

Clarifying the Role of SES in Political Participation: Policy Threat and Arab American Mobilization

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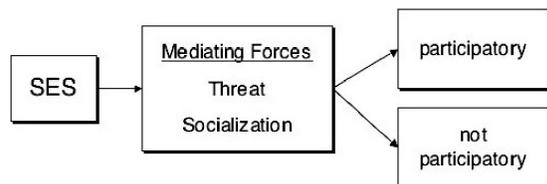
Although there is much empirical support for the causal connection between higher socioeconomic status (SES) and political participation, there are ample instances of lower SES individuals participating and higher SES individuals abstaining from participation. Apparently other factors send some similarly situated individuals down the expected path and cause others to detour. In the same vein, several bodies of political science literature suggest that threatening circumstances can be politically motivating, but mobilization does not always follow. Our analysis of Arab American participation patterns suggests that the effects of socioeconomic status are mediated by socialization experiences and policy threat. If the political learning process includes the apprehension of worrisome government policy actions, it may provide the motivation for participation from those who have the ability to participate, but heretofore have chosen not to do so.

Political participation, indisputably the cornerstone of democracy, is the focus of a large body of research in political science aimed at developing and testing theories about who participates and why. Prominent in this literature is the notion that political participation varies with socioeconomic status (Campbell et al. 1960; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). The central theme is that higher status individuals are more likely to participate because they have the *skills* to master political subject matter and facilitate involvement in politics. Those with higher socioeconomic status (SES) may also derive greater benefits from political involvement than those of lower status (Campbell et al. 1960; Key 1964). Higher SES is certainly associated with involvement-enabling political socialization (Beck and Jennings 1982), and higher status individuals are more likely to experience social settings that are informationally richer on many subjects (e.g., politics), than those of lower status, making them more likely to acquire participation-enabling knowledge and civic skill (Gimpel, Lay, and Schuknecht 2003; Rolfe 2004). Despite voluminous empirical evidence supporting these generalizations, there remain instances of individuals and groups who

are not highly participatory, in spite of high socioeconomic status. Many have noted that Asian Americans, for instance, exhibit high SES levels but low participation rates (e.g., Cain, Kiewiet, and Uhlaner 1991; Nakanishi 1991; Tam 1995).

In some instances, most notably for ethnic minorities, socialization-related variables have emerged as mediators of the influence of SES on participation because they shape what people learn and know about politics. This information exposure may be the product of interaction with well-socialized individuals or groups who fulfill an important informational and cue-giving function on political matters (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954; Huckfeldt 1979). Cho (1999) finds among some minority groups that increased education does not correspond to higher participation levels unless that education brings would-be voters into contact with the institutions and practices of American democracy. Immigrants who are educated abroad often do not manifest the high levels of participation we have come to expect from similarly situated individuals educated in the United States. Evidently, participation is affected by the broader context in which socioeconomic status influences how individuals apprehend politics.

FIGURE 1 The Indirect Link between Socioeconomic Status and Political Participation



Higher levels of political engagement have also been linked to levels of political threat for minorities as well as other populations (Giles and Hertz 1994; Ramakrishnan 2005). Seminal work in psychology has suggested that threat perception motivates affiliation with others who feel similarly threatened, as in the famous dictum, “misery loves company” (Gump and Kulik 1997; Lowenstein et al. 2001; Schachter 1959). A solid body of evidence, beginning with Salomon and Van Evera (1973), indicates that political mobilization is a direct response to the degree of threat and discrimination a group experiences (Campbell 2003; Feldman and Stenner 1997; Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen 2000; Miller et al. 2002; Rudolph, Gangl, and Stevens 2000). If the political learning process includes the encounter of worrisome events, say, about particular government policy actions, it may provide the *motivation* to participate from those who have the *ability* to participate, but heretofore have chosen not to do so. In this way, threat would mediate the effects of SES in a manner similar to socialization. Indeed, all members of a group may not similarly perceive the extent of threat because the resources necessary to comprehend alarming policy actions are not found in equal measure within a population (Miller and Krosnick 2004), and information is simply not uniformly distributed across a mass public (Converse 1962; Zaller 1992). People may routinely be in threatening situations without being cognizant of it. Cognition provides the apparent link between SES and threat perception.

The implication is that competence and skills are only one element of a coherent theory of political participation. Once ability is in place, other factors such as socialization and threat modify the role of SES. As in life, ability and skill *may* lead to success, but not inevitably so. Similarly, those who succeed are not necessarily those who are most skilled. The literature has strongly implied that high SES is directly related to participation. We also believe SES to be important, but, as Figure 1 suggests, posit that the link between SES and participation is not always unswerving. In

some studies, the path from SES to participation may appear to be straight due to deficient variance in the data. For instance, if all individuals are educated in the United States, then variance in socialization experiences is limited and so the connection between education and participation may appear more direct than the reality. Accordingly, minority groups heighten variance on a number of factors, and in so doing, help us to refine our understanding of political engagement. Here, we explore the role of mediating influences, particularly policy threat, in stimulating political participation. The specific case we examine involves Arab Americans (a high SES group) and the policy aftermath of 9/11 (a set of highly threatening events).

This paper proceeds as follows. We begin by presenting the Arab-American case and discuss how this case allows us to observe the interplay of SES, socialization, and threat, on voter registration. We then examine how the pattern and timing of Arab-American voter registration after 9/11 is linked to specific policy-relevant activities of the U.S. government. The upshot of our analysis is that the greater comprehension of threatening events associated with certain individual characteristics heightens political activism. We conclude by discussing how Arab Americans are a particularly illuminating example and enhance the field’s understanding of the impetuses behind participatory behavior.

The Arab-American Case

Just who is and is not “Arab” is a matter of some contention, both in the Middle East itself and in the United States. We consider the population that hails from 22 Arabic-speaking countries (including Palestine) in the Middle East and North Africa (Al-Qazzaz 1996, 258).¹ By this designation, the 2000 U.S. Census indicates that there are approximately 1.2 million people who reported Arab ancestry (Brittingham and de la Cruz 2005), although leading Arab-American

¹This is a standard definition, widely accepted, but not universally agreed upon. Some people who might be classified as Arab under such a definition may not consider themselves Arab, and conversely some people who consider themselves to be Arab might not be included. No scheme is perfect, but one that emphasizes place-of-birth and ethnic origin is most commonly used for large scale surveys and demographic analysis, including studies of ethnic political preference.

advocacy groups suggest that the figure is closer to 3.5 million (Arab American Institute 2004).²

Arab Americans in the Post 9/11 Environment. The aftermath of 9/11 gave many Arab Americans a visible and anxious stake in U.S. government policy action. Anecdotal evidence indicates that Arab Americans found themselves facing serious threats along a number of broad fronts following the 9/11 attacks. Almost immediately, incidents of discrimination and anti-Arab violence surged. Fatal shootings of Arab-American citizens occurred in California, Texas, and Arizona. Mosques were vandalized. Children were taunted in school, and Muslim women wearing the Hijab were assaulted. Two members of the Jewish Defense League were indicted for conspiring to bomb a mosque and Arab-American Congressman Darrell Issa's (R-CA) office. Sikhs and even Hispanics, who were mistaken for Arabs, were targets of violence and verbal abuse.

While the Bush Administration was quick to condemn the backlash against Arab Americans, some government policy actions have stood as anxiety-provoking threats that might mobilize members of this group. The most prominent was the passage of the USA Patriot Act by overwhelming majorities in Congress in October 2001. This legislation gave the government broad new investigative authority, the power to detain and deport those judged to be a special threat, to conduct secret searches, and to deploy wiretaps and other surveillance tools. A series of Executive Orders and directives by the U.S. Attorney General led to the detention of hundreds and authorized FBI interviews of thousands more.

Military tribunals were authorized to try noncitizens alleged to be involved in terrorist activity. Muslim charities working within the United States were targeted for close scrutiny, assets were frozen, and records were seized. In 2002, the FBI announced that it would target small businesses owned by persons of Arab or Muslim descent to search for financial connections to terrorist organizations. Finally, stringent new immigration rules have been put into place, and controls on visa distributions has been tightened (Arab American Institute 2002), leaving Arab-American citizens on edge (Howell and Shryock 2003, 448–49).

In the international arena, many view the war in Iraq as a hostile and anti-Arab action—a more distant

threat than that of surveillance and detention at home, perhaps, but still threatening to group interests. While most Arab Americans welcomed the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime, the majority response has been one of opposition to the war. In addition, the President's strong support for Israeli hard-liners in the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict sent signals that government policy is hostile to Arab interests abroad. By October of 2004, surveys indicated that a majority of Arab Americans opposed President Bush's handling of the war and a similarly sizable majority favored the election of John Kerry. The Arab American vote had gone Republican in the 2000 election.

Awareness of Threat. Survey data provide an indication of the extent to which Arab Americans were aware of threatening policy. A Bendixen and Associates survey included a national sample of 600 Middle Eastern respondents (representing Arab foreign-born and Muslim populations, in addition to Arab Christians), with interviews conducted in English, Persian, Urdu, and Arabic (language preferences were 41% Arabic, 31% English, 16% Persian, and 12% Urdu).³ While this particular study may not have the instrumentation political scientists would typically demand (e.g., no income or formal education information were available), it remains one of very few surveys of *any* Middle Eastern population that separates Arab-American views from the overall white population.

Interestingly, these data show that Arab Americans are not uniformly aware of foreign and domestic policy—approximately 41% of Arab Americans have heard of the Patriot Act *by name*. It would be reasonable to hypothesize that those targeted by a law might be those who are most aware of it, but this generalization is not iron-clad. The logistic regression appearing in the first column of Table 1 shows that awareness

²In 2000, 46.4% of those reporting Arab ancestry were native born, 28.3% naturalized, and 25.3% were noncitizens (Brittingham and de la Cruz 2005). Just prior to the 2004 election, in just the four battleground states of Michigan, Florida, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, the likely voting population of Arab-American ancestry was estimated at about 510,000 (Zogby International 2004).

³The poll was conducted between August 8 and August 18, 2004. Because there are not many Arab Americans in the general population, survey researchers made up to 20 call-backs to households that were selected using ethnic name coding from a sampling frame of all households with telephones in the nation. Random digit dialing, while methodologically preferable, would be prohibitively costly for reaching a population that is less than 1% of the U.S. total. Response rate for the survey was 27%. Respondents were assured that their answers were confidential and screening questions included ethnic identity and country of birth. Respondents included 400 ethnic Arabs, with 200 of Persian or Pakistani descent. Reported margin of error for the survey is +/- 4%. For the sample of 400 Arab Americans the margin of error is +/- 5%, for the samples of Pakistanis and Iranians, the margin of error is +/- 9%. Bendixen and Associates, of Coral Gables, Florida, conducted this survey for *New American Media*, a nationwide association of over 700 print, broadcast, and online ethnic media organizations founded in 1996 by the nonprofit Pacific News Service.

TABLE 1 Logistic Regression Estimates. Dichotomous Dependent Variable Measures Awareness of USA Patriot Act, September 2004

Variable	All Respondents		Arab-American Respondents		Muslim Respondents	
	Estimates	Probability	Estimates	Probability	Estimates	Probability
Constant	-2.547*		.239		.039	
	(.508)		(.549)		(.465)	
Detained since 9/11	.695*	14.4	.723*	17.4	.720*	17.5
	(.261)		(.349)		(.296)	
Victim of Discrimination	.022		-.093		.140	
	(.113)		(.157)		(.126)	
Female	-1.029*	-21.0	-1.118*	-25.2	-1.024*	-23.5
	(.195)		(.260)		(.239)	
Age 18-29	-.442		-.923*	-19.3	-.479	
	(.268)		(.349)		(.320)	
Age 65 older	-.397		-.447		-.552	
	(.346)		(.407)		(.568)	
English Media	.497*	10.2	.362		.746*	17.9
	(.199)		(.261)		(.243)	
Born in U.S.	.658*	13.6	1.186*	28.2	.455	
	(.291)		(.369)		(.387)	
Christian	-.618*	-11.9	-.469			
	(.241)		(.272)			
English Interview	.834*	17.4	.983*	22.8	.761*	18.4
	(.228)		(.270)		(.279)	
Registered Voter	.513*	10.3	.680*	14.9	.380	
	(.216)		(.301)		(.251)	
N	574		384		388	
Log Likelihood	-347.1		-208.7		-227.7	

Standard errors in parentheses. Probability value is change associated with moving each independent variable from its lowest to highest value while other variables are held constant at their sample means.

Source: Bendixen and Associates, Coral Gables, Florida.

* $p \leq .05$.

of the Patriot Act is higher among men and those detained since 9/11, but also among registered voters, consumers of English media, U.S. natives, and those completing the interview in English. These latter traits would not immediately come to mind as qualities that would describe those targeted by the Patriot Act.

The next set of columns in Table 1 report estimates from the subsample that includes only the Arab ancestry respondents and show that similar information biases are present among this population. The difference is that English media consumption is no longer significant. The last set of columns in Table 1 report results from the subsample that includes only Muslim respondents. Again, we see informational biases along similar lines though being a registered voter and being U.S. born are no longer significant, implying that awareness of the Patriot Act is a bit more uniform for Muslims. Among all three samples, there appears to be some uniformity in that political aware-

ness was heightened by English language preference, which is also related to higher SES.

The most important insight emerging from this analysis is that many in the Arab-American community most threatened by the law enforcement provisions of the USA Patriot Act are among those least likely to be aware of it because they do not traffic in the language necessary to learn of its nature and extent. Evidently, exposure to mainstream American media is an important determinant of knowledge acquisition about government policy (Cho 1999).⁴ Important

⁴More evidence on this point is seen through a related survey question that asked respondents whether they were worried about unfair treatment, detention, or deportation of either themselves or a family member in the future. While only 10% expressed a high level of apprehension about this grim prospect for themselves or family members, Muslim respondents, but also those who were born in the United States and who completed English interviews, expressed the most disquiet. It may also be the case that Arab

related research from the Arab-American population in Detroit has also found lower political awareness among non-English speaking Arab immigrants (Lin and Jamal 1998, 1999). The magnitude of threat perceived by a population appears to depend upon the reception of information about intimidating circumstances—information that is less accessible outside of mainstream society where fear-provoking experiences are more likely to occur.⁵

These survey results speak to the relationship between threatening policy action as a mobilizer, on the one hand, and the role of civic skills, resources, and socialization as mobilizers on the other. Associated work in political psychology suggests that mobilization in response to threatening stimuli also depends on important cognitive steps, namely upon subjects' determinations that they have political options or choices (Miller and Krosnick 2004). Recent immigrants are more likely to be uninformed about American political institutions, and uninformed about how they might voice grievances, or express their views on the matters of greatest concern to them. Although immigrant-heavy contexts may not ordinarily be the best places to gain political awareness and sophistication, there are countervailing forces within these

Americans who have been more thoroughly socialized in U.S. culture would be more comfortable expressing concern. It was noteworthy that among those who were interviewed in Arabic, there was no difference in awareness of the Patriot Act between Muslims and non-Muslims, but there was a difference between immigrants and natives, with U.S.-born speakers of Arabic expressing three times the level of awareness as immigrants. It is also possible that confusion can arise in the translation of certain words and phrases, although it is unclear if this would bias survey responses by favoring political awareness or favoring ignorance.

⁵We should point out that the pertinent information did not necessarily include familiarity with the USA Patriot Act, per se, as even respondents who had not heard of the law expressed unease. More important than knowledge of the name of the Patriot Act was the experience of previous detention. Still, information exchange about U.S. domestic policy among English speakers and U.S. citizens is typically much higher than it is among immigrants and those speaking Arabic or another Middle Eastern language. From a nationality standpoint, it was Pakistanis who expressed the greatest concern about discrimination. Though they are not Arabs, they have strong exposure to English in their country of origin. In this connection, the gender differences may be attributable to the greater fixity constraint of women—the tendency to have less extensive travel patterns away from home and neighborhood during ordinary weekdays—compared to men, a constraint that is present even after controlling for work-related travel (Kwan 1999, 2000). Confinement to one's neighborhood may have an insulating effect on the experience of ethnic discrimination, reducing the likelihood of contact with those who might express prejudice. Finally, we know that Arabic men, not women, were more likely to be the target of profiling and investigation by authorities in the wake of September 11. Indeed, our gender differences are similar to survey results found in other populations where men often exhibit greater political knowledge.

communities that might encourage participation. For instance, contact with other vulnerable group members may affect threat perception because proximity encourages information flow more than isolation. Nominal members of a group usually include those who are commonly distant from any kind of substantial group concentration or network. These individuals may not consider themselves part of an issue public concerned with a particular government policy (Krosnick 1990). In the course of daily events, they are less likely to come into contact with worried confederates who voice their concerns than those who live among other group members. Finally, the barriers involved in successfully cultivating collective action may discourage more isolated individuals who are at risk. Low internal efficacy reduces the impact of hazard perception on political involvement (Rudolph, Gans, and Stevens 2000).

Data and Measurement

To further evaluate the relationship between threat and mobilization, we scrutinized official voter registration lists from the years 2001–2003, a time that includes considerable variability in politically related stimuli across the nation.⁶ The registration lists encompass 15 counties that have a wide range of suburban and urban environments⁷ and numbers of Arab American registered voters (from a U.S. Census estimated high of 66,000 in Los Angeles, to a low of just under 800 in Forsyth, North Carolina).⁸ Voter lists from these locations are well-suited to study the timing and volume of voter mobilization after 9/11 because they identify the registration dates of new voters and reregistrants. Some local elections boards

⁶California experienced a gubernatorial recall. Pennsylvania, Oregon, and Florida had competitive off-year elections for governor. The U.S. Senate elections in North Carolina and Oregon were lopsided contests won by entrenched incumbents.

⁷Lists of registered voters were collected from California (San Diego, Los Angeles, and Santa Clara counties), Oregon (Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington counties), Pennsylvania (Philadelphia), New York (Queens and Nassau counties), North Carolina (Forsyth, Mecklenburg, and Wake counties), and Florida (Broward, Orange, and Pinellas counties).

⁸Wayne County, Michigan has a well-known Dearborn-area population of Arab Americans, but was omitted because it lacks partisanship information. According to many estimates, there are more Arab Americans living in Los Angeles than in Detroit, so we have included the county with the largest Arab population. Our goal in selecting states and counties was to take advantage of the availability of voter lists containing information on party registration while simultaneously maximizing variance across likely explanatory factors.

bundle their new and updated registration cards by month, assigning a single date for all new registrants from the entire month. However, we study locations where registration date is within one or two days of the postmarked registration card, giving us a more accurate view of weekly registration activity after 9/11.⁹ From each of these lists, we extracted the Arab-American registrants by name (Lauderdale and Kestenbaum 2000; Morrison et al. 2003).¹⁰

Tables 2 and 3 list summary information about the Arab-American population. Table 2 summarizes the Arab-American registered voter population, the number of pre- and post-9/11 registrants for each location, basic information about total population size (from the 2000 Census), and total registration (from the 12/31/03 voter file). From these data, we can see that the *post-9/11* registration was a substantial but variable share of all Arab-American registration across these locations, ranging from a high of 44% in San Diego County, California, to a low of 16% in Nassau County, New York. Table 3 presents assembled facts about the partisan distribution of post-9/11 registrants. As we might suspect, there is an overall registration increase among Arabs and non-Arabs. The question, however, is not whether there is an increase but what prompted the registration increase, and specifically, if Arab Americans might be responding to policy threat.

Data Analysis and Model Estimation. Since we are interested in whether the pattern and timing of Arab-American voter registration after 9/11 is linked to specific policy-relevant activities of the U.S. government, our dependent variable is the number of Arab-American registrations for event weeks from September 11, 2001 through the last week of 2003 for each location. To capture policy threat, we conducted keyword *full text* searches in several *Lexis-Nexis*TM databases that permitted us to evaluate the *daily*

occurrence of newsworthy events that could have mobilization potential (Althaus, Edy, and Phalen 2001).¹¹ *Lexis-Nexis*TM covers 95 of the top 100 U.S. daily newspapers, 76 of these in full-text (Snider and Janda 1998).¹² We searched newspaper stories from the “major papers” file, AP wire stories, and television news transcripts. Although all three types of searches were strongly associated,¹³ newspaper stories provided far and away the best estimate of variation in the intensity and coverage of individual events that may have mobilizing potential—providing us with a convenient measure of exposure, not simply occurrence. Following extensive exploration, we chose to measure the extent of threatening policy action by counting the number of instances the term *Patriot Act* was identified in news stories. As an alternative measure of policy-related threat, we similarly identified the number of times *War in Iraq* was identified in news coverage. Other similar terms were also examined, but finally excluded for the sake of parsimonious model construction. As we can see, Figure 2 shows that news mentions of the term *Patriot Act* peaked in the fall of 2003, about the time the legislation was facing a mounting pile of abuse claims and legal challenges in the U.S. Courts. News mentions of *War in Iraq* were intensely concentrated at about the time of the U.S. invasion in March of 2003, but do not occur much before then.

We control for a number of other potential influences on registration activity. For instance, we evaluate the effect of religious mobilization (as well as Muslim presence) by controlling for the number of mosques present in each study area, normalized for the local size of the Arab-American population (Jamal 2005). Since Arab-American registration may simply be a function of overall registration trends, we include the total registration trend. Whether the surge is the result of party mobilization or campaign events and

⁹Perhaps most importantly, voter lists also have the advantage of presenting actual party-enrollment data and vote history for registrants, rather than the error-prone self-reports gleaned from surveys. Of course, one important factor in any study of registration and voting is the set of laws and deadlines governing the formal registration of voters in a given county. This is a particularly intriguing factor here given our multicounty, cross-state design. There is, however, more consistency than one might have expected in registration practices across the sample. We discuss further issues in the appendix.

¹⁰Tests of this method have indicated that surname lists do identify, with high accuracy, a majority of persons who self-identify as Arab American (Lauderdale and Kestenbaum 2000, 294). This technique is admittedly limited in some respects. For instance, if one is examining names only, intermarriage and adoptions certainly can “mask” ethnic identity.

¹¹Among these searches, we also examined “Patriot Act,” “Deportations” and “Arabs” and “Arab Americans,” “Muslim” and “Detainees,” “Civil Liberties” and “Arab Americans,” “Israeli” and “Palestinian” and “Conflict,” “War in Iraq,” and a number of others that exploratory analyses suggested were less relevant. More generally, we also examined the distribution of stories that appeared containing the words “Arabs” and “Muslims.” Stories mentioning various combinations of key words inevitably wound up correlated with one another, and including all search terms as possible measures of exposure to policy-related threats did not make sense. We ultimately settled on *Patriot Act* and *War in Iraq*.

¹²Newswire reports are excluded from newspaper coverage in *Lexis-Nexis*. We have a separate count of AP wire stories.

¹³The correlation between newspaper key word searches and TV news transcripts was .76. The correlation between newspaper key word searches and AP wire stories was .77.

TABLE 2 Total Population, Arab-American Population and Voter Registration Before and After September 11, 2001 in 15 Counties

Location	Total Population (2000)	Total Registration (2003)	Total Arab-American Registration (2003)	Pre-9/11 Arab-American Registration	Post-9/11 Arab-American Registration	Post-9/11 Arab-American Registration as % of total Arab-American Registration	
						American Registration	Total Registration
Broward, FL	1,623,018	1,012,060	8,385	6,782	1,593	19.0%	.52
Orange, FL	896,344	555,056	4,183	3,021	1,162	27.8%	.47
Pinellas, FL	921,482	656,662	1,789	1,369	420	23.5%	.19
Los Angeles, CA	9,519,338	3,789,797	27,059	20,348	6,711	24.8%	.28
San Diego, CA	2,813,833	1,364,077	5,949	3,339	2,610	43.9%	.21
Santa Clara, CA	1,682,585	797,331	3,889	2,740	1,149	39.5%	.23
Forsyth, NC	306,067	195,418	297	232	65	21.9%	.10
Mecklenburg, NC	695,454	439,842	1,218	959	259	21.3%	.18
Wake, NC	627,846	432,008	1,623	1,108	515	31.7%	.26
Nassau, NY	1,334,544	844,712	2,731	501	3,232	15.5%	.20
Queens, NY	2,229,379	929,722	7,307	5,725	1,582	21.7%	.33
Clackamas, OR	338,391	212,513	377	304	73	19.4%	.11
Multnomah, OR	660,486	388,683	801	507	294	36.7%	.12
Washington, OR	445,342	241,775	601	393	208	34.6%	.13
Philadelphia, PA	1,517,550	974,655	7,132	4,599	2,533	35.5%	.47

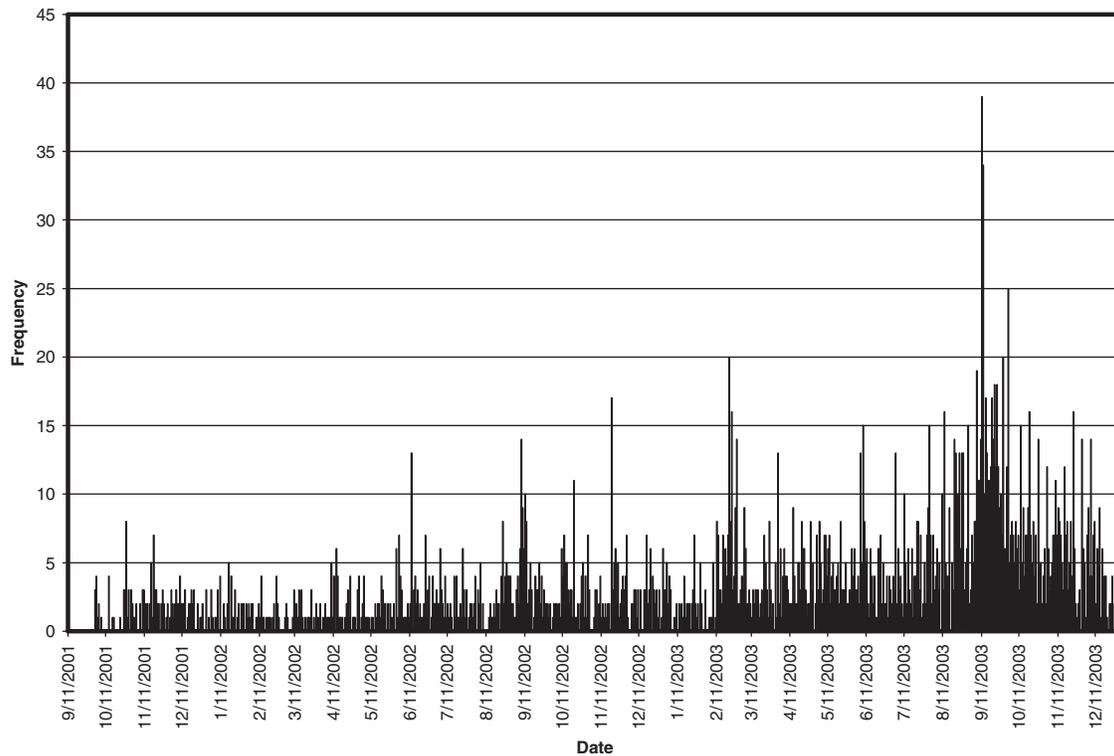
Source: County voter files for each location as of December 31, 2003 and U.S. Census 2000.

TABLE 3 Total Registration, Arab-American Population and Voter Registration After September 11, 2001 in 15 Counties

Location	Total Population (2000)	Non-Arab-American Post-9/11 Registration as of 12/31/03 by Party			Non-Arab-American Post-9/11 Registration as % of all Non-Arab-American Registration by Party			Post-9/11 Arab-American Registration by Party			Post-9/11 Arab-American Registration as % of all Arab-American Post-9/11 Registration by Party		
		Rep	Dem	Ind	Rep	Dem	Ind	Rep	Dem	Ind	Rep	Dem	Ind
Broward, FL	1,623,018	36,069	69,170	48,419	23.5	45.0	31.5	32.2	67.4	597	20.2	42.3	37.5
Orange, FL	896,344	33,956	42,423	37,605	29.8	37.2	33.0	288	457	417	24.8	39.3	35.9
Pinellas, FL	921,482	30,509	31,743	27,937	33.8	35.2	31.0	106	177	137	25.2	42.1	32.6
Los Angeles, CA	9,519,338	241,550	435,711	319,275	24.2	43.7	32.0	1,866	2,339	2,506	27.8	34.9	37.3
San Diego, CA	2,813,833	165,807	129,697	128,285	39.1	30.6	30.3	786	864	960	30.1	33.1	36.8
Santa Clara, CA	1,682,585	37,295	62,669	60,088	23.3	39.2	37.5	159	458	529	13.9	40.0	46.2
Forsyth, NC	306,067	7,594	7,284	5,332	37.6	36.0	26.4	20	24	21	30.8	36.9	32.3
Mecklenburg, NC	695,454	19,324	20,724	17,247	33.7	36.2	30.1	53	116	90	20.5	44.8	34.7
Wake, NC	627,846	23,608	23,362	20,983	34.7	34.4	30.9	76	164	275	14.8	31.8	53.4
Nassau, NY	1,334,544	19,283	26,914	24,342	27.3	38.2	34.5	102	207	193	20.3	41.2	38.4
Queens, NY	2,229,379	13,186	53,495	36,213	12.8	52.0	35.2	172	786	624	10.9	49.7	39.4
Clackamas, OR	338,391	9,350	8,507	8,525	35.4	32.2	32.3	21	26	26	28.8	35.6	35.6
Multnomah, OR	660,486	16,154	37,807	30,048	19.2	45.0	35.8	49	122	123	16.7	41.5	41.8
Washington, OR	445,342	18,775	17,476	15,755	36.1	33.6	30.3	45	89	74	21.6	42.8	35.6
Philadelphia, PA	1,517,550	50,456	217,648	26,232	17.1	73.9	8.9	368	1,842	323	14.5	72.7	12.8

Source: County voter files for each location as of December 31, 2003 and U.S. Census 2000. Percentage tabulations run across rows; rows may not total 100% due to rounding.

FIGURE 2 Frequency of Patriot Act Mentions, Major Newspapers, September 2001–December 2003



deadlines that stimulate a general surge, we can expect Arab-American mobilization to be responsive to the more general ecology of mobilization at these populous and politically important locations. This is an important control variable since it allows us to rule out many competing explanations for the rise in Arab-American registrants. In addition, if the general population is registering at greater rates because of these news stories, then that rate will be absorbed into the general registration trend while increases that are specific to the Arab-American group will be captured by the news story indicators.

It is also entirely possible that registration is not especially purposive, or stimulated by government policy activity, but responsive to the age distribution of local populations. The birthdates of Arab-American residents are included to account for this possibility. Also included are closing dates as important events that stimulate up-ticks in registration.¹⁴ The competitiveness of elections is also incorporated to account for

registration-related stimuli resulting from differential media attention and election intensity.¹⁵

Since socialization may be linked to the political participation of ethnic minorities, several county-level contextual variables are introduced to serve as indicators of the ecological circumstances that may promote or impede information flow: percent with a college education, percent foreign born, and the total size of the Arab-American population, all quantified from U.S. Census estimates. To evaluate the interaction of variable levels of threat with socialization-relevant characteristics of registrants, we include interaction terms for both percent college and percent foreign born with the *Patriot Act* and *War in Iraq* news story indicators.

¹⁵Our measure of competitiveness is based on pre-election polling results of elections occurring between 2001 and 2003. Specifically, we looked for major media polls that occurred between three weeks before the closing date for the general or primary election, but occurring before Election Day itself. The measure of competitiveness was taken as the absolute difference in the margin (percentage) between the leading and trailing candidate subtracted from 100 for each week up to eight weeks prior to the election. We presume that citizens may be especially induced to register at locations where electorates are evenly divided and elections are hard-fought rather than lopsided. The most competitive elections occurred in Florida (2002) and California (2003), although all of the 2002 gubernatorial elections were contested. Even the 2003 mayoral election in Philadelphia was considered highly competitive, although the incumbent mayor did eventually win.

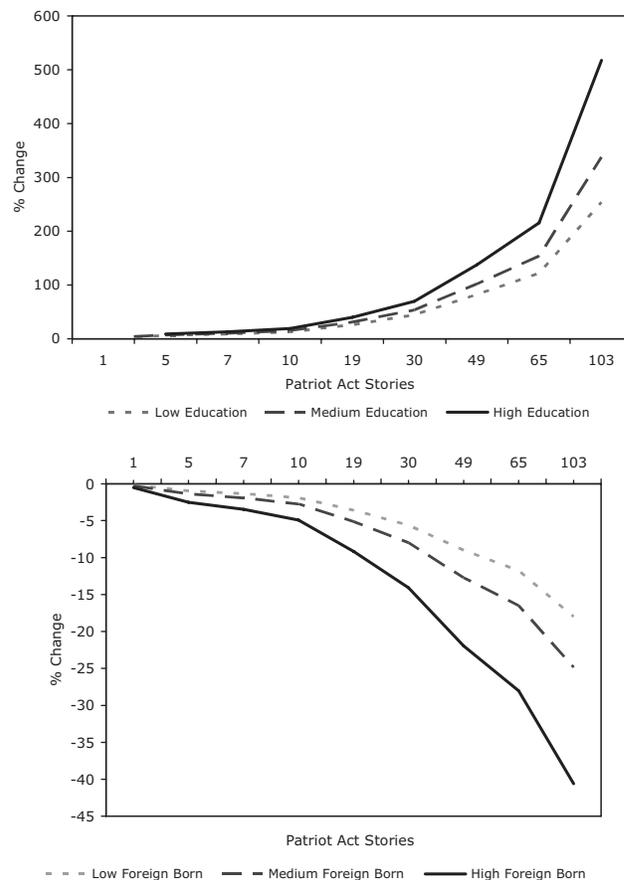
¹⁴Political parties often concentrate their efforts near closing date deadlines. Here our measure is simply a dichotomous variable for the three weeks prior to the closing date in each state for each election occurring in 2001, 2002, and 2003.

Since we have count data that is both a cross-section as well as a time series, we analyze these data with a panel data model adapted for nonnegative integers. This statistical model is an application and generalization of the Poisson distribution that accounts for the panel nature by conditioning on the total sum of outcomes over the observed time period (Hausman, Hall, and Griliches 1984). The negative binomial model allows for overdispersion in our data by allowing each observation's Poisson parameter to have a random distribution of its own.¹⁶ Overdispersion is an indication that the variance of the dependent variable is greater than the mean, and this appears to be the case for our data (dependent variable mean is 10.9, and variance is 40 times larger at 446.1).

An initial step in specifying a panel data model is to choose between modeling the system with fixed versus random effects. A random-effects estimator assumes that the intercept term is independently and identically distributed, which implies that the random effects are uncorrelated with the regressors. That is, the assumption is that the individual-specific unobservables are uncorrelated with the individual-specific observables. This strong assumption of the random effects model is not present in a fixed-effects model, which allows the intercept term to be determined by individual-specific, time-invariant regressors. If the random-effects model is correctly specified, then both the fixed- and random-effects models are consistent. The random-effects estimator is not consistent, however, if the random effects are correlated with the explanatory variables. A Hausman test examines whether a significant correlation exists between random effects and explanatory variables. If so, the random-effects slope estimator is inconsistent, and so the fixed-effects model, rather than the random-effects model, should be implemented.

A Hausman test on our data indicated that the estimates from the random-effects model are consistent for our data, and so we report only the results from the random-effects model in Tables 4 and 5. In addition, the shape parameters for our models are both significant. Along with the coefficients and standard errors, we report the incident rate ratios to ease interpretation of the model. Incident rate ratios can be interpreted as the percentage change in the dependent

FIGURE 3 Interaction Effects for Patriot Act News Stories on Percent Change in New Registrants per Week, by SES and Immigrant Context



variable (new registrants per week) given a one-unit change in an independent variable, with the remaining variables held constant. A ratio of 1 signifies no change. A ratio less than 1 indicates a negative relationship, and a ratio greater than 1 indicates a positive relationship.

Results: Total Registration. The results of our estimation for all Arab-American registrants appear in Table 4. Consistent with theoretical expectations, news coverage surrounding the Patriot Act was highly associated with surges in Arab-American registration conditional on the educational attainment of local populations. Figure 3 shows that Arab-American registration increased among Arab Americans living in areas with varying education levels, but at a significantly faster rate among those Arab Americans living in the highest education contexts.¹⁷ At the same time, an increase in Patriot Act stories led to a decrease in

¹⁶Hausman, Hall, and Griliches (1984) assume that the Poisson parameter, λ_{it} , is distributed according to a Gamma distribution, $\Gamma(\gamma, \delta)$, where $\gamma_{it} = \exp(X_{it} \beta)$. To allow for overdispersion, they assume $\delta_{it}/(1 + \delta_{it})$ is distributed according to a Beta distribution, $B(a, b)$. Accordingly, we need to estimate the two shape parameters in addition to the vector of coefficients, β .

¹⁷The values for the Patriot Act represent percentiles (1, 5, 10, 25, 50, 75, 90, 95, 99) for the number of stories. The graph shows the effect of just the interaction variable (not including the base effect

TABLE 4 Negative Binomial Panel Model of Arab American Registration, by Week, at 15 Locations

		IRR
Intercept	3.87* (.4336)	
Patriot Act	-.0072 (.0038)	
War in Iraq	.0045 (.0050)	
Birth Date	-.0012 (.0008)	
2002 General Closing Dates	.5739* (.0935)	1.7752
2002 Primary Closing Dates	.3714* (.0812)	1.4498
2003 Recall Closing Date	-.5331* (.1375)	.5868
2001 General Closing Date	.6172* (.2258)	1.8537
2003 Primary Closing Date	-.0387 (.1525)	
Competitiveness	-.0005 (.0008)	
General Registration Trend	.0001* (.0000)	1.0001
Arab American Population (1000s)	.0134* (.0042)	1.0135
Local Mosques	-.7201* (.0812)	.4867
Percent College	-.0390* (.0095)	.9617
Percent Foreign Born	-.0357* (.0060)	.9649
Week (Trend)	-.0027* (.0006)	.9973
Patriot Act × Percent College	.0005* (.0001)	1.0001
Patriot Act × Percent Foreign Born	-.0002* (.0001)	.9998
War in Iraq × Percent College	-.0003 (.0002)	
War in Iraq × Percent Foreign Born	.0001 (.0001)	
<i>a</i>	1.51* (.5224)	
<i>b</i>	1.71* (.6145)	
<i>N</i>	1,815	
Log Likelihood	-4,666.4	

Standard errors in parentheses.
**p* ≤ .05.

registration levels as the proportion of immigrants in the local milieu rose. The impact of threatening policy action on political mobilization, then, does appear to be mediated by the characteristics of the locale.

The presence of mosques, normalized for Arab-American population size (mosques per thousand Arab-American residents), is associated with diminished Arab-American registration. New cases of Arab-American voter registration dropped by approximately 51% for every unit increase in the number of mosques. We also see in Table 4 that upticks in Arab-American registration were driven by more general increases in total voter registration. Specifically, Arab-American registration jumped by 25.4% for every standard deviation increase in the total number of registrants ($\sigma = 2,544$).¹⁸ Similarly, Arab-American registration dramatically increased in counties with larger Arab-American populations, by about 21% for every standard deviation increase in size ($\sigma = 15.6$).

Results: Registration by Party. Table 5 shows the disaggregated results for registration trends for Arab-American Democrats, Independents, and Republicans. Some important differences stand out. First, Republican registration was not as responsive to post-9/11 policy events as Democratic registration—something strongly hinted at in the tabulations presented earlier. News stories did not increase the number of Arabs on the Republican rolls. Instead, Republican gains among Arab Americans are associated primarily with predictable features of the election calendar, such as closing date deadlines, and overall GOP registration trends, but are significantly less prevalent at those locations where mosques are present.

Predictably, Republican registration also drops in immigrant contexts—mainly large urban areas. Interestingly, both Democrats and Independents also do poorly where there is some semblance of a Muslim religious presence, though not nearly as poorly as Republicans. This does not imply that Muslim Arabs avoided party registration after 9/11, but it does mean that there are not dramatic surges in new registrants in locations with a noticeable Muslim religious presence. Part of the reason for this effect may be that Arab-American non-Muslims residing in locations of otherwise high Muslim concentration registered as Independent or unaffiliated, or with the GOP, largely obscuring any Democratic surge that may have occurred among Muslims themselves (Jamal 2005).

¹⁸We use “one standard deviation” here because a one-unit change is too small and uninteresting (since the variable has such a large range) to provide much substantive insight.

from the Patriot Act, which is insignificant, or the base effect from the other variable in the interaction).

TABLE 5 Negative Binomial Panel Model Estimates of Arab American Partisan Registration after 9/11, by Week, at 15 Locations

Variable	Republican		Democrat		Independent	
		IRR		IRR		IRR
Intercept	3.71*		3.49*		3.35*	
	(.7723)		(.6096)		(.5612)	
Patriot Act	.0011		-.0107*	.9894	-.0068	
	(.0062)		(.0042)		(.0056)	
War in Iraq	.0088		.0103		-.0030	
	(.0084)		(.0062)		(.0065)	
Birth Date	-.0042		.0047*	1.0047	-.0030	
	(.0039)		(.0018)		(.0026)	
2002 General Closing Dates	.3088*	1.3618	.7825*	2.1870	.5883*	1.8009
	(.1291)		(.1126)		(.1137)	
2002 Primary Closing Dates	.3451*	1.4121	.2873*	1.3328	.4498*	1.5379
	(.1174)		(.1093)		(.1000)	
2003 Recall Closing Date	-.4234*	.6548	-.1010		-.7720*	.4621
	(.1752)		(.1676)		(.1790)	
2001 General Closing Date	.7983*	2.2218	.8405*	2.3175	.2430	
	(.3085)		(.2345)		(.2836)	
2003 Primary Closing Date	.1037		.3645		-.4824*	.6173
	(.1925)		(.1897)		(.2310)	
Competitiveness	.0016		-.0017		-.0002	
	(.0010)		(.0011)		(.0010)	
General Partisan Registration Trend	.0003*	1.0003	.0002*	1.0002	.0004*	1.0003
	(.0000)		(.0000)		(.0000)	
Arab American Population (1000s)	.0243*	1.0246	.0056		.0152*	1.0154
	(.0058)		(.0048)		(.0053)	
Local Mosques	-.8235*	.4389	-.6886*	.5023	-.5265*	.5906
	(.1463)		(.1174)		(.1152)	
Percent College	-.0226		-.0355*	.9651	-.0532*	.9482
	(.0186)		(.0135)		(.0118)	
Percent Foreign Born	-.0542*	.9472	-.0307*	.9698	-.0155	
	(.0125)		(.0080)		(.0087)	
Week (Trend)	-.0024*	.9976	-.0034*	.9966	-.0033*	.9967
	(.0009)		(.0008)		(.0008)	
Patriot Act × Percent College	.0001		.0007*	1.0007	.0005*	1.0005
	(.0002)		(.0002)		(.0002)	
Patriot Act × Percent Foreign Born	-.0001		-.0002*	.9998	-.0002*	.9998
	(.0001)		(.0001)		(.0001)	
War in Iraq × Percent College	-.0005		-.0006*	.9994	.0001	
	(.0003)		(.0002)		(.0002)	
War in Iraq × Percent Foreign Born	.0001		.0001		.0001	
	(.0001)		(.0001)		(.0001)	
<i>a</i>	3.24*		2.10*		2.96*	
	(1.30)		(.77)		(1.10)	
<i>b</i>	1.21*		1.40*		1.94*	
	(.45)		(.50)		(.71)	
<i>N</i>	1,815		1,815		1,815	
Log Likelihood	-2,633.1		-3,508.2		-3,322.5	

Standard errors in parentheses.

* $p \leq .05$.

Notably, Muslim and mosque presence is positively associated with both lower income neighborhoods and larger more densely populated counties with more recent immigrant populations.

Republicans decisively lost the Arab-American mobilization race to Democrats at the time of the 2002 closing date for the off-year general elections. Republican registration surged by 36%, but Arab-American registration with the Democratic Party shows a considerable 119% increase; Independent/unaffiliated registration also soared by 80% at this same time, indicating that a large share of new Arab-American registrants feel no affinity for either major party.

What of the other potentially disquieting policy actions that emerged after 9/11? Notably, we did not find evidence that either the Iraq War or other policy-relevant stories we studied had a systematic or consistent impact on Arab-American registration. It appears that a substantial increase in stories about the war may have slowed Democratic registration gains in areas of high educational attainment, but did not elevate Republican or Independent registration. Without question, news about the passage and enforcement of the Patriot Act was the most consistently alarming and mobilizing aspect of news coverage among the members of this minority group.

Discussion

While the act of voter registration is only a first step in the mobilization process, it is a prerequisite one in all but a handful of states. Moreover, many studies have shown that the vast majority of registered voters do cast ballots, implying that registration is the critical hurdle in the mobilization process, and something worth studying in its own right (Timpone 1998; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). The policy aftermath of 9/11 was apparently enough to stimulate mobilization that would likely not have otherwise occurred among many Arab-American citizens. By heightening Arab-American concern about government policy, the events following 9/11 led to greater political activity among a dispersed, unorganized, and quiescent population and provided valuable clues to understanding how politically mobilized diasporas develop.

Our analysis fills some gaps in the participation literature on the uneven impact of socioeconomic status. A central finding is that policy-relevant events can stimulate interest in elections and the electoral process, but that these effects are conditioned on contextual effects and general levels of attentiveness and communication, which are related to SES. Threat and

SES work in tandem and viewing either in isolation paints an incomplete picture. Our evidence is certainly consistent with the idea that citizens with better access to information are more capable of identifying policy threats when they arise and of taking action to counter them. Even for a variable such as education, which has long been known to be positively related to participation, we saw in Figure 3 that the interactive impact is greatest in the most well-educated venues. The conditioning effect is not constant. Similarly, Arab-American registration gains are far slower in areas of immigrant concentration, which may signal not only the barriers posed by naturalization, but differences in political information in locales where English is not the primary medium of communication.

Our findings suggest that mobilization is a function of political and policy consciousness wrought by socialization experiences and that local context is an important marker of socialization experience. It appears that information flow about threat travels faster among members of a population in a venue where communication with other group members about frightening public policies is recurring, but within a general setting of higher socioeconomic status. Arab Americans did not have homogeneous or uniform experiences after September 11, 2001, and our results show this very clearly—suggesting that what shaped the post-9/11 experience had a lot to do with local conditions. Certainly part of this context involves the organized mobilization efforts by parties and interest groups—endeavors which are more vigorous in areas where there are geographically compact populations. The surge in Arab-American mobilization in more urban counties likely reflects the activity of party and interest group activists, many of whom play upon political anxieties when registering voters.¹⁹

¹⁹Surely, our analysis also showed that threat posed by government policy is not the only reason Arab Americans add their names to the voter rolls. Mobilization appears to be stronger in areas that are least likely to house Arab-American citizens who fit a “terrorist profile” (e.g., mobilization occurred independently of the presence of local mosques and of population characteristics such as nation of ancestry). Since Christians outnumber Muslims by 2 to 1, we should not be surprised by this result. If we were considering only the population of Muslim Arabs, our results for the influence of mosques might be different (Jamal 2005). Even so, our results indicate that it was not only Muslim Arabs who surged onto the registration rolls after 9/11. By including locations where Arab Americans reside outside of large central cities, we have avoided the selection biases associated with studying only highly urban Arab-American populations, or only the foreign born. Our findings also make sense once it is understood that mobilization through the conventional means of registration and voting first requires citizenship, and may also require higher than average levels of literacy and exposure to U.S. political institutions. Recent immigrant Muslims are disadvantaged on all three counts relative

The Arab-American case also illuminates several other facets of the stimulus of policy events on political engagement. First, in addition to an uneven response to registration, those who did register registered more heavily as Democrats than as Republicans. So policy-related events may not only add voters to the rolls, but also have the potential to reconstitute the electorate by reconfiguring the balance of political preferences expressed at the polls. The large number of Independents who registered is also noteworthy and suggests that some members of a threatened group do not feel comfortable allying with the policy stands of either major party. These voters typically constitute a volatile group whose allegiances may swing, and who are not always activated to turn out at all. The two major parties will be forced to compete for these voters in future elections, at least in battleground states.

Finally, following the work of Ramakrishnan (2005), we note that threat can not only be a mobilizer but can also trigger ethnic consciousness, even pan-ethnic consciousness, to generate political capital. It is a healthy testimony to the openness of a free society and the value of democratic institutions to observe individuals mobilizing in response to government policy actions. That these individuals are a part of a small minority group that has faced considerable social hostility as well as adverse official policy is even more remarkable.

Appendix

APPENDIX TABLE A.1. Descriptive Statistics for Variables in Arab American Survey

Variable	Low Value	High Value	Mean	SD
Patriot Act	0	1	.395	.489
Detained Since 9/11	0	1	.157	.364
Discrimination	1	4	1.437	.907
Sex	0	1	.478	.499
Young	0	1	.203	.403
Elderly	0	1	.083	.276
Media in English	0	1	.357	.479
US Birth	0	1	.217	.412

to those of Arab-American ancestry who are Christian, speak English, and have a longer history in the country. The level of mobilization would appear to have far more to do with the size of the local foreign-born population, the size of the Arab-American community, and general registration patterns driving registration among other population groups in the locale.

APPENDIX TABLE A.1. continued

Variable	Low Value	High Value	Mean	SD
Interviewed in English	0	1	.317	.466
Registered Voter	0	1	.658	.475
Muslim	0	1	.672	.469
Christian	0	1	.236	.425
Arab	0	1	.667	.472

Source: Bendixen and Associates, New American Media Poll, August 2004.

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