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Structural Social Change and the Mobilizing Effect of Threat: Explaining Levels of Patriot and Militia Organizing in the United States

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In the 1990s, a widespread patriot/militia movement emerged in the United States. Although patriot/militia organizations exist in all 50 U.S. states, some states have higher levels of patriot/militia organization than do others. We examine the factors that account for this variation, including the possibility that mobilization occurs in response to threats produced by structural social changes. We conduct a negative binomial regression analysis of state-level counts of patriot/militia organizations and find support for the argument that structural transformations can spark the mobilization of reactive social movements. We show that economic restructuring, measured by a decline in manufacturing jobs and the decline of the family farm, influences the mobilization of patriot/militia groups in the U.S. in the mid-1990s. We confirm these state-level findings with an analysis of patriot/militia organization in 300 U.S. counties.

Patriot/militia¹ groups came to national attention with the bombing of the Federal Building in Oklahoma City in 1995 and media claims that the chief perpetrator had ties to militia organizations. Throughout the latter half of the 1990s, individuals with connections to militia and/or patriot organizations committed a number of additional acts of violence, many of which also drew national media attention (Berlet and Lyons 2000; Cattarinich 1998; Southern Poverty Law Center 1999). The movement's relatively recent emergence, as well as its potential for violence, makes an exploration of the factors associated with its incidence worthwhile. Both case studies and journalistic accounts of the patriot/militia movement attribute its rise to broad structural changes, including population shifts, economic restructuring, and the increasing political power of previously disenfranchised groups, such as African Americans, women, and Jews (Abanes 1996; Castells 1997; Dyer 1997; Lamy 1996; Snow 1999). Although these explanations are fairly consistent with recent empirical research on social movements, they do not fit neatly into the currently dominant theories of social movement emergence, and thus remain under-theorized.

In this paper, we explore the mobilizing effect of several types of threat produced by structural social change. We consider the possibility that changing economic conditions,

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1. The *Patriot* movement involves individuals who identify themselves as patriots opposed to a "New World Order" government conspiracy. The common theme articulated by the groups we define as belonging to this movement, is the idea that the U.S. government has failed to uphold and protect the Constitution, and that citizen action is necessary for its protection. *Militia* group members are patriots who have formed armed units. We include *both* militia organizations and patriot organizations in our analyses and refer to these as "patriot/militia" organizations in this article. In the section of this article entitled, "The Patriot Movement in the United States," we describe in detail the beliefs that are held, and the ideology articulated, by the movement.

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demographic shifts, and political competition may all produce threats which inspire *reactive mobilization*, or mobilization in response to the real or perceived loss of power or resources (Tilly 1978). To evaluate this argument, we conduct a negative binomial regression analysis of state-level counts of patriot/militia organizations and show that economic restructuring, within both the manufacturing and agricultural sectors, explains variation in levels of mobilization of patriot/militia groups in the U.S. in the mid-1990s. We confirm these results with an analysis of 300 U.S. counties. Our findings suggest that scholars of social movements (and especially scholars of reactive social movements) should consider the mobilizing effect of threat alongside other, more commonly theorized, factors that influence the emergence of collective action.

The Mobilizing Effect of Threat and Reactive Social Movements

Scholars of social movements recognize that groups sometimes mobilize in response to threat. Strain theories, which were popular through the 1950s and 1960s, argue that groups mobilize when they face broad-scale social changes, including economic crisis or restructuring, wars, the loss of supporting social institutions, or mass migrations (Bell 1963; Gusfield 1963; Hofstadter 1955; Kornhauser 1959; Lipset 1963). The individual-level component of the theory suggests that socially isolated individuals are more likely to participate in movements, and that participation is a response to psychological distress (Kornhauser 1959; Lang and Lang 1961; Turner and Killian 1987). Although scholars developed the theory based on their studies of the right-wing movements (e.g., Nazism, fascism, McCarthyism) active during the 1940s, 1950s, and early 1960s, they presented it as an explanation of all social movements (Garner 1997).

While strain theory was popular through the mid-1960s, research on the left-oriented movements that emerged in the 1960s generated questions about its utility (Buechler 2000; Garner 1997). Critiques of early individual-level strain theory center on the assertion that social movement participation is irrational and that individuals are more likely to participate in movements when they are socially isolated (Finkel and Rule 1986; Gould 1993; McAdam 1988; McAdam and Paulsen 1993; Tarrow 1996; Taylor 1996). Critiques of the macro-level component of strain theory are based on empirical analyses of left-oriented movements, which consistently demonstrate that groups tend to mobilize when they experience *increased* economic resources, as opposed to *decreased* levels of economic resources (McCarthy and Zald 1977).

While we do not address debates about the utility of the individual-level component of strain theory in this article, we do argue that the macro-level component of the theory is useful in explaining the emergence of reactive forms of mobilization. Resource mobilization and political opportunity theories, the two most dominant theories of movement emergence, do not make predictions about threats produced by macro-level structural change.² Classically, resource mobilization theory argues that movements emerge in response to increases in the resources needed to sustain collective action and the availability of organizations to coordinate the effort (for reviews see Jenkins 1983; McAdam 1996; McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1988). The political process variant of resource mobilization theory emphasizes the importance of expanding political opportunities as a catalyst to collective action (McAdam 1982 (1999); Tarrow 1989, 1994; Tilly 1978). But, what happens when resources available to those who are generally resource advantaged *decline*? And, what happens when political *threats* against those typically in more powerful positions emerge? Groups that have some social power during one period, by virtue of their race or gender or class, may face a loss of power, or at least the perception that they are losing power, during another time period. While we do not advocate a

2. They do concede that "suddenly imposed grievances," such as environmental disasters, may trigger mobilization (Walsh 1981). Scholars in this tradition also explore the mobilizing effect of the state's use of repression, which can be considered a type of threat.

return to the micro-component of strain theory, we suggest here that the threat produced by structural social change may lead to the mobilization of certain social movements, in particular reactive social movements.³

Reactive social movements, according to Tilly (1978), involve attempts by a group to reassert claims to political and/or economic resources that they have lost (or that they perceive they have lost, as Beck (2000) suggests). A group may feel threatened when its members perceive that social forces are developing in a way that will prevent them from realizing their interests. As the literature we describe below suggests, groups may mobilize in response to a threatened loss of economic resources and/or political power. The source of the threat may include economic or political developments, or changing majority/minority populations. Political threats may include increased government repression against a group, a loss of rights, or a loss of political power associated with the increased political power by an opposing group (Goldstone and Tilly 2001; Meyer and Staggenborg 1996; Van Dyke forthcoming). Threatening economic developments may include economic restructuring or other economic changes that put at risk a group's ability to economically maintain itself. The same conditions that create favorable conditions for collective action by one movement may present an increased threat for another (McVeigh 1999; Meyer and Staggenborg 1996). Those enjoying the most powerful positions in society may have sufficient economic and organizational resources and political leverage to mobilize, but may only be inspired to do so when faced with a perceived threat to these resources.

The counter-revolutionary mobilization among the Vendée during the French Revolution (Tilly 1964) is a classic example of a reactive social movement. Essentially, the Vendée organized in response to threats produced by the major social changes occurring at the time (including urbanization, industrialization, and demographic changes) that made France ripe for the Revolution. Thus, some segments of the population were affected by social change in a way that inspired them to join the revolution, while others counter-mobilized as they saw the revolution and other social and economic developments threatening their interests. We argue that the patriot/militia movement is a modern day example of a reactive social movement. It is important to note, however, that we do not equate *reactive* social movements with *right-oriented* movements, although there may be considerable overlap between the two. While some recent scholarship suggests that movements on the political right mobilize in response to political or economic threat, other empirical examples provided in the next section demonstrate that *left-oriented* groups may also mobilize in response to threat. Thus, rather than distinguishing between right- and left-leaning movements, we think that a more useful conceptual distinction can be made between reactive and proactive movements.

Structural Social Change and Threat

Recent empirical work shows that reactive mobilization may, at least in part, be a function of threats caused by three types of structural changes: political, economic, and demographic.⁴ Tilly (1978) suggests that increased political opportunities or political threats may inspire mobilization. Studies of the American peace movement mobilization in response to the policies of the Reagan administration (Meyer 1990) and the White Separatist movement in the U.S. (Dobratz and Shanks-Meile 1997) support the idea that political threats sometimes

3. Tilly (1978:144) classifies collective action based on the forms used and claims articulated by collective actors. In addition to reactive action, he defines competitive and proactive action. Competitive action overlaps with reactive, and occurs when groups assert the right to resources also claimed by another group. Proactive actions are those that claim resources that have not been previously enjoyed.

4. Environmental crisis is another factor that sometimes inspires reactive mobilization (Walsh 1981), but it is not relevant to our case.

inspire mobilization. Similarly, work within the ethnic conflict literature, described below, also suggests that groups mobilize when threatened with a loss of political power.

In addition to political threat, research also demonstrates that changing economic conditions and/or economic restructuring may be perceived to be threatening and thus trigger protest activity. The economic changes of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries triggered mobilization on the part of several different populations. For example, peasants responded to the commercialization of agriculture across Europe with a series of uprisings (Moore 1966; Tarrow 1996), and growing exploitation accompanied by economic insecurity triggered massive peasant unrest in many Asian countries in the same period (Scott 1976). In urban areas, the industrial revolution generated conflict, as workers resisted losing control over production and their increasing dependence on wage labor (Tarrow 1996; Tilly 1993). And, scholars convincingly link economic downturns in the U.S. to the rise of the White Separatist Movement (Dobratz and Shanks-Meile 1997; Wellman 1993). In all of these cases, factors such as the strength of the state and divisions of power among different groups mediated the success of the insurgency, however, economic restructuring created the underlying social conditions that inspired populations to protest.

Several scholars studying right-wing extremism and racial violence suggest that mobilization is a function of unstable macro-level phenomena such as unemployment and changes in the size of minority populations (Barret 1987; Beck 2000; Koopmans 1996; McVeigh 1999). Research demonstrates that right-wing mobilization in Western Europe is associated with increased minority populations and economic problems (Kitschelt 1995; Koopmans 1996). Indeed, the perception that minority populations are increasing, whether or not the increase is real, may be enough to inspire racist action (Gallagher 1994; Giles 1977; Giles and Evans 1985). Castells (1997) argues that processes of globalization influence the rise of fundamentalist movements, including the patriot/militia movement, in all parts of the world. Increasing globalization and economic restructuring are having a negative economic impact on some segments of society, especially those that do not benefit economically from the changing economy. In locations where minority population levels are increasing, social conflict may ensue.

Finally, work within the ethnic conflict literature also provides strong support for the idea that population changes, when accompanied by scarce economic resources, can lead to mobilization. Political and economic competition theory rests on the idea that competition for scarce economic and/or political resources may trigger ethnic conflict (Blalock 1967; Olzak 1992). Factors that increase contact between ethnic groups (e.g., migration) are likely to trigger conflict, as are factors that decrease the level of available resources (e.g., economic recession). Empirical research provides overwhelming support for arguments from both economic and political competition theories (Beck 2000; Jacobs and Wood 1999; Olzak 1992; Soule 1992; Soule and Van Dyke 1999; Tolnay and Beck 1995).

The empirical evidence from these various traditions supports the idea that structural social changes, including political, economic and demographic shifts, inspire mobilization. Based on these findings, we test hypotheses about how broad structural changes affect levels of organization of a reactive social movement: the patriot/militia movement. Before we turn to a discussion of our cross-sectional analyses, we briefly describe the historical context of the movement and factors that played a role in the emergence of the movement.

The Patriot Movement in the United States

In 1996, there were nearly 800 documented patriot/militia organizations in the U.S. (Southern Poverty Law Center 1996). The number of organizations declined dramatically in subsequent years as these groups and individuals adopted a mode of organization known as "leaderless resistance" whereby they function largely underground in "cells" (Berlet and Lyons 2000; Dobratz and Shanks-Meile 1997; Southern Poverty Law Center 1999, 2002).

Nonetheless, in 1996 patriot/militia groups were active all over the country, as shown in Figure 1.

Patriot/militia groups first came to the attention of the U.S. public in 1995, with the bombing of the Oklahoma City Federal Building, however, far right patriot/militia groups were under investigation by the federal government well before this time (Berlet and Lyons 2000; Hamilton 1996). The patriot/militia movement follows a long history of conservative political thought and activism in the United States. Its more recent historical antecedents include the Ku Klux Klan, McCarthy-era communist witch-hunts, and the John Birch Society (Berlet and Lyons 2000; Hamilton 1996; Stern 1996). Previous militia initiatives, including that of the Minutemen of the 1960s, the Posse Comitatus, active from the mid-1970s until the mid-1980s, and the Order, active during the early 1980s, also influenced the movement.

Many leaders and members of patriot/militia organizations belonged to other conservative organizations prior to or during their patriot/militia activity (Berlet and Lyons 2000; U.S. Committee on the Judiciary 1997b). Indeed, to separate the patriot/militia movement from other conservative movements is difficult, as members of different right-wing organizations sometimes work together or attend conferences and rallies together (Blee 1996; Neiwert 1999; Stern 1996). On top of this, patriot/militia ideology reflects multiple themes from other

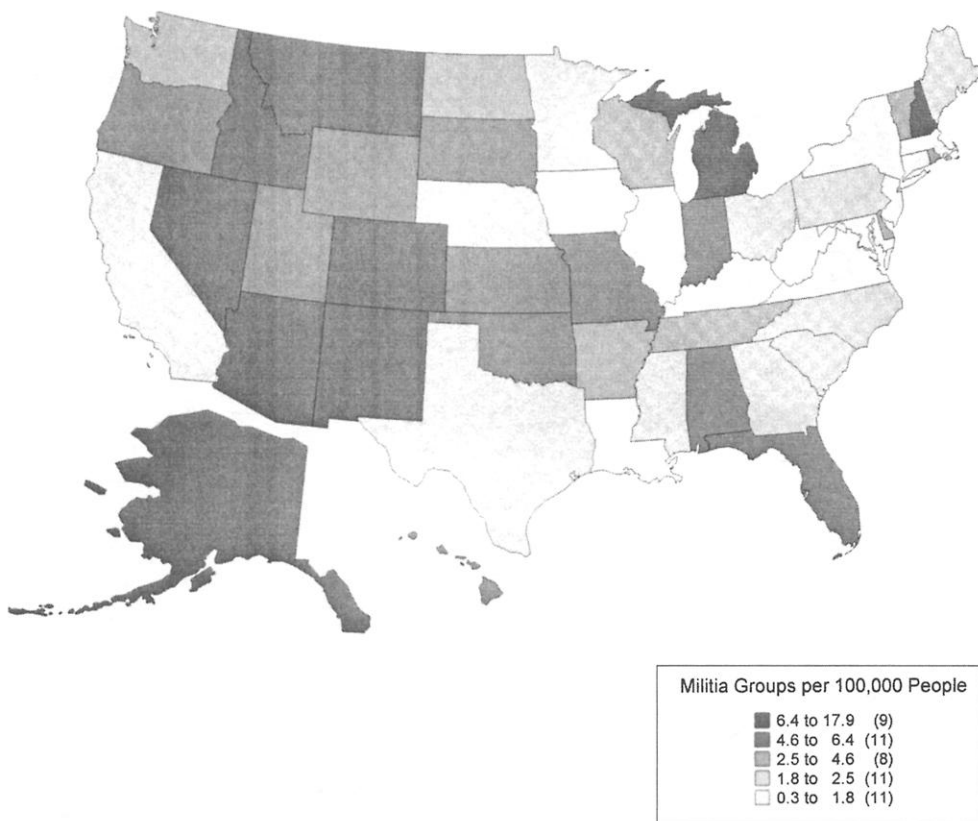


Figure 1 • Patriot/Militia Groups in the United States, 1994–1996. Source: *The Southern Poverty Law Center, 1996.*

conservative organizations and movements (e.g., confrontational anti-abortion, pro-gun, white racist, far right libertarian, and so on) (Berlet and Lyons 2000).

In order to understand the patriot/militia movement, it is important to consider the mobilizing constituency, their identities, and their stated reasons for mobilization. Because the movement is largely underground, it is difficult to obtain representative information regarding the characteristics of patriot/militia members. However extant research suggests that members of the patriot/militia movement are predominantly, though not exclusively, white males (Kimmel and Ferber 2000; Snow 1999; Southern Poverty Law Center 1999). And, other research suggests that patriot/militia groups include individuals who have been hurt by economic restructuring. For example, Abanes (1996) argues that patriot/militia group members are unskilled workers who face increasingly fewer employment opportunities and Snow (1999) adds that, in addition to unemployed working class men, the movement also includes farmers and middle-class individuals who have been hurt by economic restructuring.

At face value, claims about the dismal economic situation faced by members of patriot/militia group seem plausible. While the 1990s were not an especially bad time for the entire U.S. economy, the country experienced profound economic changes in the manufacturing and agricultural sectors. In the U.S. in 1983, 21% of jobs were in manufacturing, but by 1993 that figure had declined to 16% (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1985, 1994). At the same time, the nation experienced what some call the largest farming crisis since the Great Depression (Lobao and Lasley 1995). From 1980 to 1990, between 8 and 12% of farms failed financially, and the farm population fell by 24% (Stam et al. 1991). Individuals with manufacturing and farming skills do not necessarily have the ability to secure positions with comparable pay in the new economy.

One central ideological theme that unifies and galvanizes the movement is the perceived failure of the U.S. government to represent its citizens and uphold the Constitution (Bennet 1995; U.S. Committee of the Judiciary 1997a). Patriot/militia group members believe that the U.S. Government has betrayed the American people by becoming too involved in international politics. In fact, many groups argue that the U.S. is losing sovereignty to a socialist "New World Order," managed by the United Nations and funded primarily by international Jewish financiers (Berlet and Lyons 2000). Many patriot/militia members believe that the "New World Order" is behind a United Nations plan to invade the U.S., overthrow the government, disarm the citizens, and install a dictatorship. As one member of the Militia of Montana states:

There are individuals in this world, within this country, and in our own government, who would like to rule the world. . . . These power hungry individuals have corrupted our government and are working on sabotaging our freedom by destroying the Constitution of the United States, in order to establish the "New World Order" (a.k.a. Global Community). (Quoted in Stern 1996:73).

Some patriot/militia members believe that the government actions at Ruby Ridge in 1992 and Waco in 1993 indicate that the U.S. government, in its attempt to disarm people, no longer supports the constitutional rights of its citizens (Berlet and Lyons 2000; Hamilton 1996; Stern 1996). Although we are unable to study the influence of these key events here because of the cross-sectional nature of our data, it seems likely that they played a role in the emergence of the movement, possibly acting as "suddenly-imposed grievances" (Walsh 1981).

According to some patriot/militia groups, part of the government's failure is its apparent secession of power to minority groups and women. Indeed, racism and sexism are two other ideological themes prevalent in the movement. Some movement members are influenced by the Christian Identity religion, which holds that whites are the true chosen people and that Jews are the descendants of the Devil (Hamilton 1996; Neiwert 1999). In a letter to Attorney General Janet Reno, Morris Dees of the Southern Poverty Law Center, states that his organization has "confirmed the active involvement of a number of well-known white supremacists . . .

in the growing militia movement" (U.S. Committee on the Judiciary 1997b:75). This point is echoed in Swomley (1999) as well.

Anti-government rhetoric is often combined with anti-Semitism and racism (Abanes 1996; Dees 1996; Southern Poverty Law Center 1999). One patriot group member, Robert Wangrud, stated:

There is only one race that founded this country and that is the White Race. The Constitution recognizes this and clearly states that only white people can be citizens of this country. The 14th Amendment changed all that, but we feel it became law illegally and as such is not binding (Quoted in Abanes 1996:33).

Similarly, Simpson (1991: 20) argues:

. . . The vast majority of White people have become so befuddled by Jewish propaganda, that they believe this breaking down of barriers can go on without it ending in the destruction of their own race. . . . I am firmly convinced, from a study of history and scripture, that if the White man in America settles down to live side by side with the Black, on any terms, it is only a matter of time—and not a long time—till he will cease to exist as a White man.

Many patriots call for the repeal of the 13th and 14th Amendments and believe that blacks and women should give up the right to vote and own property (Crawford and Burghart 1997; Kimmel and Ferber 2000; Stern 1996). One book sold by the Militia of Montana argues, "Hillary Clinton and her feminist co-conspirators control the country" (Marrs 1993). Thus, both racism and highly traditional views of gender roles are themes running throughout the movement.

It is important to note, however, that there is some debate in the literature about the extent to which *all* or even *most* patriot/militia members hold racist, anti-Semitic and anti-feminist beliefs (Dobratz and Shanks-Meile 1997). The issue is complicated because some groups deliberately seek to distance themselves from overtly racist and anti-Semitic views. As Berlet and Lyons (2000:296) suggest, racist views are clearly "woven into Patriot narrative, but in many cases it is unconscious and unintentional. In other cases far right activists hide their . . . views to recruit from, or take over, Patriot and militia groups;" These authors also note that the complexity leads some scholars to deem all ". . . militia members . . . closet Nazis while others, out of ignorance or expediency, sanitize the movement by trivializing evidence of racism and anti-Semitism" (Berlet and Lyons 2000:296). Thus, while we acknowledge that not all members of these groups hold racist and sexist beliefs, we do not want to ignore the rhetoric espoused by many of these groups.

Research Design, Dependent Variables, and Modeling Technique

In order to explore the factors that influence levels of patriot and militia organizing, we use data on levels of patriot/militia organization, at both the state and county-levels, in the United States. Our data come from the Southern Poverty Law Center's (SPLC) Intelligence Project, a task force that has the goal of identifying all of the patriot/militia groups active in the United States. Since 1994, this organization has been monitoring the activity of all organizations that identify themselves as patriots opposed to a "New World Order" government conspiracy (Southern Poverty Law Center 1996). This includes patriot and armed citizen militia organizations as well as common law courts.⁵ The SPLC's Intelligence Project collects data on these groups through several means: field investigations, the study of Internet sites, studies of literature and publications, consultations with law enforcement agencies, and by monitoring

5. The SPLC also includes Identity Churches in their definition, but we exclude these because it is not clear that all patriot/militia organizations are racist and, as we note in the text above, many patriot/militia organizations try to distance themselves from racist organizations.

news stories. In all, 778 patriot/militia organizations were active between 1994 and 1996, and their distribution across the U.S. can be seen in Figure 1.⁶

While in the state-level analysis we examine all 50 states, we conduct our county-level analysis on three states, California, Georgia, and Michigan. We chose these three states because they are diverse both regionally and in terms of our important independent variables. These states exhibit variation in the extent to which they lost manufacturing jobs, the extent to which they lost farms, and in the composition of their population. For example, Michigan lost approximately 12% of its manufacturing jobs between 1990 and 1993, a level on par with the national average. But, Georgia lost a below average percentage of its manufacturing jobs (5%), while California lost an above average percentage of jobs (24%). The three states exhibit similar variation in the other characteristics especially relevant to this analysis (see Appendix, Table A1 for descriptive statistics on these 300 counties).

In both the state and county-level analyses presented below, our dependent variable is the number (or count) of patriot/militia organizations active in the state or county between 1994 and 1996. While there may be some variation in the *size* of these militia groups, there is evidence that these differences are not substantial. Patriot/militia groups are usually small; it is estimated that even the largest organizations, such as the Militia of Montana, have fewer than 250 members per chapter. Police in Ohio estimate that the state's militia groups have a total membership of approximately 1,000 people, which translates into an average of forty members per group (Winerup 1996). While police estimates of militia group size may be biased, this figure lends support for the argument that patriot/militia organizations tend to be fairly small in size. We argue, then, that the number of organizations is a good indicator of the overall level of mobilization in a state or county.

We also use counts of patriot/militia organizations as our dependent variable for a practical reason; specifically, these are the only data available documenting patriot/militia organization or activity. We acknowledge that it would be interesting to examine membership numbers in each state, but these data simply are not available. In his testimony before the Senate Subcommittee on Terrorism, Technology, and Government Information in 1995, James L. Brown of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF), notes that *accurate* estimates of membership are not available because the ATF and other federal law enforcement agencies do not collect such data (U.S. Committee of the Judiciary 1997b:51). A similar point was made by Steven Emerson in his testimony before the Senate Subcommittee on Crime in 1996 (U.S. Committee of the Judiciary 1997a:131) wherein he remarked that it is not possible to obtain militia group membership numbers because membership lists are kept secret.

To analyze state and county counts of organizations, we use negative binomial regression, a variant of Poisson regression (Beck and Tolnay 1995), which is the most common method for analyzing event counts (Barron 1992). This form of negative binomial regression corrects for a common problem that occurs when an assumption of the Poisson regression method is violated: overdispersion. A condition of overdispersion exists when the variance of the dependent variable (in this case, the count of patriot/militia organizations) is greater than its mean, and may be caused by unobserved heterogeneity or contagion. Unobserved heterogeneity exists if differences between states on unmeasured variables affect the dependent variable. It is also possible that contagion exists, whereby the occurrence of one event increases the chances of further events. In other words, the existence of one patriot/militia organization in a state or county may inspire the formation of additional militia groups. Because it is possible that both factors are present in our data, we use negative binomial regression, rather than Poisson. The

6. Another potential data source for this project is Wilcox's (1995) *Guide to the American Right*. In order to verify that our findings from the SPLC data are robust, we obtained the 1995 version of this book and ran the same state-level analyses. The results are comparable to those that we present here. We present the results from the SPLC data analysis in this paper because these data are more readily available to the public. (The 1995 edition of the Wilcox book was extremely difficult to obtain, and the 1996 book is no longer available).

negative binomial method we use effectively takes care of the problem of overdispersion by adding a stochastic component to the model (Beck and Tolnay 1995; Land, McCall, and Nagin 1996). The model calculates coefficient estimates through maximum likelihood methods, using the following equation:

$$\ln \lambda_i = X_i\beta + \varepsilon_i \quad (1)$$

where $\ln \lambda_i$ denotes the natural logarithm of the expected value of the dependent variable, X_i denotes a matrix of covariates, and β represents the regression coefficients for the model. The inclusion of the error term, ε , allows for unexplained randomness in $\ln \lambda_i$.

As noted above, we conduct our analysis at two different levels, the state and county. We do this for two reasons. First, the underground and loose structure of patriot/militia organizations makes them especially difficult to study. Because the groups are somewhat elusive and hard to get a handle on, robustness checks are important. Conducting the analysis at both the state and county-level provides us with confidence that our findings are not an artifact of measurement.

On top of this consideration, certain economic and political processes may operate at the state level, while others may be more local. We think that it is fruitful to pursue research at both levels of analysis because while economic processes do vary within states, they also vary between states. On the one hand, state governments, because of their ability to set economic and political policy, are important (Leicht and Jenkins 1998).⁷ On the other hand, aggregate measures of a state's political and economic climate may obscure important differences within states. Within a state, certain local areas may be particularly hard hit by changing economic conditions, but this local variation may wash out when we examine overall state conditions. Similarly, individuals experience changes in the racial composition of the population at the local level (even if their perceptions are affected by higher levels). Thus, although state-level shifts in minority populations may inspire mobilization, these effects may be stronger at the county-level. Because of these reasons, we examine both state-level and county-level variation in levels of patriot/militia organization.

State-Level Hypotheses and Independent Variables

Below, we present four models in order to test whether broad structural changes help explain state-by-state variation in levels of patriot/militia organization (see Appendix, Table A2 for descriptive statistics on our key state-level independent variables). The first three models include variables to measure three categories of broad social changes that may be perceived of as threatening to patriot/militia members: demographic conditions, political competition, and economic hardship and economic restructuring. The final model includes all significant variables from the previous analysis, along with several controls for the overall political context of the state.⁸

Model 1 includes a measure of demographic change that we expect will affect patriot/militia mobilization based on ethnic competition theory arguments that dominant group members feel threatened if they perceive an increase in the size of minority populations, and based on the racist themes included in patriot/militia group rhetoric. Therefore, the analysis

7. The economic structure of a state may be unique, for example, if the state offers tax-break incentives to lure corporations within its borders. And, of course, states are also important in setting policy (Earl and Soule 2001; Grattet, Jenness, and Curry 1998; McCammon et al. 2001; Soule and Earl 2001; Soule and Zylan 1997; Zylan and Soule 2000).

8. We include only significant variables in the full model because of our small number of observations and limited degrees of freedom. We performed traditional regression diagnostics, including variance inflation factor tests for multicollinearity. We found no evidence of multicollinearity in the models presented in this article. We also examined whether outliers were driving the results by running the analyses excluding cases with very high numbers of patriot/militia groups, or with extreme values for important independent variables. Exclusion of outliers did not significantly alter the results.

includes a dummy variable coded "1" if there was an above average increase, between 1980 and 1990, in the proportion of the state population that was non-white.⁹ Because in this period most states (90%) saw an increase in the proportion of their population that is non-white, we define the dummy based on whether the state saw an increase in its non-white population that was above the mean for all states. We use a dummy variable rather than a continuous variable because we do not expect incremental differences in the non-white population to affect the mobilization of patriot/militia groups. We also use a dummy variable because a continuous measure caused multicollinearity problems in the models. We gathered data on the racial composition of the states from the *Statistical Abstract of the United States* (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1994).¹⁰

The perception that minorities or women are making political gains may also be threatening to dominant group members, therefore, the second model includes two variables designed to measure political competition. First, we include the percent of the state legislature that was African American in 1993 and second, we include the percent of the state legislature that was female in 1993. Because patriot/militia groups often espouse racist and anti-feminist ideology, we expect to see higher levels of mobilization in those states where political threats are more salient; those which have more African Americans and women in office. It is important to note that, with respect to women in office, we are not arguing that patriot/militia activity is sparked by liberal attitudes of female politicians or that female politicians are inevitably more liberal than their male counterparts. Our argument is about the threat generated by women in non-traditional gender roles holding political power. These data came from the *Statistical Abstract of the United States* (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1994).

Poor economic conditions in a state and economic restructuring may also inspire reactive mobilization, thus, in our third model, we include three variables to measure economic conditions. First, as an overall measure of the economic climate of the state, we include the unemployment rate in 1993. We expect that states with higher levels of unemployment will have higher levels of patriot/militia mobilization, based on prior research suggesting that economic deprivation may inspire reactive mobilization. This measure comes from the *Statistical Abstract of the United States* (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1994).

Second, in order to test the claim that globalization and economic restructuring influence reactive protest activity (Betz 1994; Castells 1997; Lipset 1963), we include a variable in our third model that measures changes in the manufacturing sector. We hypothesize that states that experienced a decline in the number of manufacturing sector jobs between 1990 and 1993 will have higher levels of patriot/militia organizing. Between 1990 and 1993, the number of manufacturing jobs in the U.S. declined by 10% (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1991, 1994). We created a dummy variable coded "1" when the state experienced a decrease in the size of the manufacturing sector, using data from the *Statistical Abstract of the United States* (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1992, 1994). Importantly, we do not expect that the number of manufacturing jobs, *per se*, should affect levels of patriot/militia mobilization, but that a *loss* of these jobs will be indicative of economic restructuring and economic crisis, thus, we employ the dichotomous measure.

In addition to changes in the location of manufacturing jobs, economic restructuring in

9. Because patriot/militia members sometimes espouse anti-Semitic rhetoric (Abanes 1996; Berlet and Lyons 2000), we also ran models including three different measures of the Jewish population and organization in each state: the presence or absence of an Anti-Defamation League Office in the state, the number of Jewish Community Centers in the state, and an estimate of the total Jewish population in the state (and the change between 1980 and 1990). None of these measures was ever significant, and we do not include them in the models we present here because of our small number of observations and limited degrees of freedom.

10. The use of dummy variables in place of continuous variables is appropriate in this case, as in many cases comparing geographic units. The coefficients on continuous measures are calculated at their means, but with this measure (as well as many others used in this paper) the relevant action is not at the variable's mean. Thus, in addition to reducing multicollinearity, using the dummy variable here makes more sense theoretically.

the U.S. involves a move toward corporate agriculture. The resultant decline in the family farm may influence levels of patriot/militia organization (Abanes 1996; Dyer 1997; Kimmel and Ferber 2000). To tap this, we include a third variable in Model 3 that is coded "1" when a state lost farms between 1990 and 1993. We collected these data from the *Statistical Abstract of the United States* (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1992, 1994). As was the case with manufacturing jobs, we do not expect that the number of farms, *per se*, will affect the number of patriot/militia groups. Rather, we expect that the economic crisis created by a loss of farms will result in higher numbers of militia groups. In this period, 60% of U.S. states lost farms, while 40% either lost no farms or actually gained some. A dummy variable is appropriate due to the bimodal distribution of this measure.

We hypothesize that in addition to demographic, political, and economic threats, levels of militia and patriot organizing respond to the overall political context of the state and the level of preexisting organizational resources. Thus, in our final model, in addition to significant variables from the first three models, we include an additional three variables. First, in Model 4, we include the number of conservative organizations headquartered in each state in 1993 to measure potential organizing bases for the patriot/militia movement. These include white supremacy organizations, anti-taxation groups, historical revisionist groups, and traditionalist conservative organizations. We gathered these data from the *Encyclopedia of Associations* (Burek 1994). We expect to find more patriot/militia organizations in those states with higher levels of indigenous right-wing organization, both because of the overall organizing function these groups may serve, and because of the conservative political climate that they may both reflect and help create within a state.

The second additional variable in the fourth model measures the percent of the state's population that can be considered liberal. Wright and his colleagues (1985) developed this measure, which is a score measuring the percent of individuals in a state who said that they vote liberally. Wright created this measure using the results of 51 opinion polls with over 76,000 respondents. We predict that states with fewer self-proclaimed liberals will have higher levels of patriot/militia organizing.

Our third indicator of the state's political context is a measure of the strength of each state's gun control laws. With data from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (1989), we create a measure of the number of restrictive gun control laws in each state. Specifically, three laws were considered: whether or not any weapons are banned in the state, whether the state has a waiting period until firearms can be purchased, and whether gun owners must obtain a license before purchasing their guns. Thus, each state could have a value between zero and three for this variable. Political opportunity theory suggests that those states with more restrictive gun control legislation will see lower levels of patriot/militia activity, as stronger gun control laws indicate an institutional political system that is less receptive to claims made by patriot/militia groups. Alternatively, potential militia members may view gun control laws as a threat to their civil liberties, and this may inspire higher levels of organization. We thus include this variable in the analysis but note that there are two different and equally plausible predictions of its effect on patriot/militia organizing.

In all four state-level models presented below, we include two control variables. First, we include a variable representing the overall size of the state's white population, measured in thousands (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1994). Because the membership of patriot/militia organizations is almost exclusively white, we consider the state's white population to be the potential constituency for this movement.¹¹ We expect that states with larger white populations will have greater levels of patriot/militia organization. Our second control variable measures whether any of the patriot/militia organizations in the state were affiliated with other

11. We control for the white population rather than the total population of the state for a second, practical reason: we experienced significant multicollinearity problems when controlling for the state's total population.

organizations through a chapter structure (Southern Poverty Law Center 1996). Because this affiliational structure may lead to higher counts of militia groups, we include a dummy variable coded as "1" if there were affiliated organizations in the state. In this way, we are able to ensure that our results are not dependent on assumptions we have made regarding the comparability of affiliated and non-affiliated organizations.

Results of State-Level Analyses

In Model 1, we examine the effect of changing demographic conditions on the number of patriot/militia organizations in a state (see Table 1). Contrary to our hypothesis based on eth-

Table 1 • The Effect of Selected Independent Variables on Levels of Patriot Movement Organization in U.S. States. Negative Binomial Regression

	<i>Model 1 Demographic Threat</i>	<i>Model 2 Political Threat</i>	<i>Model 3 Economic Threat</i>	<i>Model 4 Full Model with Controls</i>
Above average increase in non-white population	-0.3736* (0.2136)	—	—	-0.3072 (0.2000)
Percent black legislators	—	0.0106 (0.0222)	—	—
Percent female legislators	—	0.0280* (0.0133)	—	0.0356** (0.0124)
Unemployment rate	—	—	-0.0225 (0.0973)	—
Loss of manufacturing jobs	—	—	0.5364* (0.2595)	0.6667** (0.2387)
Loss of farms	—	—	0.4117* (0.2151)	0.3283* (0.1982)
Number of conservative organizations	—	—	—	0.0170 (0.0423)
Percent liberal voters	—	—	—	-0.0523** (0.0221)
Number of restrictive gun laws	—	—	—	-0.1893* (0.0983)
White population	0.1303*** (0.0278)	0.1100*** (0.0268)	0.0884*** (0.0277)	0.1106*** (0.0306)
Presence of affiliated militia organizations	0.3955 (0.3738)	0.5595* (0.2468)	0.4869* (0.2118)	0.4882** (0.2078)
Intercept	2.0853*** (0.1596)	1.3641*** (0.3401)	1.5024** (0.5625)	1.7958*** (0.4188)
Dispersion parameter	0.3738 (0.0893)	0.3640 (0.0871)	0.3448 (0.0840)	0.2332 (0.0633)
Chi-square	59.8978	58.0805	59.2893	51.7919
df	46	45	44	40

Note:

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$ one-tailed test.

N = 50; standard errors in parentheses.

nic competition theory and on the racist rhetoric of some patriot/militia group members, an above average increase in the non-white population is associated with *lower* levels of patriot/militia organizing. However, we note that in the full model (Model 4) the coefficient becomes non-significant. We explore this relationship further in our county-level analysis, as it is possible that demographic changes within smaller geographic areas have more of an impact on levels of patriot/militia organizing.

With respect to the control variables in Table 1, it is not surprising that those states with higher white populations have more patriot/militia organizations. The effect of this measure remains the same across all of the models in Table 1. In Model 1, we do not find a significant relationship between our dummy variable for chapter or affiliated organizational structure, although the coefficient is in the expected positive direction and in subsequent models becomes significant, as we hypothesized.

In Model 2, we find some support for the hypothesis that political threat is associated with higher numbers of patriot/militia organizations. The percent of the state legislature that is female has a positive effect on the number of patriot/militia groups, a finding that is consistent with the argument that women in power pose a threat to patriot/militia group members. In Model 2, each additional percentage of women in the legislature is associated with a 3% higher number of patriot and militia organizations. This effect remains significant in the full model (see Model 4). This finding suggests that the political strength of women may inspire some men to become involved in a movement which calls for more traditional gender roles, as Kimmel and Ferber (2000) propose.

We do not find support, however, for the argument that gains in the political strength of African Americans explain levels of patriot/militia organization, as the coefficient for African American legislators is not significant, although it is in the expected positive direction. This finding, taken alongside the lack of support for our hypothesis regarding an increase in the non-white population (Model 1), indicates that despite the overtly racist rhetoric of many patriot/militia groups, the threat posed by non-whites (at least at the state level) is not associated with higher levels of organization. Another possibility is that population changes are experienced and, therefore, have an effect at a more local (county) level, as we explore below.

The results presented in Model 3 provide support for the hypothesis that economic restructuring is associated with patriot/militia organizing in the mid-90s. Those states that experienced a loss of jobs in the manufacturing sector saw higher numbers of patriot/militia groups. States where there was a decline in the manufacturing sector had 71% more patriot and militia organizations than those states with a more stable manufacturing economy. Model 3 also shows that those states that lost farms had higher numbers of patriot/militia organizations. A loss of farms is associated with a 51% higher number of patriot/militia organizations. These two findings are consistent with arguments that globalization and the economic dislocations caused by the movement of labor positions overseas and the growth of corporate agribusiness are associated with the rise of the militia/patriot movement (Castells 1997). These results remain significant in the full model.

Contrary to our hypothesis, the coefficient measuring the state's unemployment rate is not significant. When considered alongside the findings for the loss of manufacturing jobs and farms, this finding suggests that the patriot/militia movement is associated with economic crises among certain segments of the population, rather than a general economic downturn. It is also possible that unemployment at the local level affects patriot/militia organizing, but that state-level differences in unemployment do not do so. We explore this possibility in the subsequent county-level analysis.

As noted above, Model 4 includes (in addition to significant variables from prior models) three variables to control for the organizational and political context. The addition of these variables does not significantly change the results for the structural change variables reported above. Both of the two measures designed to capture information about the state's political context are significant in Model 4 in Table 1. The coefficient for the gun control measure is

negative and significant, suggesting that more restrictive gun control laws are associated with fewer patriot/militia organizations. The negative coefficient is consistent with political opportunity theory's assertion that movements are less likely to mobilize when they face an unfavorable political climate. In other words, more stringent gun control laws are more likely to exist in more liberal states, and these states are likely to have less favorable political climates for patriot/militia organizations.¹²

The coefficient for the second political context variable, the percentage of the state's population that claims they vote liberally, is also statistically significant and in the expected negative direction. A more liberal populace is associated with fewer patriot/militia organizations. Each additional percentage of the state that is liberal is associated with 5% fewer patriot and militia organizations. This finding resonates with our finding regarding gun control laws; more liberal states are more likely to have stronger gun control laws and fewer patriot/militia organizations.

As we noted earlier, resource mobilization theory predicts that those states with higher levels of indigenous conservative organization should have higher levels of patriot/militia mobilization. We do not find support for this hypothesis, as the coefficient for our measure of preexisting conservative organizations is not statistically significant (however, it is in the expected positive direction). One explanation for the lack of significance of this variable is that we may already be controlling for many of the factors that explain levels of conservative organization. We discuss the implications of our findings after presenting the results of the county-level analysis.

County-Level Hypotheses and Independent Variables

In our county-level analysis, we include independent variables similar to those used in the state-level analysis, although due to a lack of available data, the number of variables is reduced. The first model includes a measure of demographic change consistent with that used in the state-level analysis. We include a dummy variable measuring whether the county saw an increase in its non-white population between 1980 and 1990. On average, counties saw an increase of 1% in the proportion of their population that is non-white (see Appendix, Table A1). The non-white population increased in 67% of counties. This measure comes from the U.S. Census (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1983, 1993).¹³

The second model in the county-level analysis includes variables measuring economic conditions within the county. As was the case in the state-level analysis, the first economic variable measures the county's unemployment rate using data from the *County and City Extra* (1995), a data book that presents data from various government sources. This variable is a continuous measure of the percent of the county population that was unemployed in 1993. We expect to find more patriot/militia organizations in counties with higher unemployment rates.

The second economic variable we include is a dummy variable that indicates whether the size of the manufacturing sector in the county's labor market area saw an above average decline between 1990 and 1993.¹⁴ We use a dummy variable rather than a continuous vari-

12. We speculated that gun control laws may be perceived as a threat by patriot/militia members and may therefore inspire their mobilization, however, this does not appear to be the case.

13. Because there is much greater variation in the change in the non-white population at the county-level, this dummy variable is defined differently than at the state-level, where 90% of the cases experienced an increase in their non-white population.

14. Because the vast majority of labor market areas lost manufacturing jobs between 1990 and 1993, we coded this variable "1" when the county's labor market area (LMA) lost an above average percent of jobs, rather than when it lost any manufacturing jobs. In other words, this variable is coded "1" when the county's LMA lost more than the mean value for all states. We should note that we obtain comparable results when we assign the dummy a value of "1" when the county's labor market area lost any manufacturing jobs.

able in order to use consistent measures in the two sets of analyses.¹⁵ The manufacturing sector data were also collected from the *County and City Extra* (1992, 1995). Each county in a labor market area has the same value for the change in the size of the manufacturing sector.

We examine the loss of manufacturing jobs within labor market areas rather than counties because research demonstrates that labor markets do not conform to standard geographic units such as SMAs or counties (Tolbert 1989). It is conceptually incorrect to conceive of labor markets as geographic regions such as cities or counties, when they actually consist of relations among buyers and sellers of labor (Tolbert 1989). Therefore, rather than examining changes in the manufacturing sector within a single county, we use labor market areas defined by Tolbert and his colleagues from the Economic Research Service (Tolbert and Sizer 1996). Tolbert and Sizer use census data to define the labor market area relevant to individuals living in different U.S. counties. They define areas based on a hierarchical cluster analysis of county-to-county flows of commuters. Thus, these labor market areas reflect the fact that individuals living in rural areas may commute farther distances to work than individuals living in more developed areas. For example, research shows that 13% of males who own farms commute more than 100 miles for jobs to supplement their farm income (Deseran 1989).

As was the case in our state-level analysis, we include a measure designed to tap changes in the farming sector between 1987 and 1992.¹⁶ We do not expect an incremental change in the number of farms to explain reactive mobilization, rather, that the economic hardship created by a loss of farms may inspire mobilization. Therefore, this measure is operationalized as a dummy variable coded "1" when a county lost an above average number of farms between the two time periods.¹⁷ These data come from the *County and City Extra* (1994, 1996). We expect the results of the county-level analysis to mirror those of the state-level analysis. We predict that those counties which have suffered as a result of economic restructuring within the manufacturing and agricultural sectors will be the sites of patriot/militia organizations.

The third and final model in the county-level analysis includes a variable measuring the political climate of the county, in addition to the significant variables from the previous models. We include a measure of the percent of voters in the county who voted for a Republican candidate in the 1992 presidential election. These data were collected from *America Votes* (1994).

In all three models, we control for the size of the white population of the county (measured in thousands), using data collected from the U.S. Census (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1993), as we did earlier in the state-level analysis.

Results of County-Level Analyses

Seventy-eight of the 300 counties we examine had a patriot/militia organization within their boundaries. In those 78 counties, the number of patriot/militia groups ranged from 1 to 8. The results of the negative binomial regression analysis provide us with some insight into the question of why some counties have more patriot/militia groups than do others. And, it is important to note that for the most part, our county-level results are consistent with those obtained in our state-level analysis (see Table 1).

In the first county-level model (see Model 1), we find support for the argument that an increasing minority population is associated with a higher number of patriot/militia organizations within a county. Counties whose non-white populations increased have 370% more

15. We did obtain comparable results when using the continuous measure.

16. We use the change in farms from 1987 to 1992, rather than between 1990 and 1993, as we do in the state-level analysis because farm data were not available for counties for 1990 and 1993.

17. Because a large majority of counties lost farms, we assign this variable a value of "1" when the county lost an above average percentage of its farms. We should note that we obtain comparable results when we assign the dummy a value of "one" when the county lost any farms.

patriot/militia organizations. This result is consistent with the argument that the patriot/militia movement mobilizes, at least in part, in response to the threat produced by an increase in minority populations. However, as we note above, we do not find this effect in the state-level analysis. One explanation for the discrepancy in findings is that the demographics of their local environment may influence people more so than does the composition of the population at the state level. People experience and interact with people in their local environment more often than they are confronted with the demographics of their state. There can be a great deal of variation between different cities or counties within a state in terms of racial composition, and perhaps state-level data obscure the relationship between the population composition and patriot/militia organization. Given our mixed findings, we are not willing to make a strong argument regarding the relationship between increasing non-white populations and patriot/militia mobilization. Further research is necessary before we will fully understand the relationship.

As was the case in the state-level analysis presented above, counties that experienced a decline in the manufacturing sector and a decline in the number of farms are more likely to have a patriot/militia organization (see Table 2, Model 2). Those counties that experienced an above average decline in the size of the manufacturing sector have 152% more patriot/militia organizations. An above average loss in the number of farms is associated with 107% more patriot/militia organizations. The effects of economic restructuring on levels of patriot/militia mobilization are experienced at both the state and county level.

As in the state-level analysis, the coefficient for the unemployment rate is not significant. As we noted earlier, this finding indicates that a general economic crisis is not associated with

Table 2 • The Effect of Selected Independent Variables on the Number of Patriot Movement Organizations in 300 U.S. Counties. Negative Binomial Regression

	Model 1 Demographic Threat	Model 2 Economic Threat	Model 3 Full Model with Controls
Increase in the non-white population	1.5466*** (0.3670)	—	1.3672*** (0.3691)
Unemployment rate	—	0.0203 (0.0463)	—
Above average loss of manufacturing jobs	—	0.9246*** (0.2549)	0.8001*** (0.2533)
Above average loss of farms	—	0.7272** (0.2546)	0.6423** (0.2465)
Percent voting for republican president (1992 election)	—	—	0.0150 (0.0168)
White population	0.0014*** (0.0004)	0.0015*** (0.0005)	0.0011** (0.0004)
Intercept	−2.3136*** (0.3376)	−2.1754*** (0.4319)	−3.6567*** (0.9395)
Dispersion parameter	1.3586 (0.3749)	1.4645 (0.3204)	1.1091 (0.3390)
Chi-square	325.9718	304.7220	298.8925
df	297	295	293

Note:
 * p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001 one-tailed test.
 N = 300; standard errors in parentheses.

increases in patriot/militia mobilization. Rather, patriot/militia mobilization is affected by decreases in the manufacturing and farming sectors, specifically.

The economic and demographic variables in Models 1 and 2 maintain their significance when we add a control for the political climate of the county (see Model 3). Based on political opportunity and resource mobilization theories, we hypothesized that more politically conservative counties, as measured by the percent of the vote going to the Republican presidential candidate, would be more likely to have patriot/militia groups. However, this hypothesis is not supported by the analysis, as the coefficient is not significant, although it is in the expected positive direction. Note, however, that we do find an effect at the state-level; states with more liberal populations had fewer militia group members. One possible explanation for this discrepancy is our use of different measures for the state and county-level analyses. In the state-level analysis, we are able to use a measure of the percent of individuals who said they voted liberally, while in the county-level analysis the only measure available was the percent of people who voted Republican in the prior presidential election. Subsequent research should explore this relationship further.

Conclusion

This paper makes four primary contributions to the literature on social movements and to the study of the patriot/militia movement. First, we emphasize the importance of bringing the notion of threat back into the study of movement emergence. Social movement scholars cast strain theory aside in the 1970s in favor of opportunity and resource-based theories of movement emergence, but they may have thrown the baby out with the bath water. While abandoning strain theory's micro-level focus on irrational individuals may be warranted, scholars were hasty in their rejection of the macro-level component of the theory. We present evidence here supporting strain theory's macro-level argument that structural social changes, including economic and political shifts, influence levels of patriot and militia organization. Our key point then, is that theories of social movement emergence should include structural social change and the threat it engenders as important mobilizing conditions, particularly for reactive social movements.

While our findings provide empirical support for the argument that reactive movements respond to threat, future research should also consider whether or not structural changes and the threats they create also affect the mobilization of *proactive* and *competitive* movements. If Tilly's (1978) distinction between these three types of movements is to provide us with a useful typology, future research should evaluate whether they emerge in response to different phenomena (Goodwin and Jasper 1999). While research on proactive movements, such as the civil rights movement, suggests that these respond to an increase in opportunities and resources, it is also possible that some proactive movements respond to both threats and opportunities. In a society as complex as ours, threats and opportunities may come from a variety of social actors within different social arenas. A movement may simultaneously experience opportunities in one arena and threats in another. Thus, future research should explore the emergent conditions associated with each of Tilly's (1978) three movement types.

A second contribution of this paper is our use of empirical analyses at two different levels, states and counties. While we did not obtain consistent results between the two levels of analysis for the effects of non-white population change, we did find similar results for our hypotheses about economic restructuring. The use of analyses at two different levels helps us more fully understand the dynamics of reactive mobilization. While it is not always feasible to study phenomena at two different levels, when data are available, scholars should attempt to do so. This is especially true when studying phenomena as illusive as the patriot/militia movement, where robustness checks are particularly important.

A third contribution of this paper is that we tap the multifaceted nature of threat by including measures of threats spurred by economic restructuring, increases in the political power of formerly less powerful groups, and changing minority group populations. While movement scholars typically focus on threats (such as repression) that are created by actors in the institutional political arena (e.g., Goldstone and Tilly 2001), we show that actors and events outside of the institutional political arena may also create a sense of threat and inspire reactive mobilization. The most robust of these threats for the patriot/militia movement is economic restructuring of the manufacturing and agricultural sectors. Net of an overall economic decline, the loss of manufacturing jobs and farms is associated with higher levels of patriot/militia organizing at both the state and local level. This is an important finding and resonates with the findings from qualitative research and journalistic accounts of the patriot/militia movement, as well as with studies of the white separatist movement (Dobratz and Shanks-Meile 1997). But we also find in our state-level analysis that women’s legislative gains are associated with patriot/militia organizing. And, in our county-level analysis, we find that increases in minority group populations are associated with increasing patriot/militia organization. Future research, then, should expand the notion of threat to consider different kinds of threat, including those outside of the institutional political arena.

A final contribution of this paper lies in the implications of our findings regarding the effect of economic restructuring on patriot/militia organization. Patriot/militia rhetoric is rife with discussions of national sovereignty, the threat of an international conspiracy to take over the U.S., and the failure of the U.S. Government to uphold the Constitution. Why, then, do we find that economic conditions, at the state and local level, have such a powerful impact on patriot/militia organization? Like the working class members studied by Wellman (1993), workers in manufacturing and agricultural sectors may be hit hard by changing economic conditions, and therefore, may find the messages articulated by the patriot/militia movement appealing. Arguments that international interests are gaining power may resonate with those who have experienced a loss of control in their local environment (Castells 1997). Thus, our findings indicate that the rhetoric articulated by the patriot/militia movement is filtered through the personal experiences of individuals. To some, in particular, those hard hit by economic restructuring, the messages will ring true and serve as a call to action.

Appendix

Table A1 • Descriptive Statistics—California, Michigan, and Georgia Counties

	Mean/Percent	Standard Deviation
Number of militias	0.48	1.03
Change in percent non-white	1.08	3.70
Percent voting for republican president	38.22	7.12
Unemployment rate	7.43	2.68
Percent change in number of manufacturing jobs	−13.26	13.15
Percent change in number of farms	−6.95	9.87
White population	109,728	363,684

Note:
N = 300.

Table A2 • Descriptive Statistics—U.S. States

	Mean/Percent	Standard Deviation
Number of militias	16.35	17.67
Change in percent non-white	1.63	1.52
Percent black legislators	6.96	6.06
Percent female legislators	18.72	7.83
Unemployment rate	5.45	1.17
Percent change in number of manufacturing jobs	−10.23	12.22
Percent change in number of farms	−3.19	6.40
Conservative organizations (N)	1.88	2.99
Percent liberal voters	19.85	4.56
Number of restrictive gun laws	0.82	0.94
White population	3,739,018	4,207,137
Presence of affiliated militia organizations	28.00	45.36

Note:

N = 50.

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