Race and Racism in the Militia: Members' Responses to Michigan's Black and Muslim Populations

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> "Yeah! It's not surprising [that there are some racist militia members].
> We're a cross-section of society. So that cross section is going to be
> represented in our group."
>
> *- 35 year old George*

Many depictions of militias portray them as little better than Neo-Nazi groups or other outright racists—white men, primarily, who consciously want to exclude everyone else from social power. This is a simple story to communicate in a two minute news clip or in a 20 page academic article. The militia's navigation of race and its ramifications, however, are just as complicated as in American society more generally.

This chapter analyzes the spectrum of the militia's responses to race and racism through a focus on the two racialized groups that are most salient to militia members: Michigan's Black and Muslim populations. I first analyze the militia's group-level orientation toward these issues and argue that Michigan militia units are not racist *at the group level*. By this I mean that the militia as a group does not have racism as either a goal or a guiding principle; indeed, any form of identity-based exclusion is antithetical to the militia's stated mission of upholding Constitutional principles of equality and freedom. I analyze two racialized interactions to clarify this point: a meeting where the militia's only consistent non-white member was clearly put forth at a large public meeting as a token of racial acceptance, and a meeting where local NAACP members planned to protest a militia gathering but instead became involved in the meeting.

Despite the egalitarian group-level outlook, members may not always recognize or ideally respond to individually-evinced racism at their gatherings. Additionally, there are some members who do not conform in practice to the group's ideology, and strongly racist individuals have the potential to harm the group's egalitarian viewpoint over time. I analyze an incident where a new militia member consciously tested how much tolerance the group had for his increasingly racist expressions in an apparent attempt to see how much racism he could show before being sanctioned. This case demonstrates the point at which coded language (e.g., Mendelberg 2001) becomes recognizable and objectionable as racism to militia members. I suggest that most members who do exhibit racism are best understood as symbolic racists, but that non-racist militia members may mistake racist statements for a shared investment in nationalism. I show that nationalistic sentiment also undergirds a more common disdain for illegal immigrants among militia members.

I then analyze an issue that arose in early 2011 that initially posed a challenge to my categorization of the Michigan militia as a non-racist group: on several occasions, members coordinated involvement in several anti-Muslim events in the state, despite

having a respected militia leader who is Muslim. It became clear that many members were viewing Muslims as a racial, not just religious, outgroup. I show that militia members' anti-Muslim sentiment is not a form of symbolic racism, but rather a form of cultural threat to their national ideal, combined with a real fear of physical harm of future terror attacks.

THE MILITIA'S ANTI-RACIST ORIENTATION

The front page of www.michiganmilitia.com states:

> "A well-armed citizenry is the best form of Homeland Security and can better deter crime, invasion, terrorism, and tyranny. Everyone is welcome, regardless of race, creed, color, religion or political affiliation, provided you do not wish to bring harm to our country or people. If you are a United States citizen (or have declared your intent to become such), who is capable of bearing arms, or supports the right to do so, then YOU ARE the MILITIA!"

When I first read these words just prior to attending my first militia event, I could not help but wonder how true they were. Did their author genuinely mean that people from a variety of backgrounds would be welcome, or was the intent merely to minimize overt claims of racism and exclusion against the group?

Over time, I witnessed interactions in the field that indicated the message was indeed a genuine reflection of the group's intended ideology. I observed, for example, different militia leaders tell first-time meeting attendees that they had no patience for racism or any "Nazi crap" on at least half a dozen occasions (usually directed toward white men with numerous visible tattoos), including times when they did not know I was observing. I also saw many members regularly act welcomingly toward black couples who were in earshot of public militia events and seemed to be listening to the proceedings, inviting them (usually unsuccessfully) to join the discussion. Members almost never approached white onlookers in this manner, and it became clear from my discussion with leaders that the militia both wanted to ensure the black couples did not feel uncomfortable or threatened by the militia's presence, and also wanted to increase the racial diversity of the group in an effort to combat accusations of racism. Some members genuinely want to increase the diversity of the militia because they believe people of all backgrounds should be prepared, while others are guided more by concerns of social perceptions; they believe they might face less public criticism if they are seen as racially inclusive in media reports, for example.

Many male militia members were involved in interracial relationships, often with Asian women they had met while stationed abroad during military service, but these women never attended militia functions[1]. Some members proudly and spontaneously described their own mixed racial heritages during our interviews when they sensed I was interested in the racial dynamics of the group. Several interviewees, to my surprise, even responded similarly to 30 year old Mark, who has some college education, when I asked why they thought more people of color were not involved in the militia:

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[1] See Appendix 3 for more information on women in the militia.

"I know plenty of black folks that would like to go shoot guns and stuff and, you know, be more involved in defending their country. I don't think it's an awareness thing. I think if anything they're *more* aware than most white people. Because they've been *through* it. I mean they've already been manipulated and exploited more so than most white people have. It's just, I think it's a proximity issue. You can't train at Six Mile [in the middle of Detroit]."

Mark says he understands that non-white Americans have a different relationship with the government and the country's history than he does. He says he thinks non-whites may have a greater awareness of the need for something like a militia to protect citizens' rights because of a history of race-based mistreatment in the U.S., but are unable to participate in training.

Marks' reference to the unavailability of militia training sites in large cities alludes to ongoing socioeconomic disadvantages of people of color relative to white Americans. That is, many white militia members live in or just outside of Michigan's larger cities. They are nonetheless able to travel to militia events, but Mark thinks a higher proportion of people of color are unable to do so. Mark believes that if more people of color would participate in regular militia activity if such opportunities were more readily available. Mark's perspective is informed by his living in Detroit for many years and talking with his black neighbors. Whether his assumptions are correct, his attitude is reflective of a greater awareness of racial issues than stereotypes of white militia men would predict.

Figure 13: Militia members try to demonstrate their open-mindedness in a variety of ways. At a recent field-day event, they provided Kosher and vegan meal options. Photos from http://s657.photobucket.com/profile/SMVM

Racialized Interactions: Tokenism
Kevin, a black man in his thirties, is the only person of color who regularly participated in the militia during my fieldwork. During my interview with Kevin in early 2010, I asked him how he felt about being asked to sit with militia leadership at a large meeting just after the 2008 Presidential Election. The meeting was open to the public and had drawn a larger crowd than usual. At the start of the meeting, one of the leaders loudly

asked Kevin, who works in information technology, to help them set up the computer to show the crowd some of their YouTube videos. The leader in question was quite familiar with computers and had been responsible for creating and uploading the video. It seemed obvious to me that the leader's real motive was to make sure the crowd could see their token black member.

At the time, Kevin came across as happy enough to take this role, but his participation in militia events after that became much less consistent. He elaborated on the experience during our interview:

> "I was okay with it [being shown off] but it was still a little…daunting. […T]hey put me up front as a way of saying, you know, 'This is our stance on the whole [race] thing.' […] So I thought that was a good statement but at the same time, too, I was just like, 'Wow.' So. And then I started going back—like I have been going back sporadically now. And, you know, for the most part it's pretty cool. But I'm actually thinking about going next month and taking my son just so he can see everybody."

Kevin did not take his son to the next militia meeting; rather, he stopped participating in the militia altogether. I do not know for certain whether my questioning Kevin about the militia's using him to promote an egalitarian group image influenced his decision to end his militia participation, but it is difficult to imagine the timing of his disengagement was purely coincidental. Kevin's statement and the rest of his interview demonstrate that he believes that militia members really do strive to be racially inclusive, but do not always know how to be racially sensitive. At least in retrospect, Kevin was uncomfortable being shown off as a token non-white militia member and presumably did not want to be pushed into that role again.

Racialized Interactions: NAACP
Another unique yet instructive encounter occurred when the militia gathered for a joint post-election meeting in November 2010. Militia members from four different units across the state were confronted by six members of the local NAACP who mistakenly believed[2] that the militia was gathering with some kind of racial agenda, and they planned to protest the meeting. The militia meeting had been underway for five or ten minutes when one attendee noticed that a woman was standing outside the restaurant, taking pictures through a large plate glass window at the side of the meeting room. Leaders paused and exchanged glances with one another, and normally well-spoken Lloyd uncharacteristically had to stop speaking, collect his thoughts and regain his composure before warmly saying, 'Tell her to come in! Welcome! Why not?' and motioning for her to come inside.

Only when she entered the room did her "NAACP" baseball cap become visible. Behind her, five men who had previously remained out of sight also entered, some of

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[2] One NAACP representative told me that a local pastor had notified them that 300 armed people had recently been in a nearby Detroit neighborhood somehow causing anxiety. I wondered whether local Neo-Nazis or the Open Carry movement had been mistaken for the militia in this scenario, but could find no information on any group having recently been in that area with a racial agenda in any local or regional news sources.

them wearing jackets with the NAACP emblem. The feel of the room became rather tense as neither militia members nor NAACP members seemed to know the other group's motives for being there, and militia members cautiously watched as the woman pulled out a laptop and began taking notes. Lloyd continued speaking for a few minutes about the militia's mission and an upcoming training. He jokingly noted that, 'This is the wrong place if you were interested in the secret Nazi moon base. My van just does not get the kind of gas mileage it would take to drive to a secret Nazi moon base, so you should just forget it.' Comments like this were not unusual for Lloyd, and this one in particular was intended to subtly convey the non-racist intent of the militia without directly referencing white racism toward Blacks. With the new visitors, however, the comment only added to the awkwardness in the room.

One of the male NAACP members eventually asked a question regarding sources of information for concealed carry permits. Militia members struggled to put together a coherent answer, with at least five eager members inadvertently talking over each other and providing different information. I had never before seen such a muddled response to a straightforward firearms question that many of the members take great pride in being able to answer. I had to assume they were made nervous by the NAACP presence and were trying too hard to appear knowledgeable and cooperative. The man who asked the question quickly became frustrated and clarified that he already had a permit and wanted to know the best source for keeping up with changes in the laws that would affect his permit. This clarification very visibly made several of the militia members relax and act less warily toward the man, whom they could now view as a fellow gun owner. A sole responder quickly provided a succinct and clear response to his question.

This interaction apparently made a couple of the other NAACP members comfortable enough to also begin asking questions including, "What exactly are you preparing for?" "Why are you armed?" and "Do you see yourselves as law abiding citizens?" Militia members from all four units collectively provided calm, clear responses to every question. Some discussed their military service, as did one NAACP member—a WWII veteran who received a, "Thank you, sir!" and a standing ovation from militia members when he announced his service record. After this, everyone seemed more at ease and militia leaders soon returned to their planned talking agenda for the night.

After the meeting was over, I asked Jamal, the NAACP member sitting closest to me, if the meeting had been what he expected. He laughed and vehemently shook his head, saying, 'These guys aren't *at all* what I expected, in a good way!' Jamal mentioned that he was heavily involved in his community and it seemed like the militia was, too. He said, 'It sounds like they have some good ideas. I feel like there needs to be more conversation across different groups with the same interests.' At that point, he exchanged phone numbers with militia member George who had joined our conversation before continuing:

> 'I'm really interested in reaching out to the youth. You know, I live in the suburbs, but I work regularly with the youth in the city. I try to help get them on the right track. In part, I try to get them on the right track so they won't come to my house and *I'll* be in a position to defend myself! You know? I'm a gun owner, and I'll gladly defend myself if I need to, but I

really don't wanna be responsible for perpetuating a cycle of violence and death of young black men.'

George and other militia members could strongly identify with Jamal's interest in his community and with his gun ownership, even if they could not quite empathize with particular needs of the black community that Jamal referenced. Along with the other man who had acknowledged his concealed carry permit earlier in the meeting, this interaction helped militia members see NAACP members' interests and concerns as parallel to their own and helped reaffirm their anti-racist self-image. To my knowledge, no long-term interactions between militia and NAACP members happened after this night, though George reported at least one positive follow up phone call.

Militia members' overall response to race, as shown in the above scenarios, reflects a more insightful perspective than I had anticipated prior to starting my fieldwork because of common misconceptions of militias as overtly racist. These interactions demonstrate members' attempts to support a super-citizen vision of an egalitarian America. Unlike some of Bonilla-Silva's white respondents who, despite having many other similarities with militia men, "don't like to think about" race (2006:145), militia men do think about race and how their group is perceived in the context of members' whiteness.

The interactions do not, however, mean militia members have full empathetic understanding or knowledge of institutional racism and other continuing discrimination. It also does not mean that members always recognize racism, including from other members. In the rest of this chapter, I focus on interactions where racism goes largely unrecognized by a majority of militia members. These interactions are instructive for understanding how and against whom racism continues within this group of lower and lower-middle class, white American men.

RACISTS IN THE MILITIA

Edmond, a utilities worker who is married with young-adult children and is in his early 40s, joined the militia in spring 2010 and was by far the most racist member I encountered. His feelings became evident when he intentionally tested other members' tolerance for racism at the first camping event he attended. As Edmond, four other members, and I sat around the campfire on a cool May night, Edmond remarked that 'the natives' were out that night as he complained about the loudly croaking frogs in the distance. The men made small talk about new weapons and other gadgets for a few minutes before one started talking about the deteriorating state of Detroit. Edmond assented and noted that he enjoyed going to the 'ghetto' and acting as an election monitor—someone tasked with observing a particular polling location and watching for signs of fraud or other problems. It became clear that Edmond envisioned all of black Detroit as the 'ghetto' as he continued. He explained that he had monitored a poll location for the 2008 Presidential Election 'during Obama's run,' and found it funny when a woman approached him after seeing his "Republican" badge, supposedly saying, 'I thought we got rid of all of you four years ago!' He said, 'But by the middle of the day, they were all glad to have the Republicans there because they couldn't keep track of what they were supposed to keep track of on their own.'

Edmond's story implies several things. First, that the 'ghetto' of Detroit needs particular assistance in avoiding voter fraud and other problems; Edmond did not live in that area and specifically chose to be an election monitor there. It seemed Edmond perceived incompetence or increased illegitimate behavior from black voters in Detroit. Second, Edmond's reference to Obama indicated that he believed the 2008 election was even more likely to provoke problematic behavior from Detroit's black voters who, he assumed, might have particular incentive to rig the election in black Presidential candidate, Barack Obama's favor. Third, when Edmond reported the woman said she thought they had gotten rid of "all of you," his inflections indicated that he thought she meant not only Republicans, but also Whites (or perhaps white *men*) more broadly. Edmond interpreted the woman as also having an us-versus-them racialized mentality and as not wanting "them" in her neighborhood. Fourth, Edmond indicates that if he as a white, male, Republican had not been present, the black, female, Democrat poll administrator and her assistants would have been incapable of completing their jobs because of incompetence.

The other militia members listened to Edmond's story in silence, with several exchanging uncomfortable glances, but neither affirming nor challenging Edmond's implications. It seemed to me as though some of the members were trying to discern whether Edmond's statements might be racist, but were uncertain and did not want to risk accusing him without being able to more concretely identify a problematic statement. A slight pause ensued, to which Edmond added, 'They just have no clue what's going on. All over the country. Those people vote based on skin color and nothing else.'

More uncomfortable glances followed, and one member tried to shift the topic of conversation slightly by saying he thought people often voted for the wrong reason, or without adequately understanding the candidate they were supporting; this was a general statement that did not apply to any particular racial group, and is a common conversational point at militia gatherings. Edmond, however, was not finished with his rant as he then turned to discussing the high crime rates in Detroit, eventually exclaiming, 'The natives are out of control!' "Natives" often refers to a group of supposedly primitive, uncivilized people, which should be offensive enough in this context, but Edmond had just used the term a few minutes prior to refer to annoying animals at the campsite, making the connotation even worse.

One member raised his eyebrows and loudly cleared his throat at this comment, another jumped up to unnecessarily stoke the campfire, but no one yet said anything to challenge Edmond's statements. At this point, I was unsure whether the other militia members still retained uncertainty about Edmond's racism, or whether they just felt uncomfortable confronting him about it. I knew that I was struggling to remain silent, but—just like Edmond—wanted to see exactly what kind of comment would be necessary to evoke a reprimand, and to identify the point at which racism became undeniable for other members.

I did not have to wait long. Another member tried, again, to shift the subject and discuss Michigan's failing economy, saying that the auto industry in particular had left Detroit in 'a terrible state.' Another mused aloud if anything could ever be done to repair the city's economy. Edmond, still riled up from this rant, glibly responded, 'I wonder if you can grow cotton this far north?'—a clear reference to the legacy of slavery from the southern states. Most other members loudly and simultaneously exclaimed "Woah!" at

this comment, unable to deny the racism in Edmond's statements any longer. Several members talked over each other for a few moments, and the only response I could clearly make out was, 'That was *not* cool.' Those who did not speak sat in slack-jawed silence and stared at Edmond for a moment; I did not see any member who appeared unphased by his last offensive comment. Edmond's reference to the slavery-based economy was finally overt enough to make the other members recognize his racism for what it was.

None took the opportunity, however, to confront Edmond. He did not receive a version of the almost innoculatory anti-racist statements that first-time meeting attendees often heard. Instead, members quickly put out the campfire and went to their respective tents, in near silence. Edmond looked a bit uncomfortable after being admonished, but did not apologize or try to soften his previous statements. The next morning, no one spoke of the incident and militia training proceeded, though Edmond was much less assertive and vocal than he had been the night before.

Edmond undeniably possesses at least some degree of "Jim Crow" or "old fashioned" racism, which claims there is a biologically-rooted, inherent racial hierarchy. Most militia members who evinced racism did not reference biological notions, but were more like 45 year old delivery driver Aaron who told me in our interview:

> "I'm racist to a point. Um, but not outright, I mean you know it's—how do I explain it. I've got Mexican friends, very good Mexican friends that I— buddies of mine. I got black buddies. It's the, I guess when you see a group of 'em dressed up or somethin' and they're hippin' and hoppin' at a corner, you know, and whatever you wanna call it. It's just that—I don't know, I guess it's just because I don't know them. The place that I work at in Detroit, they have a whole bunch working at that factory, and the thing that frustrates us at work is they don't care about their job. And they just do it any way to get it out of the warehouse, and then we hafta to put up with what crap work they've done, which angers us."

Aaron's acknowledgement of his racism is unusual, but other members referenced similar themes. Like Aaron, they do not recognize these characterizations—congregated black youth as othered and possibly dangerous and his black coworkers as lazy, incapable workers, and similarly othered—as epitomizing racist stereotypes of Blacks.

Symbolic Racism
What Aaron's quote and Edmond's early statements have in common is a vague sense of a racial "other" whose values are incompatible with their own. Militia members who reference "laziness" or "cultural differences" as reasons for racial animosity may be more accurately described as symbolic racists. As defined by political scientists Donald Kinder and David Sears (1981), symbolic racism is "a blend of antiblack affect and the kind of traditional American moral values embodied in the Protestant [Work] Ethic." Symbolic racism has at its core a general racial resentment or negative emotionality toward nonwhites, and is often framed as a "cultural," rather than inherent difference between racial groups. Symbolic racism differs from Jim Crow racism[3] (Hughes 1997; Kluegel

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[3] Symbolic racism also differs from" laissez faire racism," which typically assumes Whites are *consciously* acting to protect a privileged position (Bobo, Kluegel, and R. Smith 1997; Hughes 1997); it also differs,

1990; Kinder and Sanders 1996), and from mere political conservatism (Hughes 1997; Sears et al. 1997).

As Chapter Three explains, the understanding that militia members (and many U.S. whites more generally) have of what it means to be a good American or a good citizen also heavily relies on the Work Ethic's valuation of individualism, hard work, and having only what one earns; these themes are embedded in the mythologized tales about the country's founding. Symbolic racists believe that Blacks do not subscribe to American ideals (Brown et al. 2003) and may therefore see Blacks as un-American. For example, they believe that Blacks do not value hard work, that they could succeed if they only tried harder, and that discrimination is no longer a stumbling block in economic advancement (Henry and Sears 2002; Kluegel and E. Smith 1983).

It is no coincidence that scholars have found that whites who identify as just "American" tend to score higher on symbolic racism measures than do whites who identify with ethnic groups like "Italian-American." People who identify as just "American" are likely more invested in the national mythos, undergirded by the Work Ethic (Bafumi and Herron 2009; Coverdill 1997). Some militia members have talked about how they do not understand the need for "hyphenated identities," and that everyone should want to be "just plain American." They believe that loyalty to some other identity category prevents a person's full integration as American citizens and means they might be intentionally maintaining "cultural differences" that are somehow problematic or set them apart from "real" Americans.

Illegal Immigrants
Some militia members exhibit similar culture-based attitudes toward illegal immigrants. These militia members recognize the U.S. as a "nation of immigrants," but insist that people who are dedicated to the nation's values should now immigrate legally. People who enter the country illegally, in these members' opinions, demonstrate that they cannot play by the rules and be law abiding citizens who support freedom and equality for everyone. As retiree Walter explains:

> "Immigration, I have no trouble with it as long as it's legal. You know, just the fact that—'illegal,' illegal immigration, okay, that means you broke a law. That means you shouldn't be here."

A selection from 52 year old Daryl's interview elaborates on this theme:

> "I think that if you're goin' to come into America, I think it should be done legally and properly and that if you're coming in, the reason *why* you want to come in here is because you believe in what the U.S. stood for, and you've read the history enough to know that that's what you wanna be. But to come in here just to start hollerin' and try to change the United States, I don't believe that's fair. I mean that's—I don't think it should be that way. I

have no problem with any race, color, you know, comin' in here. There's
no problem with that."

John, in his late 40s, made the point even more strongly in an email he wrote to me after I
asked for more information about his family's immigration[4]:

"…and I [also] have current family members who I am assisting to
immigrate to this country. Do you realize the hoops my family and myself
have had to jump through to come to this country? Many. […] I do not
fear Mexican immigration, I do not fear the 'browning of America' as
some say, I have contributed to it. But open border immigration is a free
ride. No hoops to jump through and no reason to adapt to a new culture or
a desire to. [It's supposed to be] 'Out of many one,' not 'out of one many.'
This adds to divisions and ultimately conflict. All immigrants have to earn
citizenship! Or it has no value."

John references *E Pluribus Unum*, which is stamped on U.S. currency, to reflect his belief
that immigrants should want to adapt to American culture. In his opinion, going through
legal immigration and its requirements means that a person wants to conform to
American ideals and values, while illegal immigration means they do not. Just as many
other militia members who disdain illegal immigration, John does not see it as a race-
based issue; John's wife is a non-white immigrant, and John has expressed great
frustration over his granddaughter dealing with bullying in school over her "brown" skin
because, as he says, 'Who *cares* what color you are? That has nothing to do with what
kind of person you are.' In other words, members maintain that their sentiments about
illegal immigration do not apply only to Mexican immigrants, but to immigrants from
any country.

THE MILITIA'S EXCLUSION OF MUSLIM AMERICANS
Muslim Americans[5] are the one group that many militia members, including Daryl and
John, make no effort to accept and welcome. Early in my fieldwork, 35 year old George,
a truck driver, told me that several members left SMVM and joined another group when
he wanted to bring a close Muslim friend to trainings and SMVM leadership supported
his decision. One of the objectors, Kyle, told me:

"Last April, the SMVM was contacted by some Muslims, and they wanted
to train. And they [SMVM] said, 'well we can't discriminate [based on]
their religion and their race.' And we basically said, 'the hell we can't.'
[…] Ok, you let these guys in, they come out and train with us, they come
to all our meetings, they do everything. They're there for a year or two,
next thing you know, they disappear. They're not around. You can't find

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[4] I have corrected some grammar and punctuation errors in this passage to improve readability.
[5] As explained above, militia members tend to reject all "hyphenated identities" in accordance with their
assimilationist, anti-illegal immigrant selections above. As I explain below, they tend to view Muslims as
not being Americans, but I use the term here to emphasize their understanding of Muslims specifically
living in the U.S.

them. Their email address doesn't work, there's no contact. But, one of their carcasses just turns up in the Sears tower that just got bombed, with an SMVM membership card. […] What do you think is gonna happen? They are gonna round up every member, anybody that ever inquired in conversation or email [about the militia], they're gonna come through these and hunt everybody up, [saying] 'You trained a terrorist.'"

Kyle believes Muslims would only want to train with the militia to learn skills to harm American citizens, and believes it is perfectly appropriate to exclude Muslims from the group. He does not see this as contradicting the militia's egalitarian, super-citizen vision because he believes that Muslims do not comply with the militia mission statement of allowing the participation of people who do not want to "bring harm to our country or people." A quote from Trevor, a retiree in his 60s, further exemplifies how many militia members understand the term "Muslim Americans" to be oxymoron:

"And [the Constitution] is for all people. All people of all races, all creeds and all religions. But one thing you gots to understand: the Muslim religion and our Constitution and our way of life cannot co-exist. They can't do it."

Trevor believes that Islam is incompatible with American values and implies that its practitioners are in a category of their own, excluded from other belief systems, other races, and even other human beings.

Militia members like the men quoted above feel that Muslims threaten the physical safety of the nation and its citizens, in addition to threatening the nation's cultural values. Other authors have shown that many Americans similarly believe Muslim Americans are less committed to the nation and its principles than they should be (Braiker 2007; Condon 2011; Sides and Gross 2010). They assume that there is something wrong with Islam or Islamic culture that promotes violence and makes Muslims fundamentally opposed to American values, and this may in turn play into assumptions that Muslims have the potential to be uniformly terroristic (Murphy 2002; Perry 2003; Razack 2008; Joseph et al. 2008). The case of the militia helps identify what precisely it is that is "wrong" with Muslims for some people.

Fear Management
It is sometimes overlooked that white, gun owning men are expressing real fear with statements like these, rather than merely using rhetoric to spur mobilization (e.g., Oliviero 2011) or to disguise racism or other underlying motives. Part of the reason that militia men feel such a strong need to prepare for unknown disasters is because they are afraid of what might happen; for some of them, owning guns and other equipment is itself a way to manage this fear as much as it is a real preparation for danger. For example, whenever legislation is considered that might restrict access to firearms or ammunition (such as discussions of banning online ammunition sales in the wake of the summer 2012 shooting at an Aurora, Colorado theater), many militia members stocked up on the exact model of firearm or type of ammunition that was being considered for restriction. This action was, in part, a symbolic act of defiance and protest against the proposed

legislation, but is also a concrete way to manage fear of losing access to certain weapons, a loss which represents restricted gun rights more broadly. Fear management is also the reason that my interviewees had an average of 4.6 guns[6] *per person in their household*— a much higher number than realistically needed to defend, for example, against a home invasion. This attitude can be seen as Kurt, in his late 50s, discussed his distrust of both major political parties just prior to the 2008 Presidential Election, before adding:

> "But I am more in fear of the Left trying to take away my rights [than I am of the Right]. They are more or less trying to censor people they don't like Rush Limbaugh and they try to take him off the air […]. I said, "Well, that doesn't sound like you want to protect the First Amendment, does it?" But I tell 'em, it's like, "But if you don't want to protect the Second Amendment, I see why you wouldn't want to protect the First or probably any of the other ones."

Kurt is referencing a popular notion among militia members that Second Amendment gun rights are needed to ensure First Amendment rights to free speech. This is the idea that privately held arms prevent government agents from infringing on other fundamental rights. Kurt believes that people on the political left who oppose the Second Amendment also devalue the right to free speech and possibly other rights. Kurt's ownership of firearms is a way to both defy this un-American attitude as he sees it, and to manage the fear of what might happen if such liberals were to gain increased political power.

Members' fear of Muslims is also rooted in a feeling that core American principles are being threatened, which is a feeling initiated by the terror attacks of 9/11. George, who invited Muslim friends to training, called the attacks "the biggest disaster this country has ever seen," while Adam said:

> "I, as a citizen, do not feel our nation is safe, and weaknesses are being opened up for our enemies to exploit. If there are any failures here, I feel they will cost us many American lives."

Daryl, now in his early 50s told me he tried to sign up with military recruiters shortly after the terror attacks but was told he was "too old." Other members, like Bert, a father of three teenagers, try to be vigilant against future attacks as they remember being traumatized from 9/11:

> "I recall where I was and who I was with, pretty much most details around those hours leading up to and after the planes crashed. We were all in shock - this couldn't be real - it must be an accident—is this a bad dream! […] It was only months ago, another terrorist came close to blowing up a plane as it approached Detroit. […] I've researched what experts are predicting, there are still many terrorists attempting to attack Americans and cause catastrophic damage to us. I would recommend we map out where the nuclear power plants are located and try to have maps ready on

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[6] I asked interviewees how many firearms were in their households, and, separately, how many people were currently living in their households. Only two of my forty interviewees declined to answer this question.

hand so it would be quicker to plan a route to get family away from the radiation and/or violence that could occur. Had those planes on 9-11-2001 crashed into nuclear reactor towers, it would have been WAY worse for us to recover! Terrorism is only one of many areas that militia training could help with."

In other words, the terror attacks of 2001 presented a real and symbolic threat to Americans' senses of safety and identity. No other groups had previously perpetrated an act that impacted white Americans in quite this way.

Militia members also fear change that could happen to the country's government and legal system as a result of terrorism. Militia members despise increasing restrictions on private citizens through legislation like the Patriot Act because these changes undermine what American culture represents to these self-described super citizens. Members like 27 year old Hugo, who works in customer service, describe this act as allowing the police to have entirely too much power:

"Now with the Patriot Act, with the other rules and regulations they have, [there's] no warrant, no knocking, the door gets busted down and they seize everything."

This Act exemplifies the increase in governmental power over individual lives that militia members despise and sometimes fear.

Involvement in Anti-Muslim Events
Militia members' verbal disdain for Muslims and their purported effect on American society was evident early in my fieldwork, but their disdain only shifted to action in spring 2011 when they became involved in two anti-Muslim events. Oddly, the same leaders who supported George's desire to bring a Muslim friend to training became some of the biggest proponents of involvement in these events. Understanding the militia's involvement in these events is useful for delving further into how they understand Muslims to be a threat to the nation and its values.

Involvement in Anti-Muslim Events: Terry-Jones Protest
The first anti-Muslim event that members became involved in occurred in April 2011, when Koran burning Florida pastor Terry Jones made a trip to Dearborn, Michigan to rant about Sharia law[7] and Islam's supposedly negative effect on the Constitution and freedom of speech. The city briefly denied Jones' right to protest by ordering a hearing to determine the likelihood his presence might incite violence, jailed him over his refusal to pay a "peace bond" to cover the cost of protest security, and chared him a symbolic $1 bond to be freed from jail (Langton 2011).

Militia members often stated that they believe First Amendment rights to be the most important rights Americans have. Because if any other rights are infringed, they say, 'We can complain about it, but if they take away the right to complain, to fight, we're in

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[7] Sharia law is a version of traditional Islamic Law that includes harsh sanctions for adultery and other behavior that has largely been decriminalized in the U.S. Its opponents claim to fear that courts will begin to use Sharia law to evaluate cases in the U.S., rather than judiciary law, in defiance of the Constitution.

real trouble.' Dearborn's treatment of Jones certainly played into members' decision to be involved in this particular protest, as Elias' note on the forum indicates:

> "A 1ˢᵗ Amendment precedent is being set here, that is the side we should all be on. Ignoring such things over the years, no matter how small, is why our Constitution keeps slipping away. If a local government decides my "Freedom of Speech" is beneath them, they order me to post a "PEACE BOND" of let's say $200,000 before I can speak, sorry but that is censorship by fine."

Although none said so explicitly, some members seemed to believe that the city of Dearborn was attempting to protect its Muslim residents from Jones' message at the expense of his fundamental right to free speech—a clear betrayal of American values members claim to support above all else.

Members were divided on their opinion of Jones himself. One person called him an "ass," while another noted, "In militia terms, pastor Jones is a few rounds short of a full mag," but both still wanted to support his freedom of speech. A few members expressed concern about sending the 'wrong message' by supporting Jones, and some said they were uncomfortable attending what might prove to be a violent event. To this Rodney, a student in his 20s, responded:

> "He [Jones] is not the first man or woman to step into the powder keg to make his point! I think about what it would had been like to be a black man in the 1960's when Dr. Martin Luther King was holding meetings and pleading his rights, for the things he believed in."

Likening Jones to the Civil Rights leader indicates that Rodney believes Islamic doctrine and values to be oppressive, and the fight against its perceived spread is just as noble and necessary as the fight for equal rights. Given their divided sentiment, it is unsurprising that only eight militia members from two different units attended Jones' rally, although several more expressed frustration that they were unable to miss work to do so. Those who did attend the event did not wear their usual

Figure 14: Militia members took a picture of other protestors holding signs that read, "I will not submit!" in both English and Arabic as they listen to Jones. Photo from http://s657.photobucket.com/profile/SMVM

camouflage, deciding to avoid being overtly identified as members of the militia[8]. Based on their self-reports as well as pictures and videos they took of the event and posted to an online photo-sharing account, militia members stood as a group on Terry Jones' side[9] of the street along with around two dozen or so Jones supporters. They were separated them from a loud-counter protest crowd that must have numbered in the hundreds by two sets of temporary barriers on either side of a four-lane road, police officers, and, when the counter-protestors tried to rush the barriers, a line of SWAT officers.

Importantly, some militia members who participated (including George who brought Muslim friends to militia training) did genuinely feel they were merely demonstrating on behalf of the First Amendment. However, at this point, Jones' freedom of speech was no longer threatened—he was speaking with a microphone from behind a podium on the steps of City Hall. Well-intentioned members were really protesting that Jones' freedom of speech had been impeded at all.

A more problematic motivation for protest soon surfaced for at least three of the members who participated in the event. The most telling response came at the next militia meeting when Edmond—the same member who offensively spoke about "natives" and cotton during his first camping excursion—told me that a local media crew could not air the second part of his interview about his presence at the protest when they asked what he thought of Jones' message. He had responded that he thought Jones would just stir up trouble "because we already know they [Muslims] are animals." Edmond meant that he believes Muslim Americans would respond violently in response to Jones' speech because they are "animals" who have inferior cultural standards regarding tolerance for violence and free expression.

Figure 15: Police and SWAT team members line Jones' side of the rally. Photo from http://s657.photobucket.com/profile/SMVM

Militia members did not attend Jones' rallies when he made two later trips to Michigan. There was some debate over this on the forums, as a few members wanted to go and support Jones' message. Leadership indicated that, while people were of course free to attend on their own, the militia as a group

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[8] A police officer noticed the attendee's radios and other communication equipment and asked who they were. When they told her they were with the militia, she reportedly responded, "Oh, you're the good guys," and radioed other police officers in the area so they would not "hassle" the militia members. No member speculated that she may have had other motives for alerting other officers, such as making sure militia members were being watched for signs of trouble making.

[9] One video of the event includes a text overlay that says militia members were on both sides of the protest in an effort to bolster their claim of being present to support everyone's right to free speech. They do have a few photos taken from the counter-protest side of the street; however, given the crowd placement and other details in the photos, I suspect these were taken by a single member who later switched to Jones' side of the event.

wanted no part of it because there were no threats to anyone's freedom of speech during Jones' return visits. At the same time, however, members continued to make disparaging remarks about Muslim Americans that show how they view that culture as uniform, more primitive, and socially problematic. Vincent, a proudly atheist leader, said for example:

> "Any social structure that tolerates rape and fails to punish rapists[10] is not acceptable to me. Period. Any structure which denies the basic dignity and self-ownership of human beings is wrong. Period. Any idea, concept, teaching, or thought that requires violence or threats thereof to spread is not just wrong, it is weak. Weak, weak, weak. That's why it needs force, because it cannot stand on its own."

Spoken concerns of this nature about Muslims threatening America or its culture are reflected through some members' discussion of Jones and participation in his first rally. These members viewed Jones' hampered ability to speak out against Muslims as a threat to First Amendment rights even after he was provided with a space to speak at City Hall. Other members, like Edmond, were clearly participating to support Jones' anti-Muslim message, rather than his right to speak. These competing motivations for participation in the protest allowed members like Edmond to engage in exclusionary action without sanction. Edmond's anti-Muslim bias was essentially hidden behind a dialogue of First Amendment support until he revealed his true feelings to a reporter on site. After he and other members participated in the rally, he became more vocal about his anti-Muslim attitudes and was expressed frustration when militia leadership declined to involved the group in Jones' future Michigan events. Perhaps as a result of a lack of responsiveness to Jones' future visits, Edmond again appealed to the notion of a threatened First Amendment when trying to spark militia involvement in another protest opportunity.

Involvement in Anti-Muslim Events: *All American Muslim* Protest
This event happened in December 2011, when home improvement store Lowe's pulled advertising from the short-lived television show *All American Muslim*. The show followed several Muslim families in Michigan as it highlighted the Muslim community as well as the challenges some family members faced in their jobs or other venues as a result of their religion. Lowe's Allen Park, Michigan location (the store nearest where the show was filmed) found itself hosting around 100 protestors—many of them dressed in traditional Muslim garb—and around 25 counter-protestors. Only a couple militia members, including Edmond, attended this event as counter-protestors, but several more expressed regret that they could not.

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[10] Several other members mentioned objecting to Islam because of its treatment of women. More than "white men seeking to save brown women from brown men" (Spivak 1999:303), critical race theorist and philosopher Alia Al-Saji (2010) has suggested that Muslim women serve as a "negative mirror" that allows white men to view their own culture as more positive and egalitarian in contrast to Islamic culture (and in contrast to how it truly is). This is a compelling claim that needs further investigation, but nonetheless has some relevance to understanding militia men who express anti-Muslim sentiment. Many of them, like Edmond, also oppose abortion rights and health care policies that would ensure easy access to birth control. These restrictive beliefs nonetheless seem more egalitarian, to them, than their understanding of how Muslim women are treated.

Edmond claimed that people did not understand that Lowe's had the right to spend money as they chose, and said he wanted to show support for Lowe's free-market decision. Counter-protestors, however, can be heard in video taken at the event repeatedly saying "God Bless America," "'Kill the infidel right where you find him,' [it's] right out of the Koran," and obnoxiously singing "We Wish You a Merry Christmas." These comments do not reflect a concern about protecting a corporation's rights to speech or spending. If

Figure 16: A reporter interviews a small crowd of counter protestors supporting Lowe's Hardware near Dearborn. The counter protestors hold an American flag and have signs and apparel that reads "infidel" in both English and Arabic. Photo from http://s657.photobucket.com/profile/SMVM

anything, Edmond and others involved seemed not to recognize that people protesting Lowe's also had the free speech rights to express their opinion. Rather, the counter-protestors' comments demonstrate a belief that Islam is fundamentally opposed to both Christian[11] and American values. Counter-protesters were supporting and enacting Lowe's *lack* of support for the local Muslim American population.

Just as with his efforts to involve other militia members in Jones' subsequent Michigan events, Edmond failed to produce a militia strong showing when supporting Lowe's. Militia leaders nonetheless allowed him to post photos and videos of his protest activities on their forum and photo sharing sites, and other members expressed support of Edmond's actions. Billy, in his 30s, for example, remarked:

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[11] Unsurprisingly, militia members who attended this protest identify as Christian. It may also be that many people understand the nation to be founded on Christian principles, even if they are not Christians themselves. Islamic traditions may seem foreign to this heritage. A similar situation is seen in France, which strives to be a secular society and denies traditional headscarves in schools and other locations.

"We need to keep doing little things like this [protest]. Some may worry about negative backlash, but... as long as we make sure to stick to a constitutionally sound position on whatever we do, we should weather any storms."

Involvement in Anti-Muslim Events: Faux Muslim Terrorist Training

It became clear that Edmond's persistent influence was having a behavioral impact on other members who had previously only verbalized anti-Muslim discomfort when anti-Muslim activities began to enter militia trainings. SMVM conducted a training in April 2012 where the motivating scenario involves evading an imaginary terrorist group named Farouk-Al-Salit. A careful reader will notice that this is a play on the name of a Willy Wonka movie character that can serve as a tongue-in-cheek denial that the name has a Muslim connotation.

Figure 17: A used shooting target depicting a man in traditional Islamic clothing. Photo courtesy of www.michiganmilitia.com.

In my time in the field, no unit used a named figure as a fictive enemy in their training sessions. On the contrary, they usually are careful to completely avoid referencing real people in their training scenarios, with the exception of using Osama Bin Laden shooting targets; he is a person they assume everyone would recognize as an undisputable enemy. Notably, he was also recognizably Muslim in these pictures, with a long beard and turban. The introduction of the new training scenario indicates that Muslim-sounding names are increasingly acceptable as outgroup identifiers to militia members. Combined with their participation in and support of anti-Muslim demonstrations, this means that militia members are increasingly marking Muslims as problematic others, an act that reinforces lingering fear and perceived cultural difference.

RESPONSE TO SALIENT MUSLIM INDIVIDUALS

Members' marking of Muslims as othered is complexified by two men who were salient to militia members during my fieldwork. One man was a Muslim militia leader, and the other was the newly elected President of the United States, whom many people on the political right believe to be a Muslim despite his own profession of Christianity. Analyzing members' very different responses to both men helps more clearly delineate the threat members believe Muslims pose to American culture and security.

Muslim Militia Member

Militia member Chad grew up in a Christian military family and lived in nearly a dozen states before he moved to Michigan a decade ago with several extended family members.

Chad converted to Islam after joining the Navy and encountering people who believed in the Muslim faith, although, curiously, Chad was stationed not in the Middle East, but in Mississippi. Regarding his decision to convert to Islam, Chad notes:

> "I didn't like how the Lutheran religion—the churches anyway that we went to—they didn't all practice what they preached. You know, everything's fine on Sunday but come Monday morning, they're a whole new person."

Chad believed there was less hypocrisy among the Muslims he knew than among the Christians he grew up with. It was important to him to be in a community of faith that enacted the principles and behavioral standards they advocated behind the pulpit. All the same, Chad explains that he is not strongly religious:

> "I don't follow it [Islam] religiously per se. Most Christians don't either, you know, they don't go to church all the time. They don't follow *all* of the rules that you're supposed to, you know, and stuff like this. I don't. [With] Islam, you're supposed to pray five times a day. I don't. Do I have a prayer rug? Yes. Have I used it? Not in the last six years [laughs]. You know? I don't do that. I haven't been to a mosque since I have converted and when I lived in North Carolina. I have not been to a single one since I've lived here. So I mean in 10-11 years now I haven't been to a single mosque."

Chad nonetheless adheres to the relatively strict dietary standards laid out in the Koran; he doesn't eat pork despite, he laughingly notes, his rich Italian heritage, and only rarely drinks alcohol after abstaining from it altogether for many years. In his view, he takes his faith as seriously as "most Christians."

At the time of our interview, Chad had been involved with the militia for three years after starting his own militia unit along with his Christian brother. The brothers started their own unit after feeling the government was "overstepping their bounds" and realizing that there was not already a local unit with whom they could train. Chad and his brother followed SMVM model for training guidelines and required gear, which they found on www.michiganmilitia.com, soon made contact with SMVM and other units in the state, and began attending other groups' trainings as well as continuing to structure their own trainings and other events.

Militia members who did not already know that Chad is a converted Muslim became aware of Chad's religion in spring 2009, when he discussed both his faith and his militia activity on several news reports. Reporters spoke with Chad after learning he called the FBI rather than harboring members of the nearby Hutaree militia who were trying to avoid arrest following law enforcement raids of that unit. Other militia units continue to welcome Chad and other members of his unit (who are all Christian or non-religious) to shared training events and other functions, and Chad is included on messages that pertain to leadership concerns or disaster planning.

Chad attended the Terry Jones protest in Dearborn, and must have done so at least in part to demonstrate that his loyalty rested with national values including freedom of speech that the militia supports, more so than with his religion. His participation did not stop

another militia leader from only partially joking about whether other members in attendance at that event 'asked to see the contents of his backpack,' to make sure there were no explosives in it to injure Jones and his supporters. Chad recognizes that his acceptance by at least some militia members is tenuous as he talks about members who left SMVM because they allowed Muslims (including Chad, in his view) at their trainings:

> "Okay, I am a Muslim, I have an AK-47, but I'm white so that helps a little bit, you know? If I was Arabic, they would have just totally stereotyped the hell—the crap out of it."

Importantly, Chad remarks that his skin tone only helps him "a little bit," meaning that he is aware that his whiteness does not fully absolve some members' suspicions of his loyalties. Keith, for instance, called Chad a 'fashionable Muslim' and told me that he would not accept Chad if he took things 'too seriously.' He meant that Chad would be "too serious" if he talked extensively about his beliefs, wore turbans or other religious clothing, or interrupted trainings to participate in daily prayers. Another man even emailed me to ask my "professional" opinion on Chad's dedication to the nation after he first learned of Chad's Muslim faith. Thus, skin tone alone does not nullify concerns about Chad's commitment to the nation for members who do not know him well. Assumptions they hold about violence and exclusion being fundamental attributes of Islamic faith outweigh the possibility of accepting Chad based on his skin color and militia participation alone.

At the same time, other members indicate that race alone is not enough to *reject* someone as a Muslim. Thirty-six year old Curtis, for example, advocates acceptance as long as people are in some way demonstrating their commitment to the nation. Curtis became a little frustrated and animated as he tried to convey that Americanness matters more than race or other factors:

> "I mean an American's an American no matter what color you are: black, white, Arab, Mexican, whatever. I mean if you're an American, you're an American. You know, you've got Arabs fighting for the U.S. [in the Middle East], too, you know, you got Mexicans and whatever. You know, as long as you're an American, you're an American!"

Members who know Chad well follow this logic and believe that Chad demonstrates his commitment to their shared national values in several ways: his militia participation which is reinforced by his Christian family members' militia involvement, his prior military experience, and a large "We the People" tattoo on his back. Further, Chad's militia unit has participated in multiple community events, including search and rescue efforts, that have garnered positive media attention for the militia, and Chad worked with the FBI to ensure that members of a different local group did not engage in unlawful behavior. These factors allow members who know Chad to view him as a fellow super citizen who is firmly committed to their shared values of security and individual liberty.

Figure 18: Chad's tattoo, which references the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution, as well as the notion that the American people are collectively more powerful and more important than the government. Photo courtesy of Claire Schneider.

President Obama

In contrast, militia members remain skeptical of the national loyalty of President Barack Obama, assumed by many as 17% of Americans to be a Muslim ("One in Six" 2012). Atheist Vincent, a government employee, said he believed Islam denies "basic dignity and self-ownership of humans," and that it is inherently terroristic and antithetical to the American way of life such that all of its adherents are incapable of understanding and adopting American values—that they are incapable of being American. Grady, a man who only attended meetings, not trainings, announced just prior to the 2008 election that he believed that Obama had connections to terrorists like those involved in the 9/11 attacks and that 'being a Muslim should be enough to disqualify someone for running for the highest office.' Another member added that he would be able to get a higher security clearance than Obama because of his ties to the Middle East. When I asked 23 year old Stewart, who worked in construction before joining the military, about his opinion on Obama's administration during our interview, he haltingly responded, "Clearly he had some kind of Muslim or Arabic background. So that was a concern. For our nation's security."

       Presumed support for Islam is not, of course, the only factor that plays into members' distrust of the President[12]. Other factors include Obama's political affiliation and legislative history. Obama is a Democrat, whom most members see as straying more from an idealized interpretation of the Constitution than Republicans (despite members' overall dislike of both major parties) because Democrats tend to be more in favor of

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[12] Notably, two interviewees reported voting for President Obama prior to joining the militia. Both said they regretted their decision to do so and said that they felt they had not done enough research into his politics before voting. Neither of these interviewees felt comfortable revealing this information to other militia members, and one re-confirmed the confidentiality of his interview content before telling me. Both members now consider themselves to be more politically conservative than they were before joining the militia, seemingly indicating that militia membership has increased their conservatism, though the interviewees would say membership has increased their political 'awareness.'

larger government, more government spending, and greater gun rights restrictions than Republicans. Obama was a Senator from Chicago prior to entering the Presidential race, Chicago has some of the toughest gun laws in the country, and Obama has made clear his preferences for greater gun restrictions, which militia members see as a threat to the Second Amendment and other rights.

Similarly, I have found that accusations in popular discourse that conservative actors' references to Obama as a socialist are really coded language for racism are overstated. Militia members genuinely fear socialism will undermine the American Dream and citizens' sense of hard work and self-determination. References to socialism are replete in militia writing from the 1990s during President Bill Clinton's tenure. An article titled "Socialism in Amerika" by Joseph Gallup in a September 1996 issue of a militia newsletter reads, for example:

> "The recent FDA/Clinton venture that enables our government to regulate and essentially control the tobacco industry is one more example of a government that is actively seeking such a Socialist state. […] While many politicians are calling for a smaller government they appear to be moving us into a society where virtually every aspect of our lives as some kind of government controls or regulations. […] We must take advantage of the freedoms we currently possess and become involved in the political process and hold our so called representatives accountable for their actions. We must do it now while we still have the liberties which allow us to express our opinions, our influence without fear of retribution. Wake up American, for Socialism is waging its war against us and we are on our way to becoming its latest casualty."

Most members' references to Obama as a socialist thus cannot always be attributed to only his race. His status as a Democrat alone is important for at least some members' perception of him and his administration.

It is nonetheless true that Obama was also the most salient non-white in a power during my fieldwork due to his status and frequent present on TV and in political commentary. For members like Edmond, Obama's race may have alone caused doubt regarding Obama's commitment to national identity and values as members see them. However, Edmond's racism is by and large an exception in the militia. So-called "birthers"—people who believe Obama is not even an American citizen and deny the veracity of his Hawaiian birth certificate—are surprisingly rare within the militia, with only half a dozen of all the members I have contact with embracing this perspective. President Obama's assumed Muslim status is not the sole driving factor behind militia members' concerns he does not represent their idealized nationalistic interests. Some members may believe his race or his political affiliations, rather than his religion, are enough to cause doubt about his loyalty to the nation. However, what remains clear is that members' concerns about Obama's commitment to the nation and its security drive much of their resistance to him.

RACIALIZATION AND CULTURAL THREAT: A COMBINED PERSPECTIVE

Symbolic racism, which explains some members' response to their black neighbors is an inadequate explanation for members' hostility toward Muslims. Symbolic racism references cultural "otherness" in respect to values of hard work and independence embedded in the Protest Work Ethic. Little of the public discourse around Muslims seems to implicate perceived cultural deficiency regarding work ethic, and political scientists John Sides and Kimberly Gross (forthcoming) found that Americans understand Muslims as violent and untrustworthy but not as lazy or unintelligent. Purely nationalistic or xenophobic explanations also fail since white militia members are accepting of Blacks, but not Muslims. Instead, I suggest that a combination of racialization and group threat theories explains militia members' continuing skepticism of and hostility toward Muslim Americans.

Racialization
Racialization occurs when racial meaning is attributed to a group that previously possessed no such attribution (Blalock 1973; Omi and Winant 1994). It is an essentializing process; as John Hartigan says, racialization is a process that "reduces individuality to the point that only racialness matters" (1999:13). All other aspects of individual identity become lost from the perspective of the person or group making the racialized classification. Racialization means that phenotypical differences are reified across groups that are perceived to be distinct, and skin color or the shape of the nose, for example, are considered to be reliable markers of a person's racial classification.

   Racialization may also incorporate cultural factors in addition to traditional, physical markers of race and ethnicity. Importantly, these perceived cultural differences are still understood to be *embodied*. Cultural racialization often happens via religion, such that religion is understood as a maker of race, and vice versa. Race scholar Khyati Joshi, for instance, notes that the racialization of Hinduism, Islam, and Sikhism has "rendered [all three religions] theologically, morally, and socially illegitimate" in a U.S. context (2006:212) because most Americans are unable to differentiate them and reject all three. Junaid Rana (2011), a professor of Asian American Studies, discusses the State's involvement in the racialization of Muslims, which occurs, in part, to promote the war on terror and to uphold clear ingroup/outgroup boundaries during the time of national crisis following the 2001 terror attacks[13]. Sociologist Sherene Razack (2008) goes a step further and theorizes that once Islam is racialized, terrorism also becomes racialized, such that Arabs are not only perceived as Muslims, but they are also uniformly perceived as likely terrorists. This assumption certainly holds true for militia members such as Trevor, quoted earlier in this chapter, who says that Islam cannot coexist with the American way of life. The reverse is also true; for many Americans, the term "terrorist" harkens a mental image of a traditionally dressed Muslim (*ibid*).

   More explicitly, many Americans assume women wearing veils or burkas, or men wearing turbans or long beards must be Muslims, though similar clothing may mark people of several faiths (Joshi 2006; Shaheen 2000; Joseph et al. 2008). This confusion has been at the root of several incidents where followers of Sikhism were targeted for violence because their attackers believed they were Muslims (e.g., Romney 2011).

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[13] Naber (2007) discusses the history of Arab immigrants in the U.S. and argues that the racialization of Muslims happened long before the 9/11 attacks, but that the attacks changed the tenor and acceptability of expressed anti-Muslim sentiment.

Studies have also shown that many Americans believe Muslim Americans are somehow culturally deficient and less committed to the nation than they should be (e.g., Condon 2011; Sides and Gross 2010).

Group Threat

I suggest that integrating racialization with a version of group threat theory emphasizing nationalism allows for a more complete specification of what precisely it is that some people believe is "wrong" with Islam. Traditional group threat theories sometimes implicate cultural themes including nationalism, but most typically reference political threats due to the outgroup's population size, or economic threats due to outgroup members' increasing presence in jobs traditionally dominated by whites (e.g., Blalock 1973; Olzak 1994). When considering Muslim Americans, there is little realistic political threat because Arab Americans[14] comprise less than 1% of the overall U.S. population (Brittingham and de la Cruz 2005).

There is also little evidence that economic conflict plays a role in anti-Muslim sentiment in the U.S. Although Arab Americans have a higher mean household income than Americans as a whole ($56,331 versus $51,369), they also are more likely to have more education (45% with at least a bachelor's degree compared to 28%), and to be in managerial, professional, technical, sales or administrative jobs (73% compared to 59%) (Quick Facts"; data compiled from Census 2000 EEO Data tool). These factors together mean that most Americans are unlikely to view Arabs as direct competition or threats to their economic interests.

A Combined Approach: Nationalistic Threat

Members engage in racialization of Muslims Americans, such that they understand Muslims to have certain shared (and typically, essential) physical and cultural traits, but their disdain goes beyond race. They discriminate against and exclude Muslims—not only from the militia but also from their construction of full U.S. citizenship—because they believe Islam ubiquitously contrasts American values of equality and individual liberty. Notably, this fear is not the same as a generalized sense of cultural incompatibility; instead, these are the values that militia members see as central principles of the nation, the very values upon which the country was founded, and the values that they, as self-described super citizens have vowed to uphold.

Members believe that individual liberty and national identity were negatively impacted as a result of increased the security and monitoring of citizens that was implement in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, and some still feel uncertain about their own physical safety from future terror attacks. Militia members and other Americans' ongoing resistance to accepting their Muslim neighbors may, in other words, reflect a continuing insecurity, even a decade after the attacks. President George Bush and others spoke at the time about how the attacks would not undermine American culture and identity, but they did apparently undermine the historicized sense of invincibility possessed by some American whites, including militia members.

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[14] Similar data are not available for self-identified Muslims; using Arab Americans is a reasonable proxy given the racialization of Muslims and given that group threat depends on *perceptions* of threat and population prevalence.

Importantly, sociologist Nadine Naber (2008) took a similar approach to this as she convincingly argued that an interaction of cultural and nation-based racisms[15] account for Muslim Americans' experiences of discrimination after the 9/11 terror attacks. My work expands on Naber's in two respects. First, Naber's insights were built from Muslim Americans' accounts of their experiences of exclusion, while this analysis is based on non-Muslims who are justifying their own acts of exclusion. This angle provides additional information about how such action may be undertaken with limited social sanction and plays into actors' broader nationalistic schemas.

Second, my data show how discussions of "racism" as it is often construed may be an unnecessarily limiting framework. Robert Miles (1993) suggests that racism and nationalism are simultaneously distinct and overlapping. In this context, a focus on racism alone may miss an important part of how Muslim Americans are excluded from full citizenship. That is, some non-Muslims may reject Muslims solely for racist reasons, but others may reject them for purely nationalistic reasons, and yet others may reject them out of a combination of racism and nationalism. Framing the totality of this exclusion as *racism* may be misleading and distract from how individuals with different motives for exclusion may use and respond to the same rhetoric and participate in the same discriminatory behavior. I suggest that the term "legitimate *discrimination*" (e.g., Scambler and Hopkins 1986) better captures how people who exclude Muslims from citizenship similarly justify their exclusion as being in their or the nation's best interest, regardless of their underlying motives for doing so.

A few militia members like George are relatively open and express no objection to Muslim Americans so long as they exhibit an acceptable level of loyalty to the militia's super-citizen understanding of the nation. Other members like Edmond believe all Muslims are "animals" and potential killers whom he prefers not to have in his country. The majority of members fall somewhere in between these extremes, but tend more toward hostility and suspicion than even partial acceptance. Returning to Miles' (1993) construction of nationalism and racism as simultaneously distinct and overlapping, George and Edmond most represent the pure nationalism-racism poles of the spectrum, respectively, while the majority of members in between likely have anti-Muslim sentiment because of a combination of nationalism and racism. My claim is not that nationalism and racism operate independently; as Étienne Balibar (1991) argued, the constructions of race and nation are both similar acts of exclusion and are not easily separated into distinct entities. Instead, I aim to more clearly delineate how nationalism functions as a tool for exclusion in contemporary U.S. society.

An integration of group-threat and racialization process helps explain why militia members did not shift from anti-Muslim rhetoric to anti-Muslim protest involvement and training activities until very recently. Racialization of Muslims was undoubtedly an ongoing process that was revealed early in my fieldwork in various anti-Muslim comments, but group-threat only late became salient before resulting in action in spring 2011. Late 2010 brought much media attention to the controversy surrounding an Islamic center being built near Ground Zero (Jia et al. 2011), and Osama Bin Laden's death in spring 2011 returned media dialogue to the 9/11 attacks and the War on Terror. The

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[15] Cultural racism, derived from Bonilla-Silva (2006), excludes groups based on cultural, rather than biological factors, while nation-based racism is directed toward immigrants or populations otherwise defined as "foreign" (Naber 2008).

withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq (begun in August 2010 and completed in December 2011) was another contentious issue during this time. Further, media attention has also kept anti-Sharia state legislation in the public during this time frame, including Michigan (Raftery 2012). These events, collectively, helped inflame militia members' relatively dormant anti-Muslim passions and reignite perceived nationalistic group threat, with the Jones and Lowes protests in 2011 providing timely outlets for these anxieties.

   This framework combining group threat with racialization also fits with other scholar's findings regarding nationalism and discrimination. Psychologists Kumar Yogeeswaran and Nilanjana Dasgupt (2010) found that their white participants' feelings of "Americanism," or nationalistic sentiment, was intensified when judging other ethnic groups' ability to work in national security jobs—in other words, when they understood national security to be potentially threatened by another group. More specifically, Debra Oswald (2005) found that the greater association her respondents had with national identity, the greater their anti-Arab sentiment. Lile Jia et al. (2011) argue that nationalism played a strong role in opposition to building a mosque at Ground Zero, while Sides and Gross (forthcoming) found that people who viewed Muslims as violent and untrustworthy were more likely to support the War on Terror. These authors' findings all confirm that a feeling of threat against national identity may play a strong role in anti-Muslim sentiment and violence in a variety of contexts. Qualitatively examining the militia's response to their Muslim neighbors helps elucidate that threats to security and individual liberty specifically activate anti-Muslim sentiment for at least some lower-middle class, white men.

   Other work (e.g., Naber 2008; Nagel 2003) suggests that white men like militia members are more likely than other groups to believe in a strong nationalistic vision. If this is true, we would expect to see other studies confirming that white men in particular exhibit anti-Muslim animus when their nationalistic vision is threatened. Indeed, psychologist Hakim Zainiddinov (2012) recently found that white men are significantly more likely than other groups to exhibit anti-Muslim sentiment. The case of the militia reminds us how the mythic story of America's founding is one of white men individualistically taming a rugged frontier and fending off Native Americans and various European interests to form a strong, unique nation. In this story's lineage, men are supposed to be competent protectors not only of their families, but also of their country. Militia men and others who internalize this story as a personal duty may more personally feel threats to the nation and its security than do women, or men of color who do not have this same heritage.

EQUALITY AND EXCLUSION VIA NATIONALISM

Militia members who exhibit symbolic racism toward Blacks or illegal immigrants have two common threads with members who feel culturally and physically threatened by Muslims. First, they all believe in certain stereotypes about the groups they do not fully accept. Symbolic racists may believe that all Blacks fail to live up to the Protestant Work Ethic or that illegal immigrants have no desire to work hard and live up to other cultural standards. Members who feel threatened by Muslims believe they may support further terrorism and violence like that perpetrated on 9/11, and that they want to enact Sharia or other law that undermines the freedom and equality of some citizens.

The second commonality that militia members who exhibit symbolic racism and fear of Muslims have is a belief in the national mythos laid out in Chapter Three: a country founded on hard work and individual determination where the American Dream still holds true. Symbolic racists genuinely believe hard work is required to be a good American and that some groups just do not want to work as hard as others. Members who feel threatened by Muslims genuinely believe that Muslims want to subvert the country's values and that Muslims' supposed support of women's subjugation, for example, is antithetical to American values of freedom and equality.

All militia members I encountered invest strongly in this same super-citizen version of national identity, including those members from whom I witnessed no evidence of racism or anti-Muslim sentiment. Members like George (quoted at the beginning of this chapter) recognize there are racists in the militia. Militia members' shared investment in nationalism, however, unfortunately means that non-racist members often do not identify or address racism and stereotyping from other members because they charitably interpret those members as merely referencing their shared national ideal instead of having a deeper meaning. This was seen when Edmond was allowed to make increasingly racist statements until he reached a point where his claims could no longer be dismissed as only referencing an individual or as referencing the Work Ethic ideal. When Edmond's statements finally became too overtly racist to be ignored, members became incredibly uncomfortable, nearly silently went to their respective tents, and did not address the situation the following day. Edmond was allowed to remain in the group and had increasing influence regarding the anti-Muslim protest activities in which several militia units at least considered participating.

Members' inability to identify racism extends to other areas of social life. When black teenager Trayvon Martin was gunned down in February 2012 by an apparently overly-zealous neighborhood watch captain, for example, many members could not understand how the shooter's and media commentators' references to "hoodies" and "thugs" could be informed by racial stereotypes. Instead, several members posted inflammatory news articles or pictures on Facebook that insinuated news coverage was racist against Martin's shooter.

It seems that militia members can cope with racists in the abstract. They do not like the idea of racism because it violates their understanding of Constitutionally-advocated equality. They reject explicit, biologically-rooted racism on its face because it is easily recognizable as racism. To militia members, racists are neo-Nazis with visible tattoos or other people whose racism is overt and undeniable.

What members do not always know how to recognize (or address) are more subtle forms of racism like coded references to culture and notions of deservingness. Indeed, it may be the case that militia members have a subtle incentive to *not* recognize this form of racism when they witness it. I do not think this is best explained from either a conflict theory or white male privilege perspective. Overt, continuing prejudice and discrimination seriously threaten the national mythos in which members are heavily invested. Stories like Trayvon Martin's or Edmond's characterization of Detroit and its black citizens threaten members' worldview of a just, equal America, and they may look for any possible reason to reject an explanation of racism as a result. Members may even be less willing to recognize this kind of racism in other militia members than they would

in a stranger because they want to believe that other members are as devoted to equality and inclusion as they are.

I want to emphasize that their inability to identify racism is certainly not unique, but rather is emblematic of a problem in American society more generally regarding recognition of continuing racial problems. Increased education is needed regarding continuing racial disparities and institutional racism. Normative examples of Muslims acting in accordance with national values, rather than being terrorists, as they are often portrayed in fictional stories, are needed.

The case of the militia additionally suggests that we should expand the boundaries of what constitutes group threat to more explicitly encompass nationalism. The 9/11 attacks represented a new kind of threat: a group threat combined with a concrete act of mass violence that uniquely made Americans insecure about their safety and identity. Although discrimination is generally considered un-American, discrimination against people who supposedly want to harm the nation is not only legitimate and acceptable in this frame, it is seen as necessary to uphold the identity and security of the nation, as well as the safety of its "true" citizens. This protectionist framing has the possibility to resonate with other politically conservative groups who also profess a certain nationalistic vision, including those who may be excluding Muslim Americans solely on the basis of race or religion, rather than perceived national threats, or those who exclude based on a combination of factors (Miles 1993). That is, nationalistic framing of anti-Muslim sentiment may have the potential to mobilize a variety of groups with differing underlying motives for discrimination. As Balibar (1991) notes, the outcome is the same regardless of the underlying motive and Muslim Americans are prevented from enjoying full citizenship.

Finally, I want to return to Edmond and his influence on the militia. As I mentioned, Edmond is by far the most racist militia member that I encountered. I sat quietly and observed his early interactions with the rest of the group as he tried to determine how much racism they would tolerate. Over time, I observed how he had a slow, yet consistent influence on the group. His attitudes toward Blacks did not seem to transfer to other members, but I do wonder how involved the militia may have been in anti-Muslim activities if it were not for his presence.

Edmond often wore t-shirts or baseball caps with "Infidel" written in both English and Arabic on them, and eventually helped procure similar clothing for other members. Edmond's son was fighting overseas during much of my fieldwork, and he often told stories about his son's experiences in the war. Many of these stories revolved around his son having trouble with local militants in a way that portrayed Muslim culture as primitive and uniformly violent. Edmond's stories consistently received sympathetic nods from members in earshot, particularly those with military experience. Further, the Terry Jones protest was the first protest in which militia members became involved despite the frequent discussion of instances where free speech or property rights were being threatened, such as when an elderly Michigan woman painted her porch in a color that her neighbors found objectionable and reported it as violating township procedures. However, members' talk on these issues never resulted in action, while they did become involved in the first Jones protest, at Edmond's urging.

It seems that Edmond's presence and frequent anti-Muslim discussions had an influence on the militia's involvement in protests and other anti-Militia events. As legal

scholar Cass Sunstein (2009) notes, members of a group that have the same general belief—in this case, a version of Americanness—become more extreme in that belief over time. In other words, an individual's extreme ideology may go unrecognized, and over time, make the group more extreme on this dimension. As a result, the militia may face the possibility of becoming more racist over time if it does not adequately recognize and address individually racist members like Edmond.

   In the next chapter of this manuscript, I analyze a different influence on militia activity: authoritative attempts to control the movement. Law enforcement is the primary source of authority that attempts to define the militia movement, though the media and researchers may also take this role. I observed law enforcement characterize militia members in four different ways in my fieldwork: as confidants, suspects, criminals, and terrorists. I argue that militia members interpret the legitimacy of these framings through a lens of ideal Americanness, and respond to what they understand to be illegitimate action through increased militia activity.

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