists and rightists (Mills, 1956; Allen, 1958; Prouty, 1973; Scott, 1993). TCM founder Jon Roland believed that a shadow government of politicians, CIA operatives and business leaders has already taken control of much of the U.S. government and most of the world; this government will take away constitutional rights, beginning with the right to bear arms. The best way to prevent this, he believed, is to activate the Texas Militia, an armed group of citizens dedicated to defending freedom.

Roland wrote in a 1995 e-mail (quoted in Snow, 1999: 111-112): “it is extremely important now to reach out to the general community for their support. Get our story out before our adversaries can get theirs out. Look like respectable businessmen. Emphasize our primary purpose: to enforce the law, especially the Constitution, and that means to expose criminal wrongdoing in government and abuses of power. Forget all the rhetoric about foreign troops, New World Order, and all the rest of the stuff that sounds bizarre to ordinary Americans. Stick to the basics, and hammer it over and over: Corruption and Abuse.”

A similar view emphasizing abuses of power was presented by J.J. Johnson of the Ohio Unorganized Militia who indicated that “people are tired of being terrorized by law enforcement. If a war is waged, these groups (militias) plan on winning.” For Johnson, the generalized belief is that an out of control police force is denying citizens their constitutional rights. (Hoffman, 1995).

Johnson's version of the "police state" generalized belief is the primary alternative to the idea of the New World Order. The Resister, a publication of the Special Forces Underground, states the vision thusly: "The increasing militarization of federal, state and local law enforcement agencies, aided by the duplicity of the Department of Defense has created the very beast feared by the founders generally and the antifederalists specifically; an armed force under the exclusive control of the executive branch of the federal government. These federal agencies have no purpose other than the enforcement of arbitrary, undefined, whim-based federal 'laws'" (Stern, 1995: 158).

Furthermore, researchers have reported that the militiamen who joined Christian Identity oriented militias were more likely to have been introduced to skinhead culture first, and sometime after that, to Christian Identity beliefs (e.g., Macko, 1996). Proponents of this religion believe that the main threat to society is not the NWO but ZOG, the Zionist Occupational Government. ZOG, then, emerges as a third generalized belief among U.S. militiamen.

#### Ruby Ridge, Waco and Gun Control

Ruby Ridge and Waco are the most commonly mentioned precipitants of the militia movement that appear in the literature (Tharp, 1994; Barkun, 1995; Bock, 1995; Karl, 1995; Maxwell and Tapia, 1995; McLemmee, 1995; Smolowe, 1995; Walter, 1995; Abanes, 1996; Halpern and Levin, 1996; Hamm, 1997; Kushner, 1998; Niewert, 1998; Snow, 1999). This finding aligns well with what was found in this dissertation. The emotional content of the two episodes appeared to be very high. The future militiamen wondered why so much federal firepower was allocated for Weaver, living in an isolated

part of Idaho with his wife and family, and the Branch Davidians, a small and unpopular religious sect. Was all this attention necessary or a case of drastic overkill?

The endings of both episodes were especially highly emotional; Weaver's wife was shot and killed by the FBI, and at Waco, over 70 died in a fire on the final day of the standoff, including 17 small children. Randy Weaver and Waco would become key symbols of "murderous" federal power menacing the freedom of innocent American citizens (Bennett, 1995). Militia activists continually have used these incidents as examples of government tyranny. Books and especially videos about the two events circulated quickly among those who were instrumental in forming militias and among those who would join later (Koernke, 1993, 1994; Thompson, 1993, 1994).

### The Internet

Several sources document the role of the Internet in movement mobilization (cf., Meador, 1996, Southern Poverty Law Center, 1996; Clauser, 1998). The most important of these, a University of Houston study of on-line militia chat groups (Meador, 1996), noted that the militia movement is "Internet-driven" and that the Internet serves as a platform for creating, sustaining and maintaining a group consciousness among militia members.

Several researchers note that the movement benefited from trends in technology that existed at the end of the Waco standoff. By the time of the birth of the movement in 1994, computers and computer services were cheaper, quicker, and more readily available than ever before. The Internet newsgroups allowed speedy transmission to a huge audience, including remote rural states. Anyone with access to Usenet (obtainable through CompuServe, America Online, or other providers) could easily subscribe to

these groups. This easy access made it possible for certain key documents to be available to the movement quickly and early on in the movement, e.g. the Texas Militia Papers and the Michigan Militia manual that was published on Linda Thompson's bulletin board in early 1994 (Parfrey and Redden, 1994; Karl, 1995; Snow, 1999).

### Oklahoma City Bombing

The growth in militia traffic on the Internet following the Oklahoma City bombing has been noted elsewhere (Southern Poverty Law Center, 1996). Internet traffic grew because militiamen accepted Usenet as an acceptable alternative media that was relatively free form and for the most part absent from censoring.

Among the factors alluded to earlier in this dissertation (but not elaborated on) to account for this growth was the important role that the Internet played in keeping the movement informed about several ongoing militia controversies. Especially after the Oklahoma City bombing, the Internet was a tool for militiamen to share information and keep informed about several controversies that were also noted in the mainstream press: the Alabama militias' infiltration of a BATF party in Tennessee; the search for John Doe II, including the prolific electronic magazine John Doe Times; the arrest and imprisonment of several militia leaders during 1996; and the "show trials" the following year (e.g., Kemp, 1998). Militiamen preferred the Internet version of events, citing the mainstream press as unfair and unreliable.

### Constitutionalism Versus Christian Identity Interests

The primary purpose of the militia, found in this study to be the prevention of the trampling of constitutional rights by the U.S. federal government, has been noted elsewhere (Boucher, 1994; Makinen, 1994; Bennett, 1995; Benoit, 1995; Clauser, 1998;

Kushner, 1998). The strenuous denials of militiamen that their militias are not racist appear to be genuine (cf., Bennett, 1995, and Snow, 1999) given that constitutionalism is the predominant paradigm in the movement as the data in this study showed. Stern's (1996) finding that only 20 percent of the movement is Christian Identity is roughly comparable to the 35 percent found here, thus the finding here is not out of line or unrealistic. This more recent data may be an indication that Christian Identity influence in the movement is growing. Militia leader Martin Lindstedt (1998) estimated Christian Identity involvement at 30 percent as of 1996 and claimed that it would grow to 50 percent in the future.

The literature likewise confirms the diversity that was found in terms of different types of militias. Scholars have acknowledged that the movement is difficult to classify largely because of this diversity (Kushner, 1998). Meador (1996) noted a “citizen activist” worldview among militiamen that was similar to those who joined the open constitutionalist militias that were examined in this study (e.g. Cascade Brigade). She also encountered an “enforcer” or protector type whose profile resembles the militiamen in the open constitutionalist militias that had a command structure such as the Michigan Militia and the Alabama Constitutional Militia. Finally, she notes a “separatist” world view similar to that voiced by militiamen who joined the survivalist/cell structure militias such as the Militia of Montana and the Texas Constitutional Militia. These militiamen are the kind that stockpile food and weapons, fearing a civil war between U.S. government agents and militias.

## Internet and Non-Internet Militias: A Comparison

This section of this chapter is concerned with the study of non-Internet militias and comparison of those results with that of Internet militias. Again, a national group of 28 militias was assembled: 6 militias from the Southeast, 9 from the West, 6 from the Midwest, 2 from the Southwest, and 5 from the East. No claim is made that this list of non-Internet militias is all-inclusive. The point of this comparison is to find a near-matching group of 28 militias to compare with the 28 Internet militias. Table 15 compares the militias by region with those studied earlier in Chapter 4. There was no significant difference between the numbers of Internet and non-Internet militias in each of the regions, according to the Chi-Square analysis. The non-Internet militias selected for study are listed in Table 16.

Once again, each potential militia to be studied was screened against the operational and conceptual definitions of a militia as constructed in this study. The non-Internet militias qualified sociologically as militias but either (1) had no web site, or (2) did not generate a significant amount of Usenet traffic (defined as 15 or more total hits in the Deja News archive from 1994-1999). Finally, for the scant Internet data that was available, the data analysis was conducted in the same general manner as for the Internet militias, except that data was not downloaded to diskettes and NUDIST was not used to analyze the data, due to the greatly reduced traffic for these militias. For the most part, secondary sources outside of the Internet were consulted regarding these militias.

### Differences Between Groups

The most obvious difference between non-Internet and Internet militias was that the former were not the larger “name” militias that are well known to scholars and to



Table 15.  
Internet and Non-Internet Militias by Region

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	<u>Internet</u>	<u>Non-Internet</u>
Region		
Southeast	7	6
West	9	9
Midwest	7	6
Southwest	3	2
East	2	5
Total	28	28

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Chi-Square = 1.6376 with 4 df,  $p > .80$ .

extremist watchers. There were 171 cases in the 28 Internet militias compared with only 31 cases in the 28 non-Internet militias. The non-Internet militias may well be larger than this analysis indicates; however, the 31 cases represent the only cases that could be located, due perhaps to the obscurity of the groups. The non-Internet militias also are not reported upon extensively in the media. When there are reports, media coverage is local or regional at best.

#### Comparisons Along Smelser's Dimensions

There were no large differences between the two groups when compared along the dimensions of Smelser's theory. For the most part, the differences discovered were minor and are best viewed as variations upon the general themes that were articulated with respect to the Internet militias. Again, these comparisons are based upon a small

Table 16.  
Non-Internet Militias Studied by Region

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Southeast	Lee County Militia (FL)	South Carolina Citizens' Militia
	Alabama Unorganized Mil.	Central Ark. Regional Militia
	Tennessee Vol. Militia	Eastern Diamondbacks (AL)
West	Alameda Cty. Militia (CA)	Arizona Patriots
	Guardians of Am. Liberty	Unorganized Mil. of Arizona
	Oregon Militia	Wyoming Militia
	Yakima Co. Militia	Yavapai Co. Militia
	Phineas Priesthood	
Midwest	Southern Kansas Mil.	Wisconsin Free Militia
	Illinois Minutemen	Iowa Militia
	U.S. Militia (MI)	Western Illinois Militia
Southwest	Red River Militia (TX)	North Texas Militia
East	Hillsborough Co. Dragoons	Maine Militia
	Rhode Island Light Infantry	Pennsylvania Militia
	Southern Maine Militia	

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number of cases for the non-Internet militias.

The non-Internet group responded to the same kinds of stress as did the Internet group. A difference between the groups was that the most often mentioned occupation in the non-Internet group was “current or retired military.” The Internet group had shown

Table 17.  
Criminal Involvement of Internet and Non-Internet Militias

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	<u>Internet</u>	<u>Non-Internet</u>	<u>Total</u>
Crimes Recorded			
Domestic Terrorism*	25	4	29
Militiamen Incarcerated**	42	10	52
Total	67	14	81

---

Chi Square = .379 with 1 df,  $p < .50$

Note: \*Cases Prosecuted as of 12-97; Source: Smith and Damphousie (1997)

\*\*As of 2-14-98; Source: Pitcavage (1998)

more variety in occupations. However, the same general conclusion can be reached for both groups: there was no evidence of economic marginality based upon the militiaman's occupation.

There was more than one generalized belief found among militiamen in the non-Internet group. This finding parallels that found among Internet militiamen. One difference discovered was that the non-Internet group was more likely to say that they had been introduced to and accepted the idea of the New World Order prior to joining the militia.

The Branch Davidian conflict at Waco, Texas was the most mentioned precipitant in the non-Internet group and this aligned well with the findings in the Internet group. However, there was generally a more even distribution of responses for all of the

precipitants in the non-Internet group. In the Internet group, Waco and Ruby Ridge were the most often mentioned precipitants, accounting for over three fourths of the valid posts relevant to that research question.

The Internet did play an initial role in the formation of several of the militias that are now referred to as “non-Internet.” At one time many of these militias had URLs (Web addresses on the Internet) and were linked to and displayed on the web sites of several other militias. However, at some point in time the non-Internet militias pulled their pages off the Web and did not move them to another location. Some of the “bad URLs” are still displayed today. For example, there are (bad) links to the pages of the Lee County Militia and the Regiment of Dragoons, even though their pages have been pulled for some time.

Tactics did change after the Oklahoma City bombing in that the non-Internet militias tended to drop their pages after the bombing while the Internet group continued for the most part to operate their pages. Posted messages indicate that more secure kinds of communications were engaged in by the non-Internet militiamen, just as in the Internet group. The non-Internet militiamen did not engage in or participate in the rapid growth in Internet traffic due partially to the fact that some militias quit the movement. For those that carried on for some time after the bombing, it is likely that they did use more secure kinds of communications and not the Internet, according to the messages studied. So the non-Internet group fulfilled the initial research expectations based upon the literature review whereas the Internet group did not. However, despite the fact that the non-Internet groups were more likely to go underground, they did not engage in more criminal activity than did the Internet groups, based on the data at hand in Table 17.

### Status Displacement

Based on the evidence accumulated, status displacement did not play a role among the non-Internet militiamen in terms of influencing their decision to join the militia, as in the Internet group. There were no messages at all (or no secondary data at all) to indicate that status displacement had occurred.

### Constitutionalism Versus Christian Identity Interests

As in the Internet group, there was a large proportion of constitutionalists and constitutionalism is the predominant paradigm. In the non-Internet group, however, constitutionalism was the preferred philosophy by more than the approximate 2 to 1 margin that was found in the Internet group.

### Summary

There was evidence to corroborate the findings of this dissertation, and the research questions were answered. Mostly the corroborative evidence was not reviewed in Chapter 2 because it did not fit well with Smelser's theory.

A near-matching group of militias that do not appear on the Internet was studied to see if there were significant differences between those militias and the ones reported on in Chapter 4. There were minor differences that could be characterized (for the most part) as variations upon a theme. For example, though the non-Internet militiamen were more likely to report an occupation of "current or retired military," the same general conclusion can be reached as in Chapter 4: there was no evidence of economic strain or economic marginality based upon the militiaman's occupation.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

This dissertation is an effort to analyze the U.S. neo-militia movement from a sociological point of view. For the first time in an academic sociological study, militias are conceptually and operationally defined. The militias selected for examination are only those that withstood the rigors of the sociological definitions. By holding up against this rigor, there is confidence that the militias studied are social groups with some endurance, and that they had roles, norms and boundaries that were understood and observed by persons within and outside the group.

The purpose of the dissertation was to provide a content analysis of the Internet traffic of U.S. militiamen to test the thesis that structural strain (and other factors specified by Neil Smelser) account for the rise of the most recent militia movement in the United States. Smelser's theory of collective behavior was selected as the theoretical frame of reference because extant literature about U.S. militias indicated that structural strain played a role in the genesis and direction of the militia movement. Prior to the study, Smelser's theory was viewed as the best fit between available data and a logical explanation for the origins of the movement.

In general, this dissertation suggests that Smelser's theory adequately explains the emergence and maintenance of the recent militia movement. The key points of this research are as follows.

The early stage of structural conduciveness that is considered a necessary and sufficient condition for the militia movement was not tested in this study because its existence is readily apparent to all who study the militia phenomenon. It was mentioned

briefly in the literature review. There, it was noted that conduciveness refers to implicit rules and standards of a society that allow a given episode of collective behavior to occur. In the U.S., the right to freedom of assembly and freedom of association that appear in the Constitution is conducive to the formulation of militias as well as other kinds of social groups or movements. More specifically, modern militias draw upon colonial history and the precedents for militias that appear in the Articles of Confederation, the Constitution, and subsequent federal legislation. Militias today see themselves (and not the National Guard) as the militia mandated in federal law and as protectors of the people against an arrogant, tyrannical government.

The strain that Neil Smelser believed was a necessary precondition to any kind of collective behavior emanated from social structure. Sometimes the strains could be detected and people could be cognizant of them, and at other times they could not. Consequently, this research considered Internet messages both by and about U.S. militiamen. A goal of the study was to account for both the known (overt) articulated strains as well as the hidden, unarticulated ones.

The major strain upon U.S. neo-militiamen was fear. There was considerable fear of the power of the federal government, especially its rapidly growing police force and its use of increasingly “Sovietized” means of social control.

The literature review suggested that economic strain would be prevalent among militiamen. However, occupational data reported in this study contradicted that notion. Militiamen, based on occupation, were a mix of middle and working class people who were not experiencing stress due to the occupational displacements associated with global economic changes.

Based on the literature review, it was assumed that one and only one generalized belief (the New World Order) had developed prior to the militia movement's formulation and that this belief was a necessary and sufficient condition for the movement to appear. The results of this study showed that about half of the militiamen were not introduced to this concept before joining the militia or did not accept it. Thus, in the formulation of the neo-militia movement, more than one generalized belief did exist. Two other generalized beliefs, Police State and Zionist Occupational Government, were identified that operated concurrently with the NWO.

Waco and Ruby Ridge were the two most prominent precipitants mentioned by the militiamen studied. It was anticipated that the Brady Bill and the Weapons Act of 1994 would also be important precipitants, but they ranked well below the more emotional issues of the loss of life at both Waco and Ruby Ridge. This suggests that the impact of gun control legislation may not be as great as previously thought. A key meeting in Estes Park, Colorado in 1992, thought to be very important by some extremist watchers, also ranked low as a precipitant.

The neo-militia movement has been described as "Internet-driven," and the results of this study bore out that description. Bulletin boards, Web pages and Usenet were the preferred media of the militia movement, although fax machines, videos, e-mail, and short-wave radio were also respected alternative media to the movement. Messages indicated that all of these complimented one another and worked together to provide an alternative system of communication for the movement.

It was anticipated that social control in the form of stepped-up policing or the negative public opinion following the Oklahoma City bombing would eventually lead to



a decrease in public forms of communication such as the Internet, and an increase in more secure and private kinds of communication. The expectation was that confidential talk, encrypted e-mail, and heavily coded messages would replace Internet traffic.

The data did not bear this expectation out. The time after the bombing was divided up into two twenty month periods; the first, time frame 1, being the first twenty months after the bombing and the second, time frame 2, being the period 21-40 months after the event. Internet traffic in the three newsgroups by and about the 28 militias and the militiamen increased by 67 percent overall during the second time frame. This general trend was evident in the total traffic in the three newsgroups that were studied, including that traffic not specifically directed at the militias or militiamen studied.

The neo-militia movement is guided by the precepts of constitutionalism. Based on the cases studied, the goal of nearly two thirds of the movement is to prevent the trampling of citizens' constitutional rights by an arrogant and increasingly powerful U.S. federal government. However, the data did suggest that Christian Identity ideology is gaining popularity within the movement. The differences in the two orientations were very clear. The data did disclose some ideological and tactical variety within the categories of militiamen who called themselves constitutionalists or Christian Identity.

The concept of status displacement (Lipset and Raab, 1978) was not confirmed in this study. This concept was selected for examination because it complemented Smelser's theory and was a specific and logically coherent explanation for the zeal of the militiamen as they carry out their plans. Only 13 of the 1,189 documents examined in the study bore evidence of status displacement. Though this concept remains a cogent

academic attempt to explain the intensity of militia beliefs and tactics, the empirical evidence for it is lacking. The results of this study show it to be a marginal phenomenon.

#### The Adequacy of the Internet as a Data Source

It was expected that the Internet would provide a valuable data resource for an academic study of militiamen, who are difficult to interview and who are suspicious of academic research. They believe that research data will simply be used as a “control mechanism” by the federal police, or ZOG, or the New World Order to stifle the aims of the movement. It was anticipated that unobtrusive monitoring of Internet traffic would get around the obvious problem of reactivity that might be expected among such a skeptical group of interviewees.

While the Internet may prove a treasure trove for those investigating communication processes (e.g. by studying online chat groups), it may not prove as valuable to those who are conducting studies aimed at answering substantive sociological research questions such as was the case in this study. The data seemed thin at points. This was especially true when seeking private demographic information that was important from the standpoint of research, as in trying to determine a subject’s social class. Data on education and income is needed to measure social class adequately, but militiamen did not reveal this information (as a rule) on the Internet. Therefore, supplemental face-to-face or phone interviews are needed when such information is important to the investigator’s research goals.

Much of the militia Internet traffic was duplicated and most of it had to do with current events and with issues peripheral to the daily activities of neo-militiamen. There was an effort by some to keep the concept of the New World Order alive by producing

(or reproducing) highly conspiratorial evidence that it is still a viable concept. All this traffic frankly got in the way of this research. In poring through the documents, one encountered more “weeds” than “wheat.”

Therefore, though research questions can be answered from Internet messages, a very large group of documents may have to be examined in order to get answers to the research questions posed. Getting answers will be particularly difficult when such answers rely on the basic and private information that is routinely extracted from face to face or phone interviews. This aspect of Internet research may prove tiresome and be unattractive to some researchers.

#### Future Research

Over 80 messages studied in this dissertation referred to the fact that at least a portion of the neo-militia movement has gone underground. Extremist watchers now acknowledge this, conceding that there are fewer militias today than in 1996. The most alarming aspect of this trend is that the leaderless cell concept is being offered as the model of a militia that goes underground. Some messages studied even provided a primer of sorts on how leaderless cells can engage in terrorism. If the neo-militia movement is waning, and is replaced slowly by leaderless cells, there is virtually no limit to the amount of terrorism that such cells can produce. The Oklahoma City bombing may be only the beginning of it.

Therefore, what is important from the standpoint of research is to begin to penetrate this secret world. This would take the form of participant observation in militia cells, or participation in militia computer bulletin board discussions, a more secure form of communication than Usenet. To qualify for one of the bulletin boards, the participant

must demonstrate that he/she is a patriotic and loyal American who definitely shares the goals of the militia. Once past this obstacle, successful participant observation might reveal much that was hidden from view in this study.

Among the things to be learned in such observations would be ways to infiltrate the militia Internet discussion groups and ways to begin a program of counter-education. At present, newcomers to the groups are treated hospitably, unless they boldly show their ideology. If they do show their ideology, they find themselves locked into an ideological “camp” from which escape is difficult. A strategy of counter-education that comes to mind, is to infiltrate one of the camps and then to slowly define one’s role as a mediator and/or discussant. By such means, logical arguments can be used to refute some of the neo-militia movement’s most inflammatory arguments.

Before data were collected, Smelser’s theory was selected as the frame of reference for the research at hand because it was the best match between the available data and a logical explanation to account for the genesis of the movement. After the data was collected and analyzed, it was determined that the general outline of Smelser’s theory was confirmed by the research data. Smelser’s theory held up well and continues to be a most adequate explanation for the movement.

However, during the research process it was obvious that there is at least an opening for a new theory to explain what was found in the data. It was noted that traditional demographic categories such as gender, region, and social class were not particularly meaningful nor did they shed any light on the findings. Furthermore, there was such variety in the types of militias studied that 6 general types were developed, along with only a few model or example militias that fit the category well. This meant that the

remainder of the militias were hybrids that did not fit well in any category. Thus, sometimes even the variable “orientation” did not prove meaningful.

What became clear after the analysis proceeded was the boundaries being set between individuals in a “camp,” whether it be Christian Identity, constitutionalist, Common Law, Posse Comitatus, or anti-militia. Membership in these camps did not depend upon the kinds of demographic or social factors mentioned above, but were more likely to depend upon a very strong common shared language or argot. For instance, case number 83, a well known Christian Identity militiaman, called his constitutionalist enemies “SMAF’s” or Solipcistic Mattoid Anarchy Fascists. Frequent readers of the newsgroup Miscellaneous-Activism-Militia come to accept this as case 83’s “put down” of his enemies and after a while this argot becomes familiar to the readers of the newsgroup.

What may be at work here is that militiamen in each camp are becoming what Bates (1997) called a self-referential system. This is a closed system, an organized way of seeing things. As a closed system, the group can adapt to its environment because of shared symbols and language structures. Such adaptation often occurs when changes are made or proposed to the internal operations or internal organization of the system. Thus, after much debate, case 83 was not expelled from the Miscellaneous-Activism-Militia newsgroup in 1999 after he had made several very inflammatory postings. The decision made was that his language was in the tradition of free speech and should not be infringed. His positions were clear and his argot had become more understandable over time. Additionally, the controversy over case 83 prompted discussions about changing the organization of the newsgroup, so that serious militia traffic would have its own

group, and the related, peripheral traffic would be relocated to another group. The subscribers to M.A.M. thus adapted to case 83's language and mannerisms and continued to operate as a closed system.

Finally, every researcher can think of things he or she would want to change in their research design if they had the opportunity to do the research over again. In this case, a few face to face interviews, phone interviews, or conversations via Usenet would have helped to validate the findings and to shore up those portions of the data that seemed "thin." For example, more data on structural strain, generalized beliefs, and status displacement would have helped to give a more complete picture of the social dynamics involved in these processes. More responses or more data would have made it possible to retract some of the qualifiers attached to the findings of this research.

There is a tradeoff in unobtrusive research for every researcher who tries it out. On the one hand, the researcher loses sensitive data that he/she would like to have such as that about income and education. On the other hand, an unobtrusive researcher is able to revisit his data as often as he or she likes and to look at it for any themes or trends that may emerge. This means the validity of the research is high even though the reliability of it may be low.

APPENDIX A  
A NOTE ABOUT USENET

Usenet is a discussion system that is distributed world-wide. It consists of a set of news groups with names that are classified by subject. Messages are "posted" to these newsgroups by people on computers with the appropriate software. This software must be offered by the computer owner's Internet service provider. Just because a computer user has Internet access does not automatically mean that the user has access to Usenet. Some newsgroups are moderated. In these newsgroups, the messages are first sent to a moderator before appearing in the newsgroup. The three newsgroups studied in this dissertation were all moderated, so that messages with extreme sexual content, or ones that were determined to be otherwise offensive to a broad general audience, were not published in the newsgroup. However, beyond that, all views were permitted on a "free speech" basis."

Usenet is not the same as the Internet. The Internet is a wide-ranging network, parts of which are subsidized by various governments. The Internet carries many kinds of traffic (including e-mail) of which Usenet is only one kind. Furthermore, the Internet is only one of the various networks that carry Usenet traffic."

Usenet is also not a "UUCP" network. UUCP is a protocol for sending data over point-to-point connections, typically using dial up modems. Sites use UUCP to carry many kinds of traffic, of which Usenet is only one. UUCP, furthermore, is only one of the various transports carrying Usenet traffic."



APPENDIX B  
RESEARCH QUESTIONS, KEY CONCEPTS AND KEYWORDS FOR NUDIST  
DATA SEARCHES

Question 1: Did militiamen experience social and economic strain prior to joining the "militia?"

Key Concept: Strain"

Keywords: Strain"  
Downhill"  
Downward mobility"  
Status"  
Prestige"  
Fear"  
Income"  
Divorce  
Layoff"  
Children  
Illness"  
Occupation  
Work"  
Living"  
Control  
Illegitimate"  
Corrupt  
Displaced"  
Change"  
Soviet "  
Socialism "  
Communism"  
Collectivism

Question 2: Before joining the militia, were militiamen introduced to the idea of the New "World Order?"

Key Concept: New World Order"

Keywords: Black helicopters"  
Occupying troops"  
Regionalism"  
Trilateralists  
Bilderbergers"  
Rockefeller  
Federal Reserve"  
FEMA"  
Masonic  
Russian troops"

Rothschild"  
Illuminati"  
Zionists"  
New World Order"  
NWO"  
Gurkha troops "

Question 3: Were events at Ruby Ridge and Waco, together with the passage of gun control legislation, important reasons why participants joined the militia?"

Key concept: Precipitant"

Keywords: Ruby Ridge"  
Waco" "  
Koresh  
Weaver"  
ATF "  
Gun control  
Bureaucracy"  
Autonomy"  
Brady Bill" "  
Violent Crime Act  
Estes Park  
LA Riot"  
MOVE"  
Roland  
Brady II"  
Anti-Brady"  
Pratt

Question 4: Did the Internet play a more important role than other media (short-wave radio, e-mail, fax) in helping to mobilize the movement?"

Key concepts: Internet, Alternative media"

Keywords: Internet"  
Short-wave radio"  
E-mail"  
Fax"  
Usenet  
Bulletin board"  
BBS"  
Computer"

Question 5: Following the Oklahoma City bombing, did social control influence movement participants to use the Internet less and "underground" kinds of communication more often?"

Key concept: Mode of communication"

Keywords John Doe"  
McVeigh"  
Nichols "  
Underground "  
Tactics  
Security,"  
Cut-out  
John Doe II,"  
Strausmeier  
ARA "  
Centennial Park  
Tri-States  
Leaderless"  
Cell  
Brescia" "  
Resistance

Question 6: Did militiamen experience status displacement at the time they joined the militia?"

Key concept: Status displacement"

Keywords: Respect"  
Pride "  
Conversion  
Future"  
Regain "  
Deprivation  
Status "  
Education  
Backlash"  
Power  
Politics"  
Infringement"

Question 7: What is the primary orientation of the movement  
(constitutionalist or "Christian Identity?")

Key concepts: Constitutional Republic, Christian Identity"

Keywords: Republic"  
Constitution "  
Collectivism "  
Socialism "  
Covenant "  
Yahweh "  
Christian "  
Apocalypse "  
Aryan" "  
Sheeple "  
Colonial  
Taxation"  
Identity"  
Oklahoma City"

APPENDIX C  
DATA GATHERING PROCEDURES

As mentioned in Chapter 3, information from web pages and from Usenet was downloaded to diskettes for analysis. After the downloaded information was converted to Microsoft Word files, NUDIST was used to analyze the data."

NUDIST is a software program that was designed to look for keyword and chunks of text that pertain to the research questions. These keywords appear in Appendix B."

NUDIST searches for the relevant keyword and then generates a report. The report lists the files in which the keyword appears along with a printout of the data chunk (the sentences immediately prior to and following the appearance of the keyword.)"

There were 97 keywords relevant to the research questions, and therefore 97 reports were generated that were subsequently reviewed."

In reviewing the reports, each chunk that appeared to have substance to answer a research question was noted and the original file was found on the disk. The hard copy of the file was the raw data from which a number of coding decisions could be made (see Chapter 3 for coding instructions)."

Some keywords were added or deleted based upon what was in the reports. This was expected because in qualitative research, codes often have to be added, reconstituted or deleted as the analysis proceeds (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Snow and Anderson, 1993; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Mason, 1997)."

After all documents had been coded, the results were loaded to SPSS for limited quantitative analysis in the form of Chi Square or Binomial Test, as appropriate."

In summary, the basic steps in the data collection process were these:"

- locate file on disk "
- produce hard copy of the document"
- code according to instructions, making note of codes that need to be added, combined, or deleted
- after finishing all coding, loading of data into SPSS for quantitative analysis."

APPENDIX D  
CODING OF MILITIAMEN'S OCCUPATION



Occupations were coded according to U.S. Census Bureau (1996) categories as follows:"

Professional/managerial"

Executive, administrative and managerial personnel,"  
and those with professional specialties. (Includes"  
business owners and current and retired military)."

Sales, Technical"

Technicians and related support; sales occupations;"  
administrative support, including clerical. (Includes"  
reports of middle class standing with no elaboration;"  
and reports of government work with no elaboration)."

"

Manual labor

Precision production and crafts; repair work; operators,"  
fabricators, and laborers. (Includes reports of lower middle"  
class or working class with no elaboration)."

Service, Low Skill"

Service occupations, farming, forestry, and fishing."

APPENDIX E  
CODING INSTRUCTIONS FOR QUESTION 6

Messages indicating status displacement were coded 1."

Messages that indicated collective concern were coded 2. This data was imported from the results of question one."

Examples of messages coded 1:"

The militia movement is a cry for attention, recognition and respect, not a call for bloody revolution (post 1)."

More they inspire pity but mostly disdain. A large number seem to be disenfranchised because they just can't cut it in the new information age. It's not my fault they're too stupid or just too damned lazy (post 15)."

Threatened with the loss of jobs and traditional uses of the land, they fear they are losing control of their lives (post 20)."

Examples of messages coded 2:"

They (militiamen) are not driven by hatred – of blacks, Jews, or even the government – but by fear. They worry that the federal government does not respect the liberties guaranteed in the Constitution and many eventually pose a direct threat to them, their families, and their neighbors (post 1)."

Experts who have been watching such developments ... say all this is leading one place – to the establishment of a genuine national police force (post 12)."

The breakup of the Eastern Bloc ... is merely a smokescreen to get America to lower its guard. The Berlin Wall did not fall on its own ... if you think the Soviet Union is gone, ask the Chechens ... (post 23)."

APPENDIX F  
CODING INSTRUCTIONS FOR QUESTION 7

Messages whose manifest or latent content indicated that the purpose of the militia is to restore a Constitutional Republic, or were otherwise supportive of the constellation of beliefs known as constitutionalism, were coded 1. Messages whose manifest or latent content was supportive of Christian Identity goals were coded 2.

Examples of messages coded 1:

Once we got past the race card and people understood that we were not any of the things that certain areas of the media were saying - because we have Jewish commanders; we have black commanders; ... joining us, and we're trying to make a positive force here in Michigan to change our government back to the Constitution (post 25).

Purposes (of the Georgia Militia)... to execute the Laws of the Union, suppress Insurrections, and repel Invasions (post 30).

... the bulk of the... militias of the various United States have formed a grass-root response to such government-sponsored terrorism as well as the continued degradation of our Constitutional rights at the hands of the current federal administration (post 31).

Examples of messages coded 2:

Other elements that occurred since the high-water mark for the open Constitutional militia movement . have strengthened my conclusion that the CI (Christian Identity) and White Nationalist Resistance cells have their place in our Patriot coalition . (post 51).

Thomas (ARA leader) said he met Guthrie, nicknamed "Wild Bill", at Aryan Nations headquarters in 1991 (post 70).

Frankly . you hate White People. You really hate those of us who are fighting to restore White America for White People. I point out that if you hate us so much, you simply have no right to live as a parasite off of us and among us. We neither want nor need to have you around. Go live among those you serve. Practice what you preach (post 78).

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