More of a Bridge than a Gap: Gender Differences in Arab-American Political Engagement*

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Objective. Research on immigrant women's economic and cultural adaptation has increasingly come to the fore of immigration research, yet relatively little remains known about their engagement in the political arena. This study examines this question among Arab Muslims, a group that has been at the center of much public debate but little scholarly discourse. *Methods.* Using nationally representative data on Arab Muslims, this study examines gender differences in political consciousness and activity and assesses the degree to which different dimensions of religious identity contribute to differences in men's and women's attitudes and behaviors. *Results.* Both women and men have high levels of political engagement, in part reflecting their relatively affluent socioeconomic positions. Men are slightly more involved than women, and this is explained by their greater participation in religious activities and higher levels of political religiosity. In contrast, subjective dimensions of religiosity—or being a devout Muslim—have no effect on political engagement. *Conclusions.* Overall, there are few gender differences in Arab Muslim political engagement, suggesting that collective identity based on ethnicity and religion is more salient for the political mobilization of this group. Further, religion is not uniformly associated with political activity, varying by gender and the dimension of religious identity in question, suggesting that future research needs to focus on how different facets of religion influence U.S. political involvement.

Research on gender differences in political attitudes and behaviors has flourished over the past two decades in response to rapid changes in women's degree of participation in the political arena. In 1980, women caught up to men in their voting rates and have surpassed them in every subsequent election (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2006). Because women are a higher proportion of the population than men, vote at higher rates, and are more likely to vote for Democratic candidates, there has been considerable interest

in the gender gap in party identification and presidential candidate support (Conover, 1988; Manza and Brooks, 1998; Plutzer and Zipp, 1996). However, less attention has been paid to gender differences in the foundations of such differences—political consciousness and activity (for exceptions, see Conover, 1988; Schlozman et al., 1995)—and the dearth is particularly evident in research on immigrant political incorporation, where the overwhelming majority of work has focused on men's experiences (Gerstle and Mollenkopf, 2001; Portes and Rumbaut, 2001).

The question of whether and how gender shapes the political engagement of immigrant groups is an important one, given that women comprise one-half of the U.S. foreign-born population and their immigration rates have outpaced men's in every decade since the 1960s (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1999, 2004). Although scholars have increasingly brought immigrant women's adaptation experiences to the fore of immigration research, particularly their economic and cultural adaptations, we still know surprisingly little about their involvement in the political sphere (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2003). Many immigrants originate from countries that have relatively depressed rates of female political representation and participation; thus immigrant women may have little knowledge, experience, or desire to engage in U.S. politics, where female participation rates are at an all-time high (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2006). At the same time, immigrant women are typically responsible for the social well-being of the family and may be motivated to become more politically integrated in order to voice their concerns and access resources (Jamal, 2005a).

This study considers these possibilities by examining gender differences in immigrant political participation among Arab-American Muslims (hereafter Arab Muslims). Arab Muslims are an interesting case study for both theoretical and substantive reasons. At the theoretical level, there are competing possibilities for Arab women's participation in U.S. politics. On the one hand, Arab Muslims are a well-educated and affluent population that is comprised primarily of well-established immigrants (i.e., very few recent immigrant arrivals), all of which points to a positive profile for political incorporation (Bukhari, 2003). On the other hand, Arab Muslims originate from countries that are much less progressive in terms of women's political engagement, and they often reside in ethnic and religious enclaves where traditional gender roles are sustained; thus women's participation may remain relatively low despite greater opportunities for involvement in the U.S. context (Read, 2003). Arab Muslims are also diverse with respect to factors that are central to contemporary theories of U.S. political incorporation, namely, religious identity (secular and devout), social class (ranging from professional to working class), nativity, and generational status (for a review, see Leighley and Vedlitz, 1999). These factors also vary by gender, which likely results in men's and women's varying degrees of integration into the fabric of U.S. life.

Substantively, Arab Muslims are a highly visible and contentious population in the post-9/11 era, yet most Americans know very little about this population: a recent national poll found that 42 percent of Americans feel

that the majority of Muslims around the world are anti-American and 36 percent have an unfavorable opinion of Islam, even though 66 percent admit that they know very little or nothing about the religion (Pew Research Center, 2004, 2006). Stereotypes of Muslim women are particularly unfavorable, depicting them as oppressed, backward, uneducated, and disengaged from the economic and political realms (Read, 2004a, 2004b). However, no study to date has produced empirical evidence to corroborate or challenge these assumptions, nor has any study distinguished systematically the factors that promote or inhibit the political inclusion of Arab Muslim men and women, an important question in today's political and cultural climate (for exceptions, see Jamal, 2005a, 2005b).

Using the only national data on Arab Muslim political activity currently available, this study examines gender differences in political engagement (consciousness and activity) and assesses the degree to which dimensions of religious identity and sociodemographic differences between men and women contribute to observed differences in their attitudes and behaviors. A primary theoretical contribution is the separation of religious identity into three distinct components: *political religious identity*, *organizational religious identity*, and *subjective religious identity*. Political religious identity refers to attitudes toward Muslims participating in the U.S. political system, while the organizational and subjective dimensions are more conventional measures of strength of religiosity, such as frequency of mosque attendance and degree of mosque involvement (organizational) and frequency of prayer and importance of religion in daily life (subjective). This innovation will provide a more refined understanding of how religious identity influences political engagement in general, and how different facets of Muslim identity influence Muslim-American political consciousness and activity, in particular.

The data for this study derive from two national telephone surveys of Muslim Americans administered by Zogby International in conjunction with Georgetown University's Project MAPS: Muslim Americans in Public Spaces. Each of the surveys contains approximately 1,800 adult respondents, and weights were applied based on region, age, and gender to more accurately reflect the population at large. This study focuses specifically on Arab respondents, who numbered 514 in the 2001 survey and 642 in the 2004 survey for a combined sample size of 1,156.

In what follows, I begin by discussing current perceptions on Muslim-American political engagement to provide context for research on this understudied group. I then provide an overview of extant theories on minority political incorporation in U.S. society and assess their applicability to the Arab Muslim case. Building on these existing theories, I develop models for predicting gender differences in Arab Muslim political attitudes and behaviors and test these models with nationally representative data. I conclude with implications for future research on the inclusion of Arab Muslims in U.S. politics and for understanding how gender shapes their patterns of political incorporation.

Predictors of U.S. Political Participation: Do Muslim Americans Have What it Takes?

The question of Muslim-American democratic inclusion is not a new one. Writing for the Carnegie Corporation six years ago, Sam Afridi (2001) cautioned:

> It is vital that we as a nation seek a more balanced understanding of the complexities, challenges and opportunities inherent in the emergence of the American Muslim community. To the extent that we can gain greater awareness and confront these issues, their participation will grow and democratic institutions will be strengthened. On the other hand, if American Muslims are neglected or misunderstood, our society as a whole will lose out.

The ensuing years have seen rapid changes in the political participation of the Muslim-American community. Heightened political consciousness after 9/11 facilitated mobilization efforts by Muslim-American organizations to increase their participation in the political process, and the ongoing war against terror, interpreted by many as war against Islam, has ensured that Muslim advocacy groups have an active and vocal base. In 2004, a record high number of American Muslims were elected to public office—nearly 50 percent of the 100 candidates nationwide—ranging from positions on city councils (e.g., Mohammad Khairallah, Prospect Park, NJ) to mayors (e.g., Dr. Muhammad Ali Chaudhry, Bernards Township, NJ) to state senates (e.g., Larry Shaw, NC).[1] There was also an unprecedented shift away from President Bush, with only 7 percent of Muslim-American voters supporting his candidacy, down from over 40 percent in 2000 (Zogby, 2004).

Despite such changes, our awareness and understanding of the dynamics that contribute to Muslim-American political participation remains limited, as does our ability to identify factors that may lead to future differences in their political ideologies and behaviors. A primary reason for the ambiguity surrounding Muslim-American political integration is the continued misconception that this is a homogeneous population. Characterizing this monolithic image is the mainstream belief among Americans that Islam is a violent religion, that Muslims are anti-American, and that Islam is incompatible with democracy (Pew Research Center, 2004). This image is also compounded by the Iraq war, the lackluster success of Arab countries to institute democratic regimes in the Middle East, and the belief that this failure reflects individual deficiencies inherent in Muslim societies, rather than structural barriers erected by a history of colonization (Abou Fadl, 2004).

However, existing evidence suggests that Muslim Americans are more diverse and more similar to other U.S. minority groups than these images

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[1]For links to articles dealing with Muslim Americans in the 2004 elections, go to ⟨www.americanmuslimvoter.net/⟩ and ⟨http://www.amperspective.com/⟩.

would imply. As is the case for other immigrants, Muslim immigrants are selected on a number of characteristics that distinguish them markedly from Muslims in their countries of origin (Haddad, Smith, and Esposito, 2003).[2] On average, they tend to be more highly educated, have greater English-language fluency, and greater levels of political consciousness than those in their homelands. Most are indigenous to the Middle East and Asia (60–65 percent), but a sizeable proportion of the population is comprised of African-American, Anglo, and Hispanic converts (35–40 percent). Immigrants make up a majority of the indigenous population, but an increasing number are second- and third-generation offspring of earlier immigrant arrivals (McCloud, 2003). The indigenous population is further diverse by national origin and ethnicity, with South Asians and Arabs making up the two largest ethnic groups. In sum, Muslim Americans are characterized by considerable diversity with respect to factors that affect U.S. democratic participation, and thus may be better positioned for political integration than common stereotypes imply (Pew Research Center, 2004).

Another important characteristic to consider when examining Muslim-American political incorporation is degree of religiosity (Jamal, 2005b). Muslim Americans include the religiously devout, religiously moderate, and those who are nonpracticing and secular, basically Muslim in name only, similar to a good proportion of U.S. Christians and Jews. Among the more religiously devout, there is still a sharp distinction between being a good Muslim and being an Islamic fundamentalist. Indeed, many Muslim Americans emigrated from countries in the Middle East, in part to practice their religion more freely in the United States (Haddad and Smith, 1996). However, the evidence on how religious identity affects political participation is mixed. Some find that Islamic beliefs discourage participation in U.S. politics (Khan, 2003), while others find that religious involvement is positively associated with political participation for Arab Muslims but less so for South-Asian and African-American Muslims (Jamal, 2005b). A lack of quality measures on religious identity contributes to these mixed findings—What dimensions of Muslim identity affect political participation and in what direction?[3] For example, to what extent are personal dimensions of Muslim identity, such as the importance of Islam in daily life, relevant for political involvement? To what extent do more politicized aspects of Muslim identity affect political attitudes and activities? In other words, what is it about being Muslim that matters for political incorporation and does this vary for men and women? This study will address these questions, as detailed below.

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[2]Size estimates of the population are contentious, ranging anywhere from 2 million to 8 million, but there is more agreement on the social and demographic composition of the community.
   [3]Personal communication with Yvonne Haddad, Professor of History and Islamic Studies at Georgetown University.

Theoretical Models of Minority Democratic Inclusion: Bringing Muslims In

The diversity that characterizes Muslim Americans is central to contemporary explanations for differences in U.S. political incorporation, particularly for examining differences between and within U.S. racial and ethnic groups (Gerstle and Mollenkopf, 2001; Leighley and Vedlitz, 1999; Portes and Rumbaut, 2001, 2006). The leading theories include the socioeconomic status model, group identity model, cultural adaptation model, and group conflict model: persons with higher levels of educational attainment and income, greater levels of group consciousness, longer duration of U.S. residency, better English-language skills, and higher levels of conflict with mainstream society tend to be more politically active than are those without these characteristics. Underpinning each of these arguments is the idea that individuals with more at stake in political outcomes are more motivated to try to influence such outcomes.

The group identity model is especially relevant for Muslim Americans, given the growing research that links religious group identity to political participation among other minorities, such as African Americans (Harris, 1994, 1999; Patillo-McCoy, 1998). Religious attendance is frequently found to increase political participation, and the argument is that religious communities provide a context for their members to forge a collective identity that, in turn, stimulates political activity to address issues that are salient to the group, such as social inequalities (Harris, 1999). In the Muslim-American case, active participation in a mosque may create a sense of communal identity that fosters political activity to address concerns about discrimination and the restriction of civil liberties in the post 9/11 era and the escalating Middle East conflict. On the other hand, frequent mosque participation may reinforce the belief espoused by some religious scholars that Muslims should abstain from participating in non-Islamic political systems, such as that of the United States (Khan, 2003).

These models are not mutually exclusive, nor do they operate in a vacuum. They interact with each other and with demographic characteristics, such as race/ethnicity, national origin, duration of U.S. residency, and age, to marshal civic engagement. For example, more recent immigrant arrivals typically have stronger ties to their ethnic identities and may live in ethnic enclaves for social and economic support on arrival in the United States. They may also experience greater levels of discrimination, which in turn strengthens their group consciousness and affects their decisions to participate in the political process (interaction of the cultural adaptation, group identity, and group conflict models). Empirical analysis allows researchers to test the degree of overlap between these models and tease out their independent and joint effects on political engagement. Taken together, these theoretical models account for much of the variation in political activity between and within U.S. racial/ethnic groups, such as whites, blacks, and Latinos (Leighley and Vedlitz, 1999).

To date, however, this body of literature has been largely divorced from assessments of Muslim-American political participation. The dearth of knowledge about this group is evidenced in several recent scholarly publications on U.S. immigrant political integration, none of which contain a single reference to Muslims, Arabs, or Middle Easterners in their indices (for examples, see Gerstle and Mollenkopf, 2001; Portes and Rumbaut, 2001). A lack of data on Muslim Americans has been a primary reason for their exclusion from mainstream research. Exceptions to this general pattern are Amaney Jamal's (2005a, 2005b) case studies on the effects of mosque involvement on Muslim-American political incorporation in the New York City area. These studies provide important insights into Muslim-American political and civic participation, finding that mosques promote group consciousness and serve as a vehicle for the political mobilization of Arab Muslims. However, the studies are limited to the New York City area, based on a total of 335 interviews, and contain no information on income, duration of U.S. residency, or other important predictors of political integration. Thus, the ability to make broader generalizations to the Arab Muslim population or make comparisons to other U.S. minority groups remains limited.

A final missing piece of the puzzle on Muslim-American political engagement is the gender question, or the degree to which women participate in the political realm. The gender question is an important one because current theoretical models suggest mixed outcomes for women's degree of involvement in U.S. politics. On the one hand, we might expect fairly low levels of political activity among Arab Muslim women, especially immigrant women, because women's participation rates in the Middle East are relatively low and may translate to the U.S. context (Moghadam, 1994). Socialized in countries where women occupy few, if any, high-profile political positions and have little say in political processes, Arab immigrant women may have little knowledge, resources, or desire to be politically active in the United States. This argument stems from the childhood socialization literature that states that differences in men's and women's political attitudes and behaviors stem from sex-role differentiation in early life that lasts over the lifecourse (for a good review, see Manza and Brooks, 1998). In a similar vein, the adult socialization literature would point to traditional familial arrangements and women's roles as wives and mothers as particularly consequential for their political involvement (Manza and Brooks, 1998:1240). Thus we might expect Arab women to have lower levels of involvement in the political arena than Arab men given their adult (and childhood) roles in the domestic sphere (Read, 2004a). A final argument for gender differences in Arab Muslim political involvement stems from the religion-politics literature. Though there is limited evidence on whether and how the influence of religion on political activity varies by gender,[4] research on African-

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[4]Some studies have examined the influence of religion on partisanship and voting behaviors of men and women but not the precursors to these behaviors—such as political consciousness, activism, and activity.

American political activism does suggest that religious participation has different effects on men's and women's political activity (Harris, 1994, 1999). Specifically, religion promotes political activism for both African-American men and women but is less stimulating for women (Robnett, 2006), and one possible explanation is that the black church is patriarchal and encourages a clear separation between men's and women's roles that promotes leaving the running of the country to men (Collins, 2004).

In contrast to theories predicting low levels of political involvement among Arab Muslim women, there are also reasons to expect them to have fairly high levels of political activity. First, religious identity may actually encourage rather than dampen women's political involvement. In his research on African Americans, Harris (1994, 1999) argues that black women benefit politically from their participation in church activities and points to the fact that black women had higher levels of voter turnout in 1984 as an indication that church attendance facilitates a "sense of civic duty" and "exposes church goers to political information" (1999:172; see also Robnett, 2006). Although men are considerably more involved than women in mosque activities in the Middle East, their rates of participation are more equivalent in the United States, which may contribute to similar levels of involvement in the political realm. Indeed, a recent case study of Arab Muslim immigrants in the Detroit metro area found that women were more involved in mosques, and thus had higher levels of group consciousness and were more likely to be politically active than their male counterparts (Jamal, 2005a). Theories of immigrant selectivity provide a second reason to expect high levels of political activity among Arab Muslim women (Portes and Rumbaut, 2006:ch. 5; Rumbaut, 1997). Immigrants to the United States, on average, are not randomly selected from their countries of origin; rather, they are often more highly educated and progressive than the population at large. This has been the case for Arab immigrants, many of whom came to the United States as highly skilled laborers or came to earn their degrees in U.S. universities and never returned (Suleiman, 1999). Thus, Arab immigrant women may be more politically active than their counterparts in the Middle East, particularly in a context that promotes women's participation.

Given the literatures outlined above, this study aims to answer two overarching questions: (1) To what extent is there a gender gap in Arab Muslim political engagement? and (2) To what extent are observed differences between men and women mediated by differences in their socioeconomic status, religious group identity, cultural adaptation, perceptions of group conflict, and other background characteristics (i.e., contemporary models of minority political inclusion/exclusion)? For example, women may have lower levels of political consciousness than men, and this difference may be explained mainly by differences in their socioeconomic statuses. Alternatively, there may be an independent effect of gender such that women remain significantly different from men after accounting for possible mediating mechanisms, suggesting that other factors are influencing their political participation.

Data and Methods

This study uses the only national data currently available on Muslim-American political attitudes and behaviors to examine these questions. The data consist of two telephone surveys administered in 2001 and 2004 by Zogby International in conjunction with Georgetown University's Project MAPS. Each of the surveys contains approximately 1,800 adult respondents, and weights were applied based on region, age, and gender to more accurately reflect the population at large. Phone interviews were conducted with persons, 18 years and older, nationwide who identify themselves as Muslim. The telephone list was created by matching the zipcodes of 300 randomly selected Islamic centers with their respective local telephone exchanges. Listings of common Muslim surnames were then identified from the local telephone exchanges and called. The margin of sampling error for each survey is ± 2.3 percent. This study focuses specifically on Arab respondents, who numbered 514 in the 2001 survey and 642 in the 2004 survey for a combined sample size of 1,156.[5]

There are several advantages to using the survey data. First, they are immensely valuable given the lack of national information on Muslim Americans; most national data sets contain too few Muslims for meaningful analysis (e.g., General Social Survey) or do not contain questions on religion (e.g., U.S. Census). The lack of such data has limited our knowledge to case studies of Muslim-American communities, which, while useful, have obscured the diversity that characterizes this group because concentrated communities tend to be more homogeneous than the population at large with respect to nativity, religiosity, socioeconomic status, and other characteristics known to influence political and civic engagement. Second, although the survey data have been used to produce informative reports, no study to date has used them to systematically analyze Muslim-American political incorporation.[6]

In addition to being nationally representative, these data contain detailed indicators on the dependent and independent variables of interest for this study. The primary dependent variable is political engagement, which I separate into two distinct components: political consciousness and political activity. Political consciousness is measured with four items that gauge the salience of political participation: (1) importance of participating in politics, (2) importance of children participating in politics, (3) frequency of

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[5]The two data sets were combined due to the relatively small sample sizes of Arabs in each data set. In ancillary analyses not shown here, the findings were nearly identical when the regression models were run on each of the data sets separately. Merging the data makes the findings more robust.

[6]For a list of produced reports, see the MAPS Project webpage at ⟨www.projectmaps.com⟩.

discussing politics with family and friends, and (4) degree to which government and public affairs are followed. These items are combined into a political consciousness scale ranging from 2 to 10, with high internal validity (Cronbach's alpha = 0.694). Political activity is also a scaled item, consisting of six measures: (1) active member of a political party, (2) ever attend a political rally, (3) ever participate in a boycott, (4) ever contribute or volunteer for a political campaign, (5) ever visited a political website, and (6) ever called or written a politician. The scale ranges from 0 to 6 and has a high internal validity (Cronbach's alpha = 0.698).

The independent variables tap into each of the theoretical models outlined in the previous section. The most important model for this study is the religious identity model, which I separate into three components that tap distinct aspects of religious identity. The first component is "subjective religious identity," which is measured with three variables that are combined into a scale that has a high internal validity (importance of religion in daily life, frequency of prayer, and importance of Islam; Cronbach's alpha = 0.709). The second component is "political religious identity," which is gauged with two dummy variables that measure favorability toward mosques expressing views on politics and favorability toward religious leaders discussing politics and political candidates in the mosque (1 = strongly favor/favor). The final component is "organizational religious identity," which is measured with two dummy variables that tap into the degree of mosque participation (1 = attend mosque once a week or more and 1 = very involved in mosque activities). The other theoretical models of interest for this study include the socioeconomic status model, which is captured with questions on education and family income; the cultural adaptation model, which is measured with questions on nativity and duration of U.S. residence; and the group conflict model, which is gauged with a dummy variable that captures experiences of discrimination. Finally, I control for age to account for possible generational differences in political engagement.

A limitation of the survey data is that they likely underrepresent the secular Muslim-American community because the sampling strategy focused on areas with high mosque concentration. However, as the analysis below shows, there is considerable variation in the sample's degree of religiosity, ranging from secular to religiously conservative Muslim Americans. Moreover, a focus on the more religiously devout is particularly appropriate for this study given the focus on how various dimensions of religious identity influence political participation and given current national attitudes toward Muslim Americans—religiously devout Muslim Americans are more visible, more susceptible to stereotyping, to racial profiling, and to discrimination than secular Muslim Americans, many of whom are more integrated into U.S. society. Thus, demonstrating diversity within this subgroup will make huge strides toward correcting monolithic images of Muslim Americans.

Gender, Religious Identity, and Arab Muslim Political Involvement

The analysis begins by determining the degree to which men and women differ in their political engagement and then examines possible factors that might explain observed differences. As seen in Table 1, the gender cleavage in party identification among Arab Muslims follows the national trend, with women being more likely than men to affiliate with the Democratic Party (35.7 percent compared to 26.4 percent) and less likely to affiliate with the Republican Party (12.4 percent compared to 21.0 percent). Following prior work on this group, a sizeable proportion of both women and men consider themselves independents (20.9 percent and 28.8 percent, respectively). Turning to registration and voting, the overwhelming majority of men and women are registered voters (85.1 percent and 78.7 percent), which surpasses the national average of 72.1 percent in 2004 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2006). This is somewhat surprising given that most of the sample is comprised of immigrants to this country (87.6 percent of men and 73.0 percent of women); however, the national average for naturalized citizens is also fairly high at 61.2 percent. The gender gap in voting only partly tracks with differences in party affiliation: women were less likely than men to have voted for Bush in the 2000 elections (31.9 percent compared to 40.1 percent), but there is no significant difference in the likelihood of voting for Gore (12.6 percent and 14.1 percent), with both men and women favoring other candidates such as Ralph Nader. Gender differences in other measures of political activity are fairly small. About one-fourth of men and women are active members of a political party, one-third of both groups have participated in a boycott, and nearly one-half have attended a political rally. Men are significantly more likely than women to have called or written a politician and to have visited a political website.

In terms of political consciousness, again, women are slightly less involved than men on each of the dimensions. Men are more likely to report that it is "very important" to participate in politics (52.9 percent compared to 42.9 percent) and to consider it "very important" for children to participate in the political arena (57.2 percent compared to 51.9 percent). They are also more likely to "closely follow" government and public affairs and to "frequently" discuss politics with family and friends. Overall then, the story is twofold: (1) both Arab men and women have relatively high levels of political consciousness and activity, (2) Arab women have slightly lower levels of engagement than Arab men, and (3) Arab women have much higher levels than would be expected given extant theory and popular stereotypes of this group.

What might account for observed differences in men's and women's political engagement? In addition to standard sociodemographic factors, this study is particularly interested in examining how religious identity influences political participation. Not surprisingly, the overwhelming majority of the sample were raised as Muslims (Muslim converts are typically African

TABLE 1

Gender Differences in Arab Muslim Political Engagement, 2001 and 2004 ($N = 1,156$)

	Women	Men	
	$N = 445$	$N = 711$	χ^2
Political Activity			
Party affiliation			
Democrat	35.7	26.4	**
Republican	12.4	21.0	**
Independent	20.9	28.8	**
Registered voter	78.7	85.1	**
Voted for Bush in 2000 election	31.9	40.1	**
Political activity scale (mean scores, ranges from 0 to 6)	2.0	2.4	**
Active member of political party	23.1	22.9	ns
Ever attended a political rally	42.0	44.9	ns
Ever participated in a boycott	31.7	36.0	ns
Contributed or volunteered for political campaign	26.7	38.7	***
Visit political websites	35.3	44.4	**
Called or written a politician	46.7	54.1	*
Political Consciousness			
Political consciousness scale (mean scores, ranges from 2 to 10)	7.6	8.0	*
Very important to participate in politics	42.9	52.9	**
Very important for children to participate in politics	51.9	57.2	†
Frequently discuss politics with family and friends	42.5	48.8	†
Closely follow government and public affairs	57.5	68.8	**
Experienced discrimination	66.5	57.2	**
Religion			
Converted to Islam	4.0	1.8	*
Subjective religiosity scale (ranges from 3 to 13)	11.6	10.6	**
Pray all five salahs daily	59.6	43.9	**
Religion very important	85.4	68.9	**
Role of Islam very important in daily life	82.2	71.2	**
Organizational religiosity			
Very involved in mosque activities	9.4	9.6	ns
Not at all involved in mosque activities	35.5	40.5	ns
Attend mosque more than once/week	11.2	23.2	**
Political religiosity			
Mosques should express views on politics	57.1	60.3	ns
Imams should be allowed to discuss politics at the mosque	38.4	45.3	*
Demographics			
Foreign-born	73.0	87.6	**
Duration of U.S. residency			
Less than 5 yrs	4.1	2.1	ns
5 to 9 yrs	11.3	7.5	ns
10 to 19 yrs	32.6	26.5	ns
20 yrs or more	53.6	63.9	**
Bachelor's education or higher	51.9	70.7	**
Family income $75,000 or higher	23.1	38.5	**
Age in years (mean)	38.5	45.0	**

χ^2 indicates significant differences at †$p < 0.10$; *$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$.
ns = not significant.

American or white), thus religious conversion is not a factor in the political mobilization of this group. Women have higher levels of subjective religiosity than men—they pray more frequently and are more likely to consider religion very important in their daily lives—but do not differ in their degree of involvement in mosque activities (roughly 10 percent of both groups say they are "very involved" in mosque activities and over one-third say they are "not at all involved"). In contrast, men are twice as likely to attend the mosque more than once per week (23.2 percent compared to 11.2 percent of women). The results are mixed on the final dimension of religious identity—political religiosity. Here, an equally high proportion of women and men feel that mosques should express their views on politics (57.1 percent and 60.3 percent), but men are much more likely to believe that imams, or religious leaders, should discuss politics in the mosque (45.3 percent compared to 38.3 percent of women).

Other factors that may contribute to gender cleavages in political engagement include differences in men's and women's socioeconomic statuses, degree of cultural adaptation, and experiences of discrimination. Men are significantly more likely than women to have a bachelor's degree or higher (70.7 percent compared to 51.9 percent), but both groups have much higher levels of educational attainment than the national average. Men are also older and have higher family incomes than women, which may contribute to differences in their political activity. The vast majority of the immigrants, both men and women, have lived in the United States for five years or more and a greater proportion of men have lived in the United States for 20 years or more (63.9 percent compared to 51.9 percent); again, this may help explain their greater levels of political engagement. Finally, women are more likely than men to report having experienced discrimination.

Tables 2 and 3 provide a more detailed examination of the extent to which the aforementioned factors explain the gender gap in political consciousness (Table 2) and activity (Table 3). Model 1 examines the effects of gender while controlling for age, nativity, duration of U.S. residence, and U.S. region. Model 2 adds socioeconomic status and discrimination, and Model 3 adds religious identity measures. Changes in the gender coefficient across models will help identify factors that contribute to differences in men's and women's political involvement. As seen in the tables, women have lower levels of political consciousness and activity than men after controlling for differences in their age, nativity, and duration of residence (Model 1). Differences in men's and women's socioeconomic positions partly accounts for the gender cleavage (gender gap diminishes from Model 1 to Model 2); however, women remain significantly less engaged in the political realm based on these two measures. It is important to note that these factors operate as expected: newer immigrants have much lower levels of political engagement than do U.S.-born persons, while more established immigrants have levels of involvement that approach those of the native-born population. Those who are better educated and in higher income brackets also

TABLE 2

OLS Regression Coefficients for Gender Differences in Arab Muslim Political Consciousness 2001 and 2004 Surveys ($N = 1,156$)

	Political Consciousness Scale		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	B	B	B
Female	− 0.345**	− 0.238*	− 0.144
	(0.114)	(0.108)	(0.113)
Bachelor's degree or higher		0.470**	0.410**
		(0.116)	(0.116)
Family income > $75,000/yr		0.645**	0.615**
		(0.119)	(0.118)
Experienced discrimination		0.729**	0.626**
		(0.109)	(0.110)
High subjective religiosity			− 0.037
			(0.022)
Organizational Religiosity			
Attend mosque more than 1/week			0.023
			(0.045)
Very involved in mosque activities			0.456*
			(0.185)
Political Religiosity			
Mosques should express political views			0.251**
			(0.116)
Okay for imams to discuss politics in mosque			0.455**
			(0.113)
Nativity (U.S.-Born)[a]			
FB, U.S. resident <10 yrs	− 0.831**	− 0.576**	− 0.507**
	(0.218)	(0.210)	(0.208)
FB, U.S. resident 10–19 yrs	− 0.225	− 0.110	− 0.026
	(0.171)	(0.164)	(0.012)
FB, U.S. resident 20 yrs or more	0.162	0.130	0.189
	(0.170)	(0.110)	(0.140)
Western region	0.401*	0.313*	0.309*
	(0.164)	(0.157)	(0.155)
Age	0.003[†]	0.004[†]	0.006[†]
	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Constant	7.916**	6.836**	6.766**
Adjusted R^2	0.043	0.171	0.193

[a]Denotes reference categories.

[†]$p < 0.10$; *$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$.

have higher levels of involvement than do those with lower socioeconomic statuses, and persons who have experienced discrimination are more politically active than those who have not.

TABLE 3

OLS Regression Coefficients for Gender Differences in Arab Muslim Political Activity 2001 and 2004 Surveys ($N = 1{,}156$)

	Political Activity Scale			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
	B	B	B	B
Female	− 0.427**	− 0.242**	− 0.146**	− 0.077
	(0.108)	(0.094)	(0.096)	(0.103)
Bachelor's degree or higher		0.260	0.240**	0.238**
		(0.099)	(0.099)	(0.099)
Family income $> \$75{,}000$/yr		0.381**	0.379**	0.375**
		(0.102)	(0.101)	(0.101)
Political consciousness		0.385**	0.359**	0.359**
		(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.025)
Experienced discrimination		0.640**	0.583**	0.578**
		(0.094)	(0.095)	(0.095)
High subjective religiosity			− 0.040*	− 0.042
			(0.018)	(0.018)
Organizational Religiosity				
Attend mosque more than 1/week			0.202†	0.331*
			(0.123)	(0.141)
Very involved in mosque activities			0.437**	0.438**
			(0.157)	(0.157)
Political Religiosity				
Mosques should express political views			0.209*	0.292*
			(0.092)	(0.109)
Okay for imams to discuss politics in mosque			0.261**	0.343**
			(0.090)	(0.106)
Nativity (U.S. Born)[a]				
FB, U.S. resident < 10 yrs	− 1.440**	− 0.921**	− 0.875**	− 0.909**
	(0.204)	(0.166)	(0.166)	(0.194)
FB, U.S. resident 10–19 yrs	− 1.102**	− 0.919**	− 0.754**	− 0.866**
	(0.161)	(0.155)	(0.128)	(0.138)
FB, U.S. resident 20 yrs or more	− 0.390*	− 0.438**	− 0.386**	− 0.338**
	(0.157)	(0.152)	(0.127)	(0.148)
Western region	0.502**	0.299**	0.308*	0.31*
	(0.155)	(0.133)	(0.146)	(0.131)
Age	− 0.009*	− 0.008*	− 0.007*	− 0.006*
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Female * Mosque attendance				− 0.481*
				(0.257)
Constant	3.354**	− 0.485*	− 0.281*	− 0.261
Adjusted R^2	0.078	0.331	0.348	0.349

[a]Denotes reference categories.

†$p < 0.10$; *$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$.

The most interesting findings in Tables 2 and 3 emerge in Models 3 and 4, which add dimensions of religious identity and an interaction term for gender * religious identity.[7] Looking first at political consciousness (Table 2), subjective religiosity (e.g., frequency of prayer and importance of religion in daily life) has no significant effect on political involvement, which counters popular stereotypes that equate Islamic religiosity with political extremism. Likewise, frequent mosque attendance is not significantly associated with political consciousness, again suggesting that being a devout Muslim does not necessarily incite political activism nor does it necessarily dampen political engagement (Khan, 2003). What dimensions of religious identity do matter for political engagement? Organizational religiosity—measured by being very involved in mosque activities—and political religiosity—measured by support for mosque involvement in the political arena—are both associated with increased levels of political consciousness and activity. Moreover, the inclusion of these measures reduces the gender gap to nonsignificance, which suggests that differences in men's and women's political and organizational religious identity helps explain the gender gap in their political engagement.

A slightly different picture emerges when we change the focus from political consciousness to political activity (Table 3). Here, subjective religiosity has a significantly negative impact on political activity, although the effect is fairly weak. One possible interpretation is that those with the strongest religious beliefs hold to the school of thought that Muslims should not be involved in non-Muslim political activities (Bukhari, 2003; Khan, 2003). Another possibility is that those who pray the most frequently (all five salahs daily) have less time to engage in the political arena. In contrast, frequent mosque attendance, involvement in mosque activities, and political religiosity all increase political activity, and these operate largely the same for men and women (separate models not shown). The one exception is mosque attendance, where the effects are positive for men and negative for women (Model 4). A possible explanation is that frequent participation in mosque services teaches different things for men and women regarding appropriate gender roles, which translates into women being less active in the public sphere than men (Read, 2003, 2004a).

Discussion and Conclusion

Despite six years of intense media attention on Arab Muslims, we still know surprisingly little about where this group fits into the U.S. political milieu. This study begins to fill this gap by examining the political engagement of Arab Muslims and assessing whether and how gender shapes their political consciousness and activity. The results show that both women and men have high levels of political involvement, in part reflecting their

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[7]Ancillary analyses not shown here found that other interaction terms by gender were nonsignificant.

relatively affluent socioeconomic positions. Contrary to popular stereotypes, Arab Muslim women have high rates of political engagement, both relative to other groups of U.S. women and to Arab women in the Middle East. In fact, Arab Muslim women resemble other U.S. women in many respects, especially in terms of their Democratic Party affiliations and presidential candidate preferences (Schlozman et al., 1995). Arab Muslim men are slightly more politically active than women, a pattern that again follows the national trend (Schlozman et al., 1994). However, gender cleavages are quite small on most dimensions of political engagement, suggesting that collective identity based on ethnicity and religion is a salient factor contributing to the political mobilization of Arab Muslim men and women.

An important finding of this study concerns the relationships between gender, religious identity, and political involvement. A common concern in the U.S. discourse on Muslim integration is whether or not Islam is antithetical to democracy and democratic participation (Jamal, 2005b; Khan, 2003; Pew Research Center, 2004, 2006). This study shows this is clearly not the case. Personal aspects of religious identity, such as prayer and salience of religion in daily life, have little or no relationship with political involvement. In other words, being a devout Muslim is not necessarily equivalent to being hyper-political nor is it necessarily synonymous with opposition to participation in U.S. politics. Persons who are more religious on these subjective dimensions of religiosity are no less politically conscious than those with lower levels of religiosity, and they are only slightly less likely to be politically active.

For men, the effects of other dimensions of religious identity on political participation track closely with what is known about the religion-politics connection among other U.S. groups, such as African Americans (Harris, 1994, 1999). The organizational and political aspects of Muslim religious identity promote both political consciousness and activity, and although some might interpret this finding as bolstering stereotypes linking Islamic worship with political incitement, there is a more plausible interpretation that has less disturbing implications. Like other congregations, mosques may serve to heighten group consciousness and awareness of issues that need to be addressed through political mobilization, such as policies to remedy discrimination (Jamal, 2005b). It is these organizational aspects of religious life that help mobilize Muslim-American men around shared political goals.

The pattern for Muslim-American women, however, is quite different. Involvement in the mosque, particularly frequent attendance for worship, *dampens* rather than promotes their political activity, which may reflect the fact that the most highly religious women are also the most gender traditional and may feel that the political arena should be left to men (Read, 2003). This finding is mirrored in research on African-American political activism, where scholars find a weaker influence of religion on women's political involvement than men's and argue that the black church is patriarchal and encourages traditional gender roles that undermine support for

gender equality (Collins, 2004; Wilcox, 1997). Taken together, these findings suggest that future research on the religion-politics connection should continue to explore how different dimensions of religious identity influence political involvement (Harris, 1999) *and* assess whether and how this varies for men and women.

This study also suggests that future research on Middle Eastern communities in the United States must continue to try to place them in a comparative framework with other U.S. racial/ethnic and religious populations in order to demystify their adaptation experiences and identify the mechanisms that lead to their varying degrees of integration in U.S. life. This is not a newly arrived immigrant population, nor is it one that will likely fade from the spotlight in the coming years, given the ongoing war against terror and escalating conflict in the Middle East. A growing number of studies have highlighted remarkable similarities between Middle Eastern communities and other U.S. populations, such as African Americans and evangelical Christians, on a host of sociocultural and economic issues, including their civic and political participation (Jamal, 2005a, 2005b), employment patterns (Read and Cohen, 2007), gender negotiations regarding women's work and family life (Bartkowski and Read, 2003; Read, 2004a, 2004b), and cultural adaptations (Haddad and Smith, 1996). However, much more empirical work is needed to document the experiences of these groups if we are to understand where they fit into the increasingly heterogeneous U.S. cultural landscape.

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