Boringly Normal

Patterns of Arab American Participation

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Describing Arab American political participation is not as easy as it might seem. Participation has so many dimensions and levels that the very definition of the term becomes an issue. Do we mean voting or demonstrating or running for office or joining a group or having a "support your local police" bumper sticker? And how do different types of participation—political and non-political, national and local--relate to each other? And what do we do with the fact that the Arab American community does not function as a cohesive entity but is highly differentiated internally by religion, nationality, class, immigration cohort, and reason for arrival?[1] How do we even generalize?

Consider, for example, the expected participation patterns of two Arab American communities that are quite different from each other. The first is primarily an immigrant community with 78% of its adult population born overseas. Few speak English in the home (86% use Arabic or Chaldean), most (63%) get their television news from overseas via satellite dishes that bring Al Jazeera and other Arab stations into their homes; and a full half think an Arab or Muslim accused of terrorism could not receive a fair trial in the U. S. Would such a community even participate in American politics?

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[1]According to the 2000 census, 37% of those nationally of Arab heritage are Lebanese, 12% Syrian, 12% Egyptian, 6% Palestinian, 3% Jordanian, 3% Moroccan, 3% Iraqi. In Michigan, the pattern is Lebanese 36%, Iraqi 30% (25% being Christian), 3% Palestinian, 6% Syrian, Egyptian and Jordanian 2% each. 16% identify with a general term such as 'Arab" and others decline to classify themselves. Samhan (October, 2003) reports that the socioeconomic make-up of the national community as follows (with comparison for the full census): Has BA 40% (US 25%), professional or management 42% (US 34%), retail trade 31% (US 15%), service 12% (US 27%), income of $75,000 or up 30% (US 22%). In Michigan, the US census (2003) found 115,000 persons of Arab or Chaldean ancestry, 80% of whom live in the three county area. Many observers believe this is an undercount. The Arab American Institute (2003) cites a figure of 450,000 a figure not supported by statewide polling data. Regarding religion, the DAAS found that 58% of the sample was Christian. If this were projected to the whole state it would produce a figure of 54,000 persons who are both Muslim and Arab. The problem of estimating is compounded by the fact that Muslim leaders (who may not have formal membership lists) can offer high estimates of the total persons affiliated with their congregations. (Since many Muslims attend more than one congregation, such overestimates do not imply fabrication). There are also political advocacy groups that grab onto the highest estimate and taut it as the "true" figure. Regarding various estimates, Bagby et al (2001) came up with a figure of six to seven million Muslims in the country. This was widely criticized on methodological grounds. The *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches* (2000) estimates that there are 3.9 million Muslims. It is not clear where they get this figure. Smith (2002) analyzed several efforts to estimate the Muslim population. His is the most reliable discussion of the estimates and the methodological issues involved in estimation. He concluded that there are 1.9-2.8 million Muslims in the country, perhaps 1 percent of the total population.

Now consider a second community. In this community, 91% say they are proud to be an American, 86% say they feel at home in America, 86% say America is a land of equal opportunity, and 86% say they have confidence in the local police. For this community, their lives are such that only a handful (7%) are at high risk for anxiety or depression (actually below the risk level of the general population). Will they not be at the front of every parade?

Of course, the question is a trick. These are not two communities but are one, reflecting data from the Detroit Arab American Study of 2003, the study from which much of this paper will be drawn. [2] If responses to these questions seem to defy simple answers, then, indeed, they defy simple answers. The Arab American communities of metropolitan Detroit contain within themselves a complex mosaic of patterns that do not lend themselves to simple generalizations. There are Christians and Muslims and sub-groups of each. There are Lebanese, Iraqis, Yemenis, Syrians, Palestinians, Jordanians, and Egyptians. There are those whose ancestors have been in America for a century, and others who are still learning the language. There are educated professionals, business owners, union workers, service workers, and welfare recipients. Many of these sub-groups live in different places, move in different circles, marry along different lines, and vote differently. It is very difficult for leaders to create cohesive political behavior, or for social scientists to identify cohesive political positions.

The Detroit Arab American Study was conducted just after the President delivered his "Mission Accomplished" speech. The Iraqi resistance had not gotten organized and many in the Iraqi community enthusiastically supported the war. It was two years after the attacks of September 11. The USA PATRIOT Act had been passed and FBI interviews (with recent arrivals) caused grave apprehension in the community about issues of civil liberties. Many individuals thought they were under surveillance. In the 2000 election, various local community bodies had encouraged Arabs to register and vote and to participate in the political system. Many had done so. Governor George W.

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[2] The Detroit Arab American Study is a comprehensive, in-depth quantitative study. It consists of 1016 hour-long interviews by trained, bilingual interviewers with a scientific sample of Arab Americans and Chaldeans drawn from the tri-county Detroit area. There were seven members of the research team: Wayne Baker, Sally Howell, Amaney Jamal, Ann Lin, Andrew Shryock, Ronald Stockton, Mark Tessler. Major funding was by the Russell Sage Foundation with supplementary funding by the Carnegie Foundation.

Bush had criticized the ethnic profiling of Arab-Americans and had won the support of many in the community but then had come to be seen as "profiler-in-chief."

Three Patterns of Participation

Perhaps we can think of three distinctive types of political participation, Prominent Citizens, Politically Influential Organizations, and Individual Participation. By Prominent Citizens we mean those who hold positions of influence or trust in the public sector, be they elected, appointed or civil service. In this dimension Arab Americans in southeast Michigan excel. Far from being a marginalized community excluded from the political system, many Arabs hold prominent positions. There are at least two Arab-American mayors, several members of city or county councils, members of Boards of Education, judges, and members of the state legislature. The following summary by Howell and Jamal (2005) makes the point:

> Arab Detroiters are uniquely situated in positions of local power and influence. The City of Detroit, for example, is a border town, home to the Ambassador Bridge and the Detroit-Windsor Tunnel which carry between them nearly a third of all traffic crossing the US/Canada border. The Ambassador Bridge is rare among American border crossings in that it is privately owned and operated. It is rarer still for being owned by an immigrant form Lebanon, Manuel Maroun. Likewise, when international travelers arrive at the Detroit Metropolitan Airport, they pass through a terminal bearing the name of another Lebanese American, former Wayne County Road Commissioner Michael (aka Mohammed) Berry. Flight schedules and ground traffic at the airport are managed by Hassan Makled, Director of Airfield Operations, who, like Berry, is an active member of the Islamic Center of America [Note: A large mosque]. All this coming and going is carefully monitored by Detroit and Wayne County Homeland Security Task Forces, both of which are led, in part, by Lebanese American law enforcement officers who are also Shi'a Muslims. These men are among more than 60 deputized Arab Americans in Wayne County alone, where Azzam Elder, a Palestinian American, was recently named Deputy Wayne County Executive. Elder is one of at least 34 Arab Americans in Michigan to hold a political appointment, while the state is home to at least 21 Arab American elected officials. This list, with its perhaps surprising inclusion of Arab Americans who work for Homeland Security Task Forces, is perfectly mundane in Detroit. It does not include the much larger number of Arab Americans who sit on the boards of local hospitals and the United Way, serve as Regents of state universities, or are active participants in the local ACLU, UAW, Civil Rights Board, or many of the State's important non-profit organizations. While no other

state can rival Michigan's high number of Arab public servants, similar patterns of community service by Arab Americans can be found across the U.S.[3]

The second dimension of participation is at the organizational level. When Arabs began coming to this country over a century ago, their first organizations were local and communal. They formed churches and mosques and village associations. Suleiman (1993) noted that in those early decades, Arabs thought of themselves as temporary residents. Their approach was "to go about one's business of making money with as little interaction as possible" with non-Arabs (p. 41). During this time, "their involvement in U.S. society, other than in the workplace, was consciously and deliberately minimal, if not practically nonexistent" (p 38). But especially after World War I, an "assimilationist approach began to gain favor and became the dominant orientation" (p. 41). Arabs "became truly an Arab-*American* community, i.e., they realized that, much as many of them desired to go back, there was no 'going home again'" (P. 43). There was a 'strong identification with the United States" and a "tentative but tangible process of U. S. politicization" including voting, party membership, and "some public or political service on the local and state levels" (P. 44). There were calls for the various sub-communities to begin a process of unification to maximize their influence (p. 43).

After 1967, the community saw a new surge of organizations, driven by a sense of danger in the Arab world. (See Terry, 1999 or Haddad, et al, 2006). Five organizations stand out. Arab American University Graduates was founded in 1968 as an association of politicized intellectuals who held conferences, debated issues, and published books. In 1973 the National Association of Arab Americans was formed as a political body. They lobbied for legislation and tried to influence policy. The ABSCAM Scandal of 1978 (a sting operation in which an FBI agent posing as a corrupt "Arab" tried to bribe a Senator) sparked a third organization, the Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), under the

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[3]At the national level, there has also been a surge of prominent Arab Americans. Since the 1970s, there have been five Arab American Senators (Abourezk and Abdnor of South Dakota, Abraham of Michigan, Mitchell of Maine and Sununu of New Hampshire). There have been several Arab members of the House of Representatives, at least three cabinet ministers, and a host of mayors, council members, and governors, not to mention the US commander in Iraq. All of the Senators are of Lebanese Christian heritage except Sununu whose Christian family has its roots in Jerusalem.

founding leadership of former Senator James Abourezk. ADC is committed to promoting civil rights and fighting stereotyping. In 1985 James Zogby formed the Arab American Institute to promote Arab participation in politics. Finally, CAIR (The Council on American Islamic Relations) tried to define a mainstream, American-compatible Islam with which many in the Arab community would agree.

At the local level, in the three-county area of Southeast Michigan, there are a host of organizations, and what every politician knows is that it is organization that drives the political process. Individuals vote but organizations raise money, organize rallies, mobilize voters, and bless candidates.   There are mosques and churches, national and town clubs (Lebanon Club, Syria Club, Jordan Club, Ramallah Club, and Yemeni Benevolent Association, to name a few).   There are   influential community-wide organizations including ADC, the Arab-American Chamber of Commerce, ACCESS (Arab Community Council for Economic and Social Services), the Arab American and Chaldean Council, and the Chaldean Federation.   These have major corporate, government, and political linkages. Some sub-contract with the government to run social service programs, job training, youth programs, English-as-a-second-language programs, health care, and even torture recovery counseling. They have large budgets and provide jobs for many individuals in the community. By linking together ethnic organization, government money, corporate sponsorship, and political promotion, they are powerful players. Their annual dinners draw top political leaders including governors and senators. Even though the Detroit Arab American community is not as large as that in Los Angeles, it is justifiably more prominent because of its concentration and organizational sophistication.

As voters, Arab Americans have traditionally leaned to the Democratic side. The appeal of that party for minorities, its civil rights tradition, and the Oslo Accords all played a role in making the Democrats seem more sympathetic. In 2000, the community made a shift and gave a plurality of its votes to George W. Bush (Bush 46%, Gore 38%, and Lebanese American Ralph Nader 13% according to the Zogby Poll (Arab-AAI.org). In the 2000 Presidential debate, when Governor Bush was asked about racial profiling, he said "Arab-Americans are racially profiled on what's called secret evidence. People are stopped. And we got to do something about that." Imad Hamed, prominent head of the

Michigan ADC, expressed the sentiments of many when he noted that, "Most of us, without hesitation, made it loud and clear and urged the community, basically to vote for President Bush. We truly believed that he was representing something new. We thought that his administration would be the administration to make the much-needed change at the international level as well as the domestic level." Those few words by Governor Bush shifted thousands of votes into Bush's camp and made Michigan competitive. One wonders how the outcome of the 2000 election would have been affected if Gore had spent that last Sunday evening campaigning in Florida instead of in Dearborn.

The political environment for Arab American participation is sometimes unfriendly. There are probably three reasons for this. First, people with unusual names are handicapped. If your name is Djemal Zeitoun you have a harder job of winning over the voters than if your name is James Oliver. Second, the political environment is resistant, especially for Muslims. There is a constant barrage of anti-Islamic and anti-Arab statements and writings from pundits, religious leaders, and ideologues. These have had an impact. A 2003 poll by the Pew Research Center (Keeter and Khout, 2003) showed that 44% of Americans think Islam is more likely to encourage violence than other religions, up from 25% in 2002. Disturbingly, this pattern holds when education is controlled. Moreover, 38% say they would be reluctant to vote for a qualified Muslim for office. Finally, many Muslims and Arabs face active resistance to their involvement. There have been several cases of persons appointed to advisory committees or staff positions having their appointments challenged on the grounds that they made anti-Israeli statement or associate with people with such views. Often the threshold for "anti-Israeli" is very low. Some candidates have even returned donations. This has happened both to Christians and Muslims. As Haddad observes, "given the importance of donations in providing access to elected officials and determining American policies," returning a campaign contribution constitutes "a form of disenfranchisement" (2006:23).

Research on Participation

The way social scientists study public opinion is to begin with what we know about those people *not* in the study. The traditional American view of political participation tended to follow DeTocqueville (1969) who suggested that when a person

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got involved in an organizational process, that person learned skills and confidence and was then able to participate in a variety of organizations.[4] More recent research found a different pattern. Now it appears that different types of participation may operate quite independent of each other. For example, participation in national political processes such as voting would be different from participation in localized organizations such as Parent Teacher Associations, religious congregations, or social clubs. And of course there are class-based associations such as unions or the Chamber of Commerce.

When we think of an immigrant community, the primary organization that comes to mind is the congregation. Often the church or mosque is the first organizational structure formed and often it is drawn from a village or sub-national base.[5] If past patterns hold, the congregation quickly becomes multifunctional, serving both as a worship center and as a center of community activities. It may well be that for an immigrant community, even into the second or third generation, there will be a multi-functional pattern of participation that is different from patterns in the general population.

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[4] DeTocqueville writes in Part II, chapter five of political associations (parties) and "those associations in civil life which have no political object" (p. 513-517). He believes that in a democracy individual citizens are "independent and weak" and would "find themselves helpless if they did not learn to help each other voluntarily." In isolation people "fall back into barbarism" but associated together "feelings and ideas are renewed, the heart enlarged, and the understanding developed only by the reciprocal action of men one upon another." DeTocqueville feels strongly about this point: "Among laws controlling human societies there is one more precise and clearer, it seems to me, than all the others. If men are to remain civilized or to become civilized, the art of association must develop and improve among them at the same speed as equality of conditions spreads." In chapter seven (pp. 520-524) he addresses the linkages between political and civil associations, suggesting that "there must be some natural, perhaps inevitable connection between the two types of association." The linkage is that "civil associations pave the way for political ones" just as political involvement "spreads a general habit and taste for association." Political involvement "draws a lot of people at the same time out of their own circle; however much differences in age, intelligence, or wealth may naturally keep them apart, it brings them together and puts them in contact. Once they have met, they always know how to meet again." Participation has a universal impact since "the technique of association becomes the mother of every other technique." Individuals are empowered since "they learn to submit their own will to that of all the rest and to make their own exertions subordinate to the common action, all things which are as necessary to know, whether the association be political or civil."

[5] Boosahda (2003) found that the early Lebanese arrivals in Worcester, Massachusetts were all from a single village in the mountains. Their first institution was a church, founded in 1885.

Recent research has discovered certain patterns which we can use to contextualize and compare Arab American behavior.[6]   Three patterns stand out. First, participation tends to be much higher among the more established elements of society. People act to promote and protect their interests, and those with more resources are more likely to be active. As Miller (2004, 189-190) puts it, "both organizational and political activity are biased toward individuals of privilege. The wealthy and well educated are more likely to both join organizations and participate in politics… Organizational joiners tend to be male, white, older, married, own their own homes, earn higher incomes, and boast higher levels of education. On nearly every dimension of status, joiners demonstrate privilege." The impact of education is particularly significant: "The magnitude of bias against those with little formal schooling is especially pronounced" (p. 201).

Second, not all participation is the same. Participation in national politics (parties, voting) is different from participation in local or community activities. "Income, education and age figure prominently in predicting nationally-focused participation, while their effects are insignificant when it comes to locally–focused participation…[Y]ears of residence in the community, marital status and home ownership all prove significant in predicting local participation, but not national…At the national level, resources matter. At the local level, social ties matter" (p. 150). The common practice of asking about a whole range of activities and then adding them together into a cumulative index, as if each was equal to the others, may not work.

Third, participation can be issue specific or group specific. Clusters of individuals can be highly mobilized around one issue but not around others. Abortion is an example. Many married women with children were stunned in the 1970s to see a policy so inconsistent with their fundamental values, and acted politically in this one area, but not necessarily others.   Relevant to this phenomenon of selective participation, there is evidence that mobilization can spread within ethnic or communal groups. Miller summarizes the pattern: "among a single group of activists, the factors that predict campaign activity may resist generalization" (p. 164).

This analysis will center upon four key questions:

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[6]Melissa Miller (2004) has made a thorough review of the literature. This summary relies upon her work.

I. What is the pattern of participation in the Arab American community, especially compared with the general population?

II. How do different types of participation link to each other?

III. What impact does religious participation have on other types of participation?

IV. How are male and female patterns similar or different, and why?

I. What is the Participation Pattern?

When compared with the general population, Arab Americans exhibit a participation deficit. Since information is linked to participation, weaknesses in this areas are particularly significant. Table 1 shows that in terms of media consumption, Arab Americans are noticeably less likely to watch television news or read a newspaper. They are less likely to know the name of the Attorney General (Ashcroft) or the majority party in Congress at the time (Republicans). While equally likely to follow the Iraq war (where some of them would have national and family ties), they are noticeably less likely to follow the war on terror.

Table 1. Political Involvement

	DAS	DAAS	Male	Female	Significance (M/F)
Watch TV news daily	82	58	59	57	Not Significant
Watch Arab news in week	-	58	58	58	Not Significant
Read newspaper daily		17	26	10	
Never	29	43	35	49	.000
Arabic radio news daily	-	30	38	23	.000
Read Arabic Newspaper	-	30	28	29	Not Significant
Use Internet		92	93	91	Not significant
Internet news daily		29	34	23	
Never		28	21	36	.001
Knows Attorney Gen.	46*	35	50	23	.000
Knows Majority Party	76*	52	61	45	.000
Follow War on Terror					
Very closely, close	77*	62	66	58	
Little, not much	23	37	32	41	Not Significant (.06)
Follow Iraq War					
Very closely, close	70*	68	71	65	.04
Party Identification					
Democrat	41	25	23	27	
Republican	21	20	22	18	
Independent	23	33	36	31	
No preference	13	21	18	24	.03

Ideology					
Conservative	34	44	42	46	
Middle of Road	47	40	41	39	
Liberal	17	16	17	15	Not significant
Voted 2000 (citizens)	70*	55	59	52	.03
Registered now (citizens)	85	64	63	65	Not significant
Signed petition past year	xx	xx			
Contributed pol. money	xx	xx			
Contacted official	xx	xx			
Attend religious services					
Weekly	24*	21	22	19	
Few times p. a.	25	25	24	25	
Less than that	28	23	25	21	Not significant
Active in					
Sports organization	26	21	24	18	Not significant
Art, Museum, Culture	15	15	14	15	Not significant
PTA or PTO	18	14	11	17	.04
Professional, business	25	20	27	14	.000
Village, town club	-	9	10	7	Not significant
Ethnic or advocacy	-	10	12	8	Not significant
Religious group	39	34	33	35	Not significant
Union member	14	5	7	3	.05

*DAS Gender difference significant.

In terms of the political system, it is not surprising that their levels are below that of the general population, given the large proportion who are immigrants. It is common for immigrants to focus upon family, religion, and work, and to stay away from the public sphere. They often do not understand the issues, the means of political expression, or the proper procedures for action. The data show exactly this pattern. Arab Americans (citizens only) are less likely to be registered to vote (65% to 85%), less likely to have voted in the 2000 election (55% to 70%). They are also less likely to identify with a political party. (Twenty-one percent say they have no party preference at all, not even "independent." Only 13% of the general population gave this answer). In political activity itself (rather than just identification), there is a particular deficit. Arabs are less likely to have signed a petition, contributed money, or contacted an official.

Organizationally, one might expect that an ethnic community would be focused upon community organizations and less upon public affairs. The ethnic organization is the place where people know you and your culture and where you feel at home. The public arena can be more bewildering and less familiar than the "small community." In particular, the religious organization might well be the focus of one's life and identity.

In fact, there is some truth in this expectation, but also some surprises. In some areas of organizational activity, Arab Americans are above the general population. They are more likely to have attended a club meeting, have volunteered in some capacity, and to have attended a protest or demonstration in the past year.[7] There is no difference between the two populations in other areas, for example attending a public meeting or being involved in some art or cultural organization. They are less likely to be involved in PTA, a business or professional organization, a sports organization or a union.

These macro patterns, however, raise as many questions as they answer. The more interesting question is not just what but why. We have to ask what is driving or inhibiting participation and how these various participation patterns relate to each other.

II. How do different types of participation link to each other?

If we look at Table 2, we see how the various participation patterns are related. First, there is a definite 'political' pattern. Voting is highly related to signing petitions, sending money to political causes, and writing or contacting public officials. These activities also seem to be driving or at least correlating with a variety of other activities not overtly political in the same way. Those who vote are also involved in the PTA, village or town associations, and ethnic groups. It is not clear what is driving what but the relationship are strong. (For example, is being involved in your town association something that makes you decide to vote, or the other way around?).

Table 2. Relationships Between Types of Participation*

	Vote	Meet	Club	Sport	Art	Union	PTA	Bus	Villag	Ethn.	Petit	Mon.	Write
Vote	X			.227	.193	.133	.220	.278	.178	.184	.454	.227	.290
Meeting		X	.614									.078	
Club			X						.110	.077	.064		
Sport				X	.539	.433	.466	.507	.444	.427	.277	.193	.179
Art					X	.488	.465	.535	.531	.535	.257	.192	.270
Union						X	.528	.476	.517	.510	.317	.298	.246
PTA							X	.524	.577	.515	.148	.163	.100
Busin.								X	.533	.538	.317	.298	.246
Village									X	.618	.165	.153	.127
Ethnic										X	.210	.202	.214
Petitit.											X	.390	.431

[7] Note that in some areas participation rates are very low overall. Differences should not be over read. Religious participation will be treated in the next section.

Money											X	**.327**
Write												X

*All figures shown are significant at least in the .05 range. Those that are bolded are significant at least in the .01 range, using a 2-tail correlation coefficient. Blank spaces indicate non-significant patterns.

The second pattern involves class interests. The question asked about involvement in a "professional or business" group and could involve everything from shopkeepers to attorneys to import-export firms.[8] Whatever it means, it empowers and charges other relationships. Those active in such associations are active at high levels in almost every other activity, including some less likely ones such as PTA and art or sports clubs.

The third pattern involves association that are neither political nor economic. These are the community or cultural organizations. Look, for example, at involvement in a club. It correlates with attending meetings (most likely club meetings) but not with much else. It is only modestly limited to a few other activities of any kind. Compare that with being involved in an art or other cultural group. That is linked to voting, but not to much else of a political nature. Those involved in such groups have contacted officials through petitions or in other ways, but the strength of those relationships fade when compared with other activities of such persons. Their involvement in village and ethnic groups is exceptionally high, as is their involvement in business or professional groups.

For contrast, look at involvement in a school association (the PTA or PTO). These are traditionally considered women's activity, specifically the domain of stay-at-home mother. But Burns found that the reality was quite different. Working mothers were more active in such organizations than their non-working counterparts. Here we see that while PTA involvement is linked to political activities, it is much more strongly linked to almost every other cultural and community activity that we measured. The school is a community-wide organization so that involvement in school activities appears to push individuals into a wide range of community and social activities.

Finally, there is a pattern not easily seen in bolded correlation coefficients. It has to do with the fact that these patterns run both ways. Strong correlations show that people more active in one organization tend to be more active in another.   Less obviously, they also show that people *not active* in one organization tend to be not active

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[8] We also asked a question about union membership. Percentages involved were very low so it was dropped from the analysis, but it seemed to parallel some of these findings.

in another. It would be a mistake to romanticize the ethnic community in the sense of a 1950s movie in which *everyone* comes together in a town hall meeting to make a decision. Anyone who has been to an Arab or Chaldean community event knows the amazing level of enthusiasm and linkage found there. What is not obvious is the number of individuals who are absent from these organizations or activities. There is definitely an underclass in this community (if that is the right phrase), a bloc of people who are not involved or engaged in any meaningful way. That shows up in the percentages of Table 1 more than in these correlations. It is not surprising that such an underclass exists for it exists in all communities but its existence must be noted.

National versus Local Participation

Earlier we saw that in the general population, voting tends to follow class lines and is distinct in this way from involvement in local activities. Table 3 illustrates how this works in the Arab American community by presenting information on two activities, voting and PTA involvement. Voting follows the national pattern of being rooted in economic and social position.   While high levels of trust are shared by both voters and PTA activists, from here they diverge. Income, education and business ownership all correlate highly with voter turnout but much less with PTA involvement. Voting is also correlated with media involvement and higher levels of political information, a pattern definitely not true with PTA involvement. There is a slight male advantage in voting, a significant female advantage in PTA engagement. In those areas where the patterns run in the same direction, three (information, owns business, trust people) show much

Table 3. Voting and Participating in Parent Teacher Organization (DAAS).

	Voted	Active in PTA	
Income	.331**	-.149**	Rank in Society
Education			Rank in Society
Owns Business	.184**	.077*	Rank in Society
Married	.065*	.133**	Rank in Society
Gender (male)	.040	-.090***	Gender
Live in Enclave	.100	.132**	Ethnic residence
Read Newspaper	.327**	-.122**	Information
Knows Ashcroft	.299**	.144**	Information

| Knows Major party | .299** | .077* | Information |
| Trust People | .178** | .136** | Trust |

stronger relationships in the voting area. Two (married and live in Dearborn area "enclave," where perhaps 2/3 of all Muslims, and few Christians, live) sustain PTA activities.[9] Clearly, these illustrate the national pattern in that they call upon different resources and different types of people. It is interesting that among voters, both information items correlate at an equal level but not among PTA activists. They know the name Ashcroft but not which party is dominant in Congress. Since both of these were Washington-based questions, it is possible that the name Ashcroft had an almost local dimension in that his policies reached down into the neighborhoods. Party dominance in Washington is distant from local concerns, at least in terms of those active in the PTA.

III. What is the link between Religion and Participation?

In America, a congregation almost always has what Stark and Finke (2000:193-217) call a "niche." It may have an ethnic profile, a class profile, an ideological profile. Those congregations with a stronger sense of separation or distinction from the broader society tend to generate a stronger sense of membership identity with the congregation. There are also high levels of political engagement when congregations "serve as the primary organizational vehicles for social conflict" (p. 202).

The Black churches might offer a helpful model for looking at the impact of Arab American religious organization on participation. While the two communities are quite different in many ways, both have a strong sense of identity and a non-mainstream position in society. Harris (1999) notes in his study of Black congregations that "The influence of religious culture on political mobilization is perhaps the least explored aspect of the interrelation of religion and political behavior" (35). He believes that not only does religion provide members with the skills and confidence to participate in the political system (a common hypothesis) but also provides them with a sense of civic

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[9] Half of the students in the Dearborn schools are Arabs, mostly Lebanese or Yemeni. Several schools are overwhelmingly so. A local PTA could well be an ethnic association of women who know each other and may well have even village ties in their homeland. "Community" has a different meaning in this context.

culture (a sense of being citizens of a broader system) and a determination to produce social change. As he puts it, churches "serve as a source of civic culture by giving African Americans the opportunities to practice organizing and civic skills and to develop positive orientations toward the civic order" (p. 40). Church attendance and affiliation tend to promote voting, to nurture civic obligation and legitimize the social order. Church attendance and membership encouraged "campaign activism…fostered civic duty and provided organizational resources for such activism" (p. 66).

Harris also notes how religious organizations can generate an "oppositional disposition" that enables individuals "to challenge their marginality through modes of action and thought that call for inclusion in the political system instead of exclusion from the polity." This "oppositional civic culture" ironically has a "dualistic orientation" to the structures of power. The two thrusts "simultaneously support civil society and oppose a system of domination with that society. Dominated groups may oppose their domination through conventional and unconventional modes of activism that attempt to reform society rather than undermine or overthrow it…By rejecting violence as a political strategy and supporting protest-demand activism, this oppositional civic culture among black Americans promoted inclusion within the polity rather than separation from existing political structure." In other words, African American religion "fostered both loyalty to the regime *and* opposition to aspects of that regime" (p. 40, 67).

Putnam (2000) addresses these issues from a different perspective, that of social capital and its relationship to civic engagement. Social capital (following DeTocqueville) involves self-confidence, trust in society, commitment and engagement. It has two dimensions, bridging and bonding. Bonding processes pull homogeneous groups together, a process particularly relevant to an ethnic community. "Dense networks in ethnic enclaves" provide "crucial social and psychological support for less fortunate members of the community, while furnishing start-up financing, markets, and reliable labor for local entrepreneurs" (Putnam, 22-23). Bridging networks, in contrast, pull diverse groups together for common purposes. The best outcome for society is that a bonding organization will promote the integration of the group into the larger society rather than its separation. The danger is that the process, "by creating strong in-group loyalty, may also create strong out-group antagonism" and accelerate tensions within

society. Individuals can be highly bonded but never interact with more than a very limited segment of the population so that the impact is less integrative than separatist. The "dark side of social capital," as Putnam calls it, is that social capital can be organizationally and ideologically structured in a way that is 'exclusionary along racial and gender and class lines" (p. 358).

Putnam believes that "faith communities in which people worship together are arguably the single most important repository of social capital in America….Religiously active men and women learn to give speeches, run meetings, manage disagreements, and bear administrative responsibility…In part for these reasons, churchgoers are substantially more likely to be involved in secular organizations, to vote and participate politically in other ways, and to have deeper informal social connections" (p. 66).

A third piece of research is relevant to this analysis. Bellah (1992) wrote of what he called the American Civil Religion. While this concept is less in vogue today (and vigorously resisted by some), it makes an important point. According to Bellah, Americans have historically had a perspective of what they believed, who they were and what they hoped to achieve with their country. According to this belief system, America is a unique country aspiring to fair play and full equality for all citizens. It is a nation drawn from different nations, bringing people together into a common identity. That identity allows for exceptional diversity within its population, freeing groups to observe their separate religious or cultural practices so long as they affirm the national "myth." Americans believe that religion is good and should receive respect but that its practice should be private and its religious authorities not involved in the governance process. Americans are proud of their country in a way that often seems corny or even chauvinistic to other peoples. In this belief, immigrants can become full Americans so long as they affirm these things. As Abraham Lincoln said in the Lincoln-Douglas debate of July 10, 1858, those who adhere to the principles of the Republic are "blood of the blood," as American as if they were directly descended from those who signed the Declaration of Independence.

These models leave us with some questions: In the Arab-American community, does strong religious involvement increase engagement with the broader community or does it generate a sense of separatism and isolation? Within the community do

patriotism and protest go together, or do they diverge? Finally, are those who identify with the American myth more like to participate in the political process?

Some of these patterns emerge, others do not (see Table 4). The most powerful pattern is that those active in religious organizations are significantly more likely to be involved in a host of other organizations and activities. This is a pattern that also emerges in the general population, but in the Arab-American community it is consistently more dramatic. Moreover, it does not apply just in ethnic organizations such as culture clubs, town and country clubs, and advocacy groups such as ADC, but extends into the common organizations of society. People are noticeably more likely to be involved in the PTA or a union if they are active in a congregation. The pattern also extends into the political realm. Active members are more likely to vote or be registered. They are also more likely to have participated in a low frequency activity, such as contacting an official, contributing to a political cause or signing a petition.

There is also evidence of both the civil religion and an "oppositional" culture among the religious, although with lesser strength of pattern. Those who are religiously active are more likely to be proud to be an American, feel this is a land of opportunity, and feel at home in America.   While they are more likely to trust people in general, they are also more likely to feel that Arab Americans are not respected by the general population. Regarding the media and its perceived hostility against Muslims and Islam, a pattern is only marginally present. This is not surprising since perception of a hostile media is widespread in the community (and in the general populace as well). One does not have to attend religious services or have a religious way of thinking to feel this way.

Regarding the "oppositional" culture and its love-hate relationship with power, the pattern is there (which is noteworthy) but is not as strong as one might anticipate. Active members are less likely to trust the legal system, marginally less likely to think a person accused of terrorism could receive a fair trial, and slightly less likely to trust the police, parties and the government in Washington. Moreover, they are less likely to compromise on civil liberties issues as a means of enhancing security in the post-September 11 age.

Table 4. Religiously Active, General Population and DAAS.

	Active in congregation		Nature of Item
	General Population	DAAS	DAAS
Voted 2000	.218**	.212**	Action
Registered to vote	.148**	.233**	Action
Attend public meetings	.093	.030	Action
Signed petition		.271**	Action
Contributed to Pol.	.103*	.169**	Action
Contacted official	-.029	.168**	Action
Attend club meet.	-.133*	.026	Organization
Village or town club	--	.352**	Organization
Ethnic or Advocacy	--	.340**	Organization
Attend sports club	.188**	.339**	Organization
Attend culture club	.184**	.356**	Organization
PTA/PTO	.214**	.344**	Organization
Professional or Bus.	.129**	.357**	Organization
Union Member		.205**	Organization
Proud to be America		.088	Civil religion
Equal opportunity		.090	Civil religion
Home in America	--	.90**	Civil religion
Media bias: Islam		-.035	Hostile Environ
Arabs not respected		.120	Hostile Environ
Trust legal system		-.189	Trust
Fair Trial		-.044	Trust
Surveil, detain, Stop		-.121	Security focus
Confidence ADC	--	-.003	Trust
Trust people		.096	Trust
Trust police		-.042	Trust
Trust parties		-.053	Trust
Trust DC govern.		-.070	Trust

 Pearson's R two-tailed, *significant at .05   **Significant at .01

What do these findings say about the role of religion in creating and enhancing a political culture of engaged resistance?   There is no doubt that the religious structures are in some way encouraging or pushing individuals into the political and public arena.[10] Active individuals are more likely to be institutionally involved and more likely to be

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[10] While writing this paper, the author asked several people who attend a variety of mosques and churches if their religious leaders mentioned politics or encouraged people to vote. There was a mixed response on whether political issues were discussed from the pulpit but all said they were encouraged to vote either by the imam or priest, or by organized groups within the congregation.

participants in the political arena. They are more likely to feel a part of the country and to affirm its civil religion, but are also more likely to feel that there are institutional and cultural impediments to their full involvement in the system. Interestingly, while they are more likely to be active in the ADC, the major civil rights advocacy organization in the community, confidence in this organization appears to cut across the community without regard to whether one is active in religious organizations or not.

IV.   What is the Link Between Gender and Participation

One of the most comprehensive and insightful studies of gender and participation is Burns et al (2001). Their findings constitute a model seen nationally against which we can compare the Arab American and Chaldean experience. They note that while the participation gap by gender is less in the US than in other democracies, it still remains true that men participate at higher levels than women (p. 20). On an eight point scale, women participate at 1.96, men at 2.27 (p. 1). The authors note that this is not a simple categorical difference but that "gender differences are contextual, their extent and nature varying across social domains." Class, race and ethnicity all play a role producing a "heterogeneity among men and among women."   We should conceptualize any differences less as a dichotomy (male and female) than as "overlapping bell curves with different means" (p. 28). In other words, "Sometimes the differences among men and among women are greater than the differences between men and women" (p. 28).

Regarding why such differences occur, the authors offer several "hunches" that serve as working hypotheses (pp. 7-8). While some deal with data not included in this study, five can provide background for our analysis. First is the "free time" thesis, that women have less free time for participation than men. As they put it, "those with children at home and full-time jobs, simply do not have the time to take part in politics." This is tied into a psychic space thesis that "Raising children so absorbs available mental energy that mothers, especially those with toddlers under foot, are too preoccupied at home to pay attention to politics" (P. 7).

Third is a family structure argument, that the patriarchal family does not train females for participation. When "men function as the undisputed head of household and women are unequal at home, women can never function equally as citizens." This is

connected to the socialization argument, that childhood and adult socialization "create different environments for men and women and lead them to draw different conclusions about the relevance of politics to their lives." Women may live in a world with less exposure to informal political chat and other politicizing cues.

Fifth is a socioeconomic resources argument, that since education, income, and occupational status drive participation, to the extent that women are disadvantaged in those areas, they will be less likely to participate.

When they examined the data, the scholars found that some hypotheses were "just plain wrong" and that no single reason explains the gap in political activity. Instead there are several factors.

> First, men enjoy an advantage when it comes to the single most important resource for political participation, formal education. In addition, the non-political institutions of adult life—in particular, the work place—function as an important source of the factors that foster participation. Because women are less likely than men to be in the work force, and because, even if employed full time, they are less likely to hold the kinds of jobs that provide these factors, gender differences in work force experiences loom large in our explanation of the disparity in political activity. Finally, women are less likely than men to be psychologically engaged with politics—that is, to be politically interested, informed, or efficacious—a deficit that contributes significantly to participatory inequalities. However, when women are in an environment where women seek and hold visible public offices, they are more politically interested and informed, and disparities in psychological orientations to politics shrink (pp. 8-9).

Americans are often told that Arab women are held back from their natural potential by Arab or Islamic culture. During the time of this research, President Bush frequently asserted that the American army in Iraq and Afghanistan was working to advance women's rights. While few serious scholars accept that reasoning, the issue must be addressed: If Arab men have the opportunity to achieve whatever is within their potential and merit, then perhaps male-female differences in attitudes or participation could be explained by cultural or religious values. This is a hypothesis to consider.

A Pattern of Minimal Differences

When we look at the evidence, we find that men and women are remarkably similar (return to Table 1). They are similarly likely to be citizens, to be fluent in

English, to watch television news, to read an Arabic newspaper, to perceive a media that is hostile to Muslims and Arabs, and to follow the war on terror. They are equally likely to feel at home in America, to identify with the country, and to feel that it is a land of equal opportunity. They have similar partisan identifications and similar ideological distribution (both genders more on the conservative or middle of the political spectrum).

An unpublished analysis of gender experiences and perspectives in the aftermath of September 11 also found a remarkable absence of differences in this significant area.[11] Men and women were within a few percentages of each other in terms of whether they had a bad experience after September 11 (16% to 15%), had a supportive experience after September 11 (34% to 32%), whether anyone in their family had experienced one of five specific overt harmful acts (an average of 1% difference over the five), whether they were guarded or nervous during the interview (no difference, 14% each). A few differences did emerge. Regarding the "security mom" hypothesis (that women are more security conscious than men), women were 7% more likely to say that September 11 had shaken their sense of security and were 11% more likely to say the Iraq War had shaken their sense of security. But the pattern was not across the board. On four questions about willingness to compromise civil liberties to enhance security, men were slightly (3%) more likely to approve. Regarding three other civil liberties compromises (these targeted at Arab Americans), there was just a little over a point difference on average.

On cultural issues, there was a difference but even here it was mixed. Women were more conservative on some issues, but not much different on others. They were 19% more likely to say that premarital sex was never justified (59% to 78%) and somewhat more likely to support modest dress (a 7% difference in wearing hejab among Muslims for example). But on issues such as abortion, gambling, or divorce the two genders were very similar. (Muslims and Christians were likewise remarkably similar). Both genders were trusting of people (men 88%, women 85%) and less but similarly trusting of people in their neighborhood (men 31%, women 37%). Men and women both showed high levels of confidence in certain local institutions (the schools, men 69%, women 77%, the police, men 84%, women 87%, the legal system, men 68%, women

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[11]Ronald R. Stockton, "Arab Americans in an Age of War, Findings From the Detroit Arab American Study with an Emphasis upon Gender Patterns," American Political Science Association, September, 2004.

65%. The pattern persisted when asked about trust in political parties (men 25%, women 22%) and the government in Washington (men 55%, women 51%). If one is looking for dramatic differences between men and women, it is more often absent than present.

But at some points they diverge, often in ways significant for political involvement. The demographic facts show that women have deficits in those areas most likely to produce higher levels of participation. They are less likely to work outside of the home (70% of men do, 40% of women), to have a college degree (28% of men, 19% of women), or to be involved in a business or professional association. They are also in deficit in terms of media consumption. Women are significantly less likely to read a daily newspaper or to get news from the internet. Perhaps the most significant difference, however, is that women suffer a major information deficit.   Women were 27% less likely to know the name of the US Attorney General (Ashcroft at the time, a name used almost casually among activists and leaders). They were 16% less likely to be able to identify the Republicans as the majority party in Congress (at the time controlling both the Senate and the House of Representatives). To be honest, these findings are not surprising. Burns et al noted that men were 14% more likely to know the name of at least one Senator from their state (p. 343).   While we should not over generalize, the expectation that men are more likely than women to have a public life appears to be true, not only among Arab Americans but in the general public as well.

What Drives Gender Participation Patterns?

Table 5   shows the impact of various elements upon whether or not one votes. When this table is compared with the significant differences of participation rates by gender shown in Table 1, the results are remarkable. There is very little gender effect in this table. Males and females show remarkably similar patterns, patterns that track

Table 5. Percentage Voting by Traits.

	Females	Males
Education		
Less than HS	21	28
High School	43	25
High School +	44	53
Bachelor degree	64	61

Bachelor degree+	76	69
Income under $20k	22	16
20-49,000	35	35
50-99,000	56	48
100,000 +	53	73
Read newspaper never	27	26
2	52	48
3	51	57
Daily	80	68
Major party correct	59	57
Not correct	49	46
Identify Ashcroft	69	62
Failed to Identify him	56	67
Now working	43	50
Not working	34	42
Speaks English V Well	55	50
Well	30	30
Not well	1	11
Not at all	4	0

national trends very closely. As we noted earlier, there is a national tendency for men to be more involved in the political system than women. We also noted that this is a function of having those "resources" associated with participation. As Burns et al observe, it is not that men and women are inherently different but that their bell curves have different means. This table shows as clearly as it could that being possessed of those resources that drive political engagement—education, income, information— affects women and men in similar ways. For both genders, voting is enhanced by more education, more income, more information. The correlation statistics that go with Table 5 show that the strength of those relationships are very similar.

	Male	Female
Education	.318	.324
Income	.410	.259
Read newspapers	.331	.329
Identify major party	.222	.240
Identify Ashcroft		.269
Working	.082	.064
English fluency	.264	.362

These are very parallel patterns. All are highly significant (.000), except for the impact of working upon turnout, which is weak and non-significant for both men and women. Male voting appears to be somewhat more influenced by income level, female voting somewhat more by English fluency, but otherwise these are similar stories. Anyone looking for an "Arab effect" in this population will not find it. Arabs Americans are different from the general population in their statistical means, just as men are different from women in their statistical means. But by and large, what drives anyone away from those means, into higher participation rates or into lower participation rates, is very similar for all population groups analyzed in this paper.

Conclusions: A Middle Ground of Engagement

In spite of several excellent studies of Arab American politics, this is in some ways a relatively new field of research. Few of those who published before the new century began were professionally trained in the area of their endeavor. (That certainly includes my own modest ventures into the field). Right now Arab American studies is struggling to find a paradigm and a body of scientific theory to serve as a foundation for its efforts. Empirical studies of the community are few, as are works that build upon existing theory. Equally scarce are efforts to put the Arab American experience into some historical context by making meaningful comparisons with other immigrant or ethnic experiences in the past.   Some studies present a racialization model, suggesting that all "people of color" share a common set of experiences and positions in society, but this model has its limitations. Anyone trying to put contemporary Haitians and Cubans into one box will see how overly broad the concept is. Moreover, the racialization model often focuses more upon the thinking and behavior of the white majority (sometimes seen as a power structure with little internal differentiation) than upon Arab Americans themselves.   Those interested in how diverse ethnic groups create a common consciousness or set of institutional structures would do well to consider some of the really fine research from the past, for example Rudolph and Rudolph (1967) on caste transformation in India or Melson and Wolpe (1970) on emergent tribalism in Nigeria. Such studies are distant enough to be 'safe' but relevant enough to be conceptually

useful. The scientific process involves extracting from a specific case or set of data, patterns and models that can be generalized into theory and then tested against other cases in different places and in different times with confirmation or refinement following. A study from lands or times far away can free us from contemporary distractions.

Fortunately, the universities are turning out a new generation of scholars. What is needed at this point are two things. First, there is need for more empirical analysis, using scientific samples of Arab-American public opinion. As valuable as such samples are, gathering them is difficult and expensive. I would invite anyone interested in a short cut to use the Detroit Arab American Study data set, which is in the public domain and available to anyone who wants it.[12] Second, we need more scientific community studies of how local populations have functioned and acted in the political system. These studies, whatever form they take, have to be more than just reports or they will not enter the corpus of scientifically useful literature. Not only do they need to be grounded in existing scientific research with solid theory behind them but they also need to be comparative. But with whom to compare? Is the relevant comparison group contemporary Puerto Ricans and Hindus, or Poles in Chicago a century ago and Jews in New York at that same time? I think we need to be more creative in seeking out useful historic analogies.

Arab-Americans often say "we exist on both sides of the hyphen" but those who study Arab-Americans are often so attentive to the waves of non-western immigrants coming into the country that they overlook the rich literature that analyzes historical development in this land.[13] While there is no doubt that those from the Arab world are uniquely different in some ways, the American experience with receiving new waves of vastly different immigrants also has its own uniqueness. Consider the following overview of what Wiebe (2002: 28-29) found of the Germans who arrived in this land the mid-1800s (before Germany was a unified state):

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[12] Contact the Institute of Social Research, University of Michigan.
[13] The reader not familiar with this Americanist literature might want to start with three excellent historical studies. Jacobson (2002) writes of the Polish, Jewish and Irish communities a century ago; Fischer (1989) writes of the four different religio-ethnic groups who entered this land from England, groups today treated as if they are the same; and Wiebe (2002) writes of how 19th century ethnic groups (Germans, Swedes, Norwegians, and others) navigated the multi-ethnic, multi-religious environment of American society.

They had two religions so different from each other as to prohibit interaction. They were drawn from different parts of Germany so as to share no common territorial identity. They were largely left out of the German unification process, which was territorially oriented and not considerate of overseas German populations. Their identity as Germans was with a language and a culture, not with a state and its interests. Separated from Germany, they "concentrated on life in America" and created new identities and organizations. "Proudly German in culture, they constructed inturning little societies around church, language, customs, and celebrations. There they prospered in groups: German families embedded in Germany communities situated once and for all in America. The more binding the cultural cement, the more self-sufficient their social environment became; the more self-sufficient their environment, the more distant they grew from Germany" (p. 29).

Does this not sound like a description of many Arab immigrant communities in this country? And if so, would Germans not be an interesting model to compare with Arab Americans? Arabs are right now experiencing a ferocious whiplash from the spillover of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict into this country, and a backlash from September 11 (See for example Howell and Shryock, 2002 or Caincair, 2004 or Salita, 2005). No one can deny that. But at the same time, they are in a country with its own historic experiences. Without denying that which is unique, there surely must be other patterns that are shared. It is important to consider both sides of that coin.

For the sake of illustration let me present a case of political interaction from a time and place so far away that it may seem bizarre, and yet perhaps it can help us in some way to think through our contemporary dynamic. For a hundred and sixty-five years, starting in 1650, in the area of the Great Lakes, Frenchmen, few in numbers, mostly but not entirely merchants, lived among the powerful Algonquin peoples of that region. The Algonquin system had the appearance of central authority and yet in reality was highly decentralized so that much flexibility existed at the local level. The two cultures and languages and societies could not have been more different. As White (1991) puts it in his excellent study, they "regarded each other as alien, as other, as virtually nonhuman…but their mixture created new systems of meaning and of exchange" (ix-x). The two sides were pulled together by the reality of mutual expediency.

The Algonquin needed what the French traders brought, the French needed what the powerful, numerous Algonquin could offer by means of security and assistance. In this "middle ground" as White calls it, far away from the power centers of their two civilizations, local people worked out mutually beneficial arrangements.

For the exchange to work, they needed a set of common terms and values around which they could conduct discourse and negotiation. Since no such corpus existed, they set off on a journey of what White identifies as creative misunderstandings (p. x). Each side tried "to persuade others who are different from themselves by appealing to what they perceive to be the values and practices of those others." Each side would "misinterpret and distort" both their own values and practices and those of the other side, but these distortions were done with a purpose so that "from these misunderstandings arise new meanings, through them new practices—the shared meaning and practices of the middle ground" (p. x). This process of interaction "involved a process of mutual invention by both the French and the Algonquians" (p. 50). The compromises and adaptations occurred because neither side was able to get what it wanted through coercion or force. Both sides were willing "to justify their own actions in terms of what they perceived to be their partner's cultural premises." Each side acted for their own interests "but they had to convince people of another culture that some mutual action was fair and legitimate" (p. 52). Put differently, "To further its interests, each side had to attain cultural legitimacy in terms of the other" (p. 55).

At the local level, an interesting process of negotiation occurred in which "Both sides now had to justify their own rules in terms of what they perceived to be the practices of the other" (p. 81). What White calls "the ritual of the middle ground" created a rhetoric of discourse and a set of understandings that drew elements from both cultures "but fully corresponded to neither" (p. 93). Interestingly, each side used the values of the other side to explain and justify its own rationales and interests.

Resistance to accommodations in the middle ground came from those who were distant from reality or who felt threatened in some way by what was going on. Back in France, Chateaubriand and Rousseau created "imaginary Indians" who "bore no resemblance to the real Algonquins" (p. 51). Likewise, the Algonquin elite saw local villages working out arrangements with the French that were beyond their control. The

enemies of accommodation--the militant Indian haters and the Algonquin raiders (both of whom used exceptional violence) targeted those who tried to work out accommodation (p. 388). In the end, the militants won, and the political middle ground was destroyed.

Let's leave the eighteenth century and return to our own "middle ground." Let the reader think back to the excerpt from Howell and Jamal explaining how deeply integrated Arab Americans are in the fabric of Detroit's public realm. Let the reader also remember the USAPATRIOT Act, FBI and NSA surveillance, Treasury department monitoring of Islamic charities, and the inflammatory rhetoric from the electronic media. There must be a way to reconcile these contradictory phenomena.

There are few places in the country where the Michigan pattern would be repeated. In Michigan, an Arab American appointed to a civil rights board is not removed after protests; an Arab American who sends a donation to a candidate does not have the money returned; and an Arab American slated for public office is not vetoed by state party leaders. All of these things happened during the period of this research, but not in Michigan.[14] When Arab and non-Arab leaders meet in Michigan, there is a dance of mutuality that goes on. The non-Arab leader will declare that the Arabs are fine citizens and good businessmen (even though most are not) who have brought hard work, family values, and a rich culture into the American mainstream. The Arabs will declare their absolute loyalty to America, praise it as a land of opportunity, and declare that with more trade between America and the Arab world there would be a significant reduction of terrorism. It is what one scholar has called a type of reverse Orientalism.[15] The Arabs

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[14] In **200x,** the local FBI announced that they were going to give an award to Imad Hamed, the head of the local ADC chapter. Hamed had done yeoman work after September 11 in persuading the FBI to be sensitive to the concerns and fears of the local community and had persuaded the local community that there were legitimate security concerns to which they should cooperate with the authorities whenever possible. Hamed was an interesting person, a Palestinian whose refugee family lived in a camp in Lebanon. He was one of the first test cases of the practice of using secret evidence in deportation hearings. A judge had ordered the government either to present their case or withdraw it. They had withdrawn. This author had attended Hamed's citizenship ceremony, at which various government officials were present. Hamed had thanked everyone for attending and said that after a few refreshments with his guests he was going to go directly to city hall to register to vote. Withdrawing the award was a shock for which no one had an explanation. The local FBI officials were quick to say that it did not suggest any wrongdoing and Hamed was soon invited to Washington for a different ceremony honoring him. Both sides needed the other and the middle ground held, in its own messy way.

[15] Orientalism is a process whereby western people "imagine" a Middle East that does not exist except in their mind. It is a world of oversimplification and stereotypes. Kalmar (2005) says a process of reversal can occur in which eastern people create their own fantasy orient as a way of "improving the image of their people" and making their culture and role in western society more palatable and successful (p. 351).

proclaim that they are different but are different in ways that represent or enhance true America values. The non-Arabs proclaim that you are the same as us, and are bringing in value added. The Arab leaders get their business and appointments and contracts. The non-Arabs get votes, endorsements, and the absence of resistance. Both sides proclaim themselves devoted to American security and determined to stop discrimination or ethnic profiling. It is a dance that works nicely for the benefit of both sides.

At the same time, however, this accommodation is being buffeted by militant elements on both sides. On the domestic front, hawkish anti-Islamic intellectuals, media personalities, and politicians use phrases such as "Arab terrorism" or "Islamic extremism" as if they were single words. Public opinion shows high levels of suspicion and hostility towards Arabs and Muslims (Keeter and Kohut, 2003, *Washington Post,* 2006). Incidents of violence and harassment are not as frequent in the Detroit area as in some places, but they occur. On the Arab and Muslim side, there is a constant barrage of anti-American statements coming from overseas militants. This creates serious problems for Arabs and Muslims in the US as they are frequently confused with such people or are put in the uneasy position of explaining away or repudiating intemperate words or violent actions simply because they share a category with others.   There are also ethnic and religious chauvinists within the domestic communities, on the one side insisting that Arabs and Muslims are not truly Americans, on the other attacking those who accommodate for being "too American." The middle ground is strong but is being buffeted. As White noted, "the middle ground blurred boundaries" and became a threat to those whose power and status were based upon separation and distinction (p. 388). In the case of the French and the Algonquin the extremists won, the system broke down in a paroxysm of wars and violence, and the middle ground was destroyed. There is no reason to believe that such a pattern would be repeated today, but the stresses and

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He suggests that Benjamin Disraeli, Jewish in heritage but not religion, created such an idealized Jew in his novel *Tancred.* This Jew was a "giver of Eastern wisdom" who worked with the "leaders of the ascendant West" for common benefit (p. 359). As this research was going on, a local Arab American group sponsored a major conference linking Middle East and American business people. The head of the event argued that American Arabs could be a moderating force in the Middle East and if business links were increased, this would reduce the chance of future terrorist attacks.

tensions are sufficiently similar to make one think. And even if the analogy breaks down, finding the reasons why it did not work can advance the scientific process.

Final Thoughts

What appears to be happening in the Arab-American community is complex but is generally consistent with what social science theory would predict. First, Arabs are pleased to be in this country and identify with it, in spite of doubts about some of its policies and the way their community is treated. Second, there is strong identification with their own community organizations and structures, and confidence in those bodies. Third, involvement in these organizations appears to be linked with involvement in other organizations, both communal and society-wide. The congregation appears to play a particular role in driving this engagement process.   Fourth, in terms of gender participation, both men and women cross the spectrum from active to indifferent. The forces that drive men and women into the public or community arena are similar for both genders and are the same forces that affect their non-Arab neighbors. While the base levels of participation for Arabs is lower than for non-Arabs, the dynamic of who participates and who does not is quite similar.

Put simply, there does not appear to be any unique "Arab" pattern that is beyond what we know about communal groups. Those differences that exist are not surprising, based on the history, situation and makeup of the population. They are Arabs and are in this land during a time of war, a war that often puts some from their homelands or from their religious category in a confrontational position against their current country. In this regard they are not fundamentally different from World War I German immigrants or Korean War Chinese.

If we were to reduce the findings of this paper to a headline it would be something like this: Arab-Americans: history different, situation different, participation patterns boringly normal.

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Appendix: Questions Used