ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: FROM MANY IDENTITIES TO ONE VOICE?:
                                  ARAB AMERICAN ACTIVISM FORGED
                                  FROM THE POLITICS OF ISOLATION

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        This dissertation answers key questions about the reasons behind the

mobilization and consolidation of Arab American collective identities expressed in

political activism. Summarized into one overarching question, these key questions

examine what encourages and challenges the mobilization of a consolidated political

voice of Arab Americans in the American political arena. The ultimate goal of this

project is to understand the reasons behind the existing political weakness of Arab

American voices in the American socio-political arena. More specifically stated, the

key questions are: "What, in the history of immigration of Arab American, impacted

the current weakness of the collective, Arab American political voice?;" "What

impact did political events and policies have on the mobilization of the consolidated

Arab American identity?;" "What are the challenges and motivations for

consolidation of the Arab American political voice related to the heterogeneity of

Arab American communities?;" and finally "What role does counter-mobilization,

namely pro-Israeli lobbies, play in affecting the intensity of Arab American voices in American politics?"

The general answer, which was acquired through tracing the process of formation of this mobilization and consolidation of the Arab American identity, demonstrates that political isolation is the predominant mobilizing factor for identity-based activism and consolidation of Arab American identities. This study concludes that Arab Americans face political isolation due to several factors such as the relatively short presence of Arab immigrants in the United States, their brief political engagement in the American political arena, the heterogeneity of Arab American communities preventing a development of strong leadership uniting the communities, and the presence of counter-mobilized communities such as well established pro-Israeli lobbies which are often in opposition to Arab American political efforts.

Historical events such as the 1967 War or the attacks of September 11 make Arab American activists aware of their political isolation. Thus, unlike many ethnic minorities motivated by cultural and economic factors, Arab American motivation is predominantly politically driven.

In regard to methodological approaches, this research draws on interviews, life histories of members of self-labeling Arab American organizations in the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Area and document analyses to learn about their organizations and motivations behind identity-based political activism. In regard to pre-existing scholarship, this study engages the literature about panethnic mobilization and the incorporation of immigrants into a host society. A recurrent theme in this literature is how panethnic mobilization is driven by economic or

cultural factors. However, economic and cultural factors are not key catalysts driving

panethnic Arab American identities. At the collective level Arab Americans enjoy all

elements of citizenship: legal status, rights and a sense of belonging yet their path to

full participation in U.S. political arenas remains a challenge.

The consolidated identity-based activism of Arab Americans focuses on

gaining a political voice and creating an influential political constituency. As this

study reveals, Arab American panethnic organizations strive to disrupt the monolithic

and negative discourse about Arabs and Arab Americans in the popular and political

culture of the United States by taking ownership over the "Arab American" label.

Thus, the use of the monolithic label of Arabness is ultimately a strategic move

towards gaining political voice(s). The complexities and nuances of this political

isolation and corresponding political mobilization unfold in the chapters below.

FROM MANY IDENTITIES TO ONE VOICE?: ARAB AMERICAN ACTIVISM
FORGED FROM THE POLITICS OF ISOLATION

By

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

> *"What we've realized is that rather than trying to come to some common ethnic or cultural program, which we did not do, the issues are what unites us. I mean people do care about Palestinians, they do care about immigrants, civil rights, liberties, the interrogations, because when you pass a visa policy that restricts visas that affects all the Arab groups, it doesn't matter if you're 5th generation Lebanese. When your cousins can't come here, when your family can't come here has nothing to do with you, because your name is Arabic or because they come from Lebanon. They have to be concerned with that, they have to be concerned with the possibility of them being wiretapped because they are calling their family in Lebanon and somebody picks up the phone and says some word that is picked up by the NSA in the tracking. So, it's not difficult to find matters that there are converging on"* Kadir, an activist from a consolidated identity-based organization

Kadir is one of many Americans of Arab heritage committed to working within the American political system to gain voice on behalf of Arab Americans. Kadir is proud to be an American and, as other Americans, he wants to live peacefully in his country. However, due to his Arab heritage, Kadir has real concerns about stigmatization, everyday limitations, and persecution. Kadir's concerns are a strong motivating factor leading him to be active on the behalf of Arab Americans. His story is one among many that explains the motivations behind decisions of Arab Americans to unite under one panethnic banner and act politically.

This study captures the stories of Arab American activists. The stories answer one overarching question: what triggers the mobilization of Arab American collective identities? On one hand the focus of this overarching question is what encourages the mobilization of a consolidated political voice of Arab Americans in the American political arena and, on the other, what challenges or hinders such mobilization. The ultimate goal of this project is to understand the reasons behind the existing political weakness of Arab American voices in the American socio-political arena. More

specifically stated, my key research questions are: "What, in the history of immigration of Arab Americans, impacted the current weakness of the collective, Arab American political voice?;" "What impact did political events and policies have on the mobilization of the consolidated Arab American identity;" "What are the challenges and motivations for consolidation of the Arab American political voice related to the heterogeneity of Arab American communities;" and finally "What role does counter-mobilization, namely pro-Israeli lobbies, play in affecting the intensity of Arab American voices in American politics?"

In answering these questions, I am tracing the process of formation and reformulation of a panethnic Arab American identity expressed in political activism. Through a thorough qualitative analysis, which includes interviews, life histories, and document analysis of self-labeling Arab American organizations in the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Area, it became apparent that the immediate triggers leading to experiences of groupness are critical historical events, policies harmful to Arab Americans, and the defamation of Arab Americans in popular and political culture. By "groupness" I mean mobilized collective identities treated as an event, and as a historically emergent process that can be traced (Brubaker 2005). However, the common indirect trigger was the need for a political voice within the political culture of the United States. Arab American activists in my study consistently expressed a lack of access to the American political system of Arab American voices. I refer to this lack of access as political isolation.

Through tracing the process of groupness revealed in the formation of Arab American consolidated identity, I argue that the mobilization of Arab American

collective identities, especially the mobilization of panethnic/consolidated identity, is ultimately a response to this political isolation. It is an effort to re-appropriate the ownership of the Arab American label, to shape it through forming coalitions within the heterogeneous communities of Arab Americans. I argue that taking control over an ethnic (or panethnic) identity label may be a strategy to take ownership over the discourse about this label and allow Arab American communities to become political actors. This label is then deconstructed and the complexities of the communities are brought to public and political attention. In other words, Arab Americans who are mobilized in panethnic organizations work on shaping the image of Arab Americans as heterogeneous communities, and are working with the multiple Arab American identity based organizations, forming coalitions, and creating one political constituency. These efforts are reflected in an increasing participation of Arab Americans in the political culture of the United States by becoming an influential constituency that can affect elections, especially in swing states.

Including the introduction, this dissertation is composed of nine chapters. Chapter two reviews the literature of interest, starting with defining concepts of identity used in this study, continuing with studies about understandings of immigrant incorporation, panethnic mobilization, and conceptualizations of citizenship. The second section of chapter two discusses the theoretical framework of this study that includes Rogers Brubaker's understanding of collective identity, focusing on the concept of groupness and its mobilization expressed in social movements. Chapter three overviews the methodology used in this study, it describes the data and population of the study.

The findings of this study start with chapter four and are organized by factors explaining the existence of political isolation of Arab Americans. Chapter four discusses the relatively short history of the presence of Arab immigrants in the United States. Chapter five reveals the rich diversity of the communities resulting in lack of common interests and leadership among Arab Americans, but also highlighting the complexity of Arab American communities. This heterogeneity of the communities creates challenges for the process of consolidation of Arab American identity. Chapter six discusses reasons why critical events (such as the 1967 Six Day War[1] and terrorist attacks of 9/11[2]) and policies (such as NSEER or the PATRIOT Act) triggered processes of groupness for Arab Americans. The impact of critical events was closely related to disillusionment by my respondents with U.S. politics and observation of a clear anti-Arab bias in politics.

The latter chapters of the dissertation contain additional findings and map these findings against the broader contexts of political lobbies, Arab-American strategies, and my policy implications. Chapter seven continues explaining the anti-Arab bias discussed in chapter six, but does so in terms of the influence of pro-Israeli lobbies on the American political system. These lobbies reduce possibilities of access of Arab Americans to the American politics. Chapter eight analyzes mobilization,

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[1] War that took place between June 5-10 of 1967 between Israel and neighboring states of Egypt, Syria and Jordan (Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria also contributed arms). It was a preemptive war waged by Israel first on Egypt and then on Jordan and Syria. As a result of this war, Israel gained control over Sinai Peninsula (from Egypt), Gaza Strip and the West Bank (from Jordan) and the Golan Heights (from Syria). It was a conflict that shocked the Arab world and is at the core of the Palestinian-Israeli dispute and the dispute between Israel and other Arab states.
[2] Attacks were conducted by an Islamic fundamentalist organization Al-Qaeda, on New York's Twin Towers and Pentagon killing 2973 people. It took place on September 11, 2001 (9/11) after which the United States declared a War on Terrorism and that led to waves of prejudice/discrimination and hatred towards American Muslims and Arabs and whoever "looked like an Arab or Muslim" (including Sikhs).

strategies and pragmatism used to form Arab American consolidated identity based

organizations in order to gain political voice in the American political arena. The

Arab American consolidated identity-based organizations are strategically creating a

ground for common interests for Arab Americans in order to create a significant

political constituency. The ultimate goal for this activism is to take over the

ownership of the label of Arab Americaness, which has been demeaned and vilified

over the years in U.S. popular and political cultural arenas, and to influence the U.S.

political scene. Chapter eight discusses the pragmatic consolidation of identity efforts

on the part of Arab Americans. It reveals that Arab Americans, who are mainly

second generation Americans, are very proud to be Americans and believe in the

American political system. This chapter focuses on what can be done in the U.S.

Chapter nine offers conclusions, contributions and implications of this study.

Chapter nine warrants a bit more elaboration than the other chapters

summarized above. Contributions include the expansion of Brubaker's notion of

identity as a traceable process and not a group. This chapter underscores the possible

pragmatism and consciousness of this process focusing on the practices and

mechanisms by which activists take over an already existing panethnic label.

This study adds to discussions on race and ethnicity, immigration, and

intergroup dynamics pointing out the existence of different mechanisms of

incorporation into society and different kinds of isolation. It moves beyond debates

about isolation on political, economic, and social realms separately or simultaneously

and highlights that economic success and racial inclusion may not translate into

political inclusion. Finally, this study points out implications of rich possibilities of

potential political partnerships for U.S. politicians with constituencies that are proud

American citizens, knowledgeable of the United States political system but also

sensitive to the issues of the Arab world, the Middle East in particular. These

partnerships can be beneficial for all parties involved and create a foundation for

dialogue that was not encouraged in the recent past.

Arab Americans became of increasing interest to the mainstream media and

scholars after the events of 9/11. Though there have been an increasing number of

studies conducted about the mobilization of Muslim communities (Bakalian 2007)

and Arab American communities (Haddad 2004), a high degree of reductionism is

present in such studies. These studies portray Arab American communities as fixed

groups and their organizations as representative of all the communities. Additionally,

they do not take into account the differentiation of internal and external definitions of

collective identity. Even if presenting a positive outlook on Arab American

communities, these types of analyses only perpetuate the dichotomous relationships

between groups, between "us" and "them," thus reinforcing the "othering[3]." This type

of analysis does not serve to diminish social distance between groups – and it does

not facilitate the process of overcoming labels and stereotypes about individuals who

associate with a given collective identity. In other words, the current literature about

Arab Americans has two major shortcomings: it overlooks the fact that Arab

Americans are not a monolithic group, and it ignores the reality that 9/11 was but a

flare-up of a continued trend of negative attitudes that can be traced as far as 1967.

The concept of "the other" is a way of defining and securing one's own identity through the stigmatization of an "other." It helps maintaining the apparent unity of the "self" through an active process of exclusion, opposition, and hierarchization (Cahoone 1996) To read more, see Cahoone (1996), Calvin (2000).

Arab Americans have been portrayed in the American mainstream as a homogenous group for decades. They are assumed to be oppressive, villains, exotic (Said 1978), Muslim, dark-haired, traditional, and to typically believe in fundamentalist religious principles. These images were ingrained even more after the September 11, 2001, attacks on the Pentagon and World Trade Center. However, images such as these attacks misrepresent Arab Americans; they neither represent a majority nor a significant part of Arab American communities. In contrast to media portrayals, Arab Americans identify themselves with multiple labels (Leonard 2005; Naber 2000). Those labels are constantly influenced and shaped by structural factors; they cannot be treated as one identity *group*.

Though Western misrepresentations about "Arabs" have existed when the first wave of Arab immigrants came to the U.S. during the 1800s, social boundaries between these immigrants and the mainstream dissipated over time. But after 1967, misrepresentations increased and have become reinforced as a result of a combination of factors. The factors include critical events, media portrayals, introduction of laws and policies that directly affect Arab American identity categories, and political forces that oppose the political interests of Arab American communities. This has resulted in the crystallization of collective identities, and the political mobilization of Arab Americans. As a result, Arab Americans are increasingly visible and they are taking ownership over their representation in the political and popular culture.

Many early Arab American immigrants felt like aliens, lacking a sense of belonging. Many chose to remain aloof from the U.S. mainstream as most of the first immigrants were planning on going back home. Eventually though, they assimilated,

became incorporated into the American mosaic and became an invisible minority, with full ethnic options. Both previous studies (Samhan 1987; Naber 2000; Orfalea 2006) and the respondents in my study cited that the main reason Arab Americans became visible again in the American mainstream were political events in the Middle East starting with the Six Day War of 1967. However, the apogee of negative press against Arab Americans took place, as mentioned above, after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 in New York and Washington, DC. After each of these critical events, Arab Americans expressed a need for a political voice. However, political voice was not easily attainable because of their previous lack of political participation in the U.S. political system, which led to a lack of political connections. Additionally, there were several factors, discussed in chapters seven and eight that made it more difficult for Arab Americans to gain access to American political system: the relatively small size of the Arab American communities, splits, and absence of leadership in the communities. I argue that these elements created political isolation of Arab Americans. This isolation contributes to a lack of influence towards deconstructing negative stereotypes, preventing the homogenization of Arab Americans, and fighting negative consequences of the critical events.

Political activism is an ultimate expression of citizenship and trust in the reciprocal relationship between the state and citizens. Full citizenship rights include legal status, citizenship rights, sense of belonging, and political participation[4] (Bloemraad 2008). Unlike most other minorities, Arab Americans have had most of these elements except for political participation. Most ethnic and racial groups had to

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[4] At the individual level it includes voting and the right to run for office; at the collective level it includes establishing a political constituency with established political connections in the polity

fight for some or all of these. African Americans had to struggle to attain all four, Asian Americans, Native Americans, even early European white ethnic groups were not granted legal status right away. Many Arab Americans went through the legal system in order to have citizenship rights granted, arguing for "Caucasian" rather than "Oriental" (i.e., Asian) or other non-white origins. However, those battles were of an individual nature and not a collective effort.

As mentioned above, I framed this study using Rogers Brubaker's approach to collective identity. In his terms, this study traces the process of groupness of Arab Americans, by highlighting the factors that triggered this groupness. This groupness resulted in turn in the process of re-appropriating the already existing Arab American label but in groupist terms i.e., "tendency to represent the social and cultural world as a multichrome mosaic of monochrome ethnic, racial, or cultural blocs" (Brubaker 2005).

Arab Americans are a puzzling case as they do not share the process of marginalization with other minority groups in the United States. The discrepancies between their portrayal in the American mainstream and the realities of these communities were one of the reasons why I decided to dedicate myself to this scholarly journey of understanding the complexities of Arab American communities and their mobilization patterns. Arab Americans are racially included, but politically excluded from the mainstream: most were and still are considered "white," they are one of few minority groups that are mostly very well educated and professionally successful; many pass as "white" and do not experience discrimination, and seventy percent are Christian. Despite the above factors, Arab Americans face social closure

when it comes to access to politics, presence in the media, and reception of their heritage as acceptable and compatible with being an American. Also, Arab Americans do experience discrimination when they are seen as an "Arab" instead of as a white person.

My own background and identity played an important role in the choice to undertake this study and impacted the ways I interacted with my respondents and analyzed the collected data. My family has been closely related to the Arab world for the past two generations, which made what people widely refer to as "Arab culture" seem almost like a second culture to me. My close relationship to the Arab world was also an element that often warmed my respondents to me and encouraged more open conversations. I have lived in several Arabic speaking countries myself and learned Arabic. Throughout my life, I have been sensitive to Arab-related issues and clarified misinformation about the Arab world whenever people voiced such misinformation in my presence. Additionally, being raised in several countries, interacting with many people of various identities and backgrounds and observing how my own identity has been shifting and changing allowed me to appreciate the flexibility of ones identity and sense of belonging. My own experiences also showed me how powerful an identity can be, especially if combined with political claims and beliefs. My stories seemed to be intertwined with those who have hyphenated identities and are related to the Arab world. The choice to embark on a scholarly journey towards understanding the process by which Arab Americans form political collective identities was only a logical next step; this journey was a means of understanding intellectually what I have been surrounded by for most of my life.

At the same time, this study is timely and necessary because it contributes to scholarly debates and studies that add complexity, variety, and dimensionality to identity categories like "Arab" that are typically covered with the illusion of singularity and incompatibility with American citizenship.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURES OF INTEREST

> *"If you're working in a situation like we have in Gaza, the humanitarian crisis, on the one hand, and on the other you are expected as an American citizen, voter, to make decisions about political campaigns – they are not a one issue decisions, right? I care about taxes, I care about gun control, and things like that. As a citizen I am concerned about things like that, but it is difficult at times to balance the full range of those issues against something dramatic and one sided as the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the way it plays out in the American politics"*
> Nadir, a Palestinian American activist

There is a rich tradition in scholarship about the incorporation of immigrants and their

descendants into host societies. These scholarly discourses are full of examples of

how this incorporation takes paths that are both lengthy and complex. The

complexities include struggling to succeed in the host economy in a new cultural

environment, learning a new language and culture, and legally becoming a member of

the society by entering in a contract between the new state to exchange the rights of

citizenship in return for its obligations. However, being incorporated into a society

does not mean being able to fully participate in it, nor being regarded as one of its

rightful members. One of the ultimate expressions of membership in a society is

political participation, to have a voice in a polity of a host country and to have an

impact, similar to that of "established" citizens. However, as revealed by Nadir's

experience in the quote that opens this chapter. there are immigrants and their

descendants who cannot experience full incorporation to the host society because they

experience political isolation. Political isolation results in few points of access to

political decision making. This situation is a consequence of a political process in

which the images, assumptions and defamations against the isolated group are

uncontested and become perpetuated and reinforced. Political isolation results in a

lack of access to political structures for the isolated group, access that would enable

the group to have an impact on shaping the image and treatment of their groups'
collective identities. The process of the social construction of minorities is ultimately
driven by politics – whether it is questioning and testing loyalty towards the nation or
state, state building, political mobilization, or is a result of structural changes that
affect social and economic links (Grew 2001).

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section provides a
background literature defining collective identity, reviewing the literature about
processes of socio-economic incorporation and reasons behind panethnic identity
formation. The first section also discusses foundations of citizenship that can create
unequal status for immigrants and their descendants and reasons for the need of
creating politically driven panethnic organizations. The second section is a theoretical
framework that provides the lens for this study. It starts with processes of collective
identity mobilization, which is followed by a discussion of new social movement
theories focusing on framing and mobilization.

Conceptualizations of the creation of panethnic, or consolidated based identity
groups and/or organizations, are rarely based upon participatory citizenship. Instead,
they are often framed in terms of culture, language (Nagel 1994) or efforts towards
economic success, or fighting structural barriers of social and economic
discrimination. However, mobilization is also an expression of efforts towards
participatory citizenship, framed in terms of engagement on political governance
(Bloemraad 2008 et al.) and activities that are related to citizenship. Panethnic
organizations/groups are often created in order to be recognized in the polity, to be
present and be able to maintain a heritage and/or become successful economically.

There is little discussion about types of mobilization of ethnic nationalism which are focused on achieving access to political structures and exercising full citizenship rights at the collective level. This formation is necessary, especially in the case of a collective of various groups who are portrayed as a monolithic group in a negative light despite an overall successful economic and cultural incorporation into mainstream society. The organizations are created in order to counteract the negative dynamics taken against this "group." They work within the frame of the label, decentering it in order to be more fully incorporated into a society by having a voice in the polity.

Traditionally, participatory citizenship was framed in terms of engagement in political governance (Bloemraad 2008 et al.) and activities that are related to citizenship. Marshall (1950) pointed out that economic and social inclusion may undermine people's capacity to act as citizens, i.e., members in a political and geographical community, in a state. This membership includes more than just legal status, as formal citizenship and participation in the polity might not overlap. Markers of integration such as economic advancement, educational attainment or cultural acceptance can become measures of second-class citizens, whatever one's legal status (Alba and Silberman 2001; Brysk 2004; Ong 1996; Portes and Rumbaut 2001, 2006). In American sociology, the primary way of understanding immigrant participation this broadly is through debates about immigrants' assimilation in either the first or subsequent generations (Alba and Nee 2003; Bean and Stevens 2003; Waters and Jimenez 2005). This review extends the understanding of participation to discussion of citizenship in terms of immigrants and an evolution of attitudes towards

hyphenated identities in general. It also includes a discussion about the existence of a durable status of "otherness" that is not based in the economy, culture, or race[5].

Who has the rights of participatory citizenship then and who does not? Those who are granted legal citizenship are officially a part of state and society. Immigrants are "people who come to a country to take up a permanent residence and engage in income earning activities" (Haddad 2004). The distinction seems to be straightforward but becomes blurry when one ceases to be an immigrant by becoming a naturalized citizen.[6]

Stigmatization and political isolation derived from "otherness" based on foreign origins shows that incorporation into a society is not complete simply by being economically successful or acquiring host society cultural mores at an individual level. Ultimately, it is achieved when, at a collective level, political access is achieved: full rights of citizenship and membership in political debates of the polity at the collective level[7].

SECTION I: Background literatures

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[5] Race is a significant and often major obstacle in achieving a status of full incorporation and substantive citizenship, however, this project is focusing on political and not-racial explanations of political alienation. I am not arguing that race does not play a role in this process, but I argue that other factors actually lead to racialization of a group.

[6] This discussion applies to industrialized and democratic states, in particular North America and Europe where the notion of multiculturalism is embraced and promoted, at least *de jure*. For the purpose of this project, democracy is defined along political process criteria, where a regime is democratic when it maintains "broad and equal citizenship, binding consultation of citizens at large with respect to governmental activities and personnel, as well as protection of citizens from arbitrary action by governmental agents" (Tilly 2002: 192).

[7] There is an emerging literature about transnationalism that highlights relations that immigrants and their descendants maintain with their homelands and with the compatriots in the host society paying attention to the role of globalization and technological ease of communication. The transnational links, as it is argued create new modes of political membership, such as dual citizenship or denizenship that erode traditional, exclusive forms of citizenship (Mandaville, 1999). To learn more, see Nagel (2002), Vertovec (1999), Kearney (1995). However, this project is not engaging in that literature as the reasons for creation of panethnic identity. While there are links to the countries of heritage at the organizational level among the participants of this study, the main loyalty lays in the host country that is treated as the motherland.

2.1. Collective identity

The way identity is conceptualized in this project is not focused on individual perception and understanding of one's own identity in everyday life, but the expression/mobilization of the identity to external triggers. It focuses on external forces shaping identity (Nagel 1994), or collective identities.

The claim that structural conditions have an impact on mobilizing collective identities is not new, be it structural factors such as critical historical events[8] (Tilly 2003), policies, or laws (Gould 1995; Brubaker 2004, 2005; Yazbeck Haddad 2004) or cultural representations (Sen 2006). A great deal of literature focusing on collective identities discuss singular identities that are being mobilized, crystallized or formed, such as ethnicity (Nagel 1986), nationality (Tilly 2003), or religious identity (Bakalian 2007) ignoring the presence of hyphenated identities .

The literature about identity and what forms, transforms, dissolves and mobilizes it is very vast. As Brubaker and Cooper claim (Brubaker 2004b), on one hand identity can be seen as fervently essentialist and on the other overly constructivist. Its definitions became either too narrow, located in strict non-flexible groups where there is no way to alter or mobilize an identity, or too wide, being too flexible and losing its analytical purpose as everything can trigger countless identities. However, the vast understandings of identity do not mean that discussions about

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[8] Events are defined here as sequences of occurrences that result in transformation of structures that begin with some type of rupture/critical event, which is a surprising break in a routine practice. (Sewell, William. 2005. *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.) Sewell (2005) conceived events as occurring every day, as consequences of exogenous causes, contradictions between structures or simple mistakes in the routine. However, most ruptures are neutralized and absorbed into the preexisting structure (ignored, repressed, or explained as exceptions). In this project an occurrence becomes a historical event if it 1) it derails the routine practice with a ramified sequence of occurrences 2) is recognized by contemporaries and 3) durably transforms previous structures and practices (Sewell 2005).

identity as a unit of analysis are not useful or even necessary. Identity politics, identity-based movements, and identity claims are still very present across politics, culture, or even medical discourse. Using identity a a unit of analysis is just a matter of a careful and useful definition used as the signifier of what the study is looking at and on avoiding the dichotomies and simplifications of "groupism" (Tilly 2003).

Identity here is understood as a product of social and political action. This understanding of identity highlights the *processual*, *relational*, *interactive,* and *dynamic* development of the kind of collective self-understanding, solidarity, or "groupness" that can make collective action possible (Brubaker 2004a). Identity in this study is not treated as an idiom of individual choice, like it is studied by social psychologists (Stryker 2000). It is understood both as a contingent product of social or political action and as a ground or basis for collective action (Calhoun 1991; Tilly 2004). This understanding of identity is related to three assumptions; first that identities are multiples and they are variables, not constants (Brubaker 2004). This assumption highlights that "participation identities" are rendered salient by circumstances and are a foundation of mobilization (Gould 1995) and they are "political identities" which according to Tilly become political when governments become parties to them (Tilly 2005: 210). Second, the intersectionality[9] of identities impacts the identity that is being mobilized, and finally, the third assumption is that "groupness," (i.e., mobilized collective identities) is a historically emergent process that can be traced (Brubaker 2005). Furthermore, collective identities are not entities

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[9] Intersectionality is yet another approach that acknowledges multiple identities in scholarship. It is conceptualized as various socially and culturally constructed categories that interact on multiple levels to manifest themselves as inequality in society. However, this approach focuses more on race, class, gender, and sexuality and its relationship to oppression and discrimination. To read more, see Collins (1990, 2000), Crenshaw (1991).

that are cast as actors, but are categories. As such, I incorporate Brubaker's (2004) assumption that identity organizations are not and cannot be representative of all their presupposed members.

2.1.1.   Locating collective identity in the literature

Most of the initial literature, starting with Cooley and Mead, focused on the social psychological micro-sociological perspectives, on individual identity (Cooley 1964[1902]; Mead 1962[1934]; Stryker 2000) and the ways it is shaped through interpersonal interactions and sense of self discussing concepts such as cognitive categorization, stereotyping, or labeling. In this literature factors impacting identity are based on interpersonal relationships or the ability of meaning making (Jones 2000), and the feelings and emotions that an individual is going through, that have an impact on their identity.

The concept of collective identity originated in classical sociology. Durkheim's "collective consciousness," focused on group solidarity based on social norms (Durkheim 1984 [1893]); Marx's "class consciousness" identified a group's solidarity as based on the ownership of the means of production that can be mobilized but have to be realized (Marx 1998 [1848]); and Tonnies' Gemeinschaft concept of community – based solidarity (Tonnies 2002 [1887]) informs much of my discussion. The early works were thus stressing the similarities or shared characteristics around which identity groups were formed. However, those characteristics were understood as fixed and indispensable, they were "essential characteristics" that collective members were supposed to internalize. Individuals from one community were

supposed to experience a unified and singular social understanding. This conceptualization of collective identity did not allow for any variation of experience among the collective actors, not even mentioning the impact of political, social, and cultural conditions on the experiences and manifestation of the identities.

Responses to essentialist arguments were constructionist approaches. They understood collective identity as a socially constructed phenomenon introducing the variability of identity formation depending on social conditions and context where the identity is being formed. This body of knowledge focused initially on gender (West 1987), race (Omi 1986), and class (Calhoun 1982) identities where "agents of socialization" were responsible for variations in those identities. Later were studies about national identity (Brubaker 1992; Tilly 1990), which stressed the exclusive nature of national identities, with the tendency of ego-centered binary divisions between friends and enemies. In the case of national identity studies, identity offered a postulated membership in a homogenized privileged circle of citizens (Bauman 1992).

Jenkins was one of the first sociologists to go beyond discussing collective identities as groups. He defined them as categories. He located them in an institutional context where the categorization and institutionalization of identities takes place (Jenkins 1996). This conceptualization of collective identity allows the researcher to study three dynamics: 1) to trace structural dynamics that shape and trigger identities, 2) to take into consideration not only members of the category but also those who are outside of it playing a role in triggering identities, and 3) when

conceptualized as categories, not groups, to see clearer multiple identity connections

across the symbolic and social boundaries that can be breached.

The following approaches and literature look at the mobilization of identities

in a complementary way. To combine them helps to form an exhaustive picture of

mechanisms through which and reasons why collective identities are being mobilized

in civil society organizations. It is very misleading to treat any identity category as a

group, as an entity, or as an independent actor. The literature discussing mobilization

of collective identities includes both immigration literature and citizenship literature.

These areas of knowledge provide an understanding behind the mobilization of

collective identities of citizens with a stigmatized ethnic heritage in a multicultural

context of a participatory democratic society.

2.2. Immigration processes in the US context impacting panethnic identity formation and political activism

2.2.1. Assimilation school means no hyphenation

Beginnings of sociological analyses of the immigration processes date back to the

Chicago School, specifically to Robert Park (1930) (Park and Burgess 1921). Those

initial theories of assimilation focused mainly on cultural and economic assimilation

and perceived it as a one-sided process where immigrants are expected to go through

a successful assimilation into the American society's "core culture." Park saw the

experiences of immigrants as a repeatable process starting with contact, competition

and conflict, accommodation, and ultimately assimilation. In this final stage,

immigrants "acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons or

groups [in society] and, by sharing their experiences and history, are incorporated

with them in a common cultural life" (Park and Burgess 1921: 735). The assimilated person "can participate, without encountered prejudice, in the common life, economic and political" (Park 1930: 281). In this model it was assumed that 1) ethnicity was mostly a cultural phenomenon, 2) ethnicity was socially constructed so it can change (towards identity of the host society), and 3) the assimilation process would result in ethnicities eventually disappearing. In this school there was no discussion about ethnicities in general, because American ethnicity was understood as the only acceptable outcome, even though it was not clearly defined.

Gordon led the next wave of assimilationist perspectives which specified the descriptions of the "core culture" (Gordon 1964: 72) as being white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, and middle class (Alba and Nee 2003; Sowell 1981), and defined the process of incorporation as assimilating into the mainstream culture. It was an "either/or" conceptualization of assimilation where an immigrant is either an immigrant or an American. There were no possibilities of functional hyphenation. It was also a linear process of acculturation, where immigrants eventually adopt the "cultural patterns" of the host society. Gordon popularized the term of Anglo-conformity as immigrants were supposed to be assimilating to the Anglo-Saxon culture[10] (Gordon 1964). This perspective did not fathom a possibility of political activism focused on immigrants' heritage but in conjunction with the American identity. The only identity organizations possible in this understanding were either based on ethnic origins *or* American centered, not both. This school of thought did not address the immigrants' side of the story and experiences. It only focused on the

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[10] In contrast to a "melting pot" where all culture would create one mixed culture, without a preferential culture, or "cultural pluralism" where cultures would not mix but thrive next to each other (Gordon 1964).

process of immigrant acculturation through the shedding of their native cultures, languages and affiliation, which led to an eventual decrease of discrimination and prejudice by the host's society's institutions. Of course, the result of assimilation was that resources of solidarity and mutual support within the immigrant community dissipated as well (Portes and Zhou 1993).

Assimilationist theorists conceptualized the assimilation process as happening strictly between the minority group (immigrants) and the host society's "core culture," and did not take into account the diverse nature of immigration. In other words, the early immigration scholars did not take into account the dynamics within ethnic groups, the dynamics between different groups, or the prejudices that long-term immigrants still experienced. Therefore, the early immigration studies saw no need for ethnic-based organizations to exist because every ethnic group was destined to merge and assimilate within the Anglo-Saxon culture.

In conclusion, traditional assimilation theories assumed that immigrants could not be fully incorporated into the host society until they rejected their culture and acquired the culture of the host society. Additionally, this process was conceptualized as irreversible.[11]

2.2.2. Economic incorporation

Occupational mobility and economic assimilation are key dimensions of socioeconomic assimilation[12] addressed in post-Park and Gordon immigration

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[11] There were different variants of this theory, such as "straight-line assimilation" (Gans and Sandberg 1973) discussing generational steps of assimilation or "bumpy-line theory of ethnicity" (Gans 1992) which attempted to answered the criticisms of ethnicity being able to be reactionary and impacted by the host society, Gans answered that it can be "bumpy"

[12] Socioeconomic assimilation is understood in two ways. First, the most common in the literature on assimilation and ethnicity, introduced by Warner and Srole (1945), equate it with attainment at an average or above average socioeconomic standing as measured by indicators such as education,

studies.[13] This kind of assimilation is of crucial significance for the assimilation theorists for two reasons. First, because equivalence of life chances with natives was supposed to be a critical indicator of the decline of ethnic boundaries and second, because the entry into the occupational and economic mainstream has provided many ethnic groups with a motive for social (or, in Gordon's terms, structural) assimilation. Furthermore, scholars argued that socioeconomic mobility created social conditions conducive to other forms of assimilation since it likely results in equal status contact across ethnic lines (Alba and Nee 1997). For immigrants who entered the labor market with high socio-economic status, it was argued that retention of ethnic identity had few costs and potentially many benefits. However, other aspects of social incorporation, such as political incorporation were rarely discussed, other than those based on racial dynamics (Bean and Stevens, 2003). These factors were the focus for my analysis of the formation and operation of ethnic identity-based organizations, and they were the key explanatory variables understanding the mobilization of ethnic identities.

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occupation, and income (Neidert and Farley 1985). The pre-assumption here is that immigrants enter the American social structure on its lower strata. In such cases, social mobility is a sign of socioeconomic assimilation. In the second understanding, socioeconomic assimilation is achieved when minorities participate in institutions such as the labor market and education on the basis of equity with native groups of similar background. The emphasis in the first definition is in the equality and equity of attainment or position, the emphasis of the second focuses on equality of treatment. The latter form of assimilation allows for segmented assimilation (Portes and Zhou 1993). There are also other forms of assimilation, such as spatial assimilation (Massey 1985) arguing the ultimate sign of assimilation is based on residential mobility into the mainstream, i.e., mainly white neighborhoods (Massey and Denton 1988)

[13] The economic aspect of immigration is at the core of several immigration theories, including "competition theories" and "ethnic disadvantage model." Competition theories explain success in incorporation of immigrant groups through competition between the groups themselves. In this understanding, identity is a tool to further the economic success through access to politics over other groups. Ethnic disadvantage model discusses structural and institutional barriers preventing full incorporation of immigrants through discrimination in the labor market (Beans and Steven 2003). Other models focus on ethnic or enclave economy (Bonacich and Modell 1980) where immigrant groups create or are put into niches in the labor market, become bound to those enclaves, and cannot ascend to or succeed in the mainstream economy.

Current immigration theories focus on assimilation (also called incorporation or integration) as a narrowing of differences between immigrants and the native-born majority population in certain aspects of social life (mostly labor force and cultural participation), but leaves open differences along other, often cultural, lines ranging from food choices to "fundamental beliefs and ideas regarding existence" *(*Zolberg and Long 1999*:8)*. In this formulation, efforts made on the side of immigrants and their descendants are focused and understood in terms of economic goals and interests.

2.2.3.   Segmented assimilation/incorporation

Over time, assimilation theories that held the linear view of immigrants' experience became problematic. Scholars recognized, first of all, that maintaining ties with the homeland did not necessarily erode their incorporation into the host society. In such cases, the presence of ethnic enclaves outside of mainstream culture ceased to mean automatic lack of upward mobility. A significant change was also made in regard to the linear understanding of ethnic identity.

Scholars of the next wave of immigration studies widely acknowledged that ethnicity is socially constructed, in all directions - revived or recreated based on reactions from events happening in the host society, depending on context and ethnicity (Glazer and Moynihan 1970; Yancey, Ericksen and Juliani 1976; Greeley 1977; Conzen *et al.* 1992). Also recognized was the complexity of the immigrant communities and understanding that immigrants even from the same country do not have a homogenous culture, as their identities depend not only on their country of origin but also on area of origin, religion, language, education, etc.

Finally, scholars observed and admitted that immigrant groups have an impact on the host society as well – incorporation of immigrants is not a one way-process where only the immigrants change their ways, but they make an imprint on the host society's culture and institutions. This conceptualization assumes a two-way interaction where ethnic mobilization is also dependent on the receiving nation-state, thus making various ethnic groups mobilize in response to policies of the host state (Nagel 1986), making the political composition of the state malleable and subject to change.[14]

The main concept that came out of the new immigration studies was that of segmented assimilation by Alejandro Portes (1993), a concept still widely used in studies of immigrants' experiences. It refers to a variety of adaptive experiences immigrants may have as they become part of a host society. They may follow the traditional model and assimilate into the white middle class (like the Punjabi Indians), they might follow a less prosperous path and assimilate into the underclass (like the Haitians), or they may attain upward mobility in a tight-knit immigrant community (like some Arab Americans). Portes and Min Zhou (1993) argued that immigrants do not necessarily have to first acculturate in order to advance economically and socially in the new country – some ethnic communities may have better chances for educational and economic mobility through use of material and social capital that their communities make available.[15]

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[14] Such as mobilization of Mexican Americans and Cuban Americans as a strict reactive response to respectively Proposition 187 (anti immigration legislature in California), a long history of discrimination, Cuban-American's response to mass immigration to Mariel, or the antibilingual referendums (Portes and Rumbaut 2006)

[15] Examples of such communities are Chinatown in San Francisco or "Little Italy" in New York where immigrants use group culture i.e. selling food products, clothing, and other cultural artifacts, to both accommodate their ethnicity as well as provide an economic base for assimilation

Portes and Zhou argued that the path immigrants take depends on structural factors such as: 1) political relations between sending and receiving countries, 2) the state of the economy in the latter, 3) size and structure of the preexisting co-ethnic communities, 4) modes of incorporation (i.e., complex formed by the policies of the host government, the values and prejudices of the receiving society and characteristics of the co-ethnic communities). Additionally, the experiences of immigrants further depend on the social context which impacts the vulnerability of downward mobility. This context includes racial formation of the host society[16], location of the immigrants (where cities produce greater vulnerability) and structural absence of mobility ladder (depends on the economy of the host country). The social context also includes the ethnic community's "institutional completeness" (Breton 1964) that depends on "ethnicity supply" where expressions of ethnicity at the community level produce various outcomes for individuals (Portes and Rumbaut 1996) depending on the numbers of immigrants in the community. When immigrants are not replaced by a new immigration stream, a pattern characterized by many European-ancestry groups, the supply side of ethnicity is diminished as a whole as well as narrowed in specific respects (Alba and Nee 1997). Organizations decrease in their membership as children move out from ethnic enclaves.

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[16]Mary Waters discussed the options that immigrants perceived as white face coming to the United States and those who do not have options to choose. Ethnic options produce symbolic ethnicity (Gans 1979) available for groups that are considered white and do not result in political activism. Mittelber and Waters (1992) argued that "Race has been used by theorists to refer to distinctions drawn from physical appearance. Ethnicity has been used to refer to distinctions based on national origin, language, religion, food – and other cultural markers" (1992: 425). However, one is related to the other as most whites also have ethnic options – have social, political, and economic privilege to ignore their racialization (McIntosh1997). Many see themselves as colorless or racially neutral – they can choose whether to assert an ethnic identity, and which aspect of their identity to incorporate into their lives. Those who are not considered as white, being treated and labeled as a person of color often decide to reject the racial classification by self-identifying along ethnic lines instead of purely color lines, as is the case with West Indians (Waters 1999).

There is an additional caveat to the options of immigrant incorporation. Massey (1994) and Portes and Rumbaut (1996) argue that assimilation, as represented by canonical account (ending with full blending into the host society), is specific to a set of historical circumstances that characterized mass immigration from Europe but does not, and will not, apply to contemporary non-European immigrant groups, which has been contested by multiculturalists.

2.2.4. *More than one loyalty?*

Recent scholarship questions the binary assumptions of possibility for affiliations on the side of immigrants and their descendants, thus widening the interest to political engagement. Those are advocates for multiculturalism arguing that political integration should not be equated with cultural homogenization (Gutman 1994; Kymlicka 1995). They argue that cultural minorities should have the right to preserve their culture and identity and should be under state protection against discrimination. In this way minorities are more engaged and can find refuge in the justice system of the state they live in and contribute to.

Kymlicka (2001) rejects the argument that contemporary immigrants are uninterested in or incapable of integrating into national societies, and argues that the overwhelming aim of immigrant activism is to negotiate an equal position in adopted societies and to become accepted as part of the "mainstream," even as complete assimilation in a cultural sense is rejected (see also Brubaker, 2001). Thus, elements of a civic nationalism may be emerging in some contexts. Current scholarship then, identifies several transformations in the nature of citizenship and immigrants' participation and integration in receiving societies. Kymlicka suggests that such

transformations may not be complete and that they are perhaps better thought of as presenting various *possibilities* with regard to the impact of new forms of legal citizenship (for example, denizenship) and ideologies of societal membership (for example, multiculturalism) on immigrants' identification with and participation in national societies. These possibilities are contingent on circumstances in receiving and sending countries and also on the position of particular immigrant groups (Nagel and Staeheli 2005). In other words, different political identities, political claims and modes of participation and belonging might exist simultaneously between and within societies. It therefore becomes important to consider the multiple identity claims that shape political outlooks and activism, and the multiple scales at which citizenship is constructed.

Additionally, even though motivation for ethnic collective action trumps class differences, there is a tendency for professionals to be more involved in politics of the host society than laborers or the working class in general. Professionals seldom reside in highly visible, culturally distinct enclaves and thus tend to "blend in" without creating opposition from natives (Portes and Rumbaut 2006). Their activism is directly related to their home countries, in the first generation case and then American issues tend to be added with time. Over the process of learning the democratic rules, political apprenticeship are achieved based on panethnic, or pan-national identities that are often new creations.

2.2.5. *Panethnic/pan-national formation/ Formation of boundaries*

The United States has many identity "groups" that are treated as homogenous and monolithic, such as the ethno-racial groups of African Americans, Asian American,

Latinos, Whites, Native Americans, and Arab-Americans, even though they are comprised of individuals who may not have much in common except for their ethnoracial category. According to Brubaker (2004), ethnoracial categories are constructed through political, social, and cultural processes, reinforced by political entrepreneurs, established in governmental and institutional routines, and embedded as legitimate groups which are statistically counted and represented. As an outcome of a political project or event, those categories undergo crystallization, or mobilization where the notion of "we" is developed, reinforced, and manifested.

Milton Yinger (1985) defined civic and political integration as a critical aspect of assimilation, underscoring that a group is integrated "to the degree that its members are distributed across the full range of associations, institutions, and regions of society in a pattern similar to that of the population as a whole" (1985: 32). Immigrants and their descendants become constructed as minorities in the host countries. In 1992, the General Assembly of the United Nations defined "minorities" as "national, ethnic, religious, and linguistic *communities.*" Through the social dynamics that construct and shape minority groups, members become a *de facto* community, growing more cohesive and developing their own self-definition. Creation of panethnic identity and organizations that are based on that ethnicity became a tool in the process of political incorporation for Americans of recent immigrant origin, as this was the only way to have a sufficient amount of political constituency. Panethnic-based organizations play an important role in securing civil rights for their respective communities by providing services and advocacy under a unifying panethnic framework while contributing to the creation of new cultural and

political identities (Okamoto 2003) and acquiring resources of political power (Espiritu 1992). The pursuit of economic or political advantage underlies the shift in ethnic boundaries upward from smaller to larger identities in the modern states (Nagel 1994). In electoral systems, larger ethnic groups mean larger voting blocs.

Pan-national or panethnic mobilization refers to a public action of people from two or more national-origin groups who express grievances or claims on behalf of the collective, pan-national group (Okamoto 2003). To create a panethnic identity is to blend together cultural material from many components of group's traditions. A panethnic identity or organization develops when the members or community being served is comprised of culturally and/or linguistically diverse national origin groups that are often seen as homogenous by the outsiders (Lopez and Espiritu 1990). However, even though it has been acknowledged in the literature that there is a political benefit in creating pan-national/panethnic/consolidated identities, this new constructed identity does not come without challenges and cannot encompass all variations *within the community*.

This is why, as evidence indicates, the process of panethnic formation emerges mostly with second generation immigrants while their parents are still associated with national based identities (Portes and Rumbaut 2006). The second generation does not have the same affiliations with their parents' countries of origin and has a higher degree of interactions with non-immigrant populations and people identifying with various ethnic origins.

Various processes of panethnic formations faced unique challenges and were a consequence of specific contexts depending on the group in question – they were

different for Latino, Asian American, or Native American consolidated identities. Scholars discussed the specific panethnic identities in various case studies. Challenges faced in creating a Latino panethnic identity by Mexicans, Cubans and Puerto Ricans were related to new civil rights laws, equal employment opportunities and affirmative action and were discussed by Padilla (1985) in the context of policies in Chicago in the 1970s. Construction of Asian American pan-national identity was discussed in the context of electoral politics, protest activity, and the formation of social service organizations, all of which responded to external threats and government policies (Espiritu 1992) of segregation processes based on racialization of Asian Americans and a feeling of "forever foreign". These policies increased intragroup interaction, common economic interests and membership in a community of faith (Okamoto 2003), and finally resulted in an emergence of a panethnic identity (Mia Tuan 1998)[17]. Native Americans (Nagel 1994) observed an increase in claiming a panethnic identity after an increase in successful land claim awards, increased federal spending and affirmative action, and minority set aside programs during 1980s that increased the material and symbolic value of Native American identity.

However, few of the panethnic identities struggle with the "forever foreign" status based mainly on foreign policy of the United States. Most minorities face marginalization based on either cultural or economic factors. Also, few studies focus on the organization along the ethnic boundaries affecting collective efforts at the

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[17] For example, Chinese in the Mississippi Delta undertook a strategic "ethnic reorganization" (Nagel and Snipp 1993), by adding a third category, Asian, next to Black and White. They also reorganized their own social relations and altered the norms governing those relations, in this case to make them better conform to the expectations of Whites had assigned them, while at the same time altering White interpretations of the Chinese identity to change its meaning (Cornell and Hartmann 1998).

panethnic level in the political realm. One exception to these studies is Okamoto's

work (2003) that focused on economic rationale of the panethnic mobilization, not

political ones. Additionally, the studies do not make clear that the creations of

panethnic organizations are led by hyphenated Americans, who know the American

political system, are related to two identities and believe in combining them. By

working within the American political system and expressing both identities,

minorities express their ultimate citizenship commitment to democratic process in the

U.S.

2.2.6. *Context and government matters*

Identity based activism is about influencing the decisions and relationships

that have consequences for the conceptualized identity group's well being. The

processes that impact this type of ethnic mobilization may have roots in the actions

undertaken by ethnic groups as they shape and reshape their self-definition and

culture. However, ethnicity is also constructed and led to be mobilized by external

social, economic, and political processes and actors as they shape and reshape ethnic

categories, definitions, and access to political decision making[18].

Government and its policies are the main factors controlling the distribution of

political rights, representation in the political system, and privileged access to

political and professional positions granted to

ethnically/nationally/racially/religiously specific ethnic identity interest groups

(Cornell and Hartmann 1998). This unequal distribution of rights along ethnic lines

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[18] National origin identity-based collective action may also depend upon the dynamics of the labor market, residential occupation of space, and social institutions such as family, exclusive social capital and maintaining of the social distance but this is not the focus of this research. Here, I am focused on processes and context that is driven by political construction and processes of ethnic political isolation.

related to decisions of keeping some ethnic identity groups (whether they represent the entire group or not) equipped with more government patronage ensures one group's ability to influence decisions and relationships at the cost of other groups' abilities to do the same. Such patterns could be observed in various states (most colonial politics were done this way) and periods in history including current times. Governments, through their policies and differential treatment, create or reinforce boundaries between groups. The result is a classification system where artificially created groups are often treated as "single administrative units." By formally institutionalizing the identity boundary in the political structure of the country, governments and their institutions solidify and strengthen those boundaries (Hartmann and Cornell 1998). Joane Nagel refers to this as a "political construction of ethnicity" (1986: 97-98) where "the rules for political participation and political access create, reinforce, or alter ethnic boundaries and hence lend significance to ethnic identities[19]."

Government plays an incentivizing role in the ethnic group formation and mobilization, by designating particular ethnic subpopulations as targets for special treatment. In that case, political recognition cannot only reshape the designated group's self awareness and organization, but can also increase identification and mobilization among ethnic groups not officially recognized and thus promote new ethnic group formation – especially if the official designation is thought to advantage or disadvantage a group in some way (Cornell and Hartmann 1998). The pursuit of

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[19] Some argue about an organic revival of ethnic identity, a so-called third generation thesis (Hansen 1938), where the third generation of immigrants is curious about their roots as they are already assimilated, do not have to struggle to adjust to the socio-political system and want to know their past. However, in this research, even though I do not dismiss its role, I argue that the political context and critical events make a more significant impact on the revival of identity than pure curiosity.

economic or political advantage underlies the shift in ethnic boundaries upward from smaller to larger identities in the modern states (Nagel 1994), because in electoral systems, larger ethnic groups mean larger voting blocs.

Furthermore, in order to be considered a minority, a group must be "both an integral element in the larger society and sufficiently outside its sociopolitical core to lack that access to status and power considered normal (even if in reality, only the dominant elites exercise that access)" (Grew 2001). Once a group becomes labeled as subordinate, it becomes subject to special treatment provisions and the sense of difference is reinforced through social discrimination, spatial isolation, or legislation. All of the above involve responses within the minority as well as the larger society (Grew 2001). One response is political mobilization and operating within the frames and tactics of a local socio-political context. This mobilization includes addressing the main factors that inhibit minorities from becoming full citizens at the collective level and would grant them political access and organization along the lines of a homogenized label in order to form a unified political front. In this process, the group becomes indeed more cohesive and constructs its self-definition.

With developed identity politics, identity groups became interest groups creating formal political organizations that focus on exercising pressure on the political apparatus of the state. Such organizations are ethnic interest groups otherwise called ethnic based lobbies.

Within the scholarship on assimilation studies, cultural assimilation, social integration and economic mobility receive primary attention, civic and political integration are secondary. However, the path of incorporation into a society and a

state does not end with obtaining citizenship, achieving economic well being, and becoming culturally savvy in the new social reality. It has to happen first through achieving the same rights at the collective level as others. Thus, there are important lessons about civic and political incorporation to be learned from the processes of the formation of ethnic and panethnic political organizations. The organizations differ between national versus panethnic/pan-national based identity and their formation depends on the generational status of the members, their social class and challenges of divides within the *communities.* Furthermore, the mobilization of ethnic minorities mirrors the process of political apprenticeship and learning the rules of the democratic game. Current studies also focus on the immigrant origins rather than on the American citizenship and political participation as Americans. However, the ethnic and panethnic political organizations often express the hyphenated identity at the core of their activism.

The next section about citizenship reviews the various levels of political incorporation and acknowledges the multidimensionality of citizenship in regards to lack of direct consequences linking citizenship rights, and treatment.

2.3. Citizenship – political incorporation of immigrants

The position and success of immigrants and their descendants are not only dependent upon their economic and cultural incorporation into the host society, but also on their citizenship status and standing which, *de jure,* grants a political voice within state institutions. However, citizenship does not only entail a status of being a citizen, but has more dimensions that predict the extent to which immigrants and their

descendants are incorporated into receiving societies (Bloemraad, Korteweg and Yurdakul 2008).

Citizenship, widely defined, is a form of membership in a political and geographical community, in a state. A state is a set of administrative, tax collecting, judicial, and military organizations claiming rule over territory and people within it. It acquires a distinctive quality only when it claims an additional monopoly over the legitimate use of force (Kestnbaum 2005: 250).

In order to fully understand what citizenship entails, one needs to get acquainted with its four dimensions: from the most straight forward legal status, through rights, political and other forms of participation in society, to the most complex and least straight forward sense of belonging. Those dimensions can complement each other or stand in tension with each other (Bloemraad 2000, 2008; Bosniak 2000). Scholars studying citizenship do not necessarily focus on all dimensions of citizenship. The examination of citizenship focuses on three dimensions: 1) foundations of citizenship, 2) debates that stem largely from a normative political theory, and 3) debates surrounding immigrants' integration. Scholarship on foundation of citizenship links particular conceptions of national belonging or institutional configurations to conceptions of citizenship as legal status. Debates stemming from normative political theory focus on advisability of multiculturalism and links group rights to citizenship. Debates surrounding immigrant integration investigate equality of participation in a host country's economy, society and political system.

All three types of literature consider how one dimension of citizenship might affect others. However, all three dimensions are interrelated. Most conceptions of national belonging are rooted in the cultural framework of the state that impacts the access of the immigrants' rights and to politics of the country. In this understanding, nation-states continue to hold substantial power over the formal rules and rights of citizenship and to shape its institutions that provide differentiated access to participation and belonging, with important consequences for immigrants' incorporation and equality. Also, states remain the sole political entity that has the power and institutional apparatus to guarantee the right of citizenship (Somers 2006; Bloemraad et al. 2008).

In words of Irene Bloemraad (2008): "Citizenship debates continue to reflect the tension between the understanding of citizenship as participation, political or otherwise, and as a legal status, with or without accompanying rights and obligations" (2008: 155). This tension is also a reflection of a different level of analysis, where legal status is focused on individual citizens while participation includes the possibility of discussion about group participation in the state institutions, which is especially relevant with political participation of immigrants and their descendants.

2.3.1. Dimensions of citizenship

Legal status

How one becomes a citizen is the most straightforward question when it comes to citizenship. The main variations in determining the status of citizenship are based on place of birth (*jus soli)* or parental origins (*jus sanguini)* or both. There are various processes of naturalization, through which immigrants become citizens if not born in

the host country. It includes, at minimum, a period of legal residency, some level of knowledge about the host country and some fluency with its official language (Baubock 2001; Bloemraad 2006). Citizenship is achieved on an individual basis, following the rules of the given state.

The implications of a varying basis of granting legal status are significant especially in the context of multiculturalist societies where legal citizenship is extended to various cultural/religious/ethnic/racial etc. groups. However, definitions of ethnic (*jus sanguini)* or civic (*jus soli*) models of citizenship dictate who is also perceived as a "true" citizen, which is oftentimes separate from the legal status and has a bearing on treatment, participation, and exercise of rights.

Rights

The next step in understanding citizenship is to look at the intricate relationship between citizens and the state includes mapping the profits and obligations related to citizenship.

It is a discussion about a relationship between the states and their citizens that can be understood as a contract between the two where both sides have rights and obligations towards one another (Janoski 1998; Tilly 1996; Somers 2006; Yuval-Davis 1997). It is defined in terms of a continuing series of transactions between the individual and the state in which each one has enforceable rights and obligations uniquely by virtue of the individual's membership in an exclusive category within the state, of being native born or naturalized (Tilly 1999; Tilly 1997; Brubaker 1992; Janowitz 1980). The state commits to providing basic rights to individuals, while the individual has the obligations to pay taxes, complete compulsory education, and obey

the laws of the country. The ultimate promise of this relationship is the equality of rights and treatment of all citizens, a promise which remains unexecuted by most of the states' institutions (Bloemraad et al. 2008).

Some scholars define citizenship purely in terms of "rights," such as Charles Tilly who describes citizenship as "rights and mutual obligations binding state agents and a category of persons defined exclusively by their legal attachment to the same state (Tilly ed. 1995: 369). However, rights and obligations are tied to conceptualization of who can be a member of the state, to ideologies of nationalism, and who can form collective claims and be successful in them, exercise these given rights fully, and to be politically incorporated into political and state institutions.

Political incorporation

A more advanced set of steps that result in a more interactive relationship between the state and its citizens is comprised through participation in the governing of people. This participation though was historically restricted by race, gender, ethnicity, religion, and class (Bloemraad et al. 2008; Pocock 1995; Magnette 2005; Smith 1997). Over time, those restrictions were formally dismantled, however, practically old exclusions still impact access to political institutions of the state affecting chances of political participation of citizens. Increasingly, debates about political participation are understood in the context of individual rights and/or human rights (Hayduk 2006). Some scholars expand the participatory dimension of citizenship underscoring that the capacity to participate politically depends on social and economic inclusion (Marshall 1950; Somers 2005; Yuval-Davis 1999).

Sense of belonging

Finally, the most intricate dimension of the analysis of citizenship is its understanding as a sense of belonging which includes concepts that are based in national identity, state formation[20], and nationalism. The mere understanding of belonging is inherently related to exclusionary tendencies and "othering" where some must fall outside of the community in order for the distinction between "us" and "them" to be possible (Bosniak 2001). Such exclusions are often translated as result of a need for social cohesion. However, it is a matter of a kind of social cohesion that would create a strong enough sense of belonging to institutions of the state. The answer here is the construction of nationalisms (Brubaker 1992; Calhoun 2007; Joppke 1999).

John Stuart Mill (1993[1859]) argued for citizenship to be joined to "nationality" because a sense of shared political history would lead to a "desire to be under the same government (…), [a] government by themselves" (1993 [1859]: 391). In this situation, citizens are bound to the state more so by invisible ties of history and culture than by formal laws and regulations. However, there is more to nationalism than a desire to have a common government. Conceptualization of citizenship as a sense of belonging traces links between nationalism and citizenship not only in the context of the state being legal and political institutions, but also imparting cultural and social meaning (Benhabib 2002). Nationalism serves a purpose for states, as the key actors instituting the rules of citizenship, in establishing definitions of membership – in particular the notions of "nationhood" (Brubaker 1992). This nationhood is culturally embedded and politically dictated resulting in cultural

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[20] The process of state formation is directly intertwined in the discussion of citizenship and national identity with the state being the key actor establishing citizenship as an institution. For more information see Barkey and Parikh (1991), Tilly (1992), Mann (1986), Steinmetz (1999), Krasner (1978), Skocpol (1979), Nordlinger (1981)

definitions of who is included and who is not into the definition of a given national identity.

Thus, even though as citizenship in a nation-state confers an inalienable right of residence in that state, the emergence of modern nation-states made immigration a political issue intertwined with culture and history. By imagining its populations as nations defined by shared, single ethnicity, "race" and/or culture it influences the perceptions of legitimate citizens. Thus, even with a developed sense of belonging, citizens who do not share the mainstream culture/race/ethnicity/religion amalgamate will not be allowed to fully enjoy some dimensions of citizenship, to be more specific – rights and political incorporation. In this way, citizen status is just a beginning for a full incorporation into a society and a state and the biggest obstacle, oftentimes is the foundation of constructed national identity that makes some identities perceived as incompatible with the political conceptions and . This is why there is a need for a distinction between substantive versus formal citizenship, that it between one's legal status and one's ability to realize the rights and privileges of social membership (Nagel 2004).

2.3.2. Citizenship in practice and politics of participation

Immigration literature is not the only branch that focused on the role of the economy in shaping the experiences of immigrants and their descendants in new roles of citizens of new states.

T.H. Marshall (1950), in his seminal piece "Citizenship and Social Class" from where much sociological work on citizenship started, defined citizenship as "a claim to be accepted as full members of society" (1950: 8). He conceptualized that

this membership, in terms of accommodation in the market economy, with its inherent inequalities, would be mitigated by full membership rights in the society. He suggested that economic changes led to the extension of civil rights, then political rights, and finally, using their political rights, the British working class won social rights. Rights, Marshall argued, were not only valuable in themselves but they were also means to ensure the solidarity necessary for the functioning of a social democratic welfare state. In this way, citizenship rights, and legal status promote participation and a sense of belonging which in turn facilitate social cohesion and common political projects (Bloemraad et al. 2008). As good as it sounds, this approach was expressed in a "deeply middle-class, English male and white" set of cultural values (Smith 1999: 214) that do not take into account individuality and cultural differences, particularly based on gender, race, ethnicity, or religion (Benhabib 2002; Brysk and Shafir 2004; Mann 2001; Yuval-Davis 1997). Thus, considering the inequalities beyond class and access to economic markets reveals that civil, political, and social rights did not uniformly happen in the way Marshall argued (Bloemraad et al. 2008).

Concluding the discussions led by immigration and citizenship scholars, the fact that immigrants and their descendants are granted citizenship, have rights guaranteed by the state, can find economic success, and are culturally assimilated do not automatically guarantee them political participation in state institutions and the polity. Explanations for the complex experiences of incorporation can be located in the fact that participatory citizenship and the experience of social cohesion are located in several areas of presence in a polity, and they include conceptions of nationalism,

definitions of sense of belonging, and political interests and interest groups of the state.

Civic versus ethnic nationalism

National citizenship, understood as a categorical membership in a political community of fellow nationals is crucial in defining a sense of belonging. It provides a kind of organizing principle, in Brubaker's words, by way of Bourdieu "a principle of vision and division" (1996: 3ff).

Ethnic nationalism is associated with belonging to a nation rooted in descent, a view that usually excluded immigrants as in Germany before 2000. Civic nationalism ties belonging to a universalist, voluntary political membership, thus offering immigrants a larger chance of inclusion, as in France and in the United States. Nationalism influences immigrants' membership. It dictates legal rules regarding acquiring citizenship. Discourses surrounding nationalism shape the understanding of citizenship as participation and belonging (Brubaker 1002, Koopmans et al. 2005). However, the ethnic/civic distinctions leave a grey area of practices where it is hard to categorize immigrants under one label. For example, asking immigrants to learn the majority language can be seen as reinforcing an ethnic sense of nationhood or as promoting civic participation in the political process (Brubaker 2004, p.139-40), but it can also turn into defining, for example, integration of Muslim immigrants as a cultural problem, designing programs to alter immigrants' beliefs and practices in the name of civic integration (Entzinger 2003; Joppke and Morawska 2003).

Multiculturalism and cultural citizenship – participation of difference[21]

Cultural diversity characterizes virtually all political communities today but notions of national identity and substantive citizenship have not changed to a larger extent. However, as a result of unequal access to participatory citizenship, debates arose challenging liberal citizenship, producing debates related to multiculturalism. The meaning of multiculturalism varies greatly across contexts and authors, but the basic multiculturalist idea is that liberal societies cannot fully honor the citizenship of their members if essential aspects of the identity of those members are slighted or treated as irrelevant to citizenship. In Will Kymlicka's view, accommodations to cultural difference are themselves necessary, as multiculturalism is merely a more effective (and more just) vehicle for the integration of minorities into a liberal civic regime.

Multiculturalists also discuss notions of cultural citizenship (developed by Renato Rosaldo in 1980s in relation to Latino movements) that are challenging the predominant nationalist identity and advocate for rights to agency on the part of minorities, where culture and identity go unacknowledged in the state's politics.

As political theory, multiculturalism challenges a liberal philosophy of universalism that views humans as freely choosing agents who deserve identical, individual protections. The reason for that is that a liberalist focus on the individual

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[21] Scholars have also pointed at potential problems with assimilation related to the recent processes of globalization and transnationalism, where immigrants retain linkages with their homelands and with their compatriots in other societies. This process, as it is argued, along with new models of political citizenship, such as dual citizenship and denizenship (no citizenship) erode traditional, exclusive forms of citizenship (Mandaville 1999). It is argued that this creates a fluid context where immigrants do not develop ties to their host societies but instead construct social fields that cross national borders (Basch, Glick-Schiller and Blanc-Szanton 1994; Kearney 1995; Rouse 1991) where they retain financial, social, and political links. The combination of these factors led to the formation of communities whose members claim political membership in more than one state and maintain a physical presence in more than one state (Vertovec 2001). However, those debates underestimate the desire among many immigrants, even as they preserve their identities and traditions and links to their original homelands, to be included in the "mainstream" (Kymlicka 2001) and this is what my research showed.

perpetuates or even exacerbates inequalities. Communitarian critiques claim that individual agency is embedded in particular social and cultural collectives that provide individuals with meaning. This meaning legitimates interests of the group over the individual at certain times and requires a recognition in which political community accommodates cultural groups (Miller 2000: 99; Taylor 1994). Multiculturalists claim that cultural neutrality is a myth, because all countries have a "societal culture" that places minority groups in a position of cultural inequality vis-à-vis the majority (Kymlicka 1995, 2001*;* Schachar 2000, 2001).

Theories of multiculturalism consequently call for recognition and accommodation of cultural minorities – including immigrants – and require states to create policies or laws that allow minority groups to root their participation in society within their cultural communities (Kymlicka 1995, 2001; Kymlicka and Norman 1994; Parekh 2006; Taylor 1994).

What if, though, minorities do assimilate, do not require cultural communities, but need to have access to political institutions and need to be heard? Theories of multiculturalism imply that multicultural citizenship will foster allegiance to and participation in the state through civic and political attachments. Taylor (1993) talks about a context of "deep diversity" in which individuals' primary allegiance lies with a community of culture and fate, and secondary identification lies with the larger political unit within which community of fate resides. Critics worry that multiple loyalties would overrun the primary loyalty to the nation-state, and then the civic, political, and even moral community of a country would be fragmented, generating problems ranging from limited democratic engagement to a lack of interest in the

policies of redistribution (Barry 2001; Gitlin 1995; Okin 1999; Pickus 2005; Schlesinger 1998). To those critiques, Kymlicka (2001) responds: "it is the absence of minority rights which erodes the bonds of civic solidarity" (2001: 36)[22].

Empirically, we do not know whether countries adopting multiculturalist orientations are less cohesive than others, or whether immigrants living in the states with traditional liberal orientations feel less like full citizens than those in countries that recognize and accommodate cultural communities (Bloemraad 2008 et al.) – this is what this project is indirectly addressing – the fight for political participation in the face of political marginalization, not even in a cultural sense, as the politics of multiculturalism is *de jure* in place.

Summarizing, the first section discussed the prevalent focus in the literature on economic and cultural incorporation of immigrants almost guaranteeing successful incorporation into new host society. It also overviewed the dynamics behind panethnic mobilization. The first section continued the discussion of immigrant incorporation adding a layer of political participation in a polity as citizens, which includes four elements: legal status, rights, sense of belonging and political participation. A lot of immigrants have to struggle to obtain the first three elements and face challenges with the economic and cultural incorporation. However, the literature ignores minorities that do not share these struggles and are in fact

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[22] There is also a difference between a passive versus active multiculturalism. A passive one, as often practiced in France or in the United States, confines cultures of origin to the private sphere. In contrast, active multiculturalism, the one that is the subject of this dissertation, minority groups are recognized in policy debates and institutionalized in the public sphere as in Canada or to a lesser extent in the Netherlands (Bloemraad 2006, 2007; Entzinger 2003; Faist 2000).

economically successful, incorporate culturally and blend in into the American mosaic but still become stigmatized. These minorities, even though they individually possess all citizenship rights, cannot access political participation at the collective level due to socio-political context. Additionally, even though these stigmatized minorities are citizens, they are often still treated as immigrants. Among the minorities in question are Arab Americans, the population that is the subject of this study.

The next section is an overview of triggers and process behind mobilization of collective identities and the dynamics of mobilization.

SECTION II: Theoretical framework

2.4. Collective identity as a process and outcome of groupness

I embark with Jenkins' and Brubaker's definition of collective identity. To clarify, identity, for the purpose of this project, is understood as a product of social and political action[23]. The identity categories, as conceptualized by Jenkins (1996, 2000) are constituted by the dialectic interplay of processes of internal and external definitions. Individuals on one hand have to be able to differentiate themselves from others by drawing on criteria of community and a sense of shared belonging within their subgroup forming internal definitions. On the other hand, this internal identification must be recognized by the outsiders for an objectified collective to emerge creating external definitions.

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[23] The proposed project does not deny the existence of psychological influences, but focuses upon sociological influences on collective identity instead

Brubaker also conceptualized identity as a category. He highlighted, however the *processual*, *relational*, *interactive,* and *dynamic* development of the kind of collective self-understanding, solidarity, or "groupness" that can make collective action possible (Brubaker 2004a). It means thinking of ethnicization, racialization, or nationalization as political, cultural, and social processes. (Brubaker 2004:11) This conceptualization is then treating identity categories not as groups but as "groupness," a contextually fluctuating conceptual variable without construing the power of collective identity[24]. Groupness is thus an event, contingent rather than fixed, identity is something that is happening, a category, not a group. It is understood both as a contingent product of social or political action and as a ground or basis for collective action (Calhoun 1991; Tilly 2004). As a product of a process, identity categories are situated in an institutional context where the categorization and institutionalization takes place. This is a conceptualization that goes against the very common conceptualization of identity as "groupism." "Groupism" is a term coined and criticized by Brubaker (2004) that treats bounded groups as basic components of social life, main protagonists of social conflicts, and fundamental units of analysis where ethnic, racial, or national groups become significant entities to which interest and agency are often attributed as if they were internally homogenous, and externally delimited by social and symbolic boundaries, with common purposes. In Brubaker's words groupism is, as briefly defined in the first chapter, a "tendency to represent the social and cultural world as a multichrome mosaic of monochrome ethnic, racial, or cultural blocs" (2004: 8).

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[24] Brubaker talks about ethnicities mainly, but his approach mentions as well other collective identity categories.

Brubaker's understanding of identity is related to several assumptions; first that identities are multiples and they are variables, not constants (Scott 1992) highlighting that "participation identities" are rendered politically salient by circumstances and are a foundation of mobilization (Gould 1995). Furthermore, collective identities are not entities that are cast as individual actors, but are categories (Jenkins 2000). Second, the intersectionality of identities impacts the identity that is being mobilized, and finally, the third assumption is that "groupness," i.e., mobilized collective identities, is a historically emergent process that can be traced (Brubaker 2005). Groupness or boundedness must be looked at as a variable, as an emergent property of particular structural or conjunctural settings; groupness and/or boundedness cannot be considered as given or evident (Brubaker 1998).

The five implications of Brubaker's approach are extremely useful for this study. First, overly groupist interpretations of situations and conflicts are removed, allowing for a search of other possible and more likely origins. Second, recognizing organizations for what they are, just as organizations with their interest and not entities representing entire identity groups. In the case of this study, organizations represent interests of one of the possible interests of the mobilized collective identities, and not the entire identity category but themselves are aware of the multiple identities present under the umbrella of the category they are utilizing in their political action. Third, recognizing that leaders may live as well *off of* as *for* politics and thus the actions of the leader, again do not represent the entire group's rhetoric. Fourth, a high level of groupness may be a result of violence and not its

cause. And fifth, recognition of groupness may reveal intra-group mechanisms (such as multiple collective identities).

Identities may be framed and mobilized, going along with Brubaker's "interpretive framing." In this case showing the multiplicity of identities and their multiple associations provides more opportunities for coalition building and less stigmatization. This conceptualization of collective identity categories allows one to problematize relations between the categories of identities and understand the degrees of groupness associated with a particular category in a particular context, and ask questions about political, social, and cultural processes through which identity categories get formed, crystallized, reinforced, mobilized, or dissolved.

2.5. External forces shaping identity

There are many studies acknowledging that identity plays a crucial role in institutional and social practice (Todd 2005), and its variations and mobilization is an important link to the causal chain of political and social behavior. However, there are two conceptualizations of this relationship. On one hand, changes in the meaning of identity and its mobilization may be the key variable in the explanation of change in political and social behavior (Abdelal 2001). Those studies do not explain the reasons for the change in salience of those identities, which is the main question of this study. The second way of looking at the relationship between identity and political structure is to perceive the changes in identity categories, its meaning and salience itself as provoked by and responsive to changes in institutional structure and social practice (Gould 1995; Todd 2005; Tilly 1990), which is exactly the argument and focus of this project.

Institutionalist and new social movement literature acknowledge that large-scale processes, such as industrialization, urbanization, or state consolidation do have an impact on particular identities to be excluded/discriminated against and/or mobilized (D'Emilio 1983; Polletta 2001). Along with large-scale processes, it is also recognized that critical events and variables such as the polity with its laws, policies, and regulations have a mobilizing effect on collective identities by maintaining, reinforcing, solidifying, and shaping boundaries between groups and institutionalizing them (Cornell 1998) – often provoking a reaction on the part of the "bounded" groups.

Critical junctures and groupness

Collective identities, as discussed in the section above, undergo a group-making process during which categories transform into groups (experience a higher level of groupness) as a result of a political project (Bourdieu 1991). Traceable but not continuous, as argued by Scott (2001), collective identities are an effect of a rhetorical political strategy, are produced in an "ongoing process of differentiation, relentless in its repetition" (2001: 19) where the meaning associated to the mobilized identities is subject to redefinition, resistance, and change (Scott 2001). Critical events put in motion a series of these types of changes in the polity and social structure, such as emergence of new laws, policies, and amplification of the events by the media. Those dynamics snowball transforming, redefining, and mobilizing the collective identities. Yet the identities are not mobilized by themselves, *deus ex machina*.

In his case study of Hungarian and Romanian ethnicity in a Transylvanian town of Cluj, Brubaker (2005) argued that paradoxically institutions, even though structured along ethnic lines, reduce the experiential salience of ethnicity in everyday life. It does not mean that during everyday life identities are not mobilized (people are not members of social movement organizations) or reproduced. However, historical events put in motion a redefinition and repositioning of collective identities through changes in institutional structure, leading to mobilization of collective identity categories, not only its reinforcement. Eventful accounts highlight the causal significance of contingent events.

Critical events provide structural openings that can be used by new collective players to exert their collective interests, rearranging the composition of power in state institutions. Critical events rearrange also the definitions of allies and enemies, and can be the basis for a reactionary mobilization on the part of collective actors that are perceived as enemies. How do these events impact the process of groupness? They do so through legal institutionalization of identity categories through laws and policies directed specifically at identity "groups." A work by Anthony Marx (1998) can be an example where he traced the origins of identity based mobilization to the presence of legal institutionalization. He compared the presence of racial privileges and civil rights movements in the United States, South Africa, and Brazil. He found that the presence of legal institutionalization of racial privilege in the United States and South Africa that generated severe inequality eventually provided the basis for demands by blacks for legal equality. In contrast, the absence of legal racial categories, agencies and statistics in Brazil impeded black mobilization (Marx 1998).

State and the process of groupness

Institutionalists, theorizing at the structural level, expectedly claim that the mobilization will have its origin at the institutional level. This approach perceives the state as an actor with its bureaucratic apparatus and institutionalized legal order (Skocpol 1985; Skocpol 2002). As an actor, an active government and mobilized communities can enhance each other. However, the state can also ostracize large groups of society, which can result in deflation of those mobilized communities. Furthermore, as the institutions operate within constraints, both formal and informal, those constraints can and do impact individual and collective actors' behavior and political action. As such, actors' actions are not the accumulation of mere preferences but are a result of institutional arrangements. In consequence, the process of identity groupness negotiation is bound by state institutions and informed by historical processes, through which institutions were reproduced as were the historical conditions that provoked their emergence in the first place (Lichbach 1997). As a result the process of groupness and identity mobilization is obviously located within those historically informed structures and impacted by it.

Role of the government

Government, as the central institution of the state, has the most powerful ascriptive force. Not only does it structure political participation in particular ways, but it is also often a source of changing classificatory terms adopted by the public as part of political change. The government having control over resources gives extra weight to its classificatory decisions (Nagel 1986; Nagel 1995). The laws and policies shaping social boundaries and classification systems have serious consequences in

mobilizing identity categories that acquire meaning. Those meanings are powerful enough to enhance the social boundaries based on identity categories, leading to political mobilization of those collective identities, sometimes categories created by those very policies. Examples are countless, starting with Eugene Weber (Weber 1976) who discussed how the 19th century French state, through institutionalization of a national education system, investment in transportation, and universal male military service created a sense of national identity out of a myriad of regional loyalties. There are also many accounts of colonial policies that created national and ethnic identities in such countries like Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, and elsewhere (Young 1985). This was done by putting together an administrative apparatus that reflected the assumptions or political interests of the colonizers combining previously unrelated groups in administrative units, and in the process, new ethnic groups were invented and eventually mobilized based on those identities (Young 1985). **<u>Favorable conditions for groupness</u>**

An increased degree of groupness has a higher chance of taking place in structures where the preexisting context or the emerging context, includes a situation where: 1) formal distribution of political power coincides with identity categories or boundaries, 2) the government treats different identity categories differently, 3) certain identity populations have differential access to social institutions, 4) ethnicity, race, and nationality are common categories of ascription in the society at large, 5) dominant culture assigns to groups a distinct ethnic or racial, religious, or national classification, and 6) dominant culture asserts large status differential between the

dominant group and ethnic, racial, religious, or national groups (Hartmann and Cornell 1998).[25]

The favorable structural conditions enhancing mobilization of collective identities include also conditions that provoke a reaction to a set of structural changes and openings, as groupness is strengthened in dynamic, interactive, organized responses, such as ones discussed by Gould (1995). He argued that after a series of structural changes in Paris, changes such as Haussmannisation[26], a transfer of political power to the Republic, organizational settings in which political activity took place and preexisting patterns of social interaction, community based participation, and identity emerged and produced a mobilization leading to the Commune Revolution of 1871.

Once the groupness is put in motion, as a product of politics and collective action (Calhoun 1991) it is strengthened in organized responses (cooperative movements, credit associations, land purchase associations, or even school strikes). An example of such response was the case of mobilization of Polish religious and national identity where Poles were reacting to harshly assimilative practices of the Prussian and Russian states in 19th century. This reaction was sustained and mobilized through the existence of a strong Polish Catholic church where religious and linguistic cleavages coincided. However, in the Western parts of the occupied lands,

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[25] Those factors are adapted from Yinger (1985) but somewhat altered as I focus on multiple identities, not only ethnicity and race and I do not include residential segregation, labor market influences and daily experiences as part of the effects

[26] Haussmann Renovations of Paris was a work commissioned by Napoleon III between 1852 and 1870. It included an innovatory urban planning in the center of Paris and its suburbs: its streets, boulevards, regulations imposed on facades of buildings, parks, public monuments, city facilities, etc. It is recognized with its long straight wide boulevards with cafes and shops on the sides. This renovation also included moving residents from old neighborhood to new ones.

where Germans were Catholics, the mobilization and resistance of Poles was lower (Brubaker 1998).

2.6. **Boundary creation and maintenance**

Part of the rationale behind the theorizing about the impact structural variables have on mobilization of collective identities is their power on maintaining, reinforcing, solidifying, and shaping boundaries[27] between groups. The matter of boundaries is important in discussing collective identity for the purpose of this study as it affects political inclusion and exclusion in terms of crystallization of identity categories.

The boundaries are being solidified by the distribution of political rights based on identity categories, facilitating or impeding on access to institutions, lands, jobs, scholarships, financial credits, etc. However, collectivity will always have attributes of each identity, even if only in a temporary way, thus the distinction between the identity categories is located in their emphasis (Jenkins 2000), which is, in case of collective identities, institutionalized.

The policies and provisions that fulfill the role of maintaining the boundaries have three effects on the relationships between social groups that eventually produce a strong sense of collective identities and their mobilization. First, by influencing the size of different identity groups, policies control one of the sources of power available to them, political power. Second, by specifying an

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[27] There is a distinction between social and symbolic boundaries. **Symbolic boundaries:** conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects, people, practices, and even time and space. They separate people into groups and generate feelings of similarity and group membership (Epstein 1992). **Social boundaries**: objectified forms of social differences manifested in unequal access to and unequal distribution of resources. Symbolic boundaries are can be conceptualized as a necessary but not sufficient condition for the existence of social boundaries.

ethnically/nationally/racially/religiously specific distribution of government-controlled opportunities and patronage, they ensure that one group's ability to influence decisions and relationships will continue to grow at the cost of other group's ability to do the same. Finally, by formally institutionalizing the identity boundary in the political structure of the country, policies solidify and strengthen that boundary (Hartmann and Cornell 1998).

Concluding the discussion about the impacts of external forces shaping collective identities, such as critical events, government and its institutions with laws and policies, it is clear that the effects of external conditions or historical processes can exercise a powerful identity feedback effect. The identity frame can be re/established through redefining, maintaining, reinforcing, solidifying, and shaping boundaries through laws, policies, institutions, and meaning. As a result identity categories can be formed/mobilized in the process. Although such feedback effects do not necessarily reflect what is felt or experienced by individual participants of an event, a compelling *ex post* framing can exercise feedback effects, shaping successive experiences and increasing the levels of groupness (Brubaker 2004: 16). This is where organizations' framing, i.e., claims and agendas, come into play. They become an expression of collective identity triggering more identity mobilization. Thus, civil society organizations are at the same time a trigger and an outcome of collective identity mobilization. Following Brubaker's approach, civil society organizations do not represent or act in the name of an entire group they claim to represent but are often an expression of external forces that mobilize identity-based activism.

The following section discusses the new social movement theories focusing on identity-based civil society organizations, and their 1) framing, which includes creation of collective claims and recruitment into a movement and 2) mobilization itself being a strategic and tactical decision making as an expression of the process of groupness and an expression of mobilized collective identities.

2.7. **Mobilized identities**

Social movement literature does not explain what leads to mobilization of the collective identities but remains fully mindful of the ways in which movement participants' location in the historical context, social structures, and cultural arrangements constrain or enhance the interpretative process of their collective action (Cerulo 1997)[28]. Social movement studies analyze the movements themselves. They address the framing and schematization of identity as it occurs within the social movement organizations bringing together group focus and shared identity to particular collectives at specific historical times and structural contexts. It admits the role of structure in the ways movements/organizations are established within an established social context and geo-political environment (Snow 2000). Furthermore, this literature records the ways in which resulting collective identities direct movement participants by defining the parameters and appropriate arenas of collective action according to the claims and agendas of those movements. It informs the emergence and institutionalization of the identity movements with their agendas, ideologies, inclusion or exclusion rules and coalitions. All of the above variables are

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[28] Collective identity itself plays a significant role in the social movement literature. It responded to the inadequacies of instrumental rationality as an explanation for strategic choice and action.

directly related to wider socio-political context and to collective identities, the latter being the dependent variable of this study.

New social movement theories treat identity as one of the independent variables behind organizations/movements. The organization is the main unit of analysis, not the identity. However, the identity is the trigger serving the purpose for the goals and claims, and recruitment into the organization. Even though this study looks at the identities as the unit of analysis, treating organizations as means to an end, not the end by itself, organizations do constitute the basis for mobilization. Additionally, organizations are often an expression of identity having an impact on shaping the discourses about given identity. Identity based organizations are not only a tool for the expression of rational claims.

The following section will discuss the logic behind the cycle of protest of social movement organizations, which includes recruitment, strategies, and claims.

2.7.1. Collective identity and social movements

Identity became the main focus in the analysis of organized social action in the new social movement literature.[29] The main assumption of the identity-based social movements is that identity production is an essential element for collective action, through the identification of actors involved in conflict, the facilitation of trusting relationship among them, and the establishment of connections linking events from different periods. New social movement literature defines collective identity as neither a thing one can own, nor a property of actors, but as the process through which individuals and/or collective actors attribute a specific meaning to their traits,

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[29] The original social movement theory focused on the rational actor making decisions based on a cost benefit analysis only.

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their life occurrences, and the systems of social relations in which they are embedded (Della Porta 2006).

Identities are forged and adapted in the course of conflict, and their boundaries can be modified quite drastically in the process (Johnston 1994). Additionally, the group has to have common interests, experiences, and solidarity, involving a "we-feeling," constructed, activated, and sustained through interaction in movement communities (Taylor 1992). As a result, in spite of identity's relative stability, even feelings of identification can be, and are, subject to recurring modifications. And this modification has two origins and both are related to this project. One is that collective identities are triggered by socio-political changes, and two, multiple identities can be mobilized at the same time, and thus their meaning changes, individuals and organizations breach boundaries between groups and identities. This is why, identity organizations are not and cannot be representatives of all their presupposed members (Brubaker 2004).

2.7.2. *Mechanisms of mobilization of collective identity*

Social movements are "an expression of the associated activities of some group or field of actors" and "they cannot emerge when people are unable, for whatever reason, to form the minimal solidarity necessary for mounting or sustaining a challenge to authorities or cultural codes" (Goodwin and Jasper, 2004: 6, 19).

Civil society organizations being a form of social movements are "historically specific complex" (Tilly 2007). They combine "three elements:" 1) they are campaigns of collective action on target authorities 2) they include an array of claim making performances including special purpose associations, public meetings, media

statements, and demonstrations, and 3) they are public representations of the cause's worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment (Tilly 2004). Those elements are used as part of a substation for crystallization of collective identity.

2.7.3. Framing

Social movements are a result of political and economic processes where a task of all social movements is to get participants to incorporate the movements' collective identity into their self-definition (Gamson 1992, 60) and to seek recognition, legitimacy, and power for the group (Calhoun 1994). However, social actors need to have a reason to formally get together and actually get involved in social action even with preexisting social bond under the form of collective identity. According to the political process model, social movements, in order to function and be successful, need to have a frame.

Every movement has to undergo a "framing" process which includes "conscious, strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understanding of the world and of them that legitimate and motivate collective action" (McAdam 1996), or in other words, interpretative packages that activists develop to mobilize potential adherents and constituents (Meyer 1998). Those packages are known as organizations' claims, agendas, and ideology. Effective social movement frames have to grant "diagnostic" (problem identification and attribution), "prognostic" (articulation of solutions to problems) and "motivational" (rationale for engaging)[30] functions, which means that they have to explain to movement participants what is wrong, what can be done to fix it, and why they should be involved in this movement (Snow 1992). The movement's frames must make sense to the potential recruits by

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[30] By Gamson called "agency" (1995)

attending the interrelated problems of "consensus mobilization" and "action mobilization" (Klandermans 1984), in other words, the former fosters or facilitates agreement about the framing and the latter fosters action, moving people from the "balcony to the barricade." It implies alignment between what audience already knows, feels, or has experienced to how to mobilize it in protest. Thus, the movement's ideology must cover familiar ground, which is the "we-feeling" captured in a collective identity[31].

Another aspect of the organization's framing that is important for the possibility of breaching boundaries between groups/organizations is the specification of the organization's identity frames. There is a differentiation between exclusive identities (those with strong boundaries separating them from other identities) and inclusive identities (with less restrictive boundaries). The first seems to be more effective in motivating direct participation and the latter is more effective in mobilization financial or material resources.

2.7.4. Mobilization

There are three mechanisms of social movements by which action constitutes identity. The first mechanism happens through the definition of boundaries between actors engaged in the conflict. It originates in the interaction between structural tensions and the emergence of a collective actor that defines itself and its adversaries on the basis of certain values/ interests. Collective action cannot occur in the absence of a "we-ness" characterized by a specific solidarity and common traits. Equally indispensable is the identification of the "other' defined as responsible for the actor's

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[31] The feeling of "we-ness" described in collective identities does not imply that framing with its arguments and claims will be expressive and not strategic, rational, or instrumental (Poletta, Jasper 2001) as it is often assumed by resource mobilization theorists.

condition and against which the mobilization is called. It is with reference to "protagonists, antagonists, and audiences" (Hunt 1994) that movement identities are formed and come to life. This differentiation becomes problematic when the members of organizations are *othered* because of the political context and their otherness differs depending on the historical times. Also, when a mobilized group has multiple identities, they may seek breaching the boundaries rather than reinforcing them.[32]

The second mechanism of new social movements is related to the emergence of new networks of relationships of trust among movement actors. They are the basis for the development of informal communication networks, interaction, and mutual support when necessary. Being part of a movement also means being able to count on help and solidarity from its activists (Gerlach 1968)**.** The third mechanism is the way identity connects and assigns meaning to experiences of collective action dislocated over time and space (Farrell 1997). At times this takes the form of linking together events associated with a specific struggle in order to show the continuity of the effort behind the current instances of collective action.

Continuity of social movements over time is important because they characteristically alternate between "visible" and "latent" phases (Melucci 1996) which are realigned with historical and political contexts**.** The visible phase includes public dimensions of action such as demonstrations, public initiatives, media

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[32] Obviously, I am arguing against the isolationist approach about identity-based social movements, claiming that they are isolated, cohesive, and with a narrow focus which makes them incapable of cross-boundary exchange (Piore 1995). I depart with an assumption that because of the meanings of collective identity categories are complex, composed of plurality of elements coexisting (Todd 2005), breaching boundaries is actually more than likely and the movements are lees than more likely to be isolationist.

interventions, etc. In the latent phase, actions within the organization and cultural production tend to dominate.

In conclusion, new social movement theorists acknowledge but do not focus on multiple identities that are being mobilized. Multiple identities, or individual feelings of belonging to several different collectives, are sometimes defined in reference to very diverse criteria. Identity operates in this literature as an organizing principle in relation to individual and collective experience responding to diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames: for example, it helps actors to identify their allies and their adversaries. Rather than uprooting these older lines of identity, new identities co-exist with them, generating tensions among actors' different self-representations or between activists who identify with the same movement yet belong to different generations (Schnittker 2003; Whittier 1995). Those complexities, though, can be traced to the structure and historical events. Activists may also belong to several different movements/organizations and coexist, bridging boundaries. Actors who are similar in some traits/attitudes/experiences may differ substantially in other dimensions (Diani 2000). One has to note, though, that multiple identities need not necessarily be in tense relation to each other.

To summarize the second section of this chapter, critical events provide structural openings that can be used by new collective players to exert their collective interests through a reshaped and mobilized collective identity rearranging the composition of power and boundaries in the state institutions. When new actors do not have institutional power, mobilizing their identities in the form of a social movement with diagnostic, motivational, and prognostic frames is one of the answers

for recognition and incorporation into the polity. How does it impact the process of groupness? It does so through legal institutionalization of identity categories through laws and policies directed specifically at identity "groups" and by reshaping and redefining the power dynamics when political power coincides with identity categories or boundaries.

As an ultimate conclusion to this literature review chapter, I could now discuss the contributions of this study. However, I believe that such a discussion is better placed after my chapters on methods and findings. Therefore, for a discussion of what my study contributes to the empirical and theoretical claims elaborated above, please refer to section 9.2 of chapter nine in this dissertation.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN: METHODS, KEY DEFINITIONS, AND DATA DESCRIPTION

> *"[The important thing for me, in my work and personal life is to] accept as a sort of a priori, that everyone is able to understand my point of view, as I'm not terribly polemical about it myself. If I'm willing to accept that there are certain aspects of my identity that should be open to critique and to dilution in certain ways and if I'm willing to accept that and expect the same of others, we can find a way to inform each others' sensibilities and frameworks, but it really begins with me and my willingness to let go of some of the, I guess, rigidities, that are installed in everyone as they are growing up. Palestinians are not always right, for example, and although I believe it is an issue of justice, and there is a right and there is a wrong, I have to be willing to accept that others are having an opinion and as long as I can live my life assuming the best about people and not the worst then I find that I am more able to engage"* Nadir, a Palestinian activist speaking about the interactions with people

Due to the complexities of collective identities of Arab Americans and sensitivity of the subject of this research, as illustrated by the above quote, interviews and life histories and document analysis were a highly productive choice of methods for this study. These methods allowed me to understand the process of decision-making towards mobilization and intricacies behind the decisions of my respondents to mobilize one or more of their collective identities. Interviews and life histories allowed me to ask follow up questions, build rapport, and work from inter-personal dynamic between the researcher and respondent, something that would not be possible with other methods, such as surveys or restricting my study to document analysis.

This chapter overviews methods I employed in order to conduct this research. It includes three main sections. It starts with research procedures and data, continues with the description of the data itself, and finally description of the explanatory factors.

3.1. General methodology

This project went through several iterations and formats, due to its qualitative character. In this type of research, the researcher observes and interprets meanings and dynamics in context, though the context changes and makes both pre-assessment and preparation impossible. Thus it was neither possible nor appropriate to finalize research strategies before data collection has begun (Patton, 1990). Therefore, this study included not only formal interviews and life histories but also informational interviews. These initial conversations were driven by intellectual curiosity for understanding the process driving mobilization of different collective identities.

However, after immersion in the discussions and literature, I found that with all the various identities among Arab Americans, there is a trend towards forming a new political Arab American identity. I was curious why that was and decided to investigate and answer this question, while remembering in the process of my research that Arab Americans are not a monolithic group and as such, ethnogenesis of Arab American-ness had to be addressed. In order to do so, it was imperative to use a combination of several qualitative ethnographic methods and receive the answer from those who are organizing and acting in the name of the consolidated identity. The methods used included document analysis, face-to-face semi-structured and open-ended interviews, abbreviated life history interviews, focus groups, and participant observation. Information received through qualitative methods was triangulated with secondary data, such as documents, Census information, news reports, and policies that the members of organizations mentioned.

I decided to conceptualize mobilization of collective identities as activity in organizations, as the organizations are a meeting ground between micro-level

interactions, motivations of individuals, and dynamics and processes at macro-level institutions of the polity. Looking at organizations and interviewing their leaders and members allowed me to analyze the dynamics between the individuals who are from various Arab national origins but decided to organize under an Arab American label, as well as the factors that indirectly contributed to their decision to join these organizations. The overarching trigger is political isolation that includes three components: existence of a counter-mobilization in the form of lobbies that block political access to politicians who openly claim an Arab American identity, the history of Arab immigration to explain why it is only recently that such organizing is possible, and finally critical historical events, such as the Six Day War of 1967 and the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 that created in a way an opening for expression of the Arab heritage, often forgotten. This is part of the "large scale process that can only be captured at a distance" (Brubaker 2005). An expression of the revisited identities was often expressed by joining an organization that can be counted and analyzed. If analyzed at the individual level, the data gathered would be more scattered and more difficult to systematize.

The object of analysis is the mobilization of consolidated based collective identity of Arab Americans. The subjects, or units of observation are members of the self-labeling Arab American organizations in the Washington, DC Metropolitan Area. The units of analysis are the organizations themselves.

3.1.1. Arab American organizations

There are several definitions of organizations. Those that are focused on the structure of the organization (Kast and Rosenzweig 1972), those that are focused on

relationships within the organizations (Biddle 1979) or definitions that focus on

activities of organizations (Giddens 2006). I combine two definitions that encompass

what organizations do and what do they look like. Giddens (2006) defines an

organization as "a planned, coordinated and purposeful action of human beings to

construct or compile a common tangible or intangible product" this purposeful action

is bound within, as Biddle (1979) argues, a structure that comprises sets of

interrelated roles, which are intentionally organized to ensure a desired (or required)

pattern of activities (Biddle, 1979). In this research, these definitions are translated

into an understanding of an organization when it has a website, a president, members,

meetings, and a formal agenda with scheduled and planned activities.

Organizations included in my sample were chosen based on two criteria – they

had to have a name that included a hyphenation that included a label "American" and

a consolidated or an Arab national origin (from 22 Arab League nations[33])

component, and were operating in the Washington DC Metropolitan Area that

includes parts of Maryland, Washington DC, and Northern Virginia. There exist

organizations that focus uniquely on the Arab world and are not concerned about U.S.

politics as it applies to the Arab American population, but those were not the object of

this research. As I conceptualized political identity and collective identity as

membership in a self-labeling Arab-American organization, the target groups were

members of these organizations as they politically mobilized their identities.

3.2. Research Procedures and Data

3.2.1. Research site, sampling, sample bias

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[33] These countries include: Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Sudan, Libya,
Morocco, Tunisia, Kuwait, Algeria, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, United Arab Emirates, Mauritania,
Somalia, Palestine, Djibouti, and Comoros.

The field research took place in the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Area (Metro area). The city is bordered by the state of Virginia in the southwest and Maryland in the northeast. Counties from those two states are included in the Metro area[34].

The city itself has a population of 591,833 people, but the Metropolitan Area counts 5.3 million. It is the ninth-largest Metropolitan Area in the country. It is a home for 168,208 Arab Americans. Virginia is the eleventh state ranked by Arab American population with the majority residing in the northern suburbs (AAI).

As the capital of the United States, Washington D.C. is the political epicenter of the country, and home to lobby groups, professional associations and 174 foreign embassies. I chose the D.C. metro area as the site for the research for three reasons: (1) its political importance and the presence of lobbies; (2) relatively significant presence of Arab Americans, and (3) it is the city where I currently live and over time gained knowledge and access to people and organizations.

Two types of sampling were used for data collection. I started with purposeful and then switched to snowball sampling (Esterberg 2002). After contacting initial organizations I found through the purposeful sampling strategy, I switched fully to snowball sampling. Purposive sampling includes selecting participants of the study according to preselected criteria relevant to a particular research question. It seeks information-rich cases that can be studied in depth (Patton 1990). Snowball sampling operates differently from purposive sampling, it increases *trust* and builds rapport between the interviewees and the researcher, which is a fundamental prerequisite for

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[34] In Maryland: Calvert County, Charles County, Frederick County, Montgomery County, and Prince George's County. In Virginia: Arlington County, Clarke County, Fairfax County, Fauquier County, Prince William County, Spotsylvania County, Stafford County, Warren County.

research (Dance, Gutierriez and Hermes 2010 *forthcoming)*, especially with populations that are stigmatized and under a lot of scrutiny (Bourgois 2003) such as Arab Americans. Additionally, rapport reduces the social desirability effect, that so pervades research of sensitive issues like reasons for political involvement, and obstacles and challenges faced by the ostracized population. Additionally, interviewees with whom I spoke, knowing the focus of my project, suggested people for me to interview who could prove valuable to my research. Snowball sampling is a special non-probability method that relies on referrals from initial subjects to generate additional subjects. While this technique can provide valuable information from people who have specific knowledge or exposure to the research in question as they were referred based on the research question by already interviewed individuals, it comes at the expense of potentially introducing bias because the technique itself reduces the likelihood that the sample will represent a random cross section from the population. However, awareness of the possibility of this bias is the first step towards overcoming it.

Minimal selection bias was present in the data collection as to which members were interviewed. I spoke to both members and heads of the organizations, I spoke to whomever was willing to speak to me, and who offered suggestions with whom to speak. I spoke with those who were critical of organizations and wanted to see them change, and those who were very devoted to the organizations. This strategy minimized the selection bias, as not only one attitude towards organizations and mobilization was present, and not only one organizational position represented. There was a selection bias when it comes to representation of the Arab American

community, as those who were members of the organizations and the residents of the

D.C. Metropolitan Area tend to be more educated, well off and politically involved

than in other parts of the United States. That aspect could affect the validity of my

data negatively, which was reduced by the relatively significant size of my sample

compared to other qualitative studies. In qualitative studies, sample sizes vary from

one participant to 20 or 30 participants as suggested by Creswell (2007).

There is a danger of three biases related to snowball and purposeful sampling.

The first relates to insufficient breadth of the sample, the second to a lack of depth in

the sample, and a third to distortions related to changes over time (Kirk and Miller

1986; Patton 1990). The insufficient breadth of the sample was addressed by

arranging interviews with most organizations in the area that met the criteria of my

study. The depth of the sample was addressed by interviewing several people in each

organization, conducting informal interviews where ambiguities were caught and the

quality of data gathered was very rich and deep. Achieving the depth of the data was

possible due to the nature of interviews and life histories, where I could ask follow up

questions, clarify them, and observe the reaction of the respondents. The distortion

related to changes over time was addressed through conducting several life histories

that encompassed a few decades and the contemporary changes to be addressed and

monitored.

My own background played an important role in the decisions the

interviewees were making whether to provide me with their contacts or not. I

encountered some hesitation at first – as a non-Arab person, people were at first

suspicious and not-fully engaged. However, after sharing my own background (as

mentioned in the introduction), my family has been closely related to the Arab world and I have lived in several Arabic speaking countries myself and learned Arabic) and reasons behind my interest in the subject, and not only to apply "dry" theories and force the respondents into any frames, respondents seemed to be even enthusiastic and willing to talk to me. Several specifically said that my research was important for Arab Americans and they were very encouraging. I was treated warmly and experienced gracious hospitality: I was invited to homes, invited for meals and encouraged to call if I needed more information.

I avoided the traps of the snowball sample's bias towards the inclusion of individuals with inter-relationships, which may over-emphasize the cohesiveness of social networks while missing those isolated from such networks (Atkinson and Flint 2001). I avoided that by using an alternative, purposive sampling method reaching organizations that are not in tight social networks of organizations and their members.

Clearly, no generalized conclusions about political mobilization of collective identities of the whole population of Arab Americans in the DC Metropolitan Area can be made solely on the basis of the information obtained from this sample. However, the strength of this study lies in seeking to give voice to experiences that have been neglected in the mainstream society of a population that, in itself, is very heterogeneous. As Lindee noted, there is a variety of knowledges creating a "patchwork quilt, pulled together from multiple fabrics" (Lindee 2003: 50) and thus every sample makes a contribution to a bigger picture of a complex understanding a social reality and socio-political processes. Without these smaller pieces, heterogeneity of knowledges and experiences is rendered invisible (Saukko 2003). As

in cultural studies, there is a contextual and realist commitment, which "mirrors the traditional criteria for validity in that it evaluates how accurately or truthfully research makes sense of the historical and social reality" (Saukko 2003: 344). The value of the data obtained in this study is culturally sensitive, and thus its validity is evaluated based on the sensitivity and truthfulness in reporting the realities of the subjects with their context and processes that affect them (Lincoln and Guba 1985, *1994*; Saukko 2003).

This study also generated insights that point future research to a new direction that has not been taken into consideration by this or other studies.

3.2.2. *Data collection and data management*

The first, exploratory set of informational unstructured interviews and observations took place in 2007 and 2008 when I started attending meetings of an organization of Arab American Students, assisted in organizing cultural events such as Taste of Arabia, or Arabian Night, at my University, and eventually made a connection with the Muslim Association of Annapolis. This part of the project was purely exploratory in nature: I took field notes, but no formal interviews were conducted - only informational, informal conversations. The nature of the unstructured interviews was spontaneous, without a set of questions prepared, more free-flowing than a structured interview (Esterberg 2002). The purpose of those informational interviews was to establish and clarify the explanatory factors and recognize patterns in the field. The exploratory observations turned into participation observation in the Arab American student organization the following year, where I attended all meetings and helped organize and participate in further cultural and educational events, such as Arabian

Night 2009, and an event on campus that took place in February of 2009 about raising

awareness about Palestine. Being a participant observer[35] allowed me to understand

the complexities and operating within two or sometimes three identities and literally

see how, when, and why certain identities were mobilized. That allowed me to be

more attuned to and aware while interviewing members of other organizations.

The second part of the data collection started in October of 2008 and ended in

June 2009. During the second wave of data collection, I conducted thirty-one

interviews, with members of twenty various Arab- American organizations. The

interviews included one charity organization, three lobbies, six political

organizations, and fourteen social/cultural organizations. The format used in the data

collection included open-ended and semi-structured interviews, abbreviated life

history, and a focus group.

3.3. Interviews, life histories and focus group

3.3.1. Interviews

Interviews lasted from forty-five minutes to an hour and a half, the focus

group took an hour and the life histories took an hour and a half to three hours. The

main questions led me to ask further questions about political isolation, access to U.S.

politics, feelings of belonging and national identity, and finally reasons behind

differences between national-based versus consolidated based organizations. All

meetings took place in informal environment chosen by the respondent, either in the

respondent's home (four), in a quiet public place, like a café or restaurant (fifteen), or

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[35] It is a type of participant observation where the researcher is openly conducting their research and his/her presence, intentions and identity are known to the observed group and through this process the researcher forms relationships with the observed where they serve both as respondents and informants (Denzin 1978).

in the personal office of the organization's members (twelve). During the data collection, eleven interviewees were contacted and responded to me after I found their organizations on the internet, and the remaining twenty were recommended by other people either after the interview or by an acquaintance of mine. Access to one of the biggest Arab American organization in the United States was possible only after receiving a recommendation; without a recommendation my efforts to schedule an interview were futile.

I used semi-structured, open-ended interviews, where I had a guide or "schedule" of a list of questions or general topics that I wanted to explore during each interview. It was prepared to insure that basically the same information is obtained from each person, though there were no predetermined responses. I had the freedom of probing and exploring within these predetermined questions. Interview guides ensured good use of limited interview time and made interviewing multiple subjects more systematic and comprehensive (Lofland 2005).

3.3.2. Abbreviated life histories

Life history proved another valuable method of data collection, which portrays an individual's entire life. It is a form of biographical data collection in which the researcher reports an extensive record of a person's life as told to the researcher (Geiger 1986). Even though there is a strong tendency in ethnographic work to focus on "representatives," it is very valuable to "explore how cultures work at the individual level and the way people manage their cultural conditioning" through listening to their life histories (Caughey 2006). This is why it is a very useful

tool in substantiating the particularities and complexities of any given individual and their identities in political context. I conducted two life histories.

3.3.3. Focus group

Finally, with one organization that was predominantly male, the member of the organization I was in contact with suggested we meet with an entire group during their organizational meeting and afterwards I had time to ask questions. Though this is drawn only through inferences from observed social cues (the room's seating arrangement, body language, awkward moment in the elevator together), I believe they were not entirely comfortable meeting me in person and arranged this setting in this way. In such case, because of the circumstances, I decided to use the format of the focus group, which was methodically reliable when researching opinions and attitudes rather than behavior (Esterberg 2002).

All data collection was digitally-recorded. There are two perspectives towards recording the interviews. One says that a recorder is "indispensable" (Patton 1990: 348), while Lincoln and Guba "do not recommend recording except for unusual reasons" (1985: 241), the reason being the intrusiveness of recording devices and the possibility of technical failure. However, recording the interview has the advantage of capturing data more faithfully than writing notes in a rushed manner, which can make it easier for the researcher to focus on the interview. This is why I chose to record the interviews when the interviewee allowed (on a few occasions the interviewee was not comfortable with me recording our conversation, in which case I only took notes during the interview). Additionally, I took notes during and after the interviews. The digitally recorded interviews were all transcribed verbatim. All original files from the

digital recorder were deleted and the files are safely stored in my own password-protected computer and available for re-examination. During the data collection, all respondents were assured of complete confidentiality and anonymity of the process, and were asked to sign an Informed Consent Form. Questions and consent forms were approved by the University of Maryland Institutional Review Board[36] with respect to their treatment of human subjects prior to the field research.

3.4. Data: problems and virtues

The majority of interview-based data presented three main problems. First, it cannot be ensured that the respondents would always tell the truth, either for the innocent reason of forgetfulness, or to intentionally distort reality. Because the interaction between the researcher and the interviewee is an interaction between two people with desires, pasts, and assumptions, there is a possibility of social desirability effect when there might be a tendency for the respondents to be more concerned about how they are viewed by the interviewer than in providing accurate answers. Thus respondents may be likely to ignore or omit those past experiences that make them appear in a less than flattering light (Biemer and Lyberg 2003). Social desirability pressures, leading to an unwillingness to admit to acting in a socially ambiguous manner, or in a manner that would "please" the interviewer, can affect the reporting. Social desirability bias is enhanced when responses are made directly to an interviewer (Tourangeau and Smith 1996). Another reason for biased responses of

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[36] IRB approval of the questionnaire and research procedures for the first stage of data collection:
University of Maryland Institutional Review Board, Application Number 08-0356 (PAS# 2041), Approval date June 17, 2008. Renewal of IRB of the questionnaire and research procedures: University of Maryland IRB HSR Identification Number – 08-0356 (PAS#2041.3), re-approval date June 04, 2009.

social desirability was related to the fact that I am neither an Arab nor an American. I often encountered an initial surprise that a Polish woman was conducting research on Arab Americans. The surprise diminished after I explained my background of my life experience with the Arab world. However, being an outsider, "the other" has its benefits as well, where I can provide a valuable perspective on taken-for-granted assumptions. Additionally, I was raised with a cynicism towards identity and religion and belonging, therefore I may have a "subjective I[37]" (Peshkin 1991). Thus I had to turn off my "critic" eyes, as being perceived as a critic or an expert is one of the most significant faults of the researcher in the field (Atkinson 1995). In both instances it is possible that my biases affected both the field and the relationships within the field. Also, the fact that I am a woman could bias my study, as found in discussions about gendered fieldworks, because of the fact that gender hierarchy can be visible, especially in religious organizations.

I was made aware of the presence of social desirability effect through reading the body language, hesitation in responses or contradictions in the answers. However, I could never be sure what those meant. In the context of this research it is possible that the participants underemphasized the hurt and disappointment with the U.S. foreign policy towards the Middle East, so as not to be perceived as anti-American, as the mainstream media often implies. Additionally, there were subtle indications about conflicts between different religious and national origin groups that were addressed by some and not by others.

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[37] "Subjective I" is a personal perspective that affects the way the researcher interacts and views participants of his/her study and shapes researcher's understanding and operation in the field. The "subjective I" is related to the researcher's socio-economic location, history and experiences that influence his/her reception of social reality.

Second, interviews are not a precise instrument in measuring an objective reality. On the contrary, the strength of the interviews is that they can grasp diversity of experience and perception of reality. However, it can also introduce ambiguity into the research that can be challenging to systematize and formalize, and hard to use as the reflection of measureable facts. Few participants report experiencing any type of prejudice or discrimination related to their origins, which is contradictory to the reports of the Arab American Anti-Discrimination Committee, data related to acts of physical discrimination after 9/11, or related job market discrimination. Instead, what they revealed were their *perceptions* of the overall treatment of Arab Americans. I obtained rough estimates of those figures that appeared to be of particular value for understanding the scale, position, and status of members of the organizations. However, it should not be a surprise to the reader that more detailed information is not provided, and that the accuracy of the given numbers is not always asserted. Secondary data was used for comparison when possible to give more credibility to those figures that were provided.

Additionally, national-based organizations were sharing their *perceptions* about reasons behind construction of consolidated Arab American identity and political activism related to it as a way of explaining why they were not participating in it.

Finally, the interviews were mainly with men, which is not a fully representative sample of the members of the Arab American organizations. However,

they were the members who responded, were willing to talk to me, and who are prevalent in those organizations.[38]

In order to minimize potential problems with the data, with regard to both sampling and data collection method, I triangulated the data obtained through ethnographic methods with documents interviewees talked about, and checked events and facts discussed. I developed cases in-depth and in breadth – in order to minimize the effect of all potential sources of problems with the data. However, in addition to getting at "facts," I wanted to make sure it was clear that this research gives voice to the members of the organizations, the point of view of Arab Americans, and this voice is important in itself. The triangulation was needed for the reference point and putting their voices in the context and understanding of the process of mobilization. It is not to say that members of organizations were lying, but that there is a difference between the reflexive (perceptions and various understandings of ones' experiences) and realist (based purely on chronology and quantitative data) research and the two can be combined and complement each other (Luttrell 2000).

My data analysis involved using three levels of coding and techniques borrowed from grounded theory coding (Strauss 1987). The coding included: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. The first stage of coding involves breaking down data and beginning the process of categorization. Axial coding takes initial categories and makes further comparisons that describe relationships between categories. Using selective coding, saturation of categories is examined, which means that further analysis produces no new information or need for additional categories. In

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[38] In fact, there was one respondent who mentioned gender politics and biases in the organizations' politics, but this is not the subject of this research.

short, all data is captured and described by key categories, and a core category emerges that tells the central story of all participants in the group. This type of coding allowed me to see a saturation of findings in my data collection to be able to distinguish explanatory factors

Breadth of the data was achieved through a substantial number and diversity of cases. It allowed me to not only have a "thick" description of cases due to the methods used and time spent with the respondents during interviews but also to look across cases of different mobilized identities for broader patterns that can have wider relevance. I used qualitative methods to investigate complexities that cannot be understood by survey and other quantitative means. I sought to understand the logic by which actors get involved, organize/respond by mobilization and/or construction of a consolidated based identity, and engage in the U.S. political system. The answers to these kinds of questions are pivotal for understanding the context in which not only Arab American political mobilization at the identity level occurs, but can be expanded to other identity groups that are not restricted to economic-based mobilization.

The thematic of identity is largely subjective and hard to grasp. There is a possibility that factors other than identity impacted entering identity-based organizations. However, this risk was minimized by interviews, follow-up questions, and life histories, thus giving me access to in-depth information and rich experiences, something that documents and surveys would never do.

3.5. Study Subjects: Population of civil society organizations self labeling as Arab American or from national origin that are Arab <u>and</u> American in the Washington, DC Metropolitan Area

3.5.1. *Definition of Arabness*

There is no strict definition of "Arabness." There are definitions based on language, geography, or nationalism.

The initial stages of the definitions of Arabness reach the beginnings of twentieth century after Arab revolt (1916 – 1918) against the Ottoman Empire. It was a concept where an Arab nationalist identity was proposed as the foundation of the modern state that would consider as Arabs people who spoke Arabic and identified with Arabic history and culture, regardless of their religious identity - be it Muslim, Christian, or Jew. It was a secular and nationalist idea, an effort to carve a national identity to create full, all encompassing citizens. This ideology was not translated into reality at that time because of the arrangements between United Kingdom and France to divide the Middle East into protectorate countries, and with the signing of the Balfour Declaration in 1917. These events interfered with the idea of a geographically bordering unbreakable pan-Arab state, from Maghreb (*West* in Arabic: current countries in North Africa, i.e., Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya) through Egypt to Mashreq (*East* in Arabic*:* countries of the Middle East, i.e., Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Kuwait, Palestinian Occupied Territories). Later, there were several additional efforts towards a Pan-Arab union, on the side of Abdallah of Jordan (to unite Syria, Jordan and Palestine), then by Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser (to unite Egypt and Syria) or by the Libyan President Muamar al-Gaddafi. The high

point of the pan-Arab movement was in 1960s under the leadership of Nasser. However, before the movement could spread its wings, it was struck a big blow with Egypt's loss to Israel after the Six Day War, which deeply hurt its ability to invest in the movement and secure its economic growth. Pan-Arabism after that period became less and less present in the politics of the Arab state governments and rather an intellectual ideology and wishful thinking of the mainstream (*Continuum Political Encyclopedia of the Middle East)*. The Camp David agreements of 1978 between Israel and Egypt further split the Arab world (Egypt was even suspended from the Arab League) - a split that further deepened after the 1991 Gulf War.

The closest Arab states came to institutionalization of the idea of a Pan-Arab state was the League of Arab States (known also as the Arab League), founded in 1945 in Egypt. It started with six members, i.e., Egypt, Transjordan (currently Jordan), Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Syria. Its main premise was to "draw closer the relations between member States and co-ordinate collaboration between them, to safeguard their independence and sovereignty, and to consider in a general way the affairs and interests of the Arab countries" (*U.N. Treaty Series, vol. LXX, pp. 237-263*). The Arab League is still in existence and currently has 22 members. The popular and most common definition of being an Arab is related to the League. Anyone who draws ancestry or is a citizen of the member states is considered an Arab (Haddad 2004). Hence, though Arab-Americans are defined as "white", the Arab League definition of Arabness is not race based.

Another meaning of being an "Arab" restricts the term to those who are native to the Arabian Peninsula as opposed to those who live in the "Arabized' northern tier (Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Palestine, Egypt, and Maghreb).

3.5.2. *Arabness in the United States*

The early immigrants from the Middle East were classified by the officials from the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) as coming from "Turkey in Asia" (Haddad 2004). These names were resented by the immigrants as most of them were running away from Ottoman persecutions and conscription. The resentment precipitated a change in 1899, when the INS started the sub-category of "Syrians" (Mokarzel 1928) which became an identity of choice. The names used by immigration officers also included Ottomans, Armenians, Greeks or Arabs (Hooglund 1987).

Arab American identity itself has been reshaped by the immigrants themselves in response to American attitudes and policies towards them as well as their original homelands. For example, after 9/11 Lebanese Maronites made a very specific effort to make sure they are not regarded as Arabs. Furthermore, immigrants from the Arab world reflect also a variety of minority and ethnic communities not expressing the above characteristics, but still occasionally claiming Arab identity. Those communities include Armenians, Chechens, Assyrians, Kurds, and Turcomans - all of whom have been subjected to the process of Arabization. While some of them tend to disassociate themselves from Arab identity when they migrate (Haddad 2004), others still associate with an Arab identity. Additionally, there are organizations that associate with various definitions, related to Pan-Arabism, the definition restricted to

the Arabian Peninsula, or to those who live in the "Arabized' northern tier (Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Palestine, Egypt, and Maghreb).

The Arab American Institute applies the widest definition of the term, where all those who speak or are from countries where the first language spoken is Arabic is an Arab and this is the definition that is used in this research.

3.5.3. *Arab American population count in the United States*

Because of the lack of a universally accepted definition of "Arab American" there is no exact census count on the Arab-American community. The previously mentioned ambiguities in the INS of the past century are a driving force in this distortion. The current census includes Arab Americans under the category of "ancestry," with the option to check "Arab," where "'Arab' is the sum of Egyptian, Iraqi, Jordanian, Lebanese, Moroccan, Palestinian, and Syrian" (U.S. Census Bureau). Even though there is an additional option to choose the national origins listed above, there are no counts for other national groups.

Based on the 2000 census, Census Bureau estimates the number of Americans of Arab descent at 1,395,553, which was 5 percent of the U.S. population in 2000. However, those counts changed after 9/11 when there was a period in which individuals hid their Arab (and/or Muslim) identity, and then an upsurge of claiming Arab identity. The Arab American Institute conducted its own count[39] and estimated that 3.5 million Americans trace their heritage to the Arab World.

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[39] Dr. Zogby, one of the brothers, founders of the Arab American Institute is a demographer whose main interest is gathering demographic counts of Arab Americans and Americans with Arab ancestry

Obviously, Arab Americans are not a monolithic group. Their national origins, religious affiliations, and even ethnicity[40] vary considerably. Arab Americans constitute a pan-ethnicity made up of several waves of immigrants from Arabic-speaking countries of Southwest Asia and North Africa that have been settling in the United States since the 1880s. Their Arabic heritage includes 22 countries, with the majority drawing a heritage from Lebanon (39%), Syria (12%), Egypt (12%), Palestine (6%), and Morocco (3%) (U.S. Census 2000). More than 80 percent are U.S. citizens.

Religious affiliations among Arab Americans is very diverse as well. The majority of native-born Arab Americans, 70 percent, are Christians, but from different denominations, including Protestant, Catholic, Chaldean, Maronite, and Coptic; 30 percent of Arab Americans are Muslim (Arab American Institute 2007).

3.5.4. *Arab American population count in the Washington, DC Metropolitan Area*

Washington D.C. has a population of 591,833 people, but the D.C. Metro area counts 5.3 million. It is the ninth-largest Metropolitan Area in the country. The Arab American Institute (AAI) estimates the area is home to 168,208 Arab Americans. Virginia is the eleventh state ranked by Arab American population with the majority residing in the northern suburbs (AAI 2009). The number of Virginians who claim Arab ancestry has increased four fold since 1980. The largest number of new Arab immigrants to Virginia came from Egypt, Lebanon, and Jordan. A growing number of Moroccan immigrants are coming to the state. Immigrants from the Gulf region

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[40] For example, the majority of Maghrebians are of Berber origin, not Arab one, but they are still a member and a part of the Arab League

originate from Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. The Maghreb region includes Algeria, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia (Arab American Institute 2003).

Arab Americans reside in 114 out of 135 counties in the state of Virginia. Three out of four live in the suburbs near Washington D.C.

3.6. **Data description**

3.6.1. General description of the studied organizations

Table 3.6.1 includes a summary of a few main characteristics of the 20 organizations in my sample and their members. This table contains information about the main identity mobilized, the main national origin and identities claimed by the members, generational status of the constituency of the organization, organizations' main activity, size of the organization, and the position of respondents occupied in those organizations at the time of interviews.

Table 3.6.1. General description of the studied organizations (in chronology of interviews)

Mobilized identity of the organization's focus	National origin /Ids claimed by the members	Organization' main activities	Generational status	Size of the org	Position of the respondent (s)
Palestinian-American	Palestinian, Lebanese/ American, non-Arab American	Charity, humanitarian programs, education	First and Second	Medium	Executive director, and a fellow
Lebanese-American	Lebanese/ American	Lobby	Second and Third	Small	Executive director
Algerian-American	Algerian	Social and cultural	First	Very small	President, member
Palestinian-American	Palestinian, Lebanese, Iraqis	Cultural, educational	First, Second, Third	Medium	Fellow

Mobilized identity of the organization's focus	National origin /Ids claimed by the members	Organization' main activities	Generational status	Size of the org	Position of the respondent
Consolidated – Arab American	Lebanese, Palestinian, Syrian, Iraqis	Civil rights	First, second, third	Large	Legal assistant and policy analyst
Moroccan	Moroccan	Educational, social	First	Small	Member and president
Moroccan	Moroccan	Social, cultural	First	Small	Vice-president
Egyptian American	Egyptian	Professional network/social	First	Small	Former president
Egyptian American	Egyptian	Social/cultural	First	Small	Member
Yemeni American	Yemeni	Social/cultural/ support	First and second	Small	Members, president, treasurer, PR
Consolidated Arab-American	Palestinian, Egyptian, Jordanian, Sudanese	Social/cultural/ attempt for political	First and second	Small	President, member
Consolidated Arab-American	Syrian, Iraqi	Political/educational	first	small	president
Lebanese American	Lebanese	Political lobby	First and second	Small	Member
Sudanese American	Sudanese	Cultural/social/ education	First	Small	President/ member
Sudanese American	Sudanese	Cultural/social/ support	First	Small	President/ member
Consolidated Arab-American	Palestinian, Lebanese,	Political	First	Small	President
Palestinian American	Palestinian	Political	Second	Small	President

There was a total of twenty various Arab American organizations. The focus of those organizations was: one charity, three lobbies, six political and fourteen social/cultural. Organizations based on one national identity tended to have mostly members from this national origin, except for Palestinian-American organizations where membership extended members from the Mashreq origin, i.e., Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Iraq. Organizations based on consolidated Arab American identity tended to include members mainly from the original Mashreq countries.   Most

consolidated-based and Palestinian-American organizations have increased in membership as a response to 9/11 and the 2008 invasion of Palestine.

3.6.2. *Demography of the respondents (position, gender, education, age)*

<u>Position in organization</u>

I interviewed 11 presidents or executive directors of organizations, four founders or co-founders who currently serve as members, or board directors, three vice-presidents, and ten regular members.

The life histories were with a member of an Arab American organization and a newly chosen executive director of a Palestinian organization. The focus group was at the meeting where all members of an organization were present and they were in the process of electing new committee members.

<u>Gender</u>

The majority of the respondents were men. I interviewed 24 men and 8 women. Two women expressed in their interviews a concern over gender bias in the operation of the identity-based organizations. Women are present in the organizations and they even hold high positions, such as Mary Oakar in the Arab American Anti-Discrimination Committee or Helen Samhan in the Arab American Institute. However, they tend to be token women and the nature of their role is a persisting question.

<u>Education</u>

All of the interviewees had higher education degrees, a MA or a PhD.

<u>Age</u>

Of my interviewees, twelve of them were in their fifties or early sixties. I interviewed six respondents in their late twenties, five in their thirties, and eight in their forties. Nobody was older than 70 years old. Older respondents tended to occupy higher positions in the organization, with the exception of one organization, where the executive director was in his forties.

3.7. Explanatory Factors/triggers

The grounded theory method and coding revealed themes and patterns that were translated into explanatory factors for mobilization of consolidated Arab American identity. The triggers for consolidation of identity were political isolation, lobbying efforts, size of the constituency, generational status of the constituency and critical events.

3.7.1. Political isolation

Political isolation occurs when there are very few points of access to the political process and it happens as a result of a political process. In such situations, the images, assumptions and defamations against the isolated group go uncontested and become perpetuated and reinforced.

This factor surfaced in most of the interviews. The questions that led respondents to talk about political isolation related to difficulty in organizing, being active, and getting involved. Also, respondents talked about political isolation when they were asked about the choice of identity that was mobilized and the reasons for being part of the organization (for full list of interview questions, see Appendix 1).

3.7.2. Lobbies

Lobby is defined as a "loose coalition of individuals and interest groups that seek to influence American policy in ways that would benefit them" (Wright 2003). The questions that led respondents to discuss lobbies were related to the difficulty in organizing, getting involved, and discussing the challenges that organizations face. Additionally, and on a more personal level, the questions related to reasons behind choosing a specific identity over another to mobilize.

3.7.3. Size of the constituency

The size of constituency was one of the triggers that led people to associate with Arab identity rather than their national origin identity. A lot of the respondents recognized the fact that Arab Americans do not constitute a large population and they must thus unite under a common banner to be heard. The questions that led respondents to discuss it were related to reasons why they chose one identity over another and what was the main focus of organization. Additionally, the questions revolved around cooperation with other organizations.

3.7.4. Generational status of the constituency

Second and third generation respondents' were more likely to get politically involved than first generation immigrants. This can be explained by the familiarity and knowledge about the American political system by subsequent but not first generation immigrants. The questions that revealed this pattern related to the importance of affiliations, the identities of the respondents, the reasons for joining the organizations, and challenges these organizations face.

3.7.5. Critical Events

Events happen every day, to all people. However, various scholars understand them in different ways. Sewell in "Three temporalities" (2005) distinguishes between teleological (used by Durkheim, Tonnies, or Marx), experimental (introduced by Skocpol) and eventful (conceptualized by Sewell) understanding of events. Teleologists see events as part of a larger continuum of change. In this understanding, events are not *really* events as they are effects, never causes of change. They can only be an acceleration of an already existing trend (Sewell 2005). The experimentalists, such as Skocpol base their understanding and scholarship on uniformity of causal laws across time and space and causal independence of sequences of occurrences from other occurrences (Sewell 2005). Thus, events are transformative but only as a result of a sequence of factors and identified by matching cases together. Finally, the eventful temporality notion I use in this project is conceptualized by Sewell (2005). Sewell conceived events as occurring every day, as consequences of exogenous causes, contradictions between structures or simple mistakes in the routine. However, most ruptures are neutralized and absorbed into the preexisting structure (ignored, repressed, or explained as exceptions). An occurrence becomes a historical event in the way it is used in this project, if it 1) derails the routine practice with a ramified sequence of occurrences 2) is recognized by contemporaries and 3) durably transforms previous structures and practices (Sewell 2005). In this understanding, events are transformative. Sewell conceives the events as a "sequence of occurrences that result in the transformation of structures" (created by humans). This sequencing results in a rupture, a surprising break in the routine of the structures. Those occurrences happen every day but most of them are neutralized and reabsorbed

without durably transforming the structures with their practices.[41] However, even though Sewell underlines the transformative value of events, he acknowledges that the events do not happen in a vacuum: they are path dependent chains of events and are contingent upon other critical events. This view allows the temporal heterogeneity instead of strict linearity in the sequence of events: events can have the power of transforming social causality and reshaping socio-political reality in turn.

From my analysis of the interviews and the given socio-political reality of the United States, it was clear that one of the triggers for my respondents' identity mobilization were politically critical events, such as the Six Day War, the Persian Gulf War, or 9/11. Those events were an interruption of the socio-political routine of the country and its people. And even though there could have been a political situation that could lead up to either one of those events, making them a result of a gradual process or a trend, these interruptions were so significant that they have changed the course and patterns of mobilization. Therefore Sewell's eventful understanding of temporality is applicable to my findings.

I addressed the impact of critical events on mobilization of collective identities by asking questions about increases/decreases of membership in organizations in specific historical times, expansion of one identity over another in organizations, and about the impact of specific events on the respondents and how the impact was manifested.

This chapter overviewed the research design of this study that was conducted with members of Arab American identity-based organizations in the Washington, DC

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[41] Here I diverge from Brubaker who conceptualizes the events in a broader sense, including events that are not transformative but more "ordinary" ones (Brubaker 2005) at all scale, however, the focus of my research varies from his.

Metropolitan area. This chapter discussed the merits of using interviews and life

histories as methodology, it described the data used, the population and the sample of

the study, and finally defined the key concepts for the study. The following chapters

provide a historical background of Arab immigration into the United States and

political activism of Arab Americans and continue with four chapters of findings of

this research. The findings are organized in themes, including heterogeneity of Arab

American communities, impact of critical events and policies on Arab Americans, the

role of the pro-Israeli lobbies and strategies behind consolidated identity based

mobilization.

CHAPTER 4: PLACING ARAB AMERICANS IN CONTEXT

> *"If you look at the immigrants, it takes a while [to mobilize], especially with Arab Americans because they have a conflicted representation. It is not a popular minority. It is conflicted, demonized and it is having its own difficulties, with how to represent itself and who represents its image. It takes a while [to mobilize and become part of a society's political structure]."*
> Salima, an activist of one of the consolidated identity-based Arab American organizations

The story of Arab Americans in the United States is a very vivid one. Many came to the United States as sojourners planning on going back to their homelands.[42] With time most assimilated and became an invisible population. For the last few decades, and especially after 9/11, the status of Arab Americans has changed: they have become a singled out and stigmatized group that is politically marginalized, as expressed by Salima, yet economically successful, able to "blend in" to the American mosaic.

This chapter overviews the historical journey of immigrants from Arabic speaking countries and the processes of their relatively recent political involvement in the American political system. It is composed of four sections. The first section discusses the history of major Arab immigration waves into the United States, the second overviews the history of Arab American political activism from invisibility to ethnic political awakening after the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. The third section provides an overview of the first Arab American panethnic political organizations, and finally, the fourth section takes a look at the history of stigmatization of Arab Americans.

4.1. Arab Immigration waves into the United States

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[42] At the beginning of the Arab American immigration, there was no mentioning of Arab states yet. First Arab immigrants were members of the Ottoman Empire.

Arab immigrants came in three waves: the first wave was the period from 1878 to 1924; the second, from 1948 to 1966; and the third, from 1967 to 2005. All of the waves had common factors which motivated people to emigrate from the Arabic speaking countries – aspirations to social and economic self-improvement and to escape from political adversities or uncertainties. Each of these waves had its additional specific reasons too, mainly related to the conditions in countries of origin. The sectarian massacres of 1860 in Mount Lebanon and in Damascus were at the root of the first wave of emigration, amplified later by the conscription of the Arabs to fight in the Ottoman Empire's wars, and culminating in the Levantine disasters and famine in the First World War (WWI), 1914-1918. Additionally, Christians experienced persecutions under the Ottoman Empire – they were not granted equal rights with Muslims.

In addition to conflicts, there were two major economic push factors. First was the opening of the Suez Canal, which sidetracked the world traffic from Syria to Egypt and made the trip to the Far East much easier and faster. As a result, Japanese silk started to provide major competition for the Lebanese silk industry. The second economic catastrophe occurred when Lebanese vineyards were infected by the fungus phylloxera , devastating the wine industry there and leaving the farmers with no income (Suleiman 1999).

The *Nakba*[43] of Palestine in 1948 and the Arab political upheavals in Egypt and other Middle East countries following the creation of Israel, were at the root of the second wave of emigration. The defeat of the Arab states by Israel in the War of

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[43] *Nakba* means "catastrophe" in Arabic. It refers to the exodus that happened in 1948 when between 650,000 and 750,000 Palestinian Arabs fled or were expelled from their homes by the Israeli forces during the creation of the state of Israel.

1967 and the continuing political and military conflicts in the Arab world that

followed were the foundation of the third wave of emigration. The third wave was

also composed of a newly growing emigration movement from the Arab Gulf states,

Sudan, and the countries of North Africa (Orfalea 2006).

Arab Americans live in all fifty states, but two thirds reside in ten states; one

third of the total live in California, New York, and Michigan. About 94 percent live in

the Metropolitan Areas, with the top five metro areas being Los Angeles, Detroit,

New York/NJ, Chicago and Washington, D.C. About 64 percent of Arab American

adults are in the labor force, with 5 percent unemployed. Seventy three percent of

working Arab Americans are employed in managerial, professional, technical, sales,

or administrative field. Nearly half as many Americans of Arab descent are employed

in service jobs (12%) in relation to Americans overall (27%). Most Arab Americans

work in the private sector (88%), while 12 percent are government employees (AAI).

4.1.1. First wave: Sojourners turned into Americans

The first Arabic-speaking immigrants came mostly from Greater Syria, part of the

former Ottoman Empire (modern day Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Palestine, and Israel),

and came to the United States as rural laborers, mostly Christians (Naff 1985) hoping

to make money and return home to their families (Ghazal Read 2003). It is very

challenging to establish reliable data on the numbers of immigrants from Arab

countries before 1899, as immigration officials did not employ a standard term for

identifying the immigrants (as discussed in the chapter 3). They were first called

Turks, then Syrians. The names also included Ottomans, Armenians, Greeks or Arabs

(Hooglund 1987; Naff 1983). It is estimated, though, that 110,000 immigrants from

Arabic-speaking countries came to the United States by 1914, representing about 85 percent of the total Arabic-speaking population up to 1940. During and immediately after WWI, less than four thousand Arab immigrants arrived to the United States. Since 1924, when the quotas were in effect, less than twenty five hundred Arabic-speaking immigrants were admitted to the United States. By 1940, U.S. officials reported that 350,000 immigrants were Arabic-speaking. About 80 percent of them were from today's Lebanon, 15 percent from Syria and Palestinian territories, with the rest from Yemen and Iraq. The majority were Christian (45% Maronite, 45% Greek Orthodox, only 4% were Muslim).

The initial immigrants in the first wave were mostly poor, uneducated, and illiterate. Some came from farming villages in Lebanon (Faires Conklin and Faires 1987; Naff 1994). As unskilled laborers in a labor market already filled by other ethnic groups, many of the Lebanese and Syrians became peddlers. Both women and men carried a stock of goods consisting mainly of items for personal use that were difficult for farming families to make themselves or to procure in nearby stores. They carried on their backs products such as dry goods, lotions, tinware, combs, and handcrafted goods (mainly fine linens made by Lebanese women). A handful of families established a network of peddling, setting the routes and supply sources for next families to come. No other immigrant group, with the exception of German Jews, were so completely identified with peddling (Naff 1994). By 1920s many of the peddling families were able to establish stores. Subsequently, they became wholesalers and retailers of groceries and produce (Faires Conklin and Faires 1987). In two decades, the Lebanese and Syrian communities established themselves as a

middle-class, entrepreneurial group. They fended for themselves, created and sustained religious, social, and service organizations but were not vocal in politics. By 1911, there were Syrians in almost every branch of commerce, including banking and import-export houses, and the government reported that their medium income was only slightly lower than the $665 annual income of the adult white native born male (Hooglund 1987). This was the very common occupational pattern and career path for Arabic speaking immigrants observed throughout the United States.

Of course, not all Arab immigrants were peddlers. The majority of them settled in, and worked as unskilled laborers in factories located in big cities such as Boston, New York, and Cleveland, and in medium size cities and towns, primarily in the East and Great Lake region. In 1919, more than half of all Arab immigrants lived in four states, Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio. A minority, perhaps fifteen percent, were involved in entrepreneurial activities such as barbering, bakery, grocery, carpentry, transportation, and manufacturing. The smallest percent in the first wave consisted of professionals such as dentists, doctors, clergymen, pharmacists, and teachers (Hooglund 1987). Some Syrians resurrected the silk production that they had been doing in Greater Syria (Orfalea 2006).

Before WWI most Arabic speaking immigrants thought of themselves as sojourners, visiting a new land but ultimately wanting to go back to their homeland.[44] Yet there were splits in the community between the nativists and Americanists (Shahid 1987), where the first group focused on returning to their homelands, while others advocated assimilation and participation in the wider American society.

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[44] I am referring to homelands and not states or countries because in this historical time there was no Arab states yet, first Arab immigrants were a part of the Ottoman Empire

Additionally, while there was a communal solidarity built along the lines of several communities, they were often in tension with each other (Suleiman 1999). All that said, the first Arab immigrants were oriented mainly to their homelands, even though a process of socialization and assimilation resulted in increased participation in voting and party membership (Suleiman 1999), which was not on behalf on their national identity, but rather based on interests at the community level.

The flow of immigration was interrupted by World War I and then curtailed by the National Origin Act/Immigration Quota Act of 1924, which reduced quotas of immigrants from the Middle East to 100 per year. [45] The interrupted communication with the homeland, lessened flow of immigration, and subsequent length of stay in the United States made the first Arab immigrants follow the pattern of assimilation that refashioned them into American citizens. With time their names became Anglicized, Muhhamad became Mo, Ali was recognized as Al (Haddad 2004). They started attending citizenship and English classes while studying the American governmental system in preparation for their role as well-informed and contributing citizens. These assimilationist attitudes were not based on ideology or mobilization, but rather on suggestions made by the community leaders to cease feeling like strangers and settle down as members of local communities and a new country. They established their own churches, clubs and newspapers, but they were not active in the political arena of the United States. They were anxious not to offend their hosts, not to break laws, and not to behave in a manner offensive to Americans, but they did not

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[45] The 1924 National Origin Act limited the number of immigrants who could be admitted from any country to 2 percent of the number of people from that country who were already living in the United States in 1890, according to the Census of 1890. It excluded immigration of Asians. The Act was aimed at further restricting Southern and Eastern Europeans who were immigrating in large numbers starting in the 1890s, as well as prohibiting the immigration of East Asians and Asian Indians.

intermarry with Americans and did not participate in the political system except for voting (Suleiman 1999). However, over time, Arab immigrants became Americans with ethnic option. Arabic newspapers lost their intellectual quality as they needed to compete with American media technology and style but could not match them (Naff 1994). Religious institutions of Syrian and Lebanese descent focused on worship and not politics. Even though they sponsored social activities, and provided scholarships, aside from some interest in Arabic food, music, and dance, little Arab ethnic heritage, be it Syrian or Lebanese, was present in the organizations.

4.1.2   Second immigration wave: *conflict driven and nationalist policies immigration*

A second wave of Arab immigration started after the Second World War (WWII) when Arab nationalism was nascent, Arab states agitated for independence[46] and the United States became involved Middle East petroleum politics and recruited students from newly independent Arab states to study at American universities in hopes of creating a desirable imprint on the region (Pulcini 1993). Additionally, many newly formed Arab states initiated free and fully accessible education. For example Iraq had the best educational system in the region, then Egypt, Jordan and Kuwait. These education systems facilitated wider access to scholarships abroad. Many of the students married American women and stayed in the U.S. Additionally, Middle Easterners were driven out of their homes by regional conflicts (e.g. Palestine-Israel, Arab-Israeli, Iraq-Iran) or civil wars (Lebanon and Yemen). They were mostly men

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[46] Before WWII for more than a century, the West had political control over most of the Arab world, altering its social and political boundaries. France ruled Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Syria including Mt. Lebanon; England governed Sudan, Egypt, Palestine, Transjordan, Iraq and the eastern and southern shores of the Arabian Peninsula, Southern Yemen, and had considerable influences on Libya. Only Saudi Arabia and (Northern) Yemen remained independent (Naff 1994).

from middle and upper class urban backgrounds, often highly educated professionals like lawyers, professors, teachers, engineers, and doctors (Suleiman 1999). Many found good employment opportunities and stayed in the United States. From 1948 to 1979, approximately 216,000 Arab immigrants arrived to the United States, and about 142,000 came after 1967. More than 44,000 came from Egypt, 126,000 came from Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and Iraq, and a lot of them were Palestinian refugees (Naff 1994). Finally, a third group of immigrants from Arab nations included semi-educated Arabs who were primarily political refugees who became engaged in trade in the United States.

With this different composition of the second wave of Arab immigrants and its higher education levels, immigrants were more likely to be more vocal about political issues. However, because of lack of knowledge about the American political system and a habitude of authoritative regimes where expressing political voice had often undesirable results, the majority of the second wave Arab immigrants were vocal when it came to Arab issues, but not so much about American politics.

After WWII Arab Americans who were subsequent generations of immigrants were mostly assimilated and a lot of them did not maintain their Arab ethnicity, in many cases, Arab visibility and ethnicity was on the verge of extinction. However, there were several factors that revived and mobilized the Arab identity once again and increased the immigration to the United States. The dismemberment of Palestine, creation of the state of Israel, and mass immigration of Palestinian refugees to the United States after 1948 were precipitous events. During the *Nakba,* the turmoil resulting from independence struggles in the Arab region, professionals and young

students became involved in Arab world politics and transplanted this outlook to American soil, but this was unrelated to American politics. Finally, the Six Day War in 1967 had devastating effects on the Arab nations and thus awakened a multitude of Arab American identities. Many immigrants returned to get involved in the conflict, or otherwise started to associate and call themselves Arabs instead of a specific national origin. It was the start of a united Arabness for Arab-Americans in the United States.

4.1.3. *Third wave: Immigration Act of 1965, Nakba, and Iraqi Wars*

The sixties marked the beginning of the third wave of Arab immigration to the United States. The Immigration Act of 1965 abolished the national quota and increased overall immigration into the United States, including from the Arabic speaking countries. This was a significant pull factor. The push factors for the majority of foreign-born Arab Americans was political turmoil in the Middle East, such as the 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli wars (Naff 1994; Suleiman 1999).

The largest segment of the third wave was Palestinians. Out of 757,626 Arab immigrants who came during the period between 1967 and 2003, 121,737 were Palestinians (even though they came through Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Persian Gulf countries). Many from the third wave were similar to the second wave in its composition of professionals. The main difference between previous waves and the third one is that the third wave was thirteen times larger than the second one due to the end of nation-based quotas in U.S. Immigration laws. Secondly, Arabs were fleeing not only Israeli aggression but also intra-Arab conflicts. The Lebanese Civil War and the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 brought 119,562 Lebanese

immigrants to the United States (Orfalea 2006). UN sanctions on Iraq and the Gulf Wars drove 53,388 Iraqis to the U.S. Economic hardship and authoritarian government in Syria brought 71,033 Syrians to the United States. Additionally, increasing Islamic fundamentalism in the Middle East drew many Christians (Copts, Chaldeans) away from the Arab countries, including 80,000 Iraqi Chaldeans that arrived in Detroit between 1960 and 2003, as well as 129,518 Egyptians (between 1967 and 2003) many of whom were Copts (Orfalea 2006).

The third wave significantly changed the overall composition of immigrants, enhancing the representation of the diversity of ethnicities, religions, and nationalities of the Arab and Muslim world, including more women and representatives from all social classes and religions. Christian Arabs continued to migrate in this newer wave, but most of the arrivals were educated Muslims, whose achievements encouraged integration into the American middle class (Yazbeck Haddad 1994). As newer immigrants, they were more likely to maintain ties with their countries. As generations from the first and second wave were incorporated and acculturated into the American society, the third wave remains in the process of making their way into the American society, and still have stronger political and social ties with their countries of origin (Abraham and Abraham 1983). Transnational ties are strong in the recent immigrants. There is also more diversity when it comes to occupational mobility.

Many Arabs came to the United States and stayed, yet there were communities like Saudi Arabians who came to the United States in order to get an education and experience and return to their countries (Parillo 1980).

4.2. History of political activism of Arab Americans

Arab Americans have engaged in several branches of political activity since their first ancestors came to the United States. The main areas include individuals successfully running for public office, voting, and becoming political volunteers and campaign operatives. The second area involves activities in major parties at local, state, and national levels, and finally shaping and reacting to policies and legislation at all levels of government. In this study, I focus mainly on the three above areas that are motivated by ethnic or/and national heritage/origin identity. So even though in the following sections I will provide examples of Arab American activism not based on ethnic or national identity in order to show political engagement of these communities, this is not the focus of this project.

4.2.1. Beginnings of invisibility

Knowledge of political orientation of early Arab immigrants is very incomplete. Conventional wisdom, oral accounts, and secondary sources portray a community uninterested in politics and fearful of challenging authorities (Suleiman 1994), even though not fully accurate, the political involvement of the early Arab immigrants was scarce. Since they thought of themselves as sojourners, they focused on accumulating wealth and keeping a low profile in the United States, while maintaining minimal if nonexistent involvement in their workplace or in politics. They called themselves *al Nizaleh* (travelers, guests) or "Syrians" or "Ottomans", indicating a temporary status in the U.S. and non-citizen affiliation (Suleiman 1994).

Racial Classification

The main reason for early visibility was based on individual level fights for recognition of legal status as citizens in the 19th and early 20th centuries. American authorities did not grant the right to naturalization and citizenship to Arabs because of their relationship to Asians. The denial of legal status was a serious obstacle in receiving equal treatment. It was especially important as many of the early immigrants were peddlers who travelled from city to city, and it was important that they not be feared or treated as "others."

In their attempt to solve this conundrum, "Syrians" looked for their roots in the Arab background, which ensured them Caucasian racial status and therefore eligibility for U.S. citizenship – or so they argued (Bishara, 1914 after Suleiman 1999). At the beginning of twentieth century, Arabic-speaking individuals from geographic Syria[47] began to be challenged in their citizenship petitions by the courts. However, it was not until 1914 that George Dow was denied a petition to become a U.S. citizen specifically because he was of "Syrian of Asiatic birth," and thus not a free white person within the meaning of the Naturalization Act of March 26, 1790.[48] In 1915, in Dow vs. United States, in South Carolina, the 1914 decision was reversed based on the argument that the pertinent binding legislation was not that of 1790 but the laws of 1873 and 1875. In accordance to these, Syrians "were so closely related to Europeans that they could be considered 'white persons'." Since then, "Syrians" and Arab Americans in general are considered white. There were few incidents, in WWII where the status of Arabs remained unclear. In 1942 a Muslim Arab from

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[47] Geographical Syria included current Syria, Lebanon, Israel, parts of Iraq, Palestinian territories, Jordan, parts of Iran and southern parts of Turkey.
[48] This Law limited naturalization to those who were "free white persons" excluding indentured servants, African Americans, and Asians.

Yemen was denied U.S. citizenship because "Arabs are not white and therefore not eligible for citizenship" especially because of the dark skin and the fact that they were "a part of the Mohammedan world" separated from the European Christian by a wide gulf (Michigan 1942 after Suleiman, 1999). On the other hand, in 1944 and "Arabian" Muslim was granted citizenship status based on the 1940 Nationality Act, because "as every schoolboy knows, the Arabs have at various times inhabited parts of Europe, lived along the Mediterranean, been contiguous to European nations and been assimilated culturally and otherwise by them" (E.D. Massachusetts 1944 after Suleiman, 1999).

Currently, Arab Americans are included in the census as "Caucasian"; they are not considered a separate race. The only way to underline their heritage is through "ethnic heritage" category[49]. However, the categorization as "white" is not as clear-cut for every ethnicity and national group among Arab Americans. Those who came from Africa (Maghreb or the Horn of Africa), even though they identify as Arabs often will not identify or check the "white" category because of their dark skin tone (however, that does not mean they would check the "black" category either[50]). Thus, *de jure* classification of Arab Americans had varied, over time and across ethnic groups, but the current consensus is that Arab Americans are white. However, *de facto,* Arab Americans are often racialized, especially after the events of 9/11.

As for any ethnic based activism, up to WWI, even though there were newspapers and magazines in Arabic, Arab immigrants reflected the politics in the

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[49] To this day, Arab Americans are considered white. The case of Gratz vs Bollinger U.S. 244 (2003) and Grutter vs. Bollinger, 539 U.S. 206 (2003) stated that persons of Arab descent are classified by the federal government as white and therefore are ineligible for minority programs.
[50] For more analysis on identification with racial categories among immigrants with dark skin tones see Waters (1999) "Black Identities"

Ottoman Empire and were either praising or criticizing it. So, they did shape opinions of Arab immigrants but these opinions rather reflected the attitudes and opinions of Arabs in the United States and what was going on in the Empire, than shape and activate political constituency. There was no one community, but several with various standpoints and no united front (Suleiman 1994). The main activities were intra-communal and inter-sectarian. The main associations were with one's sect, and/or religious organization (church or mosque)[51]. It was a time of no Arab states, as most of the current states were either under Western colonialism or part of the Ottoman Empire.

WWI impacted Arab settlers in the United States in several ways (Suleiman 1994). First, it cut them off from their homelands, as there was no contact, which intensified a feeling of isolation and separation intensified by the introduction of quotas in 1920s that put an end of large numbers of newcomers from "Greater Syria". And secondly due to the increased propaganda on the U.S. side, where media emphasized nationalism, patriotism, and military service in preparation for the U.S. military participation in Europe – and against the hated Ottoman empire. Those two elements initiated and accelerated the assimilation process of the Arab immigrants. This was the formative beginnings of an Arab American community.

As a result, factional conflicts among Arab Americans became less intense and fewer in frequency, as calls for unity among various communities were heard

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[51]There were also instances where religious activism was combined with ethnic based activism, however, not necessarily Arab focused. An example of religious based but ethnic focused mobilization was the life of Duse Mohammad Ali, whose father was Egyptian, mother Sudanese. Ali was a political activist in the name of pan-Africanism and pan-Asian unity in the spirit of Islam He founded Universal Islamic Society in 1926 in Detroit, Michigan. It is said that this organization was the foundation of the Wallace Fard Muhammad's Nation of Islam. He did not maintain his ties with Egypt but reinforced African ties (he traveled to Nigeria, where he eventually died).

more often. This is when various Syrian-Lebanese clubs and federations were formed. Furthermore, a strong identification with the U.S. started to emerge with increased membership in the political process such as voting, party membership, and some public and political services; while the existing conflicts based on politics in the home countries became a matter of discussions rather than personal matters (Suleiman 1994). However, the biggest change happened after the 1967 Arab-Israeli War.

4.2.2. Activism and unions

The efforts of ethnic invisibility did not mean that there was no political activism on the side of Arab immigrants. However, when activism took place, it was not in the name of ethnic identity. The most important and known protest action with Arab American participation took place in 1912 during a worker's strike in textile mills in Lawrence, Massachusetts. The strike was triggered by the reduction of work hours and thus wages. The strike committee met at the "Syrian" St. Anthony's Maronite Church. Several Arab Americans were involved at the highest levels of organization and coordination of the strike. Arab Americans were the ones who spoke out at the meetings of strikers motivating the workers to resist. An Arab American was the treasurer of the Strike Committee. The significant role played by Arab Americans in the strike is visible in the fact that out of the total union membership, 2,500 were Syrians/Arab Americans (Suleiman 2006). Another example of involvement of Arab Americans in labor movements is a 1970s protest in the auto-plants in Dearborn, Michigan where members of the United Auto Workers (UAW) protested the use of UAW pension funds to purchase Israeli bonds. A protest demonstration attracted 2,500 people (Suleiman 2006).

However, political involvement on behalf of ethnic identity into the American political system happened only after 1967.[52]

4.2.3. *Political awakening*

Before 1967, Arab Americans who were second, third, or fourth generation had a hard time understanding the concerns of first generation Arab immigrants, and vice versa. Arab Americans of second and subsequent generations were not involved in Arab world politics, and among the first generation of Arab immigrants there was a high level of competing interests related to the Arab world, competing Arab ideologies, and competing attitudes towards the U.S. role in the Middle East. The communities were very divided (Naff 1994).

However, after 1967, the perceived American hostility towards Arabs and Arab Americans drew the groups together. That was also a beginning of political awakening and mobilization of collective identity on the part of subsequent generations of Arab Americans. Arab American communities seriously focused on campaigns educating the American public about the richness of Arab heritage and the Arab world, and working on gaining influence in the political system. Additionally,

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[52]There are a number of Arab Americans who are senators, congressmen or governors, including veteran Congressmen Nick Joe Rahall II (West Virginia), Ray LaHood (Illinois), Charles Boustany (Louisiana), Darrell Issa (California), Senator John E. Sununu (New Hampshire) and former Congressman John Baldacci who is now the Governor of Maine. Two Arab Americans were appointed to President George W. Bush's first term Cabinet: former Director of the Office of Management and Budget Mitchell E. Daniels, Jr., who is now the Governor of Indiana and former U.S. Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham. Former Governor of New Hampshire John H. Sununu became the White House Chief of Staff under Pres. George Bush, Sr., former U.S. Senators James Abourezk and James Abdnor, both of South Dakota. However, the above mentioned politicians were appointed and apply the policies of their constituency, and do not act "on behalf of" Arab Americans. They were not trying to impact the policies of defamation or U.S. foreign policies in the Middle East and are not affiliated with Arab American organizations. Even former Senator George Mitchell from Maine whose mother was Lebanese, father Irish, a former Senate Majority Leader, is President Obama's envoy for the Middle East. He strictly follows the policies of the administration and does not voice his Arab heritage in political decisions; he is regarded as neutral by many pro-Israeli politicians, such as Martin Indyk, a former ambassador to Israel and an adviser to the Clinton administration (New York Times, Jan 21 2009).

with increasing immigration to the U.S. after 1965, there were a lot of Palestinians (and others) who were politically dissatisfied with the U.S. and enthusiastic to partake in political activism, in contrast to the first and second waves who were either too cynical or despairing to partake in the U.S. political life. This was when many of the political organizations began.

4.3. History of Arab American Organizations

By the turn of the twentieth century ethnic organizations were in place to serve the social, religious, charitable, fraternal, and professional needs of Arab Americans. However, there were no political organizations that would engage at the identity level in the American political system and/or to advocate for Arab Americans. Politically focused organizations founded by Arab American organizations went through a process of change since their founding in the 1950s. Originally, their main agenda was solely focused on issues in the Middle East and overseas. With time and with generations growing in the United States, they are now more focused on issues pertaining to Americans of Arab ancestry rather than solely on issues related to the Arab world.

4.3.1. Organizations focused on culture and networks

Early on in their acclimatization to life in the United States, "Syrians" established social clubs and ethnic organizations which were focused on maintaining the culture and social networking. They were not political organizations. Many of the national based organizations that were a part of my study remain focused on providing social services, charity, or discussions about politics in the old countries. The greatest number of ethnic organizations is located in Dearborn, Michigan as this area has the

largest concentration of Americans of Arab heritage. The biggest social service institution is located is there as well, called ACCESS (Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services), founded in 1971. It has a large spectrum of programs focusing on community, health, and social services; employment training, programs for youth, and leads an initiative of opening an Arab American National Museum in Dearborn. As a part of National Outreach it also initiated the national Network for Arab American Communities (NAAC), a consortium of eighteen grassroots organizations. However, even though they are taking a lead in educating the public and Arab American communities about the American political system (by organizing meetings with elected and administrative officials, meetings with the AAI members, attending meetings at the Capitol Hill, etc.) they are not involved in American politics. The larger organizations such as ACCESS cooperate with the Arab American Institute (AAI) or American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC). However, the smaller ones do not.

Organizations located in the Washington DC Metropolitan Area include first generation national based social clubs and professional networking organizations, as well as lobby organizations that focus on the issues in the old countries. However, there is a limited amount of political involvement on behalf of ethnic or heritage identity in the American political system. However, most of the members of these organizations are very serious about voting and keeping up with politics (Samhan 2006).

The engagement into the American political system is done mainly by two biggest pan-Arab organizations, AAI and ADC located in the Washington DC area.

4.3.2. Arab American political organizations

Strong American support of Israel helped forge Arab-American unity, both because it created a new immigration pool from Palestinian refugees and also because media coverage of the conflict facilitated the perception of American hostility to Middle Eastern culture (Haddad 1991). Before 1967, Arab Americans did not feel the need to gain political influence as a group in American life. Individual Arab Americans were achieving positions of prominence in party politics, labor unions, entertainment, education, medicine, and journalism - but they never felt compelled to speak up in the name of Arab Americans.

Unity and feelings of misunderstanding in 1967 led to the first organization to assume and focus on a hyphenated identity, and coined a term "Arab American." Times after the Six Day War of 1967 were the beginning of non-sectarian, national, credible organizations seeking to advance an Arab (not sectarian or regional) orientation. The first organization was the Association of Arab-American University Graduates (AAUG). AAUG efforts were directed at improving the image of Arabs and providing accurate information to the public and creating an Arab American lobby advocating for influencing U.S. foreign policy. It was first non-sectarian secular organization founded in order to stimulate and propagate an Arab American identity while engaging with the American public and political system. However, as one of the founders, Michael Suleiman of AAUG stated: "the U.S. hostility towards Arabs and the concept of Arabism was so extreme and so widespread among both policymakers and the general public that the AAUG considered it practically useless to attempt to have an impact on the political process and public policy" (Suleiman

2006). Sure enough, AAUG did not survive long. The efforts of AAUG were not in vain though. The National Association of Arab Americans (NAAA) formed in 1972 by an attorney Richard Shadyac, Professor Hisham Shirabi from Georgetown University and a former Army colonel and aide to president Nixon, Peter Tanous, revived the premise of AAUG. A Lebanese-American based organization, NAAA was restricted to professional networking but was created as a lobby, though still focused mainly on Middle East issues (not even Arab world ones). The goals of the organization were: a separate independent state for Palestinians, and a pluralistic, non-sectarian Lebanon (Orfalea 2006). Contrasting AAUG with NAAA, Abdeen Jabara, who was one of the founders of AAUG said: "NAAA drew on totally different constituencies than AAUG. It was not an émigré organization by and large. It was largely an organization of Americans who were first and second generation, who felt themselves to be good, red-blooded, God-fearing, flag-waving Americans. NAAA aimed at influencing legislators and AAUG ideally aimed at reaching different sectors" (Orfalea 2006: 218). In addition to lobbying for influencing American foreign policy, NAAA found themselves also defending an Arab American candidate for Congress, George Corey in 1979 against a smear campaign by his opponent, Leo Holsinger. An article was circulated claiming Corey was linked to "Arab oil interests" and terrorist organizations. Before this article, Corey was leading two-to-one, but he ultimately lost in the primaries (Orfalea 2006).

As mentioned earlier, individual politicians of Arab descent rarely took a public stand on behalf of Arab Americans. One exception was Congressman James Abourazek, an Arab American from South Dakota (and former member of NAAA),

who spoke up about peace in the Middle East and the dominance of a pro-Israeli discourse in the United States. He declined to seek a second term and instead created an organization that would advocate for Arab Americans (Orfalea 2006) in light of the increases of discrimination cases and defamation of Arab Americans. Abourazek formed the first national, secular, non-partisan, pan-Arab, multi-issue organizations: the American-Arab Anti Discrimination Committee (ADC). Created in 1980, it merged with NAAA. Congresswoman Mary Oakar, speaking against illegal use of American weapons in Lebanon in 1979, lost her seat in Congress and became heavily involved with ADC. ADC became one of the most powerful Arab American organizations in the nation.[53] Abourazek gathered a Board of Directors who added stature to ADC that NAAA never achieved. It included five U.S. congressmen (three African Americans and two Arab Americans), Edward Said, Hisham Sharabi, Noam Chomsky, Henry Schwartchild, Reverend Jessie Jackson, and reverend Joseph Lowery. ADC's board appealed to a broader segment of society than NAAA's, which restricted full membership to Arab Americans (Orfalea 2006).

The initial agenda of ADC was to advocate and defend rising anti-Arab attitudes in the American public. That included addressing congressional members refusing individual contributions from Arab Americans by exposing such acts in the media (more about it in chapter 9), organizing lobbying visits with members of Congress and their staffs, and creating internship programs for young Arab Americans to get acquainted with the American political system. ADC also opened a legal office taking on defamation and discrimination cases and getting involved in

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[53] By the end of 1982, the national office had a 22-person staff, and a10 staffers in seven regional offices. There were 44 functioning chapters (today there are 35).

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court trials. Thanks to its spreading popularity it published two thorough reports on hate crimes and discrimination against Arab Americans (2001-2003 and 2003-2007). With an increased focus on fighting defamation, another organization spun off of ADC to focus on creating political alliances and influence in the American political arena while creating a cooperation ground for Arab American communities. This off-spring of ADC, Arab American Institute (AAI) was founded in 1985 by James Zogby who had been the executive director of ADC. AAI focused on creation of leadership and political involvement of Arab Americans into the American political life. Its focus is on encouraging Arab Americans to first of all vote (they have a very popular program during elections *Yalla Vote*), to become active in political parties and to run for positions of precinct delegates, national delegates, and other political offices. AAI also focuses on improving Arab American outreach on Capitol Hill by establishing a government relations department and a national grassroots network to mobilize community action on pending legislation and interact with members of Congress. It further mobilizes to help coordinate meetings of the Arab American community with members of Congress, testifying before those and other important hearings, initiating dialogue with the Department of Justice and Transportation on secret evidence, airline profiling, and other federal policies that contain anti-Arab bias; spearheading Arab American outreach to the Census Bureau, organizing a national coalition of ethnic groups to maximize ethnic involvement in Census, and supporting Arab American nominations to diplomatic, judicial, and other government posts – including appointments to represent Arab Americans at White House conferences (AAI, 2010).

The political activism arena of Arab Americans is still very fresh. Most activists in the current organizations were members of the first AAUG and have personal relations with each other. Also, most of the pan-Arab, consolidated identity based organizations are composed of mainly Palestinians and Lebanese of second and third generation, which creates a certain disconnect between the first generations of Arab Americans and those from other Arab national origins and backgrounds.

4.4. **Stigmatization of Arab Americans**

Oftentimes identity based Arab American organizations were formed as a reaction to stigmatization and negative stereotypes of Arab Americans in the popular culture that date back to the 18th and 19th centuries and is located in British imperialism. This essentialization of the East, called Orientalism by Edward Said (1978), is still present in academic and artistic tradition portraying the East (including the Middle East) in hostile and deprecating ways. It is prejudiced by outsiders' interpretations of Eastern cultures and people. These stereotypes were reinforced and altered to include Arabs as terrorists. The stereotypes are ever present, and their harm is noticeable to the Arab American community. As Jack Shaheen in *Reel Bad Arabs* cites an Arab proverb: "By repetition even donkey learns"[54] (2009: 7), and in this case, learning is internalization of widespread negative images of Arab Americans in movies and TV shows. Shaheen (2009) groups the stereotypes of Arabs into villains, blood thirsty sheiks, maidens, Egyptians who are mostly portrayed as related to mummies, or Palestinians who are portrayed mostly as Jew-hating terrorists, brutal by nature. The majority of these images and characters are negative, from treacherous and violent villains, to not-so-bright villains, through Anti-West, Anti-Christian, and

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[54] Al tikrar biallem il hmar (*Ar.*)

Anti-Jewish terrorists. There is a very short list of movies that portray Arabs and Arab Americans as regular folk, with families, regular jobs, worries, joys, etc. – with multiple associations and identities. An additional problem with these representations is that they not only portray Arabs as villains, but specifically as Anti-American, which creates an explicit sense of suspicion about Americans of Arab heritage.

However, the degree of stigmatization varied across time and context. It became more prevalent and present since the 1960s (Joseph 1999) with the escalation after 1967 (Joseph 1999) and over the years it was sustained, never fully disappearing. In both popular culture and government policy, anti-Arab stereotypes since the 1970s have attached a stigma on Arab ethnicity in America. Stigmatization exploded in the political climate in the post 9/11 reality. Currently, the chances for somebody that looks "Arab" to encounter hostile attitudes in public, professional, and social spheres is very high (Cainkar 2002). New negative stereotypes emerged in and permeated throughout advertising, television, and movies – particularly those of the nefarious oil sheik and the terrorist. The Arab-as-villain has been a favorite scapegoat of popular American culture, thereby setting the stage for acts of discrimination and bigotry that have affected Arab Americans at home and resulted in a range of reactions (Samhan 2001).

However, stigmatization and defamation do not end with negative stereotypes. They are translated and have consequences of negative attitudes that in turn result in anti-Arab discrimination, which includes hate crimes, systematic violations in areas of civil rights and liberties, access to public information and defamation in popular

and political culture (Samhan 1987; Cainkar 2005; ADC Report on Hate Crimes and Discrimination Against Arab Americans 2003-2007).

The first cases of civil rights violations against Arab Americans happened with "Operation Boulder" in 1972 that increased the abilities of intelligence agencies to arrest, wire and phone tap, and profile Arab American students. Tactics included intimidation by the FBI, deportations of Arab American students based on minor visa infractions, and surveillance of Arab American activists. However, the most numerous civil rights violations took place after the events of 9/11. Legislation criminalizing Arabs, South Asians, and Muslims, such as the USA PATRIOT ACT (Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act) of October 2001, expanded the power of the U.S. government to use surveillance and wiretapping without warrants. Additionally, of the roughly twenty policies (Cainkar 2004) and security initiatives implemented in the first twelve months after 9/11, fifteen explicitly and implicitly targeted Arabs and Muslims. The policies included 1) Special Registration Program issued by the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) requiring certain non-immigrant aliens to register with the U.S. immigration authorities, 2) National Security Entry and Exit Registry System (NSEERS)[55] 3) Enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act (EBSVERA), and 4) Increased liberties for the actions of the INS. Those policies criminalized and profiled Arab Americans making them victims of discrimination and prejudice. These policies and defamation resulted in violent hate crimes, airline discrimination, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) abuses, detainee/prisoners abuses, state and local police misconducts, Federal Law

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[55] Although currently suspended had already created serious hardships for numerous Arab Americans

Enforcement Agency misconducts, employment discrimination, naturalization and Green Card delays, and threats and hate speeches (ADC Report on Hate Crimes and Discrimination Against Arab Americans 2003-2007).

Nadine Naber (2000) called Arab Americans "invisible insiders." With a constantly shifting make-up in relation to immigration, as well as the fact that Arab Americans themselves self-identify according to multiple labels, a situation is created where it is difficult to categorize them. Because most Arab Americans are Christian, many are phenotypically white, and are on average well educated (Pulcini 1993), Arab Americans used to "blend in" as honorary whites. However, their ethnic identity category became politicized and thus Arab Americans, along with other "Oriental" groups became visible, despite all of the other identity categories expressed by them. This politicization grew in strength after the events of 9/11. Samhan (1987) called it a "political racism," Cainkar "criminalization" (2005) assigning Arab Americans a minority social status, even though in legal terms Arab Americans are "white" and do not benefit from minority status.

Concluding, the history of Arab presence in the United States is one of economic success and cultural assimilation. Arab American political activism developed as the need for identity based political action at the collective level only after 1967. The main reasons for political protest and identity mobilization are located in politics related to the Arab world that resonate into the American political life. The effects of these politics impacted Arab Americans started with the Six Day War and escalated with the events of 9/11 with an increased stigmatization of Arab Americans as terrorists, traditionalists and brutes, non-compatible with American values. The

following chapter demonstrates the complexity of Arab American communities along with national based organizations making the stereotypes tenuous.

CHAPTER 5: No ONE represents the community

This chapter discusses the heterogeneity of mobilized collective identities encountered in the Washington D.C. Metropolitan Area. It does not include religious organizations. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, the main organizations in this study were national based and consolidated identity-based organizations. The heterogeneity of Arab American communities is reflected in the differences among organizations and their members. Differences among the organizations are located in the main three main areas. First, difference is related to the membership base and a focus of organizations where national origin based organizations are mostly composed of first generation Americans and focus more often on cultural and social repertoire while consolidated identity based organizations gather subsequent generations of Arab Americans and focus on more political issues. Second, differentiation relates to the geo-political focus of mobilized Arab Americans, which means that there is a wide spectrum of political splits and differentiations of political opinions among the Arab American communities that makes it often difficult to work under a united panethnic label. The third complexifying characteristic of Arab Americans, as with any other communities, is that people occupy several identities and intersecting opinions, views, and social positions. These identities may develop over time and be influenced by socio-political contexts. The above three axes of differentiation are the focus of this chapter.

Historically, as discussed in the literature review chapter, there was a tendency in social sciences and humanities to treat minorities as monolithic groups.

Panethnic labels were treated as unique and exhaustive identities. These identities were analytical tools that were applied to minorities with no discussion about the diversity of experiences, identities, various processes and dynamics within the communities. Examples of such treatment can be seen in studies and works about many minorities, including African Americans, Asian Americans, Chicanos, Latinos, and many others. Prior to the 1970s, for example African American experiences were framed through works such as *The Philadelphia Negro* by W.E.B DuBois (1899) and through limited conceptualizations of one model of the "black family" in *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* (Moynihan Report 1965). Homogenizing studies also include research and books about "the" Asian American experience, not recognizing there are many Asian American experiences and communities. Examples include *Race, Rights and the Asian American Experience* by Angelo Ancheta (2001), or *Asian Americans: and Interpretive History* by Sucheng Chao (1991). Only relatively recently, new strands of studies acknowledging the heterogeneity of minorities has emerged, not to say that the homogenizing trend has fully stopped. There is an increasing number of studies that catch nuances of diversity of experiences and processes of shaping various identities within panethnic groups. In the case of Asian Americans, such studies include *Up Against Whiteness: Race, School and Immigrant Youth* by Stacy Lee (2005) where an ethnography of Hmong school children reveals the impact of various Asian identities and generational status on the success of children at school and the treatment that they receive. Another example includes *The Contemporary Asian American Experience: Beyond the Model Minority* by Timothy Fong (1998) who, even though operating within the Asian

American label, deconstructs stereotypes about Asian Americans and discusses experiences and challenges various Asian American communities face.

Unfortunately, even though there is a more nuanced analytical trend about the majority of minorities, Arab Americans are still very often portrayed, discussed and studied in monolithic terms. They are portrayed in the American mainstream negatively, and are understood to be essentially the same and sharing one strong common identity. Especially after 9/11 monolithic images and portrayals became widespread in the media and in the American mainstream. However, those images do not represent all, or even a significant part of the Arab American communities, whose members are of various national origins and religions, and thus express various collective identities, political opinions, and interests. Additionally, although Arabic is the main language spoken by Arabs, there are Arabs and Arab Americans who speak languages other than Arabic (such as Berber or Aramaic). In other words, Arab Americans themselves have a constantly shifting composition of identities. They identify themselves according to multiple, often conflicting labels (Naber 2000; Leonard 2005) which are constantly influenced and shaped by structural factors. Therefore, Arab Americans cannot be treated as one identity *group*.

Therefore, discussions about a singular Arab American community are very misleading and oversimplifying. "Arab American" as a label is often used for political and pragmatic reasons by Arab American organizations or by Arab Americans themselves for simplicity reasons. "Arab American" has a recognizable meaning in the American mainstream and the label "Arab" carries a historical meaning. However, the diversity among Arab Americans is significant and it includes

variety of national origins, political interests, religions, geographical location/town, sometimes clans, generational status, or even geographical concentrations of Arab Americans communities. The motivations for their mobilization and bases for coalition forming vary and are inspired by various interests.

In my study, the diversity of the communities is often a challenge for political consolidated identity-based organizations, but their purpose is to also demonstrate this diversity to the mainstream. Therefore, the first challenge is to get self identifying Arab Americans together, equip them with political voice, and render the voices of diversity to the mainstream. In other words, give voice to various communities and form coalitions. This is an explicitly political project though. To unite so many diverse communities is a challenge, as other racial and pan ethnic communities have discovered. The literature discusses racial formation and racialization of Arab Americans, especially after 9/11, as compared to other racial and ethnic communities (Samhan 1999; Naber 2000; Cainkar 2006; Hassan 2002). However, in cases of racial groups, there was a common geographical location (Asian or Latinos), or phenotypical traits, or common economic goals distinguishing these groups from the mainstream that had a uniting and mobilizing power. In the situation of Arab Americans, the splits are often deeply rooted in politics, religion, generational status, etc. and the common interests are often lost in the divisions.

However, with subsequent generations, as one of the respondents said, the boundaries between the communities disappear and younger generations are finding commonalities with other Arab Americans easier than their parents or grandparents. Additionally, with passing generations, especially among political activists, people

become connected and acquainted. The main differences that pose challenges to unite Arab Americans, as commented on by the members of organizations, are along the lines of 1) generational difference, between first generation immigrants and subsequent generations 2) geographical and cultural origins of Arab Americans (twenty two countries cover a lot of cultural heterogeneity and spheres of historical influence and political interests) and 3) religious differences, emphasized during the last decades.

When I was starting this research, I spoke to an Arab American journalist who, when he learned about my research, warned me that getting Arab Americans and Arabs together is an almost impossible task. That was the beginning of my journey into the diversity of the Arab American community. Thankfully, I did not have to organize Arab Americans together, just talk to them separately.

5.1. National based organizations combined with generational differences

The national based organizations in this study are mainly composed of first generation Americans who shaped organizations in order to form social networking opportunities, to provide support in a new socio-cultural context, to build a cultural network for their children, and to teach them about culture, language, and even religion. The first generations tend to keep their social ties within their own national origins and cultural influence and are often very engaged politically into the affairs in their home countries. However, because of this, second generations stop being members, *"We are losing them"* as one of the members of a Sudanese organization said. *"Second generation assimilates and the American system takes care of them."* This statement represents the core of the focus of many of the national based

organizations. Other types are of social character, social clubs, where main national, religious and American holidays are celebrated (such as Fourth of July or Eid Al-Fitr at the end of Ramadan).

5.1.1. Nature of national identity-based organizations

Unlike the consolidated based organizations which will be discussed in chapter 8, the national based organizations in my study are focused mainly on social and cultural activities or political issues in the Arab world. Their leaders are often aware of political efforts made on the behalf of the consolidated identity-based organizations but are not very pro-active in participation in the joint projects.

National identity-based organizations tend not to be involved in American politics at the collective level or be in close contact or cooperation with consolidated identity-based organizations. They vote as separate individuals rather than expressing a collective "Yemeni" or "Algerian" vote. Some of them, like the Yemeni and Moroccan organizations are potential members in political initiatives undertaken by the Arab American Institute (AAI), but are not initiators themselves. Members of the Yemeni American organization and one of the Moroccan American organizations took part in the *yalla vote* campaign organized by the AAI. Other than that, they are more involved in politics in their home countries, rather than what is happening in the United States.

This type of organization is very similar to the trends from the beginnings of the immigration of Arab Americans into the United States from 1830s. During that time, communities turned inward as they sought to assimilate with low visibility. The mobilization of the national origin identities, except for Palestinian American is

mostly of social, cultural or charity in nature. I would not even call participation in

social or cultural events a mobilization, as most of the members did not change or

"realize" a need to mobilize politically in the name of their national identity in the

American context. However, the main reason for it is the American foreign policy

that has a conflicted relationship with the nations that mobilize politically.

Lack of political prospects – other role of the identity cultural and social organizations

Other organizational types are charity organizations and lobbies for the

countries themselves, such as the Lebanese Task Force or United Palestinian Appeal.

They are non-profit organizations whose members made sure to underscore the

organizations' non-political character. In the latter situation, the subsequent

generations of Arab Americans are active; however, these organizations are not the

outlet for political activity in the name of the collective identity. Those types of

organizations are a manifestation of a wide perception that political activity at this

time can only marginally impact U.S. foreign policy with regards to the Israeli-

Palestinian conflict. Many respondents said that lack of significant possibilities for

impacting U.S. foreign policy regarding this conflict has several explanations: 1) lack

of current leadership on the Palestinian side, 2) the impact of pro-Israeli lobbies on

the American politics, and 3) lack of leadership in the Arab American community and

lack of vision or strategy to mobilize the base of the grass roots. Some other

respondents also mentioned Palestinians who are disillusioned with politics and come

to the United States wanting only to live peacefully consequently limiting their engagement to cultural and social activities. Palestinians and Lebanese are a very specific population among Arab Americans as their fate is closely related to the American interests in the Middle East. This is one more consequence of political isolation where one of the Arab American communities is not motivated by the local context, or rather, lack of capacity and fit to mobilize their identities politically. They do in crisis situations, but this mobilization is not maintained throughout times of no-crisis.

Sense of belonging

Respondents had a plethora of identities with which they associated. Even though I specifically asked about national associations, they shared experiences about religious, geographical, and ethnic ones. Thus the sense of belonging varied greatly among the respondents and finding a common sense of belonging across all communities seemed to be often challenging.

However, there is one organization I encountered that focused on the idea of uniting all Arabic speaking nations together in the spirit of pan-Arabism in order to form one great Arab nation. However, this view was not very common among Arab Americans who participated in my study. This organization was formed by a first generation immigrant, a Lebanese American, Hakim, who focused on bringing various points of views and opinions about issues in the Arab world and inter-Arab issues together in the spirit of dialogue. The organization is even called *Alhewar,* which means "dialogue" in Arabic. Similar to the national-based organizations that are focused on homeland rather than American issues, this organization is also

conceptualizing "Arabness" in a different manner than the Arab American identity-based organizations.

First generation members from national based organizations associate primarily with their national, or ethnic heritage – "I'm Algerian first", "I'm Egyptian first," Or "I'm am a Berber." However, as elaborated in chapter 8, the majority of interviewed members from consolidated identity-based organizations behave in a contrary fashion, with mostly subsequent generations engaging in political activity in the name of their Arab American heritage with a focus on the hyphenated identity – "I'm both, American and Arab" or even "I'm American first" (except for Alhewar). This process of acquiring the identity of the new homeland takes generations and was experienced by other ethnic groups in the history of United States immigration. There are Arab Americans who even compare their experiences to those of the Irish (Nagel and Staeheli 2005). The similarities are in the trend of exclusion, resistance and finally acceptance of the European immigrants' experiences from the beginnings of nineteenth century. Like the Irish, Jews, or freed slaves, Arab Americans were not considered equal nor enjoyed citizenship rights on account of being "othered" (Gerstle 2006). Even though Arab Americans fought for and won their citizenship rights in the 1830s and became mainly assimilated, now they are stigmatized and considered as incompatible with American culture because of political reasons. Thus Arab Americans experienced first isolation then acceptance from the mainstream, which was again followed by exclusion. Now Arab Americans are at the level of resistance.

5.1.2. We're not even Arabs

Not all communities feel connected to each other, be it culturally, politically or geographically, despite the common definitions of what it means to be an Arab (i.e. to speak Arabic, to be of one of the 22 countries from the Arab League, etc.). Some Arab American communities often do not even claim that they are Arabs, even though for political reasons in the American context, many recognize the need for cooperation with efforts towards consolidation of Arab American identity, to pursue human rights issues and political voice. However, there is little contact at a collective level between Arab Americans who are of Maghreb[56] origins and those who are from Mashreq, or those who are from the Horn of Africa (Sudan).

Algerians and Moroccans interviewed in this study stated that they do not have much in common with Arabs. Ethnically, a large part of Maghrebians are Berbers, some are Arabs, Phoenicians and finally even Europeans. Culturally, Arab influences are visible, however there is a strong Berber movement in Maghreb that resists the incorporation of Maghreb into the Arab world because of the history of strong culture of Berber resistance (against Europeans and Arabs). A significant share of the current population in Maghreb considers itself related to Arab identity but of Berber descent and origin[57] (Brett and Fentress 1997), regardless of mixed ethnic or linguistic heritage. These associations are translated into the American context and, in addition to lack of strong interests and/or close relations between the United States and Maghreb as compared to the Middle East, Maghrebians in this study did not report the need to associate with Arab Americans from the Middle East. They are very aware of the multilayer nature of identities and affiliations of Maghrebians. One

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[56] Maghreb ("West" in Arabic) includes countries in North Africa: Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya and Mauritania

[57] 40% of Morocco and 20% of Algeria are Berbers or of Berber descent (Brett and Fentress 1997)

of the members of an Algerian American organization[58], Fadil when asked if he were an Arab answered:

> *"Depends: politically, personally, culturally? Historically, Arab[s] were present in Algeria for a while, but it is hard to say that there is somebody 100 percent Arab. Politically, we are closer to Maghreb, the Arab world is more of an American categorization – there was no North Africa until recently. Culturally? We don't even speak Arabic. Maybe religion, but even that, there is a rich mix here. [However] at the political level [in the United States] sure, they would speak on behalf of human rights and things pertaining to us, but on [a] personal level and community level, we don't have much contact with each other.*

Speaking with the Sudanese and Yemeni Americans, despite being very pro-AAI and ADC, they did not seem to have much in common with the efforts to consolidate the Arab American identity.

The national based organizations are usually the first effort by the immigrants to self preserve and succeed in the new environment. Organizations provide them a point of reference, a support system and a set of resources. The national identity-based organizations follow the discussions of segmented assimilation where first generation immigrants tend to associate first with their countrymen (like the Sudanese), some immediately assimilate (like the Moroccans), and some have a harder time succeeding economically, especially the Yemeni population in Michigan.

5.2. Political splits

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[58] Algeria is a member of the 22 Arab League countries and AAI and ADC refer to them as Arab

The biggest challenge in political mobilization of Arab Americans relates to the political divides in opinions about the Middle East. They are especially vivid among the first generation immigrants, obviously, and fade away with generations born in the United States. I have spoken to first generation Arab Americans from various nationality backgrounds and asked them about cooperation with other Arab nationality based organizations. This discussion about political divides is a perfect illustration about the diversity of backgrounds, standpoints, and opinions among Arab Americans[59]. In the words of one of the activists, Jamila (repeated by several interviewees): *"there is one direction in the Arab world – that everybody fends for themselves, as there is no one direction."*

Interviewees shared stories about many ideological divides and reluctance to cooperate because of them, from the Moroccan-Algerian feud over West Sahara, to the Lebanese-Syrian conflict over long term Syrian military presence in Lebanon (which ended in 2005), or relations between Egypt and Mashrek countries over its claims of pan-Arabism.

One of the members of a consolidated identity-based organization, his name was Kadir, recalled a time during the first Gulf War when ADC got involved in inter-community disputes, when the staff went from forty people to five. Since then, they have a rule not to get involved in purely Arab disputes, in order to avoid splits and to focus on domestic issues.

*"We will not change anything when it comes to things at **home**. They*
have to change things at home first. When it comes to the focal issues

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[59] Another significant political split is along the lines of religion – between Islam and Christianity but this project is specifically focused on national origin-based and pan-ethnic based identities.

on Palestine and Israel, it's different, there is a consensus that something needs to be done. But now even the Palestinians are having a rift. Second is Iraq – getting out of there. And third is Lebanon, but there is no way anybody here will influence what's going on there."

There were several conflicting standpoints that I heard from most of the respondents, illustrating the multitudes of opinions among what is assumingly one community. These conflicts are the Gulf War and, not surprisingly, the Palestinian problem.

5.2.1. Gulf War

The Gulf War (1991 and 1994) was an external event that *"threw everything in the air,"* in the words of one of the members, Samantha. There are reports about debates inside the Arab American community during the Gulf War, discussing what the position of the American politics should be. There were very strong feelings on a number of sides, not only two sides. 1) That the invasion of Kuwait was somebody else's problem, that America had no responsibility whatsoever to either protect them or protect Saudi Arabia from the Iraqi invasion, 2) There were people who thought it was not their problem, with many thinking that frankly, the Kuwaitis had it coming, or 3) there were others in the community who were very strongly supportive of the American responsibility to intervene in this crisis. Finally 4) Some Arabs from the northern states criticized Gulf Arabs as greedy and gullible, accusing them of contributing to the disempowerment of Arabs in their willingness to spend tens of billions of dollars to support destruction of Iraq at the hands of Americans in order to empower Israel in the process.

In response, many Gulf Arabs questioned the Arabness of the Northern states (Egypt, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia) because they opposed Saudi Arabia and the U.S.-led retribution on Saddam Hussein (Haddad 2004), and dismissed them as Arabized peoples who did not understand the threat that Saddam's military posed on the Gulf States.

5.2.2. Palestine issue

The case of Palestine is a common thread, almost linking Arab Americans together, as many considered the support the Israeli occupation of Palestine Territories an inconceivable political stance. There are two choices of support – either a two-state solution or a one state solution, but it is considered almost un-Arab to be neutral about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, there is a range of attitudes towards further action and evaluation of the situation – some are even close to fatigue if not annoyance toward the problem.

The attitudes towards the Palestinians themselves varied, from opinions that the mainstream would assume to opinions that reflect a more nuanced and specific national origins' interests, they can be grouped in the following five categories: 1) that the Palestinian issue is at the forefront of the crucial issues Arab Americans care about (Yemeni, Syrians), to 2) Palestinians themselves feeling used by other Arab nations treating the Palestinian issue as a negotiation card while withholding needed help (like most commonly accused Egypt), through 3) ambivalent attitudes of the Lebanese who often see Palestinians as the cause for social and political unrest in Lebanon (the Civil War and invasion of 1982 were partially caused by the operations of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)), to 4) politically correct expressions

of support for the Palestinian cause as a human rights issue (expressed by the Maghrebians or Egyptians). Finally a fifth attitude, related to the third one but expressed by activists who are very committed to the Palestinian cause, treats Palestinian identity as not associated with a nationality issue, but rather as a universal struggle for human rights and social justice – compared to African Americans under Jim Crow or black South Africans under Apartheid. As Nasim, a Palestinian American activist from a consolidated identity-based organization expressed: *"There is nothing specific about Arab Americans getting involved in the system, we are the next African Americans."*

Nadir, one Palestinian activist expressed his disillusionment due to feeling used by other political interests. He felt the need to disaggregate the Palestinian cause from the wider Arab nationalist cause. In his view, the Palestinian case should be discussed in terms of human rights. Echoing the statements of many other activists, he pointedly stated:

> *"I realized, after 9/11 (after the media showed Palestinians dancing on the streets and burning the American flag) there was the need to always contextualize what was happening in Palestine and I really felt that Bin Laden in particular and anyone who supported him were, as what happened throughout the modern history, exploiting the Palestinian cause to their own benefit. I think something in me was rejuvenated with the notion that you need to focus on the specific context of Palestine, not because it is not related to anything else, but because the relationships might not be with other Arabs, they might be*

with South Africa, Myanmar, or Tibet. We needed to, in some senses,

localize the conflict and the struggle but also to think about it more

universally. It might seem a paradox, in other words, take it out of the

regional context and treat it as a purely Palestinian issue, but then see

the relationships with other social justice issues throughout the world.

And actually this is precisely what happened after 9/11. The Second

Intifada had already begun but there was a very clear sense on the

ground in Palestine, and it is only now that I am beginning to

understand that – there is a very clear sense in Palestine that

Palestinians have to take things into their own hands. Regional powers

dynamics had shifted so dramatically, especially after the 2003

invasion of Iraq that is really absurd to rely on other Arab

leaders/powers to do anything."

The above testimonies and opinions are of course only a sliver of attitudes among Arab American communities. Nevertheless, even though there is a diversity of opinions, some of them are represented more often among one national origin and generational status than others. In other words, American Arabs from Mashreq national origins tended to have a closer relation to Palestinian issue than Arab Americans of Maghreb origins and Arab Americans of second or third generation tended to have more locally focused solutions to the problems than first generation Arab Americans.

5.2.3. Stereotypes within

Additionally, political divides and animosities are present in stereotypes openly talked about within various religious and national groups among Arab Americans. For example, the most common stereotype regarded the Lebanese, who supposedly treat other Arabs as "under" them, and associate other Arabs with Islam. The stereotypes referred specifically to class issues (Lebanese Americans are on average one of the most affluent among Arab Americans). Additionally, there was a feeling of superiority on the side of Christians towards Muslims. Christians were thought to be more intelligent. Muslims were blamed for the treatment Arab Americans experience in the United States.

Thus one cannot talk about a unified Arab American community not only because of the diversity in organizations, various identities, religious, and political divides but also because of various perceptions that members of different communities have of each other. One can no more talk about a unified Arab community than one could talk about a unified American community.

5.3. Intersectionality –Timely process of groupness

One could conclude after the above discussion about the various standpoints, focuses, opinions, and political divides among the Arab American communities, there is no chance for a dialogue or finding common ground among Arab Americans (which, as discussed in chapter 7 is not the case). However, one has to remember that Arab Americans, like other minority groups and their multiple identities, live in constant contact with a surrounding world and are affected by various events, institutions, and people therein. Thus the final section of this chapter features two life stories of Arab Americans who are multidimensional, highly similar, but also very different from

each other and who combine many hyphenations with pride. They represent only a tiny example of the wide richness of Arab Americans and the process of mobilizing their collective identities.

5.3.1. *Mani*

I met Mani in a Palestinian American organization. He was volunteering his time there at that period. The last time I spoke to him, he worked there full time. His passion for the cause and his devotion to all of his identities was contagious and heightened his visibility among people there. He is a sixty three years old teacher and former principal of a school. He has grey hair and the air of a grandfather. He is indeed a grandfather of two grandchildren that he adores. Family is extremely important to him. He is a proud father, grandfather, and husband. He has very good relationships with his son and his wife. He is a very attentive interlocutor, very cavalier-like, and hospitable. The time we met for our interview, he brought cookies and made me tea. He is an American, but he was born in Beirut, Lebanon. He has no foreign accent though, as he came with his family to the United States when he was seven years old. Looking at him one could not guess his ethnicity - he has dark eyes, and light skin. He could be from any of the Mediterranean nations. He talks about himself in terms of being a Christian, an Arab, and American, and a Palestinian. He does not have a hyphenated identity; he has a full "hybrid" identity that constitutes who he is.

I met him when he was in the midst of mobilizing his identity. It was a process for him as he explained to me. At the time I met him, he identified with being Palestinian and even joking about the Lebanese – who constitute his mother's side of

the family. He was using a nickname of his full name. During the time of our last conversation he was transitioning to his full Arabic name and learning more and more Arabic. But, let us start from the beginning. Mani's story is very closely related to *Nakba*. It is a unique story but one that many Palestinians shared. He finds it important to start the story of the discoveries of his identities with the story of the way and time his parents met. Recently, Mani has been talking to his father about his memories and experiences in Palestine, even though his father does not want to talk about it too much. He always answers in mono-syllables.

His father lived in Jerusalem before he married Mani's mother. However, he always vacationed with his brother in Beirut. And this is where they met and fell in love, though his mother was not sure about him. But Mani's uncle arranged for dates, the aunt or grandmother was the chaperon, so finally she consented to his advance and they married in Beirut in November 1947. Mani's parents honeymooned in Jerusalem - and he proudly admits, with a smile, that he believes Jerusalem the site of his conception. From that November until May 1948 his father worked for the British Mandate government. In May of 1948 the political situation got tense. The British government ordered its entire workforce to leave. So Mani's father put all of their belongings in a car and took his pregnant wife to Amman, Jordan, through Damascus, Syria, and then to her home in Beirut where Mani was born. His father then had to leave for Cyprus, where the Mandate was residing. He was a civilian working for the government, so he facilitated a lot of the logistics of taking everybody out of Palestine.

Growing up in Beirut, Mani's family was later given permission to move to the United States. In 1956, the entire family left Beirut - including Mani, his brother, and his nine month old sister. They moved to Brooklyn, NY where Mani grew up. But during those years, he thought of himself as Lebanese. His father spoke little about Palestine or being Palestinian. Recently, Mani started probing him, but because it was a very sad time, his father does not want to talk about it. He answers questions in one word, or two words, but he is now 85 years old and Mani has been making notes on what his father has done, what is he is feeling.

So growing up Mani was Lebanese, like his mother, and was raised in Beirut after all, as he says. So when people asked him about his nationality, he would answer: Lebanese. And there was a time where looking at him, with his looks and Mediterranean sounding name - people would ask – "Are You Italian?", "Yeah"; "Are you Greek?", "Sure." "Puerto Rican?" Whatever people said, he would agree in return. Being an Arab was not fun, he learned. He heard comments about Arabs characterized as "rag heads" and "camel jockeys." The "not fun part" became very intense in the 1960s after the 1967 War, Mani recalls. That was the year when Mani graduated from high school and went to college. Anti-Arab sentiment was at its peak, so it was easier to let people think whatever they wanted to think. Despite hiding his ethnicity, he did his Masters and BA in history with an area of concentration of the Middle East and he did his MA thesis on Zionism. He admits that the 1967 War shocked him into reality. It shook him to where he questioned who he was. That started the unwinding of experiences. The studies were a sort of introspection, as he

put it, a therapy. Publicly, he recalled, he was still the same, but this was when he

started to get in touch with his Palestinian side.

However, it was not until he became a history teacher that he started actively

mobilizing and surfacing both his Palestinian identity and his religious beliefs.

Growing up in a very conservative home, the Jewish state was an apocalyptic reality

featuring the return of Jesus, which really bothered Mani. His religious upbringing

and his ethnicity started to weave on him. It became challenging to discuss Israel

without talking about Palestinians. He started asking "what about Palestinian

Christians? What do you do with them?" However, there were no good answers.

Some included: "Too bad, they are just peripheral damages of the God's will." That

bothered Mani quite a bit.

The more he was involved, the more he doubted the eschatology taught to

him, so he explored the biblical notions of Israeli state. Was it by land, or was it a

nation by spirit, by people? The Jews that came to Israel were Russians, Germans,

and otherwise not Middle Eastern. He felt more closely connected to Abraham than

them. He asked himself these and other questions.

When the terrorist attacks of 9/11 happened, he was a principal of a middle

school. While doing his rounds that morning, his secretary called him and they

watched the towers hit. The following morning the FBI came to his school and said

they wanted the names and addresses of all the Arabs families in Mani's school. This

directive shocked him once again into reality – "I'm an Arab!" It was the apogee of

the process of realization for Mani that he was an Arab. Then, his church said,

"you're an Arab, tell us something." His wife also encouraged him to teach in the

church, tell people what does it meant to be an Arab, what is going on in the Middle East. He organized a group that talks about what is going on that persists today. He is very connected to his church and keeps saying that the church helped him come to grips with what it means to be an Arab American, Christian-Palestinian, and other identity combinations that have been often confusing for him. He had to untangle them for himself.

He explained to me how he viewed these two identities and how they played out in his interactions with people, mostly Americans. The idea of being American and Arab is an odd concept for many. They do not even know how to identify it. So, he started explaining things to people. For example, an Arab is somebody whose native language is Arabic, "oh I didn't know that," people say. Then when he was telling people that he was a Christian, they asked him then when did he convert, even though Mani's family can trace their Christianity to the 3rd century. After explaining that he usually asked the people when their family converted.

Mani also associates being an Arab with tribalism. He distinguishes between the American family life and an Arab one. *"We are very exclusive, individualistic"* he said, referring to the American way of life. *"In the family where I grew up, the common denominator is not the individual but the nuclear family. So there's a sense of community."* Additionally, Mani had to reconcile the talks about the battle of cultures such as Islam/Christianity or East/West. He did not know where he fit in. He concluded and reconciled that there are very good aspects of the American society and Eastern culture, and wonderful aspects of Muslim culture that he cherishes as well, and he specifies that his community of choice is among Palestinian Americans.

His familial ties are with both Palestinian and Lebanese. Mani father's family is scattered over the world. However, he identifies himself more with Palestinians due to the Palestinian cause, more so than identity. He explained:

> *"What identifies me, it's not even the Palestinian itself, it is Palestinian because I identify it mostly with justice, that's what ties me, that religious strand that goes through it. I think that's more powerful, identifying with Jesus and justice […] It was an evolutionary process. And learning more about the 1st century Palestine, Jesus' ministry in Palestine, him growing up Jewish, so nationality, I feel is a result of, or an outcome of it."*

The year when Mani retired he started the revisiting process. His efforts in the Palestinian cause that started in 2001:

> *"I was like a starving man in a banquet, I just wanted to eat everything. And it exhausted me. I then I used my brain to choose – I chose the Palestinian organization I'm in right now because they're doing charity work and I knew I didn't want to do political advocacy, I don't feel motivated to do that, because we don't have the power base. The Palestinians are very thin, very weak. They don't have the power base that the opposite side has, and the opposite side means Zionism. The Zionist perspective is pronounced/heard, they are the political heavyweight. They have the money, the have the votes, they have the entrée into decision makers."*

9/11 was almost personal for Mani. *"A cowboy going to Iraq. It was almost comical. Very, very sad. And second administration was very uncomfortable to me, social views and religious views, international views. Very mean spirited. I don't think I associated with the Iraqis though at that time."*

Mani is also very aware of the presence and popularity of the Jewish culture and pro-Israeli attitudes. He told a story about one of the meetings with his interfaith dialogue group:

> *"When we organized a meeting where one of members of our church wanted to talk about Palestine, and he did, about the injustices, members of the synagogue left. 'It is a conversation stopper when you're bashing Israel.' We're not bashing Israel, 'We had Holocaust, don't talk about injustices.' But what does Palestine has to do with Holocaust? It is an end of the conversation anyways. Dialogue is pretty hard. And I feel I am not heard as a Palestinian American, the other that's who I am. Being controlled by this agenda that I have nothing to do with, the agenda of the pro-Israeli Jews in this country. There are American Jews that are not pro-Israeli and they are called self-hating Jews. So, that agenda is prevalent."*

A few months ago Mani got even more involved with the Palestinian organization, being its executive director, he went to Palestinian Occupied Territories with his wife to participate in a course and then went back to teach in the West Bank and Gaza.

5.3.2 Amin

I met Amin in the evening at the headquarters of an Arab American consolidated identity-based organization, where he is a full time employee. He is a very welcoming, open, and hard working man. He was still at work at 8pm on a Friday. We spoke for several hours. Amin is half Syrian and half Lebanese, yet never questioned his heritage and ethnicity. His mother's family is from Southern Lebanon and his father's from Syria. They immigrated in late 1970. Amin was born in Dearborn in 1980. He says *"I was born when the organization I'm in was born, we grew up together."* When asked who he is, the first thing he says is "I'm from Detroit." He says it means to him that it gives him *"this toughness and straightforwardness that people in DC lack."* He describes a commitment to blue collar culture, is a bit cocky as well, which he says keeps him motivated. He is a Shi'ya Muslim man. How many stereotypes would come with that admission? On the other side, how would people react, if Amin told them that he was raised in Catholic school, which he still remembers fondly and has contact with Catholic churches and volunteers in soup kitchens organized by the Catholic church in the area. Amin is also a lawyer. Apart from his work as a full time lawyer serving in one of the consolidated identity-based organizations in Washington DC, he also volunteers his time assisting in campaigns against honorary killings and helping the homeless. He was framing the honorary killings in the American legal terms, to approach them as domestic violence incidents.

When Amin was interviewed after 9/11, he recalls *"I was looking at how 9/11 affects me as an American first, and then as a Muslim, and that's just how it is. I lived here, I never travelled overseas. I'm from here."*

He joined the Arab consolidated identity-based organization shortly after 9/11. He says he did as much as he could in Michigan, but there was no forum to do what he wanted to do, which is to address the domestic and policy issues at the national level, and to do that he had to be in Washington, DC. He believed government officials have to listen to Arab Americans in Michigan, as there are half a million of them. He wanted more of a challenge. He wanted the dialogue.

Well before 9/11, in 1997 and 1998 he got involved in the local Organization of Arab Students (OAS). He always wanted to get involved politically. 9/11 happened when he was a senior, and he shifted from a cultural focus to a more religious one - the Young Muslim Association. He met with others from this association the day after 9/11. As he recalled what they talked about doing that day, he was impressed at the group's mobilization. They assembled lectures, topics, churches, interfaith program, magazines. He recalls that after 9/11 the first attacks were against Muslims. He explains that his religious organization gave him spirituality, which is why he is still involved with religious groups. This is why it is easier for religious groups to mobilize than for ethnic groups to mobilize (talking about Council of Arab American Relations' (CAIR) larger funding). The Quran is the bylaw.

Mani and Amin are both Arab Americans, but with such different lives, religions, and experiences. They are both Arab Americans but they are located at such different intersections of social locations and other identities. What they have in common is that they carry their hyphenated identities with pride, and they want to connect rather than divide. They both are big advocates of all of their collective identities –

American, Arab, Palestinian, Syrian, Christian, and Muslim. They both feel the need for a more significant voice for Arab Americans and for a bigger sense of cooperation between them in order to have a more visible presence of alternative points of view that are present in the mainstream media and politics. For both of them, 9/11 impacted them greatly towards mobilizing their collective identities. They both chose to join Arab identity-based organizations; organizations that fit their interests and commitment to Arab American communities. However, neither of them claim that they are representatives of the entire community. They have this much in common. However, the journey to this point varied for both. Their journey towards discovery of the need to mobilize their collective identities was entirely different, and they have different stories to tell – like most people do. They are from flesh and blood and memories and families, rather than stereotypes and imagery.

Mani and Amin's stories show that there is no way of separating one identity from another in one person and making assumptions based on one identity or a stereotype associated with it. People are multicultural and this multiculturalism is part of them, this is what constitutes them, they are the connectors between identities. One of the members of a Palestinian American organization, Nadir, put it in a very interesting way, using the allegories of God:

"I cannot tell you I'm Palestinian, or Palestinian American, or Muslim American, or Arab American, or American any of those single things in the exclusion of the other, I can't tell you that. So, I suppose the only possible answer is that I'm a mélange of all of those things, on any given day, and I think that I probably define myself. I think the

most useful metaphor for me is the one that is at the heart of Islam,
and again I'm not a very devout Muslim, but I think the concept of
defining the deity or God, or Allah by what it is not 'La Ilaha
Illallah'[60] has been always very powerful to me, almost in a post-
structural sense so it's about signification, there are 99 names [of
God] but there is nothing in the middle, no one. There are just things
bouncing off of each other. And through that interconnectivity that
endless signification you have meaning, because there is something at
that core which is causing things to interplay in that way and I really
believe that the sum total of my interactions with people has meaning
somehow, I'm not sure I can define it as Palestinian, as Arab, or any
of the things."

So, what does it mean to be an Arab?

The splits, stereotypes, quarrels, and conflicts are all an illustration that there are multiple Arab American communities. Put in words of a respondent, when asked what it meant to be an Arab:

"it is a person who speaks Arabic, it is their native language. You
share some common cultural characteristics and you choose to be
called an Arab. The Jews from Morocco and Israel are Arabs but they
refuse to call themselves Arab. They speak Arabic, it's not Hebrew. So,
self identity is very important. There are tens of thousands of Syrians
in NY, who call themselves Syrians, because for them, at least 1st and

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[60] Which means: "[There is] No God but God." It is a Muslim declaration of belief in the oneness of God and acceptance of Muhammad as His prophet. This declaration is called *Shahada*

2nd generation, it is Syrian, it's not Jewish. So, I think it needs to be respected, and the community that we have is diversity. It's like America. I mean what does it mean to be American? U.S. is multi-cultural, multi-religious, multi-everything, and that's what Arab is, like Hispanic/Latino. And I think this is its strength. Jessie Jackson used to say when talking about hyphenated Americans, he said, what's important is that dash in between the names and what we invest in that dash is important, it says a lot about us. Is it's something that joins the two parties together, it's great, if it is something that separate, it's bad."

"I mean people do care about Palestinians, they do care about immigrants, civil rights, liberties, the interrogations, because when you pass a visa policy that restricts visas, that affects all the Arab groups, it doesn't matter if you're 5th generation Lebanese. When your cousins can't come here, when your family can't come here has nothing to do with you, because your name is Arabic or because they come from Lebanon. They have to be concerned with that, they have to be concerned with the possibility of them being wiretapped because they are calling their family in Lebanon and somebody picks up the phone and says some word that is picked up by the NSA in the tracking. So, it's not difficult to find matters that there are converging on."

In conclusion, it is clear that Arab Americans have very diverse communities and often contradictory interests and standpoints. They are people from a very diverse backgrounds, political contexts, and spheres of influence. This richness of experience and attitude is one of the biggest challenges to mobilize all the communities. However, even in the process of consolidated identity-based mobilization efforts, the leaders of these efforts clearly state that *"no one represents the community."* This is why consolidated identity organizations work based on common issues, mainly domestic ones, focus on building coalitions. Serving as connectors and educators, they do not address single identities, and strive not to ostracize but to connect as discussed further in chapter 8.

This chapter highlighted the diversity, complexity and richness of the Arab American communities and their political attitudes and opinions. It showed that it is difficult if not impossible to conceptualize and discuss Arab Americans in a homogenizing way and perceive them as one "group." Nevertheless, there are events and policies that had made an impact on many, not to say most of Arab Americans to different degree that provoked a pragmatic need to mobilize under a united label of Arab American. It also does not mean that there are no political efforts towards creating common ground for political discussion and common interests in order to create a strong political voice in the name of Arab Americans. These events and policies are the subject of chapters that follow.

CHAPTER 6: GROUPNESS IN ACTION: WHAT IMPACTS US – EVENTS AND POLICIES

This chapter discusses common reasons behind the decisions of the participants of this study to join Arab American identity-based organizations as a direct response to political events. The overarching theme is that through the shock of political reality and reactions of the American public after politicized events, my respondents realized their lack of political access and the need to gain it. In short, I am discussing the triggers towards pragmatic process of groupness. I will discuss three reasons that stood out from the interviews that created a direct push mobilizing Arab Americans identities. First, the most macro-political and deep historical reason is related to the realization of close relations of the United States with Israel that created a rush among my respondents to become a strong collective political constituency in order to balance pro-Israeli groups in the American political system. A second reason consistent across the vast majority of interviews was related to anger and disbelief over the bias of media coverage of the events related to the Arab world and representations of Arabs and Arab Americans. Just as problematic was the lack of reaction by the politicians to the injustices and one-sidedness of those reports. Finally, the third reason and one that affects people "at home" (i.e., in the United States) that was often reported is treatment of Arab Americans (plus Muslims and all who "look Arab") with suspicion by post-9/11 policies and the so prevalent stereotypes limiting citizenship rights of Arab Americans.

These reasons are combined with another element that was mentioned throughout my research that led a lot of people to realize they are being targeted for the ethnic label and heritage they carry, often with new laws and policies. The

policies at hand made Arab Americans realize that they are not treated as full members of the American mosaic – and not because of the name they are carrying or food they are eating, but because of their political claims (that are often not expressed in public for the fear of reprisal). Thus, even though some do not feel they have things in common with other Arab Americans, they joined the organizations as, when it comes to the U.S. involvement in the Middle East and domestic issues, they discovered that they do have more in common with other Arab Americans than other Americans. They feel that they are treated as political enemies in the American mainstream.

Most of respondents of the study recalled a specific event that led them to mobilize their collective Arab identity and as a result become active in an Arab American identity-based organization. They recalled an event that, usually through shock, made them realize that they were both Arab and American and that their voices were neither present in the mainstream media nor expressed by American politicians. Many realized that there were only a few Arab American politicians in public spheres who defended their image and understood the complexities of Arab American communities. My respondents felt the need to act to gain voice and access to politics. As one of the activists, Kadir, of Lebanese heritage stated:

> *"Arab Americans are very proud to be Americans. And don't let people like George Bush's administration change that. I think that's what we've learned after 9/11. That going into hiding doesn't solve anything. That Muslims who shave their beards, change their clothes doesn't change anything."*

The testimonies and explanations for the push to react were based on a shock about one-sided news reports, clearly biased U.S. politics in the face of conflicts in the Middle East, and unfair treatment and information about Arab Americans and Arabs. Most participants reported the need to give voice to Arab Americans, a voice that was not present when political events were taking place. These political events made Arab Americans realize that the level of knowledge about the U.S. foreign policy towards the Arab World (Middle East specifically) and the knowledge about Arab Americans are significantly overshadowed by other discourses, discourses that are not friendly towards Arab Americans. Most events were political in nature, mostly related to the Middle East, starting with the Six Day War of 1967, the 1982 invasion of Lebanon[61], the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center, and the most recent 2008/2009 invasion of Gaza[62].

The common threads in the diagnostic factors for organizing Arab American identity organizations include awakening of ethnic identity, a realization that they were indeed Arabs and thus treated and viewed suspiciously by the American mainstream, viewed as potential enemies, as "others." A lot of my respondents thought of themselves as Americans and did not think of their ethnicity before these events. Secondly, even though some of them were not involved in politics before getting involved in the organizations, once touched by a pivotal event, often directly or from a close distance, my respondents realized that media and politicized accounts

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[61] The invasion of Lebanon was a beginning of a war that started on June 6 1982, when Israel invaded southern Lebanon and then moved north and sieged Beirut. The initial reason for the invasion was Israel's conflict with the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) that was stationed, among others in southern Lebanon.

[62] Invasion of Gaza started on Dec 27, 2008 and lasted for 25 days, Invasion of Gaza by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), called also Gaza War and Operation Cast Lead by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) and the Gaza Massacre in the Arab World (1400 Palestinians died during the offensive; 7 Israelis).

of those events were not exhaustive and were often very one sided. In a lot of cases, respondents who were second, third or even fourth generation Americans of Arab heritage were acquainted with the history, culture, and oftentimes language during their college education and traveling abroad and became sensitive to the issues of the Arab world and their Arab heritage only after gaining this knowledge and experiences.

The initial push of groupness was based on the feeling of a need to nuance the simplified messages of the image that equates Arabs with Muslims, with terrorists, and to inform the public and the authorities about the harm done by these images and by the one-sided policies towards the Middle East. These initial signs were then realized as lack of access to political power by Arab Americans and thus a need for collective strategies. It was at the foundation of mobilization where Americans of Arab heritage realized that they were isolated from American politics, where they could shape the opinions and impact the way Arab Americans and Arabs were talked about and portrayed, as well as the direction of American foreign policy.

People varied in the specific events they reacted to and the intensity of their reactions. Most events were used as motivational and diagnostic frames in mobilizing Arab American communities and create a consolidated, hyphenated Arab American political voice. Through the events and their interpretations in the American mainstream, Arab Americans are motivated to mobilize and are able to more clearly identify the problems (i.e., political isolation).

This chapter discusses the events in detail. It analyzes the testimonies of how political events released a mobilization of Arab American identities. It captures the

process of groupness and its pragmatic realization in order to achieve political ends and to eventually gain political voice – one that has been muted for decades.

6.1. Subsequent generations of Americans revisiting their Arab heritage

Many activists focusing on consolidated Arab American identity-based activism are third or even fourth generation Americans. First and second generation Americans have an obvious relationship to their heritage, however, it is more complex and often very coincidental that subsequent generations get to rediscover their heritage and become politically invested in their hyphenated identities.

Respondents of this study shared their experiences of discovery of their heritage and motivation to become politically active on its behalf. In most cases, the discovery took place during college years, either as an effect of pure curiosity, or as a result of meeting a professor who introduced the young Americans to their Arab heritage.

One of the activists of Lebanese heritage, Kasim, revealed:

> *"My father was born in the U.S. His parents were from Lebanon, and he never went to the Middle East, and my mother was from Slovak descent. I've been in the Slovak republic and Lebanon. As I know more about Arab world, so it made sense [to get involved in Lebanese issues] – I started traveling, and started examining my own heritage, and learned from a friend of the family Arabic and the heritage."*

Another activist of a Lebanese heritage, Kadir, who is very involved in consolidated Arab American identity-based activism was influenced by his professor:

"I was at the university, doing my undergrad degree. When I came back from summer, it was 1967, I was fortunate enough to be at the department of political sciences. We had a new teacher, who just came back from Tel Aviv, Tel Aviv University. And he asked what I knew about the War [1967 War]. I told him what I knew, and he said "you don't know anything about the war" because I kind of related to him, and the newspapers. And for the next few years he immersed me in the studies of the Middle East: I studied Arabic, I read books, studied the Quran. And then I went to the grad school, and I continued that and then I went to Lebanon in 1982, which changed my outlook on life"

The reason a visit in Lebanon changed Kadir's life was the fact that he went there during the war and saw things that shocked him. His story is elaborated in the pages below when discussing the general events of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

6.2. Discovery of the close relations of the United States with the state of Israel and its harmful consequences for the Middle East (Six Day War, Invasion of Lebanon, Invasion of Gaza and 9/11)

There were several events in the Middle East that impacted Arab Americans, most of them being armed conflicts. The first reason for this impact that was reported by the respondents was a discovery or realization that the United States had taken sides in the conflict and this side was not Arab. Arab Americans, as Americans, were shocked into mobilizing in order to impact this situation and engage in creating relationships with the government in order to influence policy. The conflicts that were at the

forefront of interest when it comes to U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East (not the entire Arab world) were the 1967 War and subsequent Israeli-Palestinian/Lebanese conflicts. The events of September 11, 2001 were not present in this specific context.

The Six Day War of 1967 was the first significant shock for the Arab American community. The intensity and preemptiveness of it, even though it lasted only six days, had shaken Arab Americans. The reaction of the U.S. government was the "nail to the coffin." The United States opposed any UN resolutions that would pressure Israel to concede any terrains gained through the War and required all parties of the conflict to recognize "all parties' national life." It was a sign of full support of Israel by the United States (Lesh, 2003). Additionally, as remembered (and triangulated) by the interviewees, the War created negative backlash against Arab Americans. Arab Americans had not been politically active to that moment, however, as one of the respondents, Tamir, who was active in the Arab student organization at that time described 1967:

> *"It was a turning point […] many returned [to the Middle East] to fight and the OAS was organizing flights at the Egyptian or Jordanian fronts. The majority was willing to go and organize to support the Arab cause. It was increasingly clear that the U.S. imperial policy was squarely against Arabs. Till that time there were always people who would say – look at Eisenhower [Doctrine] and what he did with [Abdel] Nasser and in 56-57, they still allow the Arabs to represent them, and so on, but '67 was a turning point when it was very obvious"*

That was the first of many times when the transparent involvement of American politics siding with Israel and against the Arabs was a very hurtful awakening for Americans who were also Arab. The reactions of the respondents after the 1967 War were also mostly negative towards the United States. Arab Americans felt ostracized at that time from a country that they treated as home. Those sentiments encouraged Arab Americans to mobilize in order to influence U.S. politics. Unfortunately, because of the heightened negative attitudes towards Arabs, the initial political efforts were in vain and unheard. There was no opening in the political system and no allies among U.S. political elites that could influence the direction of foreign policy in favor of Arabs. As a result, those Arab Americans who were politically mobilized often left the United States to either join Arab military fronts or become active in regional Middle Eastern politics. Efforts of political activism of Americans with Arab heritage kept being minuscule until the foundation of American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) and then the Arab American Institute (AAI).

Not all Arab Americans were immediately motivated to act by the Six Day War. An example of a different reaction to the Six Day War was from a participant, Mani, who, at the time of the War, was in high school. He remembered hiding his Arab identity during this time because *"being Arab was not fun then"* (and it has not been "fun" ever since). But that was the first time he realized he was an Arab, even though he pretended to be Greek, or Italian, or whatever people assumed and it led him to enter the path of learning more what it meant. He is now the executive director of one of the Arab American organizations.

Unfortunately, I spoke only to two people who were old enough and who were in the United States at that time of the 1967 War to have rich data on that period. However, the close overlap with the beginnings of Arab American political organizations around that time and the contemporaneous beginnings of negative portrayals of Arabs in the media speaks additional volumes to those few testimonies (see chapter 4). Additionally, the majority of my respondents from Mashreq countries shared views of the United States being closely related to Israel. Most of them agreed that the U.S. is too lenient towards Israel which hurts not only Palestine and the situation in the Middle East, but also the United States in the long run (see chapter 7).

The Six Day War was not the only event that had significant, life changing impacts in terms of understanding the political reality and resulting in political mobilization of Arab American identity. One of the founders of a consolidated Arab American identity-based organization shared with me his reasons for joining the efforts to create an Arab American organization that would establish political leadership in the American Arab community and be engaged in the American political system. Kadir, an American of Lebanese heritage was very interested in his heritage but not to the point of political investment on its behalf. However, he was one of the third generation Arab Americans who saw in person the damages in Lebanon and Palestine that were inflicted by Israel. But that fact was not the reason that made his identity politically mobilized. It was the discovery of an active participation of the United States on the side of Israel. It was still hard for him to talk about it, and when he did his voice broke down and he had to compose himself to continue:

"1982 was a big difference. It was an invasion of Lebanon, for the first time, and the Israelis struck a village in the south. And, [here my interviewee's voice broke down and he had a hard time continuing], still can't do this... with my brother, we organized a group of expatriates to go the south to see what happened. The [U.S.] government tried to stop us, but there were so many of us, they finally allowed us and we rented buses and we went down. It was a Christian village, town and the people there took us to see the damage, and the Israelis said they hit militants and gorillas, and there was a school and farm destroyed and it was not surprising. The thing that upset me was [saying with an upset voice], the shells were made in the U.S. Thirty-six years later...and when I came back I decided to combine what I do in the private sector, which is, I'm a trainer, inter-cultural trainer, education with political activism in the name of Americans who are of Arab heritage."

A transforming and politically motivating impact on the realization of the U.S. role in the Middle East is very present for the younger generation of college students who were deeply moved by the Gaza invasion of 2008/2009. One student, Karen discovered during this event that she was Palestinian and as a result of the invasion of Gaza became extremely engaged in organizing events on campus that would inform the mainstream about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Cathy was shocked by the disproportionate amount of force used and the "blaming the victim" reports in the media and the lack of reaction on the part of the U.S. government. Before the Gaza

invasion, she recognized she was an Arab, but expressed her identity mainly in social and cultural ways.

The effects of the political events were not the only dynamic that mobilized Arab American identities. The 1967 War was the first, the most shocking, and the one that produced the most drastic changes in conceptualization of one's political standing and shaping of political views and political identity. The two next reasons are more of a process and are a result of policies and attitudes in the United States.

6.3. One sided reports

Critical events helped the respondents clarify their political standing and treatment, through the way stories were reported in the media and addressed by politicians. The respondents felt that there was a clear bias in reporting the events and sides that were taken on the part of the media and politicians. As a result, they felt that Arab Americans lacked a desperately needed voice in the mainstream culture and/or in politics. The majority of members of politically active Arab American organizations listed as one of the main reasons for mobilizing their Arab identity, a push to inform the American public about other sides of the story being spread in the news, and combating the negative perceptions and stereotypes about Arab Americans.

Two of the most salient events for identity-based mobilization were the Six Day War of 1967 and 9/11, even while other events, especially related to the protracted Palestinian-Israeli conflict, had mobilizing effects as well. What has been talked about was the conflation of Muslims and Arabs, widespread stereotypes, especially after 9/11, and its continuing impact among politicians during past

presidential campaigns[63] and a widespread homogenizing of the entire community.

One member, Yasmeen, talking about the situation in Gaza concluded: *"Learning about and sharing information about the situation in the West Bank and Gaza is very important. We often don't get the complete story through our popular media."*

The events are definitely the biggest mass mobilizing force. However, part of the efforts to gain access to political voice is also based on attempts to change the overwhelmingly negative stereotypes of Arab Americans in the popular culture that date back to the British imperialism of the 19th century (Said 1978). Though I have not specifically heard participants in this research talk about popular culture, most of them mentioned the overwhelming negative portrayal of Arabs and Arab Americans in the media.

6.3.1. Groupness as a result of observed violence

Karen was a president of an Organization of Arab Students (OAS), a first generation American. Her parents were from Lebanon, or so she thought. But in the invasion of Gaza of December of 2008, her family revealed that she was not Lebanese but in fact Palestinian. Her family left Palestine, like so many other Palestinian refugees, and lived in Lebanon before migrating to the United States. This is when she decided to become the president of the OAS, organize events for Gaza, and talk widely about the story from the side of the Palestinians. So little was known in the media, and what was shown was not representative of the situation on the ground and sidelined the story of the Palestinians. She is a Palestinian Christian, but still "hangs out" with Arabs who are Muslim, as she says that she finds more things in common with them

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[63] Such as people saying during the presidential campaign that senator Obama cannot be trusted because he is a Muslim and senator McCain responding that senator Obama is not a Muslim/Arab, he is a good man

than with white American Christians. Her main concern and focus of her activism was to spread the word about what is going on in Palestinian territories, particularly Gaza.

6.4. Policies affecting citizenship rights of Arab Americans

6.4.1. 9/11

9/11 was a terrible event. It was shocking for the entire world and produced ambiguous results for the Arab American community. It generated damaging and empowering political reactions at the same time. The backlash was of such a significant magnitude that the mobilization was threefold compared to other times. There was an explosion of identity-based organizations after 9/11 in the Arab American community that focused on domestic issues, though they were mostly self-help organizations.

A very common first reaction among Arab Americans was even further withdrawal of visibility and expression of opinion. However, the silence did not last long. The reason why the hiding of Arab American voice was so short lived was because, put in words of Samantha, one of the respondents:

> *"Those who were not citizens, who had any kind of problem with their visa, anything like that; they were very concerned, as they were vulnerable. And even for those who had everything fine with their visa, but were not citizens they felt very vulnerable as well. So, I think at the level of grass roots, there was a lot of fear and anxiety, but I think what happened was that the leaders of the community, people who were American, and had a certain confidence level, they were not threatened.*

They took the initiative to respond to the needs of the community. In some cases, the organizations had in a case of the service orgs, they crapped up some of them before 9/11, some after, they were assisted by one of our partner organizations that we work closely with, called the Arab Center for Economic and Social Services (ACESS) so it's a 35 year old human service organization that really made a [difference] that one provide capacity building and training to the smaller groups in other cities. They actually created a number of programs that were linking these groups together, providing capacity, helping them with service delivery, and to some extent helping advocacy issues that emerged after 9/11, whether it was deportation, detentions, or immigration reforms"

The main concern was the stigmatization of Arab Americans as terrorists and the policies that singled out Arab Americans and Muslim Americans by lifting legal protections and technically removing their status of citizens. These policies include the PATRIOT Act (Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism) of October 24, 2001 and NSEER (National Security Entry/Exit Registration)[64]. It sanctioned monitoring of individuals, organizations, and

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[64] A program implemented as a counterterrorism tool in the wake of September 11, 2001 by the department of Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). It required non-immigrants from a number of countries to register at ports of entry and local immigration offices for fingerprints, photographs and lengthy questioning. The most controversial aspect of the NSEERS program was a "domestic" component that solicited registrations from more than 80,000 males who were inside the United States on temporary visas from Muslim-majority countries. In September 2003, of the more than 80,000 individuals who complied with call-in registration, 13,799 were referred to investigations and received notices to appear, and 2,870 were detained. Many non-immigrants subjected to the NSEERS program did not understand the details of the program, as the rules were unclear and public outreach and notice were insufficient. NSEERS's initial mission was to keep track of non-immigrants and prevent terrorist attacks. However, interviews with immigration attorneys representing individuals impacted by NSEERS and policy advocates, and a review of multiple reports and federal court decisions reveal that the NSEERS program was unsuccessful as a counterterrorism tool. More than

institutions without notification, including raids on homes and offices and profiling of Arab Americans and Muslims. These traumatic experiences provoked a response of organizing and defense of the identity that oftentimes was restricted to private spheres. Kadir summed up what happened after 9/11:

> *"9/11 gave people from the Arab American community who were satisfied with their lives, showed that it didn't matter what they thought, whether or not they wanted to claim their heritage or not, there was a government who had a policy which very clearly said, we're not going to trust you, we're just going to verify, as long as you're different. So, you're all guilty. So, it was an infusion of energy because it forced people to come to the reality that America has negative consequences of this exceptionalism and this mentality whether it's domestically or foreign policy."*

Interestingly enough, the current political climate of a post 9/11 United States, created a space for political activism of Arab Americans. There was an increasing level of curiosity to understand a political apparatus increasingly based on involvement in the Middle East (Iraq) and a perceived threat that "is close to home." This opening of the political structure made it easier for Arab American organizations to work.

Even though a lot of the respondents were not directly affected by the defamation, discrimination, or backlash attacks, they were acutely aware of the

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seven years after its implementation, NSEERS continues to impact the Arab-American community (Dickinson School of Law: 2009).

situation and the often hateful speeches heard from public figures[65] and discrimination that Arab Americans were facing. Efforts from state officials and actions, such as of President Bush visiting the Central Mosque in Washington DC,[66] were appreciated but were lost in the sea of negative attitudes.

On the other hand, a lot of funding was directed towards organizations perceived as reliable and there was an opening of discussion channels between political institutions and Arab American organizations that do have a long standing in the U.S. political arena. For the first time, grants such as the Fulbright and Ford Foundations were giving money to Arab American organizations.

Amin recalled a meeting with 50 or 60 fellow Arab Muslims after 9/11 that resulted in putting together lectures, topics, churches, interfaith programs, and magazines to inform and educate about Islam, which really engaged his political activism based on his identity. He said he felt empowered by the numbers and unity.

Mani got involved in his church and created interfaith dialogues illustrating and explaining who are Arabs and the geography of religions in the Arab world. He was describing it:

> *"After 9/11 people in our church started asking questions. And I wrote a*
> *sermon but my pastor said it was too cerebral, too academic. So, I sat*

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[65] Such as members of Congress, John Cooksy telling a Louisiana radio: "If I see someone [who] comes in and got a diaper on his head and a fan belt wrapped around the diaper, that guy needs to be pulled over (2001); or a series of religious commentators calling Islam "wicked, violent and not of the same God" or calling Prophet Muhammad a "demon possessed pedophile" (Human Rights Watch 2007).

[66] During which he said: "I've been told that some fear to leave; some don't want to go shopping for their families; some don't want to go about their ordinary daily routine because, by wearing cover, they're afraid they'll be intimidated. That should not and that will not stand in America. Those who feel like they can intimidate our fellow citizens to take out their anger don't represent the best of America, they represent the worst of humankind, and they should be ashamed of that kind of behavior (September 17, 2001 in the Islamic Center: www.usdoj.gov/crt/legalibfo/bushremarks.html)

down and started using pronouns. Using "I' and "me" was a very important experience. It gave me a voice. I realized that the examples had to come from me, from my experience. And the Palestinian part came out of that experience of sharing."

When I asked about other events, Mani said: *"they scratched. They were uncomfortable. I think they all got me ready for the experience after 9/11. They were like a Velcro that created a connection for me to use after 9/11. I don't think they were "aha" moments but they led to the "aha' moment after 9/11."*

Some of the politically conscious activists, like Samantha recognized that *"since 9/11, the political discourse is a big challenge. Because there is so much Islamophobia from the right wing and the conservative movement and Arab racism, Anti-Arab racism, that has permeated political discourse and we have to be on the look for it all of the time because it impacts people who are Arab American running for office, people who are running for office and are supported by Arab American and have connections with Arab Americans. I mean you saw with the whole Rahm [Emmanuel] thing."*[67]

6.4.2. Impact of 9/11 on organizations

At the same time, while individual Arab Americans were affected all over the country after 9/11, what must be mentioned is that people working at the consolidated identity-based organizations were not affected at the individual or organizational level

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[67] In an interview with Ma'ariv in November of 2008, president Obama's Chief of Staff Rahm Emmanuel's father, Dr. Benjamin Emmanuel, said he was convinced that his son's appointment would be good for Israel. "Obviously he will influence the president to be pro-Israel," he was quoted as saying. "Why wouldn't he be? What is he, an Arab? He's not going to clean the floors of the White House." After this comment ADC pressured Rahm Emmanuel to apologize for his father, which he eventually did.

(it was just a bigger hassle to send money and commit more work, as some reported).

As it was explained by one of the respondents, Ali who is a board member of an Arab American organization, *"we have a very straightforward program. It is focused on the U.S. In fact, many of our programs are funded by very well known large American foundations. So, we are trusted. If you're getting funding from organization that have a high standard for approval of funding, you get some degree of credit. […] We've gone through the weeding process by that, so we haven't personally experienced anything like that."*

What has happened is actually the opposite – even though, ADC and AAI were formed in the 1980s, their strength and reach was not as far reaching as it became after 9/11. Put in words of Ali, a member of one of these organizations:

> *"1980s and 1990s were hard. Funds from grants were not available for Arab Americans then. But after 9/11 people got interested in the community, in statistics, in how to deal with it. We were here before 9/11. That's why we work with FBI, we are their partners and talk about issues. However, even though we are partners it does not stop us to file a law suit against them without hard feelings – that's the level of partnership we have with them. It took a while. We grew in the seven years after 9/11 more than we did in the years since the foundation of the organization. We were useful with fighting discrimination."*

6.5. Diagnostic and motivational impacts of political events

In conclusion, there were several events that had a significant impact on the mobilization of the collective identities of Arab Americans. However with the

exception of 9/11, all these events have one thing in common: they provoked a strict reaction to the U.S. foreign policy and had an impact on mobilization of Arab American identity among my respondents. It sped up the process of groupness and provoked political mobilization of a specific part of the Arab American communities (all communities were not drawn to this activism, in fact, the activists were mainly from the Levant, mostly Palestinians and Lebanese).

Most of the other communities were organizing with social clubs or still focusing mostly on issues in their old homeland. Additionally, before 9/11, there was no fit in the American politics for Arab American activism – the funds that were given to U.S. politicians by Arab Americans were rejected as having a source in "terrorist" organizations; the attitudes were openly anti-Arab. Political capacity among Arab Americans and identity-based organizations had been building since 1967, but the fit, the institutional opening started to be available only after 9/11, when the U.S. political administrations began to see the value in talking with already existing Arab American organizations. Even though there is still much work to do before full dialogue, full political participation, and a status of equal partners in dialogue is reached, there has to be an acknowledgment that the amount of mobilization of Arab Americans after 9/11 tripled and the presence of Arab Americans in the media increased.

Concluding the three main themes of collective mobilization of the consolidated based Arab American identity among my respondents, it is clear that the overall base of the mobilization was an expression of political claims transformed into efforts to gain access to the political system, access that was not granted in the

history of these communities' presence in the United States. The events were part of

the motivation and diagnostic framing (Hunt, Benford and Snow 1994) that identified

the problematic nature of portrayals of Arab Americans in the American mainstream

and a biased foreign policy of the U.S. that affected Arab Americans directly through

profiled policies.

The above motivational reasons contribute to the uniqueness of the Arab

American experience. Their main concern with regards to the Arab American

identity-based activism is gaining political voice for the sake of having an expressed

voice that could defend Arab Americans against defamation and create a balanced

dialogue on the Middle East conflict. Arab Americans do not argue for a betterment

of economic standing, or about cultural incorporation, instead they fight for political

voice. Additionally, even though Arab Americans have been treated as political

enemies[68] for the last several decades, they have responded with an explosion of

identity-based organizations. Contrary to other groups in history who were treated as

enemies, such as the Germans or and Japanese after World War II, there is no

tendency for a disappearance of the Arab American identity as was happening before

the Six Day War.

Arab American groupness is a political claim more than anything else. The

feeling of Arabness is often related to a recognition that the current political context is

problematic and in need of change in order to include the political voice of a

constituency of Arab Americans. My respondents expressed the responsibility to

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[68] To give simple examples from the mainstream America, without discussing political treatment as enemies: the man who killed Balbir Singh Sodhi yelled "I'm an American!," the person who attempted to run over Faiza Ejaz screamed, he was "doing this for my country." The protestors at the Bridgeview mosque chanted "USA" (Human Rights Watch, 2002).

communicate and educate the American mainstream and political sphere about the issues from the perspectives of Arab American communities. They do this because they see benefits for all parties and identities involved and they want to be treated as regular and equal American citizens. This chapter illustrated that even though Arab Americans are extremely diverse, there are events and policies that affect most, if not all of them and thus become a trigger and foundation for political mobilization under a unified banner of panethnic identity. Political events are triggers that helped to crystallize panethnic Arab American identity, they are the embodiment of the process of groupness with an outcome of a consolidated panethnic identity. These triggers are translated into consolidated identity-based mobilization that is analyzed in chapter 8. The following chapter discusses another factor that is a trigger but also a contributor to political isolation of Arab Americans, namely pro-Israeli lobbies.

CHAPTER 7: COUNTER-MOBILIZATION: THE ROLE OF ETHNIC LOBBIES ON ARAB AMERICAN POLITICAL ISOLATION

This chapter discusses the impact of pro-Israeli lobbies on the political isolation of Arab Americans, starting with a discussion of the lobbies, their work, and its impact on efforts made by Arab Americans towards gaining access to the American political arena; efforts that failed yet continue to this day with relatively more success, ironically more success after 9/11. Israeli lobbies provide a useful point of comparison, since they are not only an example of a highly effective ethnic lobby, but they are the most opposed political factions to the efforts of Arab American organizations in their access to the U.S. political arena.

As an identity group, Arab Americans were relatively politically invisible until 1967. After the Six Day War there were efforts made to initiate political activism, but these efforts were met with a significant resistance to incorporate Arab American ethnic interest groups into the American political system. However, as illustrated in previous chapters, Arab Americans have been economically and culturally successful in the United States, unlike many other ethnic groups. But they have been deliberately isolated at a collective level from U.S. politics starting with political and ethnic based smears, through rejections of political donations by politicians, and a looming threat of political "failure" for politicians once they express alliances with "Arab interests." There are several factors that explain this situation. First, it is a result of a relatively recent engagement of Arab Americans in U.S. politics, and second, the existing Arab American organizations are relatively small, not well funded, and are historically fractioned and non-organized.

The U.S. also has a historical political alliance with Israel, and there are strong and powerful pro-Israeli lobbies in which interests are framed in opposition to Arab Americans, especially when it comes to foreign policy. These lobbies are well organized, funded, and have much more experience in framing their political needs than Arab American ones. Thus politicians have no reason to adjust their opinions and policies to Arab American interests. Additionally, whereas many Americans sense a degree of cultural proximity between the United States and Israel, they believe Israelis are 'like us," Arabs are often seen as the enemy, hostile, or at least suspicious (Shaheen 2009). As a result, shaping public opinion and influencing policy makers is that much more challenging for Arab Americans.

First, I must clarify two issues. I call the obstacles Arab Americans are facing political isolation at the collective level, and not political marginalization (i.e., relegating to an unimportant or powerless position in the society), or political racism, where individuals are excluded and prohibited access to institutions for a reason. It is an isolation (i.e., setting apart, where access points are restricted) because economically speaking, there is no powerlessness at the collective level, yet there is a separation of Arab-focused issues that distances and distorts their message. At the individual level, Arab Americans are not restricted from participating in political life in the Unites States, are not marginalized, either at the simplest voting level or at the decision-making level of being elected as a local representative, governor, or senator. There are a number of Arab Americans who have filled these positions. However, their mandates were not representative of their Arab background and their political

opinions were not made in the name of their Arab heritage. This is why, as a group they are not marginalized, but rather isolated from access to political influence.

Second, discussing Israeli lobbies is a challenging and sensitive matter. In pluralist democracies, lobbies constitute a legitimate form of political participation, and they are consistent with America's tradition of interest group activity. Ethnic lobbies have historically exerted various pressures over U.S. foreign policy. American Greeks pushed for an arms embargo on Turkey in 1974, Cuban-Americans lobbied for maintaining the embargo on communist Cuba, Armenian-Americans pressured Washington to acknowledge the 1915 genocide, or more recently to limit U.S. relations with Azerbaijan.[69] Such activities have been central to American political life since this country's origin. And yet discussing pro-Israeli lobbies is difficult and often controversial, and I would like to address possible concerns and acknowledge the sensitivity of this matter. John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt (2007) address this matter in their book, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy.* They acknowledge that examining the role of pro-Israeli lobbies may seem delicate for two main reasons. First, it may seem to be synonymous with questioning the state of Israel and its right to exist, in a situation where still several states refuse to recognize Israel. Given the strong feelings many have for Israel, especially as a safe haven for refugees of the terrors of Holocaust and as a central focus of contemporary Jewish identity, a defensive reaction is to be expected when people think the legitimacy of Israel and its people are under attack. However, examination of the pro-

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[69] For more see: Haney and Vanderbush (1999). "The Role of Ethnic Interest Groups in U.S. Foreign Policy: The Case of the Cuban American National Foundation." *International Studies Quarterly,* vol.43, no.2 (Jun 1999), pp. 341-361, and Ambrosio, Thomas. (2002). "Congressional Perceptions of Ethnic Cleansing: Reactions to Nagorno-Karabagh War and Influence of Ethnic Interest Groups." *Review of International Affairs,* vol. 2, no. 1, Autumn 2002, pp.24-45.

Israeli lobbies does not imply an anti-Israeli attitude, just as an examination of political activities of the U.S. government does not imply bias against the United States. As with Mearsheimer and Walt, I am not challenging the right of Israel to exist, its legitimacy, or the United States' right to form a defensive alliance with Israel. Yet a question for many is whether pro-Israeli lobbies lobby actively for policies considered harmful to all parties included (United States, Israel, Arabs, and Arab Americans).

Furthermore, the second sensitive issue is that in putting organizations that are mostly composed of Jews into question, and assessing their power and influence, is associated with anti-Semitic conspiracy theories. Any discussion of Jewish political power takes place in the shadow of centuries of very traumatic and real anti-Semitic history. Between the 13th and 15th centuries Jews were massacred by Christians, expelled from Britain, France, Spain, Portugal, and other places, and confined to ghettos. Jews experienced pogroms in Eastern Europe and Russia amid widespread anti-Semitic attitudes. It all culminated with the terrors of the Nazi Holocaust during WWII that cost millions of lives. Given the long history of anti-Semitism it is understandable that people are sensitive to arguments that may sound dangerously similar to the "Jewish influence" arguments of Neo-Nazis or Ku-Klux-Klan leaders. The main elements of such anti-Semitic accusations, as Mearsheimer and Walt (2007) argue, are claims that Jews exercise illegitimate influence by "controlling" banks, media, and other key institutions. Thus, if someone says that the press coverage in the United States tends to favor Israel over its opponents, or if it is pointed out that American Jews have traditions of giving money to philanthropic and political causes,

it can sound like part of the "ubiquitous Jewish influence" story line. However, this is the reason for giving the money to political campaigns – to advance some political cause. Virtually all interest groups hope to shape public opinion and are interested in favorable media coverage. This is the ultimate purpose of lobbying. This is why, evaluating the role of any interest groups' contributions, lobbying efforts and other political activities should be a rather uncontroversial activity, but because of the long history of anti-Semitism, one can understand why it is easier to discuss labor unions, arms manufacturers, or ethnic interest groups rather than the pro-Israeli lobbies.

Pro-Israeli lobbies do have an impact on the success (or rather lack of it) of Arab Americans in the U.S. political arena – as they are stronger, older, and have overwhelmingly opposite interests to those of Arab Americans. As a consequence Arab Americans have much less chance to be heard, to shape political processes, and to play a significant role in shaping discourse about Arabs and Arab Americans – including protecting Arab Americans against backlash and stereotyping. Without a balance in political access, Arab Americans lose the chance to be perceived as complex individuals and start being perceived as a monolithic, stereotypical "enemy." They are stigmatized without having an impact on how these discourses are shaped.

7.1. Ethnic lobbies

The beginnings of lobbying can be traced to the early 13th century. One of the first goals was to exercise the right of petitioning, established in England in 1215, and in the United States in 1765. Currently, lobbies are defined as "loose coalition of groups and individuals who seek and have sought to influence the foreign policy of the United States" following their interests. Since WWII, the increase in access points to

the national government helped stimulating the growth of ethnic interest

organizations (Truman 1951; Latham 1952).

It has been agreed that for an ethnic lobby/interest group to be successful, it

must be composed of members that are fully incorporated into the American society

but still retain links to and identify with their ethnic homeland (Uslander 1995;

O'Grady 1996). Additionally, characteristics that have proven to make the ethnic

lobbies strong are their organizational strength, membership unity, placement, and

voter participation (Haney and Vandersbush 1999). Beyond the internal and

membership factors, many argue that the ethnic groups are more successful if their

message resonates with the broader public that indicates a mutually supportive

relationship (Skidmore 1993; Vidal 1996), thus they tend to influence not only the

policy makers but also public opinion (Watanabe 1984). Additionally, the art of

lobbying is in translating foreign policy issues into domestic ones so that they would

be susceptible to other interest group pressures in order to create coalitions (Brenner

and Landau 1990).

7.2. **Pro-Israeli lobbies**

The pro-Israeli lobbies include secular and religious Jewish-American groups as well

as secular and religious non-Jewish organizations. It is not a single unified movement

with central leadership, but rather a group of loosely linked organizations and

individuals who work like any other interest group. What these groups and

organizations have in common is a focus to advocate in the name of Israel's interests

and influence American policy in ways that would benefit the Jewish state. Of course

these diverse groups do not agree on every issue, but they are united by their focus on

promoting a special relationship between the United States and Israel. There are several organizations that are at the core of the lobby, American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), researchers from the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP), Anti-Defamation League (ADL), and Christians United for Israel (CUI). The lobby also includes an array of thinks tanks. However, among the various Jewish organizations that focus on foreign policy, AIPAC is the most important and well-known. In 1997, when *Fortune* magazine asked members of Congress and their staff to list the most powerful lobbies in Washington, AIPAC came second after American Association of Retired People (AARP); *National Study Journal* in 2005 researched and reported the same outcome (Mearsheimer and Walt 2007). Former chairman of the House of Foreign Affairs Committee, Lee Hamilton, who served in Congress for thirty four years, said in 1991, "There's no lobby group that matches AIPAC. They're in a class by themselves" (Christian Science Monitor 1991). The conclusion usually labels AIPAC as "the most effective ethnic policy lobby on Capitol Hill" (U.S. Congress 1982:46; Cohen 1973; Nathan and Oliver 1994).

In contrast, the first Arab American lobby, National Arab American Association (NAAA) was established and registered ten years after AIPAC, in 1978 and was very small. For the first four years of its existence it was composed of one person, Helen Hage, who was reaching out to the media and writing articles (Orfalea 2006), and had no chance to compete with AIPAC.

Pro-Israeli lobbies are a model for other ethnic interest groups. Richard Allen, President Reagan's first National Security Adviser said to a member of a Cuban ethnic interest group: "I suggest you copy the Israeli lobby. You should lobby both

branches of the government" (Newhouse 1992: 76). And, at the same time, AIPAC

was also helping other ethnic interest groups, training them on how to create

coalitions. Bill Clinton once described AIPAC as "stunningly effective and better

than anyone else lobbying this town."

How does the lobby work? Following are some key strategies with examples.

7.2.1. Political contributions

AIPAC's success is largely due to its ability to reward legislators and congressional

candidates who support its agenda and to punish those who do not. It is able to

achieve this goal mainly because of its capacity to influence campaign contributions.

Money is critical in U.S. elections, which has been increasingly expensive to win.

AIPAC makes sure that its friends get financial support as long as they express their

friendship with AIPAC's political affiliations.

This process works in several ways. First, there are direct contributions for the

candidates affirming solidarity with Israel. Using data from the Federal Election

Commission (FEC), journalist Michael Massing found that "between 1997 and 2001,

the 46 members of AIPAC's board of directors gave well over $3 million in campaign

contributions" and many of them remain generous contributors today (Massing 2002).

Since 2000, *Washington Post* reported in 2004, AIPAC board members have

contributed $72,000 each to campaign and political contributions. The Center for

Responsive Politics (CRP), a nonpartisan research group that tracks campaign

contributions, has identified roughly thirty six pro-Israel political action committees

(PACs) in recent elections that gave more than $3 million to candidates from both

parties during 2006 midterms (CRP 2006). *The Economist* reported that between 1990

and 2004, pro-Israel groups contributed nearly $57 million to candidates and parties, while Arab Americans and Muslim PACs less than $800,000 (*Economist,* March 15, 2007).

Second, AIPAC connects political candidates to other donors and sources of funds. Despite its name, AIPAC is not a political action committee (PAC) and does not officially endorse candidates or give money directly to their campaigns. Instead, it serves as a linker and a data base. It finds potential candidates with whom alliances are possible or arranges meetings with potential donors and fund-raisers and provides information to pro-Israeli PACs.

Finally, AIPAC keeps records of political candidates and congressional voting records and makes them available to its members to make decisions about whom to support. AIPAC has also lists of political candidates who are hostile towards Israel and it guides the financial support to their opponents.

7.2.2. *Political pressures*

Financial contributions are not the only way to influence senators and congressmen. There is also the straightforward power of letters and follow-ups based on previous financial contributions. An example of how it works could be the case in 1975 when the AIPAC mounted its campaign to negate the effect of a Ford-Kissinger "reassessment" of policy toward Israel, initiated following the breakdown of Sinai disengagement talks. AIPAC chose as its medium a letter from Senators strongly endorsing aid to Israel. Seventy-six senators promptly signed the issued letter although no hearings had been held, no debate conducted, nor had the Administration been invited to present its views. One Senator was reported to have openly expressed

a feeling that in fact was widespread: "The pressure was just too great. I caved." Another was reported to have commented, "It's easier to sign one letter than answer five thousand." (Howe and Trott 1977).

Political pressures on politicians include not only open declarations of friendship towards Israel but also a complete rejection of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), which has been labeled as a terrorist group. The consequences of not abiding by these rules is often tantamount to political attacks. A noteworthy case was in the 1986 elections in Sacramento City, where Grantland Johnson, a councilman, was running for the county board of supervisors. In 1984, Johnson made an appearance at the memorial service for victims of the Sabra and Shatila refugee camp in Lebanon massacre. This appearance almost cost him his election. After the memorial service a letter began to circulate pointing at Johnson as associating with "pro-PLO organization composed of radical leftist groups." It called the memorial service "a diatribe against Israel sponsored by an organization closely affiliated with PLO, a self-proclaimed terrorist group" (Samhan 1987: 23). Johnson's campaign manager, David Townsend suggested Johnson sign a public statement reaffirming his support for Israel and condemnation of terrorist actions by the PLO. Townsend provided Johnson with copies of the circulating materials, they were from two sources, AIPAC's *College Guide* and the Anti-Defamation League's (ADL) *Pro-Arab Propaganda in the U.S.* Townsend resigned, but Johnson succeeded and did not repudiate his presence at the memorial.

One of my respondents, Samantha, mentioned of her organization's efforts to approach politicians that many would not even talk to Arab American political organizations. She said:

"We had previously doors closed to us from the establishment of the Democratic party because we were from a very unpopular ideological position and our ethnic identity was tinged by our support for Palestinian rights and for better understanding of the Arab world, and unfortunately by extension was being perceived as anti-Israel, and that the support for Israel in the Democratic party was extremely solid. And so we were always viewed as an outside agitator group"

7.2.3. *Punishment and refusal of donations*

A serious obstacle that was faced by Arab Americans who tried to financially support political candidates was often rejection of this support, sometimes even including return of the money. Walter Mondale returned donations from Arab American business leaders made to his 1984 election bid against Ronald Reagan. In 1988, Michael Dukakis rejected an endorsement from the Arab American Democratic Federation. In 1996, Bob Dole refused to meet with Arab-American leaders as the Republican presidential nominee. In 2000, John McCain and Al Gore were the only presidential candidates to accept, via satellite, an invitation to address the Arab American Institute's annual leadership conference.

Ironically, George W. Bush courted Arab American voters (particularly in the swing state of Michigan) in 2000 and since then, because of significant efforts of the Arab American Institute (AAI). With the *Yalla Vote* campaign during the 2004

Presidential elections, many political candidates realized about 1.5 million Arab-American voters are registered in large battleground states such as Michigan, Ohio, Florida, and Pennsylvania. Thus a main focus of Arab American organizations is to solidify Arab-Americans as a voting bloc, as otherwise they do not have a chance to affect politics.

7.2.4. *Blocking pro-Arab discourse/Policing Academia*

Academia is a ground for production of knowledge and intellectual debates. It was the most difficult ground for pro-Israeli lobbies to gain influence over. Nevertheless, the influence was achieved. AIPAC focused on university campuses where it spent triple the amount it normally needed to affect this influence. The goal of this effort was to "vastly expand the number of students involved on campus, their competence, and their involvement in the national pro-Israeli effort" (AIPAC.org). In the summer of 2003, AIPAC brought 240 college students on an all-expense-paid-trips to Washington, D.C. for four days of intensive advocacy training. After returning to campus students were instructed to concentrate on networking with campus leaders of all kinds and winning them over to Israel's cause (AIPAC.org). Additionally, in 2007, more than 1,200 students from nearly 400 colleges and universities attended AIPAC's annual Policy Conference, including 150 student body presidents (AIPAC.org).

Additionally, there were efforts in slowing down the growth of courses on Arab and Islamic studies and expressing protests when a faculty member was hired whose opinions did not align with Israel. The cases of Edward Said and Rashid Khalidi who were hired and worked at Columbia University, exemplify this strategy. Even though they were hired in different times, the reactions were similar –

complaints started coming from people disagreeing with the "content of their political views" and calling to either sanction them or fire them. Khalidi, while working at the University of Chicago, was also bombarded with spam emails. However, the intimidation did not stop with letters and emails. In 2004, the David Project released a movie alleging that faculty at Columbia University's Middle East Studies program were anti-Semitic and were intimidating Jews who defended Israel (Gaines 2005; Glick 2005). The faculty assigned a committee to investigate the allegations, but no evidence proving the case was found. It has to be noted that those who were silenced and ostracized for criticizing Israel were not only Arab Americans or Arabs. Anyone who would publicly voice criticisms was becoming an enemy of Israel. Another example is Noam Chomsky, who spoke against Israeli violence against the Palestinians. When he voiced his stand, a "rumor" was spread that he did not believe that the Holocaust had happened, an effort to discredit everything he had to say about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Chomsky 1992).

Even my respondents who were college students complained about the hardship they encountered while trying to organize and go through with events about Palestine. The hardship ranged from posters showing mothers holding in one hand Kalashnikovs and in the other with newborn babies with a subtitles "This is what they teach their children," to blocking expositions about Palestine with pro-Israeli flyers and posters. In such settings when an article is published in a campus newspaper, discussing the Palestine-Israeli conflict in a way not supportive of Israel, it is not unusual to see statements of pro-Israeli responses flooding the editors and/or the comment space if the newspaper is on the internet.

7.2.5. Bringing foreign policy home

It is important for interest groups to shape public opinion and to translate foreign policy into domestic issues. An example of such a tactic happened after 9/11, when Senator Lieberman (then a Democrat from Connecticut) explicitly tied the Israeli military campaign in Palestine to the U.S. war on terror, saying "Israel has been under siege from a systematic and deliberate campaign of suicide and homicide attacks by terrorists. Their essence is identical to the attacks on our country of 11 of September."(Congress shows support for Israel, May 5, 2002 www.cbsnews.com/stories/2002/05/02).

7.2.6. Shaping the public opinion

Shaping public opinion happens through exerting pressure (letters, phone calls, etc.) on media when news articles or televised content are expressing criticisms towards Israel. One correspondent revealed that the newspapers are "afraid" of AIPAC and other pro-Israel groups, saying that the "pressure from these groups is relentless. Editors would just as soon not touch them" (Massing 2002). As the former spokesman of the Israeli consulate in New York, Menachem Shalev, once put it: "Of course, a lot of self-censorship goes on. Journalists, editors, and politicians, are going to think twice about criticizing Israel if they know they are going to get thousands of angry calls in a matter of hours. The Jewish lobby is good at orchestrating pressure" (Friedman 1987). Additionally, *Chicago Tribune, Los Angeles Times, Miami Herald, New York Times, Philadelphia Inquirer* and *The Washington Post* had faced consumer boycotts over their Middle East reporting (Friedman 1987).

Of course, as mentioned above, part of the lobby is constituted by think tanks and research institutes that produce knowledge. An example is WINEP which produces interpretations formulated as facts and truths and provides this information to politicians and the public opinion.

Thus, lobbying strategies include sending letters en masse, phone calls, personal visits, gifts, donations to political incumbents (Mathias 1981), as well as undermining support through misinformation and withholding funding. Interest groups for Arab Americans do not have all these elements yet, but, especially after 9/11 they are working on it. The pro-Israeli lobbies have retained the elements of a successful lobby for a long time and are considered to be the most successful lobby in the U.S., followed by the Greek-American lobby.

7.3. Current successes of Arab American in the U.S. politics

The history of Arab American participation in the American political system is one of marginal success to say the least. The closest Arab Americans came to the American political scene as a collective was during the Rainbow Coalition initiated by Rev. Jessie Jackson during his presidential Campaign in 1988. For the first time in American politics a major presidential candidate articulated the feelings and concerns of Arab-Americans, and addressed the Palestinian issue in a way that Arab Americans found acceptable. That encouraged Arab Americans *en masse* to vote and increase affiliations with the Democratic Party. As Samantha commented:

"That was a big transition, Jackson being able to clear the waters for us and open some doors for us in the Democratic Party. So, that was our entrée in the presidential process."

Ironically, the horrific events of 9/11, according to many of my respondents, resulted in a significant increase in publications about Arab Americans, Arabs, and Muslims, and an increased number of Arabic courses, academic expansion of Middle Eastern programs, and finally, the acknowledgement that Arab Americans constitute a significant constituency that can be mobilized. As a result, Arab Americans are slowly getting a chance to have a voice in the United States and its politics. Additionally, according to Helen Samhan, the executive director of AAI, these circumstances have given Arab Americans greater access to government agencies. Local FBI offices, law enforcement agencies, and federal funding agencies have shown positive concern toward Arab Americans and want to work with them in the manner that was unheard of before 9/11. Yet Arab Americans still do not have a well developed lobby. They are working on establishing congressional relationships, but they are a long way from being able to impact foreign policy. For now, Arab Americans focus on domestic issues and fight against defamation and discrimination. That is a start.

In conclusion, Arab Americans are unequal competitors with an aid-dependent Israel for influence on American policy. It is the case not as a result of small size or lack of professional success on the side of Arab Americans or because of the "control of the Jewish cabal" but a result of lack of a united Arab-American community that would be comparable in size, unity, motivation, and experience to the pro-Israeli community in the United States. However, a contemporary acknowledgement that all sides in this equation can benefit from cooperation may yet shine a light in the tunnel. The expectations and hopes for an atmosphere of dialogue were high among Arab

Americans with the election of President Obama in 2008. The support for President

Obama did not decrease and faith in him on the side of Arab Americans did not cease,

even though the atmosphere of hope for solutions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

became slightly deflated with the recent fiasco of the Vice President Joe Biden's visit

in Jerusalem[70]. Arab Americans are still determined to become stronger in forming a

unified political voice and becoming a partner in the atmosphere where dialogue

seems to be possible (activism of the consolidated-identity based organizations is on

the rise). Next chapter discusses the efforts towards creating this unified Arab

American political voice.

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[70] The visit was planned to jump start peace talks between Palestinians and Israelis. However, during
Joe Biden's visit, Israeli government announced of planning permissions of 1,600 new homes in East
Jerusalem, occupied by Israel since 1967 stalling any talks possible.

CHAPTER 8: STRATEGIC GROUPNESS/ POLITICS OF ARAB AMERICAN IDENTITY; OWNERSHIP OF THE IDENTITY LABEL

Over the past few decades, leaders in Arab American communities have understood the need to create one consolidated voice. The understanding of a "consolidated voice" changed over time, though and it was applied in various ways and with various success rates. However, its purpose was mostly the same: the use of a consolidated Arab American voice was focused on politics. Arab Americans' experiences in the United States vary from the experiences of other ethnic groups. They did not have to fight collectively to obtain most aspects of citizenship (i.e., legal status, rights, and sense of belonging[71]). However because of the historical context of political affiliations of the United States, the relatively small size of Arab American communities, and lack of one voice in these communities, Arab Americans have been notoriously isolated from political processes at the collective level of American politics and stigmatized in the public and popular media. Therefore, the collective political claims of Arab Americans focus on gaining access to politics.

This chapter discusses the dynamics of groupness. More specifically, this chapter presents groupness forming in response to political isolation at the collective level and demonstrated by the ways in which Arab Americans inhabit a pre-existing hyphenated consolidated identity label. This process started with the emergence of a community closely linked and focused on old homelands and social networks, then transitioning through a focus that blended new and old homelands before finally reaching a point where Arab American identity is understood as an unbreakable

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[71] Most groups had to fight for legal status and for citizenship at the collective level, starting with African Americans, Asians or even first ethnic Europeans such as the Irish or Eastern Europeans

hyphenation of Arab _and_ American as well as a tool to achieve the last set of citizenship rights at the collective level, thus facilitating a sense of belonging. This discussion is organized in three sections, first it reveals stages through which mobilization of a hyphenated consolidated identity emerged next to national based identity organizations (i.e., the reasons behind the need for the existence of the strategic groupness process); second, I discuss framing and strategies employed in the mobilization of American Arab identities as a response to political isolation and a need to gain a political voice; third, I present the challenges these organizations face.

There is much variation in the attitudes and political visions among members of the Arab American consolidated identity-based organizations, whether these are the attitudes of executive board members, staff members, or regular members. There is a similarly extensive variation in the conceptualization of the role of the Arab American identity mobilization. However, there is a consensus about one thing: Arab Americans want to engage in and contribute to a conversation on the American political arena. They want to have a voice as Americans, as they are "Truly Arab, Fully American," as one of the interviewees said. Despite the large divisions related to the very significant diversity among those identified as Arab Americans, the mobilization of the consolidated identity is an expression of the desire to have a voice in the American political scene.

Because of the points made above, there are two strategies in place: 1) to create consolidated based identity organizations that create a large political constituency that may have an impact on elections and the political process, and 2) to focus on domestic issues that are of concern to most members of the communities.

Those strategies are the result of decades of efforts to form a political voice (see chapters 5 and 9). As a consequence, the vision is to gain the political voice of one combined Arab American constituency, educate the mainstream about the complexities of Arab American communities, and then work with the existing communities to harness the richness of Arab American identities.

Historically, access to political participation was challenging for Arab Americans. There were several factors that contributed to that, such as the relatively small size of Arab immigration, relatively new history of Arab American presence in the U.S. (impacting the level of knowledge and the political "know how" on the side of Arab Americans), and the focus of the immigrants on the issues of the Arab World rather than impacting U.S. politics. The most significant factor though is the composition of political forces impacting the U.S. political decision-making that contributes to a negative portrayal of Arab Americans and lack of political resources.

8.1. Immigration history impacts consolidated identity based mobilization: How consolidated identity-based organizations changed

When starting my research, I expected there to be several identities manifested in various organizations, such as national based identities or religious based ones, but I anticipated that there would be only one set of meaning for those various identities. This was indeed the case in terms of Arab American national-based identity organizations, where there is a tendency to understand a particular national label in one way. For example respondents used the concept of "Egyptianness" with the acknowledgement that there are various expressions of Egyptianess and there are many other identities included under the Egyptian one. However, the overall

understanding and even manifestation of being Egyptian in the organizations was rather constant. This is not the case with the Arab American consolidated identity. It is not the case, because Arab American identity underwent a process of change in the American and pan-Arab contexts and was shaped through various types of movements. These movements date back to Arab student based pan-national movements in the 1950's, then to wider reactionary movements after the Six Day war in 1967, and finally to a more consolidated identity of Americans of Arab heritage who politically mobilized in order to gain voice in the political system of their country. This voice had been blocked politically as well as socially and culturally stigmatized. Thus the creation of an Arab American consolidated identity was a process and it had its reasons which are the subject of this section. However, the main common denominator in the consolidated identity-based organizations is the fact that activists involved in the organizations were and are all politically oriented and focused on politics, not culture or economical advancement.

However, even though the shape and meaning of this consolidated based identity has changed over the years, the American mainstream did not follow in suit. Arabs in general are still conflated with Muslims, terrorists, and violence and, Arab women in particular, are identified with exoticism and oppression (Shaheen 2009). However, Arab Americaness is understood by the majority of my respondents as a hyphenated immigrant group that is bound mainly by language and concerns of U.S. foreign policy towards the Middle East. The ideology of pan-Arabism is not a prevalent ideology among Arab Americans as it was during the 1960s. Through the analysis of materials and interviews with the respondents of my study, it became

apparent that framing (i.e., the focus of Arab based identity political organizations and a meaning of Arabness) changed over the last few decades.

As mentioned in the opening paragraphs of this chapter and elaborated here, I distinguished three different stages of the process of groupness of the Arab Americaness starting with organizations where their members' attitudes focused on Arab nationalism and old homelands with no real efforts to impact U.S. foreign policy. This was followed by a second stage within the frame of a development of a hyphenated Arab American identity based activism, which started the efforts of influencing American policy. However, these efforts were still focused on foreign policy mainly and specifically on the Middle East. Finally, the third stage was a development of a fully hyphenated political identity, which framed the movements in their efforts to influence U.S. American policy both domestically and internationally.

8.1.1. Beginnings with the OAS – Arab rather than Arab American identity

As elaborated in chapter five the history of Arab immigration is one of overall success. Although many of the first Arab immigrants started as peddlers (Naff 1994), they were, on average, well off and did not experience bigger problems with incorporation into the American mosaic. They were also not always vocal and politically mobilized in the United States. The significant Arab American political identity based mobilization started only after the Six Day War in 1967. Before that, over generations, Arab Americans maintained symbolic ethnicity, but were not very vocal about it, and blended in into the ethnic fabric of the United States until they were singled out through political events. Thus, the motivation to organize politically was indeed based on politics: particularly foreign politics where the United States had

over the years been politically involved in the Arab world. This involvement eventually led to intensification of already existing negative stereotypes of Arab Americans spread in the American culture.

One of the first Arab American identity-based organizations was the Organization of Arab Students (OAS To my knowledge and that of my respondents, this organization is neither mentioned in scholarly studies nor archived. However, activists with long institutional memories provided testimonies about this organization. A former member and his wife (who was the first female president of the organization), Tamir and Salima, talked to me about the glorious beginnings of OAS in the early 1950s (1951-1952) and its ultimate downfall in the 1970s.

OAS was formed in the Washington DC area by a group of Arab students who were studying at American universities such as University of Michigan, University of Pennsylvania, Columbia University, and in other places such as California and Boston. It had very little local Arab participation until the 1970s. After 1967 War and a steep increase in immigration of Arab students to the United States (a result of Arab state-funded programs), OAS gained membership. This and other organizations operating at that time were strictly connected to the events and politics of the Arab World and, insofar as they related to the Middle East, those of the United States. The focus of OAS had little to do with interests of the United States itself and most of the members were either students or first generation immigrants who had mainly the interest of their homelands at heart, with notable exceptions for ideological politics such as joining anti-war or civil rights movements. OAS had also little impact on the politics of the United States when it came to Middle East or Arab issues, though and

the members of OAS at that time were not even that much focused on cherishing the collective identity. What was important for the members and the shape of the organization were political affiliations. In the words of the Tamir:

> *"Remember, in our time it was political affiliation what mattered. Ages before us, it was the organization of Arab students, at our times it was the political affiliations. They went to work within their political parties and affiliations"* […] *"we came together because we spoke the same language and we supported each other, but the OAS itself during our time didn't become a vehicle to do its own programs. It was a vehicle to DO, during anti-War period, to play a role, and we worked with other organizations."*

Even though the mobilization of identity at that time was really intense, the beginnings were exactly as discussed in the transnational literature but before the establishment of high communication mediums. Arabs who were active were too deeply focused on the politics of their homelands to impact U.S. domestic politics. At this early stage, it was mobilization of Arab national identities in the United States rather than mobilization of Arab American identity.

This involvement with politics of the countries of origin was clearly manifested by the fact that a lot of activists in the United States from the 1960s ended up in high government positions, from ministers, to prime ministers, or even heads of state in the Arab world. It was an effect of, in the words of the Tamir:

> *"The bubbling social and political transformations in the Middle East around the Arab unity, around liberation, and OAS as a body reflected*

that sentiment very strongly and many of its leaders of its time, from the 30s-40s well into the 50s played an important role when they returned to the Middle East and the few that stayed here, in the universities, in the education an so forth, also continued that grandiose image of one Arab nation emergent from the tutelage of the West. So that's really the formation of the OAS and therefore that's a very important grounding this movement. [Among the students] you begin to see also a growing number of representatives from those parties that were emerging in the Arab countries. So, not only do you have leaders that were playing leadership roles back in their countries, but there were many of them party-wise affiliated."

The organizations in that time underwent transformations because of an increased political polarization within the movement related to various party affiliations, an increased activism (to the point of clashing with the FBI), and its gradual decline as a mass-base organization (the immigration of Arabs into the United States was faster than organizational growth). Thus the representation of Arab students decreased percentage-wise.

OAS was an arena for political games between the Arab League[72] and the United States in the words of the Tamir:

"the Arab League began to consider the OAS as an asset in its activism, and they began to be very active with Arab student, whether it is by supplying speakers, or by giving facilities and money" On the other hand, *"The U.S. believed very much, not totally false, based on*

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[72] See chapter 4 for explanation

statistics, based on historical currents that students who studied in the

U.S. will be by and large pro-American. There are exceptions, but the

majority, if we go back to the 1920-30s, and if there were social

reformers, they were pro-U.S.. And remember, the U.S. itself was

going through a major social transformation. Emerging from the

innocent era of the 1940s to the imperial era of the post-1960s, so

when talking 1940- to 60s there was war and cold war and when the

transformations of the imperialism rising, the Dulles brothers,

Eisenhower. And while the universities continued to promote liberal

thought, liberal democracies and so on, and therefore their attention

to the Arab students was mixed because of that. But they did form in

the mid 1950s an organization that used to be called Friends of the

Middle East that was a CIA front."

This was a time when there was an increased suspicion among Arab Americans towards the American government and political access. This is when the cultural and social national clubs started to emerge, but the leadership in the Arab community dispersed and a common Arab American identity was not yet born. There was also a feeling among my respondents expressed by Salima as:

"There is no organization like that now, where as we did in our times -

we spoke the same language and we supported each other, but the

OAS itself during these times didn't become a vehicle to do its own

programs. It was a coalition builder"

The OAS was a forum where various communities could meet and coordinate common programs and learn about each other's ideas and projects. That was put on hold for the next few decades. The reactions to the Six Day War in 1967 were mentioned by the respondents as a critical moment in mobilizing a lot of the community, but at the same time dividing it and creating various new types of organizations.

These new organizations were mobilizing the "Arab" identity more so than the hyphenated "Arab-American" one. They were also based on mostly first generation immigrants. Thus, according to my respondents, the format and expression of identity was in direct relationship with their homeland, the nature of their activism was deeply located in transnationalism. Members of the organizations were still in an in-between space. Additionally, they had not achieved all the elements of citizenship yet. Some of them were not even citizens, thus did not have the same rights as citizens. Also, the first generation activists had felt a deeper connection to Arab world politics, to the detriment of getting to know the American political system – their political participation in the U.S. was not fully explored. Even though those organizations were not strictly a mobilization of Arab Americans as is the subject of this project, they depict the early acknowledgement of the force of group identities, and they were at the forefront of Arab American engagement in politics while influencing the change and recent nature of the mobilization of hyphenated identities among this community.

8.1.2. Arab Americans leanings towards foreign policy not domestic issues

A breakthrough, a "political awakening" as stated by Orfalea (2006) in identity political activism was the 1967 War. At this time the first Arab American organizations were created around professionals, such as the Arab American University Graduates (AAUG) in 1967. AAUG was an organization formed by more recent professionals, many of whom were veterans of the OAS who stayed in the States. While many of them were trying to establish themselves in their professions (i.e. academic, medical, business), they were deeply shaken by 1967 and realized that the only Arab voice explicitly active in supporting the Arab side was the national OAS. According to the OAS member, AAUG was *more nationalistic and less radical.*" Another organization that emerged in 1972 was the National Association of Arab Americans (NAAA) that was a lobbying organization. This organization was a very select movement of businessmen, some women and educators. NAAA was a very elite group of people because it was focused on Washington, D.C. and did not intend to mobilize the entire country but to only connect and create networks among businessmen, professionals, and educators.

Although these organizations no longer exist they were the beginning of a next stage in mobilization of different groups of the Arab American community, prompting a further stage in efforts towards fuller participation in the American ethnic fabric. They were created by American citizens of Arab heritage, usually first or second generation, who were successfully incorporated, both economically and culturally, into American society. Thus according to the assimilation theorists, they would be experiencing mostly symbolic ethnicity (most of them definitely had ethnic options) but not really full engagement with their ethnicity. But as a larger

achievement these first Arab American activists created a meaning of a consolidated Arab American identity, and not only an "Arab" identity. At that time, Arab Americans who were active in the identity-based organizations have already acquired two main aspects of citizenship: the legal status and rights, and were developing a sense of belonging in the United States. They started working on the fourth aspect of citizenship – political participation – at the collective level. It was a time of transition in the focus of mobilization, from foreign policy to domestic issues.

At this point the anti-Arab sentiments in the United States were widespread. The treatment of isolation and defamation was sensed not only in social interactions but above all in politics, with no avenues for political access for Arab Americans at the collective level. Efforts towards impacting U.S. politics through electoral donations or lobby creation met with no success, as discussed in previous chapter. Helen Samhan, in 1987, wrote that "anti-Arab attitudes and behavior have their roots, not in the traditional motives of structurally excluding a group perceived as inferior but in politics"(1987: 11). She pointed out as the root cause the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, since "those who supported the Palestinian cause were subjected to this exclusion whether or not they were Arab Americans." This is why the mobilization of the consolidated identity is geared towards gaining a voice mainly in the political system, because although the political isolation has an ideological basis it also derives from the absence of a political voice. That was the time when a lot of Arab Americans felt they had to hide their heritage. With enough critical events in the Middle East and an increasing one-sidedness of the United States foreign policy toward the Middle East, Arab Americans started to feel personally affected and

wanted to act based on their identity. That was a beginning of a yet another stage of mobilization.

8.1.3. Generational turnover: American Arab organizations

The third stage in development of types of mobilization of Arab American collective identities is focused on the hyphen: Arab AND American. This identity mobilization has been a consequence of several factors: 1) establishment of subsequent generations of Arab Americans who knew the American political system and felt American, 2) increased size of first generation of Arab immigrants coming to the United States, making this population relatively more visible, and 3) political events that had a direct effect on a possible decrease in quality of life for Arab Americans in the United States (such as restrictions in traveling, surveillance, and defamation discussed in chapter 6 and 7). Those three major factors made Arab Americans realize that in order to change the situation and not let events in the Arab world and/or terrorist attacks impact treatment of Arab Americans in the U.S., they must establish an Arab American political constituency, gain voice in politics, and form coalitions cooperating with the very divided Arab American communities. If successful, this would both better their standing as American citizens, and further allow them to impact domestic and foreign policies as other groups do.

Arab American leaders, as expressed by my respondents, modeled their new organizations on successful ethnic interest organizations. Leaders of these organizations knew what did and did not work in the political system in the United States for mobilized identity groups and then shaped their organizations accordingly to create strong organizations. Thus, they pragmatically focused on what many

studies found successful: membership unity, placement, and voter participation[73]

(Weil 1974; Watanabe 1984; Tierney 1994). The estimation of political success of the

above factors is based on electoral implications. The respondents who were the

leaders of the identity-based organizations recognized the importance of having a

large amount of voters who would vote in a unified/concentrated block. Additionally,

they recognized that they had to frame the message that would resonate with the

American mainstream and government in addition to their Arab American

constituency. This is why, as my respondents explained, they found it important to

compare themselves to other ethnic groups, and to appeal to American symbols (Said

1981; Uslander 1995). The challenge to gaining political access for the mobilized

groups was the need to present a common front to the policymakers and politicians,

who needed to see cooperation between interest groups in order to become invested in

a mutually supportive relationship. This is the ultimate goal of the Arab American

consolidated identity-based organizations expressed by the respondents who are

members and leaders of the organizations of my study.

8.2. American Arab mobilization

8.2.1. Incompatible identities?

Legal status and citizenship rights

My respondents are American citizens, not immigrants as many of the

respondents underscored, who are very happy to be American, believing in this

country and its system. They were underscoring their history of immigration,

comparing themselves to other ethnic groups in order to create a common ground and

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[73] Another element that is often listed as successful in ethnic interest groups is assimilation of the ethnic group. In the case of Arab American consolidated identity-based organizations, they are led by second, or third, or even fourth generation Americans, thus assimilation is not an issue.

a point of reference. My respondents who were second or third generation Americans were not too worried about showing loyalty for the U.S. out of fear of being portrayed as the enemy. The fact they were Americans was obvious and of second nature to them. They were concerned with domestic issues that affect them and the issues taking place overseas, issues that affect their families as Arabs. However, as Amin shared, they have a strong sense of belonging to the U.S:

> *"When I was giving interviews after 9/11, I was looking at how 9/11 affects me as an American first, and then as a Muslim, and as an Arab, and that's just how it is. I lived here, I never travelled overseas, I am from here."*

Arab American activists from the third wave of activism have all four aspects of citizenship, they have the legal status, rights, sense of belonging to the United States, and access to political participation. However, the fourth right is available to them at the individual level only, not yet at the collective level of their heritage or the hyphenated label "Arab-American". This is why, Arab American activists want to gain political access as a collective identity group in order to affect domestic policies and fight defamation and discrimination, and eventually affect foreign policy by pointing out benefits that the United States would accrue by rebalancing its Middle East policies. The most vocal organizations that have those characteristics are the American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) formed in 1980, and the Arab American Institute (AAI) formed in 1985.

Sense of belonging

The mobilization of my respondent's hyphenated identities is an ultimate

expression of their belonging to the United States. They are mobilizing their U.S.

citizenship rights and believing in its success. They see the multiplicity of identities

they carry as beneficial for the United States, not incompatible at all like many

claim.[74] There was an agreement among the respondents about the "generosity" of the

United States in terms of its overall acceptance of difference.[75] An example could be

a member of a charity organization working for Palestine, Nadir, who believed in this

country thanks to the continuous support for Gaza, despite the negative media

portrayal of the Palestinians and lack of reaction to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza

among politicians. He, like many others, recognized that the United States is a diverse

place which was not entirely defined by its official foreign and domestic politics, but

a country where hyphenations can be powerful and advantageous for all entities

included in these hyphenations. This is the reason why there was a consensus of

opinions about the importance of focusing on American politics and the consensus

was: *"We say America is what's important. And American policy is what's*

important." In other words, their priority in framing the Arab American organizations

is to focus on what happens at the domestic level, in American politics, in its

government and not in politics of the Arab world. This statement was an expression

of (at least) second generation Arab Americans' attitudes towards their belonging,

which was also translated into understandings of political action and mobilization of

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[74] Starting with Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* (1996) where he claims that people's cultures and religions will be at the root of conflict between people in the world where the East and West are in the opposite ends of the clash.
[75] I do recognize that my respondents' experience is based on living near a very transient and international city which is Washington DC and near a Metropolitan Area in general. I acknowledge that Arab Americans in other parts of the United States, not in urban locations could and probably would have different experiences.

identity. As a board member of one of the organizations, Kadir shared sentiments expressed by several members of various consolidated based Arab American organizations. While talking about the history of formation of the third wave of mobilization of the consolidated Arab American identity, Kadir summarized:

> "*[we were] the most effective people, and the reason being, we were not immigrants. We were 2nd and 3rd and 4th generation, knew how the system worked. So, we didn't have the ill tempered speech, we didn't have the lack of experience of political system in general, we all grew up in the civil rights movements anti-war movement, Vietnam movement. (…) That type of political experience grounded us and we learned how the system worked. It made us oriented into the very practical solutions and we didn't have the ideological taint, if you will, or just orientation, that were more Arab, in their orientation. So, we don't defend, we did not represent or defend Arab countries, our job was to change U.S. foreign policy. So, we always established as a basis for our work, as Americans, how we make U.S. relations with the Arab world work.*"

Finally, sentiments about the American citizenship status of the third wave of mobilized consolidated identities are more assertive with almost a feeling of superiority towards the first generation Arab immigrants and the older Arab-based organizations. Reflecting upon activists of the past, one of the members, Ali even said:

> *"A lot of them [activists from other organizations] were Arabs who came here to study, and they had this ideological attitude that everything is great about the Arabs, socialism is great, very pro-Cuba, pro-all this other crap. So, our definitions were pragmatism and working on U.S. foreign policy, not on Arabs."*

Or, in the words of another activist, Samatha:

> *"There was a tendency in our community to think of politics as a coffee shop politics, which is heated discussions and debates as it is done in the Arab world, but you don't do anything. So, we were introducing the antidote to coffee shop politics, we were saying – no, politics is actually joining a party, going to meetings, becoming a precinct captain, running for office."*

Those were and are American citizens politically mobilizing their hyphenated identities in a democratic system.

8.2.2. Strategies of gaining voice

Mobilization of identity changes its tactics with immigration status. Most of the consolidated Arab American identity-based organizations evaluated the realistic possibilities of getting access to politics and being productive. Activists concluded that foreign policy is currently far out of reach, but through gaining access and working on domestic issues and being present as a political constituency, Arab Americans would become a heard voice. Eventually, if the voice is loud enough and

significant enough, the impact on the U.S. foreign policy may become a reality. As one of the members, Wasim, said:

> *"I never wanted to get involved in foreign policy. I felt that as a community we can be stronger influencing domestic policy, and that's the status of [name of organization]. I think that we have a long way to go influencing the foreign policy, I will leave that to the experts, but if you want to talk about immigration, discrimination, airport detention, profiling that's something I can talk about, because it is easier to build coalitions around those issues."*

Consolidated identity-based Arab American organizations, as explained by Arab American activists, filled a void of no resources available in the political structure, in the political field that would *"helps us behave as Arab Americans."* They introduce the process of politics to both American born and immigrants who might already be interested in politics, but didn't know how to get involved, or to otherwise *"demystify American politics"* by teaching them the political ropes.

The focus is on mobilizing the political engagement of Arab Americans and creating a sizeable constituency that feels like a constituency that can be organized and mobilized in order to impact politicians and show them that Arab American interests matter as they have a political voice: one that was neglected and blocked for decades as a result of political isolation.

Strategies

The overarching goal of consolidated, Arab American identity based organizations is to gain access and obtain political voice in the American political

scene, in order to show the presence of Arab Americans and advocate for them. There are several strategies used to achieve these goals. The focus is on leadership training among the Arab American community that will reach out to the world of politics, raising awareness among politicians and the mainstream about the presence of Arab Americans in the American ethnic fabric. One of the ultimate goals is to show Americans that Arab Americans are worth paying attention to as American citizens, because they may be helpful (the other goal is to advocate for the rights of Arab Americans and to fight defamation and negative stereotypes). The goal is very pragmatic, which is to address a sense of benefit for the politicians and American mainstream. In the words Samantha:

> *"We are working on best ways to enter this info into the media. So that people understand that Arab Americans make contributions to this country that they are important to talk to. They can be helpful in terms of mobilizing interests of different constituencies. As AAI points out, Arab Americans are very strong in key states, they're in swing states, and so when you mobilize 5% of the population you can win the election. So, I think people need to hear that."*

Other issues that are tackled by Arab American organizations include three main areas. The first is fighting discrimination, which includes taking on legal cases by victims of discrimination. Second area of action is providing opportunities to contact political representatives in regards to foreign policies (Gaza, Lebanon, Iraq). Finally, the third one, a sensitive and thorny area is defense of civil liberties which translates into opposing legislation such as National Security Entry-Exit Registration

System (NSEERS) and programs and policies that allow for profiling, increased

domestic surveillance, selective law enforcement, and increased powers of search and

seizure, such as the revised guidelines governing FBI investigations, actions taken by

customs and border patrol, and directives on information dissemination between

federal, state and local law enforcement.

Actions taken by consolidated Arab American identity-based organizations

also include informing the constituency about Arab American political candidates,

and encouraging voting among Arab Americans through a very popular program

Yalla Vote, activated during elections. Additionally, organizations are involved in

research, raising awareness about Arab Americans and fighting and reacting to

defamation (from popular media ones to political ones, such as when Senator McCain

made a considerate but awkward comment about, at the time Senator, Obama: "He's

not an Arab, he's a nice man.") and reaching out to politicians in Congress and Senate

informing them about Arab American constituency. In the words of Kadir:

> *"If American decision makers and American Congress members don't*
>
> *understand these [issues pertaining to Arab American communities]*
>
> *they are going to be behind in communicating with them, so what*
>
> *we're trying to do is to educate the American leaders, members of*
>
> *Congress, policy people about Arab American communities."*

Finally, using the words of Samantha:

> *"Increasing, since 9/11, the political discourse is a big challenge,*
>
> *because there is so much Islamophobia from the right wing and the*
>
> *conservative movement and Arab racism, Anti-Arab racism, that has*

permeated political discourse and we have to be on the look for it all

of the time because it impacts people who are Arab Americans running

for office, people who are running for office and are supported by

Arab Americans and have connections with Arab Americans."

The aforementioned efforts have an ultimate purpose of decreasing the "othering" of Arab Americans and facilitating acceptance by the mainstream about who Arab Americans really are. In other words, the purpose is to show that Arab American citizens are just like every other citizen with an ethnic heritage. In the words of one of the members of Arab American organizations, Wasim:

"From what the polls show for the last three elections, Arab

Americans are not that different from the American mainstream, the

economy comes first in this election for example, and then security and

then foreign policy and that's pretty much the same. Americans are not

people who have big interest in foreign policy, in general. And we

have understood early on that if we're going to be talking to

Americans we have to share common interests."

Comparing with other ethnic groups

In the process of creating the constituency, Arab Americans model themselves after other ethnic groups who have successfully established themselves in the United States. In the words of Kadir:

"Muslims see themselves as a part of religious tapestry, but we see

ourselves as members of ethnic tapestry, so we compare ourselves and

look at Korean Americans, Nigerians, people who care about civil

liberties and national security, so we are the subset of that culture as

opposed to aloof over here, doing Arab things. No, we see ourselves as

a part of an American tapestry, working on civil liberties, issues that

concern ethnic minorities. Immigration for example."

Focus on domestic issues

Many respondents involved in politically motivated organizations mention first their affinity of pragmatism or desire to organize rather than the affinity for the cultural aspects of identity. They joined in order to engage in politics, fight the defamation and stereotypes, and change the U.S. foreign politics, but not impact the Middle East, which they often criticize. So, this consolidation of identities is strategic; the focus on domestic issues is to play the political game in order to reveal and encourage the diversity while uniting Arab Americans. Organizations, by addressing common issues, are trying to point out the commonalities among Arab Americans and thus create a stronger potential political constituency.

Additionally the effects of addressing issues strictly related to the Arab world may have drastic consequences for the peacefulness of the divided Arab American constituency. This is why there is also a consensus when it comes to the action of the organizations to not get involved in disputes between Arab states, as it would be counterproductive for the creation and strengthening already fragile common Arab American consolidated identity and constituency. Amin explained:

"We have a rule that we do not get involved in Arab disputes, so if

Lebanon has a conflict with Saudi Arabia, we don't take a stand, we

don't react. It played out this time, when Egypt didn't open its borders.

Some people wanted issue release, contact the Egyptian embassy.
Reason, in the early '90s we did not abide and the staff went from 40
people to 5"

Finally, those who get involved in the consolidated based identity are focused on American domestic issues first and then thinking about impacting the foreign policy. These attitudes are related to a sense of belonging to the U.S., but mostly as a pragmatic choice of looking at ways and outlets where things can be done politically. However, the activists are aware that everything cannot be done at once (the process of gaining political access takes time). They know that not everybody in the Arab American communities is mobilized by the organizations and not everybody is represented. Most leaders and members of organizations I spoke to admitted that communities from Maghreb are not represented, addressed, or even contacted (*"we dropped the ball there"* as one of the members said). Arab American leaders realize underrepresentation in Arab American organizations. They do have future plans to address such rifts. The immediate goal though is to push through with initiating a creation of an Arab American constituency. Once a stronger constituency is created, the next step is to strengthen contacts with more communities and educate the mainstream about the complexities of Arab American communities. Efforts to create a stronger political constituency is a call for a collective expression of citizenship, not only as a legal status, but as a political participation, which after 9/11 is more sought after than before. In words of one of Kadir:

"The membership [in the organizations] reflected for people looking
whether they could benefit from this organization. What was

hard/challenging was for people that were coming to us and saying

they were Tunisian, Palestinian, with their heritage, music, etc. and we

were telling them, 'you can be from whatever ethnic group you want

but when it comes to political action, you have to be an Arab American

because the numbers count, because you gotta' speak with one voice.'

So, I think people became more comfortable with being called and

calling themselves Arab American over the 30 years I've been doing

this work. It's not easy, it's never been easy. The Arab world is now

more polarized than it has ever been"

My respondents, who were members of consolidated based Arab American organizations, revealed three main challenges the community faces, 1) generational differences among second or third generation and new immigrants, 2) the differences among the Arabs themselves, "what does a Lebanese have in common with a Somali or a Sudanese? Or even with Moroccans?", and 3) a "pseudo-difference," that now is becoming more visible, are the religious differences. Those challenges are at the foreground of discussions whether there is a possibility of full representation of the entire community.

8.2.3. Full Representation?

The Arab American community is as diverse as it is divided. The majority of the activists I spoke to agreed upon that, but had various opinions about the weight of it when it came to possibilities for existence of a consolidated Arab American identity and the role of Arab American organizations such as ADC or AAI to represent and lead the entire community. According to my respondents, it is almost impossible at

this stage to create a common understanding about foreign policy among the Arab American community; there are too many interests, opinions, and histories embedded in the relations between the Arab states. However, it is possible to create a new panethnic identity based on the existing panethnic category and focus on domestic issues and influencing American foreign policy in general terms. This way the possibility of representation is reachable and potentially avoids conflicts that are located in Arab world politics.

As one of the directors of the organizations, Samatha, talking about reactions to various critical events (such as Gulf Wars, 9/11, or even the Gaza invasion) said:

> *"We always viewed our role as a provider of a forum for discussion or debate. We don't always come up with one solution for everything but one of the visions that we always had, is to be in a position to bring people from different communities to the table."*

Pragmatic Unification

As mentioned above, a lot of those who are active in the organizations have a very pragmatic attitude, where organizing around Arab American identity was seen as a move to gain political access. This is easier when people are working under a unified identity in order to become a part of the "ethnic tapestry" and attain the same rights as other American minority groups. Arab American activists recognize that, for utilitarian reasons, they can come under the banner of the Arab American identity. This banner, already present in the mainstream American culture as one that is associated with a lot of hurtful and demeaning stereotypes, can be used as a pragmatic tool to gain a political collective voice to then be able to form coalitions and "return"

the diversity to the community. It is a strategic move by the leaders of the panethnic Arab American organizations acknowledging the existence of the label and taking ownership over it. The majority of the activists are against the oversimplified understandings of "Arabs," they do acknowledge the multichrome mosaic of Arab American identities and want to highlight it to educate the public about it and work in coalitions. However, in order to do it politically, Arab Americans need to strategically operate under one panethnic identity banner.

It has to be remembered that these organizations are formed by Americans with an Arab heritage who are very comfortable with and know the American political system, are interested in politics, and exercise their political involvement in a pragmatic way (a word that was used frequently in interviews by the participants). This pragmatism stems from the fact that they feel themselves part of the American ethnic mosaic, and are proud to live within it. They are engaged, committed, and working within the political system as full participants to the fullest of its capacities; communicating at the same time potential and already achieved benefits for U.S. politicians willing to listen to the voice of one, relatively new identity constituency. Even some American communities of Arabic speaking heritage who do not regard themselves as Arabs, often see the political benefit in joining/forming coalitions with the consolidated based organizations in order to create a more powerful political constituency, and work on issues that are common for most of the diverse communities.

In the 1990s, surveys done by Suleiman (2006) revealed that Arab Americans, despite awareness of a prejudice in the American mainstream, and a reluctance to

report workplace or everyday discrimination, did perceive and report a clear bias and discrimination in political participation and election (44 percent said there is a definite bias, 25 percent said that there was perhaps a bias). Groups singled out as working on perpetuating the political isolation of Arab American were Zionists and pro-Israeli groups (81 percent felt this way). The effect was, as reported by the respondents (53 percent), a dissemination of hostile propaganda, specifically highlighting, attacking, and denigrating the image-ethnic background of Arab Americans. A result was either loss for campaign support or a loss of campaign itself (see chapter 9).

The respondents of this study focus on issues that unite Arab Americans (domestically and in U.S. foreign policy) rather than issues that divide them. They recognize that a lot of times Arab Americans do not share a lot in common with each other, but, as mentioned in earlier sections of this chapter, there are issues that affect most Arab Americans. And through these common issues, a common ground is being created to form a political constituency that is translated into a political voice. This voice has several purposes, starting with helping American politicians realize that Arab Americans (if used as a political constituency) are a significant constituency worth listening to and taking seriously. Also, gaining political access and voice impacts the way Arab Americans are viewed, which decreases defamation and discrimination. Finally, by becoming respectable and trustworthy players in American politics, Arab Americans can show U.S. politicians that there are benefits for the United States to have positive relations with the Arab World, that it is possible. This formation of a constituency is not based on one "common" voice but

on making American politicians realize the strength and potential impact on elections, the strength of the Arab American constituency, and helping politicians to realize the potential U.S. interests of altering foreign policy, instead of continuing a policy of isolation. This is a pragmatic use of an already existing identity label for advancing the political voice of a large population that is composed of various communities. Once access to political arena is established, coalitions would be – and already are being – formed, thus taking control over the discourse of shaping the mainstream meaning and understanding of the diverse Arab American population.

Those who are active in the Arab American organizations recognize the procedural nature of creating a common constituency and observe that Arab Americans start to organize nationally as a collective, but are not a collective itself involved in a political process. In other words, the activists do not claim that they represent everybody. The majority of Arab American consolidated identity-based organizations are focused on developing coalitions and uniting mainly for political voice purposes and assisting, providing support for programs of communities within the Arab American population (formats that were appreciated in the past and missed in current political scene by the members of the first OAS). At the same time, organizing as Arab Americans, around Arab American issues, is also getting people to move conceptually from being associated with a nationality, from being Lebanese and Palestinian or Syrian, to understanding the concept of being an Arab American (plus to get some of the American-born successful business people to identify with discrimination).

Distrust

Attempts to unify Arab American identity do provoke attitudes of distrust among some of the respondents who were members of national based organizations. It was an expression of one of Brubaker's criticisms of conceptualizing the organizations as exhaustive expressions of given identity. This distrust follows the Brubaker's criticisms of leaders living "off of politics as well as for politics," an element that scholars of collective action had pointed out already in 1960s (Olsen 1965). The distrust was expressed towards the representativeness and openness for leadership access in the organizations. The criticisms, however, do not prevent acknowledging the necessity of the consolidated identity-based organizations and even praising the work done by AAI, which is the case with all the interviewees.

The distrust was vocalized by one of the participants of this study, Jamila as:

"Unless the demands that are made on the Congress are representative, people will not stay a part of it, they can stay as Arab Americans, but as soon as the organizations do or say something that I feel that doesn't represent me, then I'm out, but they don't ask me, why I left or what I want, so I don't know how genuine that is, to be honest."

There is a worry that currently there is no organically created organization, as most current activists are from the intelligentsia and elites[76]. Jamila explained:

"They are not very well loved by the community – they are so far away from the people they claim they represent, but I think they are doing a great job. And there's this distrust. The other thing, it never tells the

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[76] The more grassroots institutions that address needs of the working class and the "masses" are of religious nature (it is a tendency that is widespread among the Muslim community especially, both Arab and South East Asian, but it is not the subject of this project).

base inside Washington for example, what goes on. So when I do those

training, everybody tells me 'we've never heard that before, nobody

told us that before,' what happens inside, how things work – to

demystify the process"

Another participant, Robert said:

"The Muslim organizations are much more – they provide much more

to the community – cultural, religious, social support, what people

need. Other organizations don't do that. We have banquets."

Another ground for distrust is related to the small representation of certain

communities and over-representation of others.[77] Even though a large number of Arab

Americans are well educated and well off economically,[78] there are obviously

communities that are working class [the stereotypical taxi cab driver or convenience

store owner] and are not being fully represented by the consolidated identity-based

organizations. Mustafa Bayoumi, an Arab American who is a professor at Columbia,

a son of parents with Ph.D.s wrote a series of portraits of young Arab Americans.

When he revealed his background talking with Arab Americans in New York, one of

them reacted "You're a strange Arab, […] for us it's all grocery store and this

[thumping on the table with *shisha*]" (2008: 147).

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[78] Close to 30% of Americans of Arab heritage have an annual household income of more than $75,000, while 22% of all Americans reported the same level of income. Mean income measured at 8% higher than that national average of $56,644. Median income for Arab American households in 1999 was $47,000 compared with $42,000 for all households in the United States (Census 2000). About 64% of Arab American adults are in the labor force; with 5% unemployed; 73% of working Arab Americans are employed in managerial, professional, technical, sales or administrative fields. Nearly half as many Arab Americans are employed in service jobs (12%) in relation to Americans overall (27%). Most Arab Americans work in the private sector (88%), while 12 % are government employees (Census 2000).

The explanation of the current membership by the members of the Arab American organizations is justified by the proportionality to the size of the national origin communities' proportions in the United States and politicization of certain communities over others. So, the Lebanese and Syrians have the largest presence in the consolidated identity-based organizations because they have been in this country for four generations and therefore they make up the majority of the membership as well[79]. The membership of Palestinian Americans is very significant as well, and the organizations have been very visible on questions about Palestinian rights. The other communities are not as well represented. The members of the organizations argue that it is because other communities are not as politicized as the communities that are present.

At the same time, the majority of members in the national identity based organizations recognized the importance of the work that AAI is doing (there were criticisms of ADC – still funded from the outside and not allowing "new blood" in leadership) and the importance to have a consolidated voice in the political process. Even though the divisions among the communities are very significant, some activists argue that by creating a consolidated identity, with time and generations that are born in the United States, Arab Americans will indeed become more homogenous. Thus, some recognize the social constructiveness of ethnicity, and for the second time in history after the Pan Arab efforts, there are chances for unification of an Arab American community but on the terms of Arab Americans themselves, not the outsiders.

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[79] The numbers and composition is not revealed by the organizations. The information obtained is based on the interviews with board members and presidents of the organizations and based on biographies that are accessible for the public of the leaders of the organizations.

<u>Addressing the lack of representation and the diversity in the community</u>

The board members and decision makers acknowledge that there is no way to organize all Arab American communities (because of lack of resources and internal divisions), but as Kadir stated:

> *"We can organize the leadership of that community and then work together and understand what the resources are."*

The efforts to increase engagement of the entire community, ADC and AAI were co-chairing efforts to create a congress of Arab American organizations. In the words of Samantha:

> *"Because we had tried a very weak model, it was modeled after the Jewish council put together in the 1980s, done to keep people out, rather than to invite people in. It had such stringent rules – how many members you had to have… it was exercising exclusion rather than inclusion. So, it seemed that our vision was not working and we did not have a collective voice. We sat down and decided it's time to have a new model. So, we launched it in the summer of 2001 - the congress of Arab American organizations and it was launched on the supposition that anyone is welcome, if you're a big or small organization, if you're Palestinian or Iraqi, if you're Arab American, even if you're a church or a mosque but a majority of your members are Arab Americans, you are welcome as well. So that was the concept. And unfortunately the events of 9/11 derailed our attempt at*

structuring that and our meeting was literally two weeks before that, at

the end of August."

The Congress does still exist, and AAI is the secretariat of it. It started out
with 40-50 organizations, and now it has more than 150. There's been a lot of
organizational growth since 9/11.

Change of meaning of Arabness?

With the pragmatic consolidation of Arab American identities, over the years the
meaning of the Arabness in the American organizational context changed as well,
even though the American mainstream did not follow the change yet. However, the
question is whether the meaning will be acceptable and internalized by most Arab
Americans. Arab American activists currently are Americans of Arab heritage who
were not members of Arab organizations in the past, were not members of political
actions focused on the Arab World. These activists are Americans who for different
reasons started engaging in the political system in order to change the policy that
affects Arab Americans – yet often distance themselves from the first generation Arab
Americans, and Arabs in the Arab world. Is there a dissonance? The meaning of
Arabness as understood in the Arab world context is not the same as in the context of
being an Arab American. As one of the activists said, the identity of Arab Americans
is often purely symbolic, especially among subsequent generations. The only reason
many organize under the banner of the Arab American identity is because they are
affected by policies, mostly indirectly, and are people of certain political beliefs
rooted in the era of civil rights movements.

This is an interesting moment of a formation of a purely political format of Arab American identity which hopefully, if the plans of the leaders will come to fruition, will be a ground for dialogue between not only the American mainstream and politicians, but also a ground for coalitions between communities within the Arab American larger umbrella. Just like the national OAS used to be, but this time focusing more on domestic common issues.

The current organizations are opening the doors that were closed so far because there were not enough people who knew the rules of the American political game. The activists want to have a voice, and they are taking the first step, putting their foot in the political door. The current goal is not representing the entire community (how can it?), but engaging the polity in a way that decreases the backlash of the stereotypes, negative attitudes and biases.

The current state of mobilized national based collective identities is still narrowly focused on foreign policy, where, except for charitable aid actions, has not made a significant impact. The consolidated based activism is still fighting to become an active member in the dialogue in American politics. Even though the voice of the Arab American community, represented now by a couple of organizations (ADC and AAI being the main ones), is being increasingly heard, it is focused on the defensive. Because of the political context and the strong counter-mobilization of pro-Israeli lobbies, Arab American political voice is still focusing on the political defensive while changing the image of Arab Americans. However, focusing mainly on the defensive, it remains impossible to be an equal member in the political dialogue impacting a change in foreign policy.

8.3. Strategic groupness as a response to political isolation

Brubaker questioned and criticized groupist treatment when it came to collective identities, especially ethnicity. He pointed out the granted nature of ethnicity and national identities as bounded groups that constitute the basic component of social life, and is treated as fundamental unit of social analysis. He called for a treatment of ethnicity and nationhood, "not as a thing, an attribute" but a way of talking and acting, a way of formulating interests, identities, and nationhood is a frame of vision – a cultural idiom and a political claim, as he argues. I argue alongside him, looking at Arab American organizations that mobilized politically. In case of the consolidated identity-based organizations, one of the first things the founders and members say is that there is no one, unique Arab American community, as the nature and strength of these communities lays in their multiplicity and diversity. In the case of Arab Americans, the process of groupness is transparent to trace in its creation and to see the political claim of reinforcing the panethnic identity as a political expression and frame of vision. In the case of pan-Arab, consolidated identity-based organizations, it is about owning the label that is already present in the mainstream that has a history and meaning. Organizations want to shape this meaning and return the image of multiplicity to Arab Americans. In this case, Arabness of the pan-Arab American organizations is a strategic or pragmatic groupness. In this specific case, ethnicity and nationhood is more of a political claim and frame of vision than a cultural expression of identity. For those who act in national based organizations, it is a cultural idiom, a form of self expression often restricted to the private sphere, but it is not the case for consolidated identity-based Arab American

organizations. The foundation of the consolidated identity-based organizations facilitates voicing claims in the name of previously unrecognized political actors - namely Arab Americans.

However, Arab Americans, as other political actors, matter at an individual level as citizens, with their legal statues, voting rights, and strong sense of belonging to the United States. They are a very unique pan-ethnic group that has been politically isolated as a collective from American politics for decades, but did not have to fight collectively for any other aspects of full membership into the American society, contrary to most other ethnic groups.

Concluding, the process of groupness of consolidation of Arab American panethnic identity is a purposeful one, a pragmatic one, and members are aware of the multiplicity under this one label. However, taking control of the label is the only way to gain political access and become a political actor. This is crucial in order to gain control over shaping the ways Arab Americans are portrayed in the media, to acknowledge the diversity of the Arab American communities and to become partners, as Americans of Arab heritage in discussions about U.S. foreign policy, especially in the Middle East. In fact, ultimately, the efforts towards consolidation of Arab American identity in organizations and political voice are a step towards decreasing the existing oversimplified views about Arab Americans and emphasize the heterogeneity of the communities through shaping the understanding of the American mainstream about Arab Americans as being composed of a rich diversity of identities.

Consolidated identity-based organizations and activists, representing both founders and members, reported in a direct way that the agenda and formation of identity is pragmatically created in order to have biggest chances for dialogue, to achieve acceptance as full citizens and political actors of this country. This identity-based political participation is an ultimate expression of participatory citizenship and a result of strategic process of groupness.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This project was a theoretically informed qualitative study analyzing the factors behind mobilization of collective identities, mostly panethnic ones. It did not attempt to construct an overarching theory but to highlight an alternative way of understanding the political activism of ethnic minorities. The data were derived from interviews, life histories, a focus group and document analysis from and about self-labeled Arab American panethnic and national-based organizations in the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Area.

9.1. Summary of findings and conclusions: political mobilization as a result of political isolation

The main finding was that Arab Americans directly mobilized as a result of critical events and policies that affect them in both direct and indirect ways. Events such as the 1967 Six Day War, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, or invasion of Gaza of 2009 or policies like the National Security Entry/Exit Registration (NSEERS) and the PATRIOT Act were triggers of identity mobilization for the respondents of this study. These triggers not only exacerbated the stigmatization of Arab Americans but also helped respondents to unravel the reasons behind stigmatization and negative treatment of Arab Americans in the popular and political culture of the United States. Ultimately, the main factor behind the mobilization of Arab American identities, especially the panethnic identity, was the historical legacy and current reality of political isolation experienced by Arab Americans at the collective level. This isolation is translated to a lack of influence in shaping political and popular discourses about Arab Americans by Arab Americans

themselves. As a result Arab Americans have little influence or control over the overwhelming presence of negative and superficial popular stereotypes of Arab Americans (such as terrorists, villains and traditionalists). Additionally, Arab Americans, even though generally involved in Middle East issues have not had much influence over one-sided characterizations of issues related to the Middle East and the U.S. foreign policy.

This study established that the response to this isolation is the pragmatic consolidation of Arab American collective identities expressed in political activism in order to create an influential political constituency and gain access to the American political system through voting campaigns, lobbying and educational efforts, and establishing of political connections among American politicians. It is a mobilization, mainly of a consolidated collective identity, in order to gain ownership over the label of "Arab American," to highlight the heterogeneity of Arab American communities, to increase political influence over the discourse about Arab Americans in political and popular culture, and to have an influence on foreign policy related to issues in the Middle East.

Reasons for the current and historical political isolation as determined by this study included the relatively short presence of Arab immigrants and their descendants in the United States, the relatively small size of the Arab American population (around three million), the rich diversity of the communities resulting in challenges in finding common interests and leadership (Arab Americans include people from 22 national origins, various religions, and even different linguistic origins), critical events in the Middle East where the U.S. has played an important political role, and

an existence of strong pro-Israeli lobbies that are often in opposition to Arab and Arab American voices.

This project questioned the assumptions behind the current understanding of reasons behind political activism of panethnic mobilization and patterns of incorporation of immigrants and their descendants into a host society. I provided accounts that showed that ethnic mobilization is not only a response to economic and cultural marginalization but can be based mainly on political isolation with little to no economic or culturally isolating repercussions. Arab Americans are in general an economically successful minority: seventy three percent of working Arab Americans are employed in managerial, professional, technical, sales or administrative fields and only five percent are unemployed (US Census 2000). Despite their overall economic success, Arab Americans are not successful in gaining political voice. As a result, this study demonstrated that even though citizens can have access to all four aspects of citizenship rights at the individual level, i.e., legal status, citizenship rights, sense of belonging and political participation, at the collective level the lack of some of these aspects results in a move towards consolidated identities. The lack of full political participation prevents Arab Americans from shaping and having an influence on the way they are being portrayed and treated in the popular and political culture of the U.S.

This study focused on factors behind political isolation and triggers for mobilization. The relatively recent engagement of Arab Americans as a political constituency, dating only to 1967, puts Arab American at a disadvantage compared to other minority groups that have a long history of political activism. This relatively

fresh start contributed to lack of established political connections and smaller political knowledge among Arab American activists.

Furthermore, the rich diversity of identities and mobilization patterns in the Arab American communities as demonstrated in this study turned out to be both a blessing and a curse for Arab Americans. On one hand, the plethora of Arab American identities spoke loudly against monolithic assumptions about this minority group. On the other, the diversity of Arab Americans also shed light upon another factor behind political isolation. A high degree of heterogeneity of identities and communities translates into a lack of one common voice and interest, which creates challenges for consolidated political constituency formation. This is the reason why consolidated identity-based organizations focus on domestic issues that unite Arab American communities (especially after 9/11), have rules not to get involved in inter-Arab-state conflicts, and are working on developing strategies of approaching the U.S. foreign policy that would include most communities.

Despite the heterogeneity of Arab American communities, critical events and influential policies initiated processes of groupness among Arab Americans, as this study demonstrated, that often created common interests and pushes towards mobilization. The impact of critical events was closely related to the disillusionment of Arab Americans with U.S. politics and the observation of a clear anti-Arab bias in politics. However, the creation of a unified political constituency and steps towards engagement in American political life were made even more difficult with the presence of well established strong pro-Israeli lobbies in the American political

system, historically reducing possibilities of access of Arab Americans to the American politics and reinforcing their political isolation.

In sum, the ultimate reaction to the political isolation was political mobilization of consolidated Arab American identity in the form of Arab American panethnic organizations. These organizations are strategically creating a ground for common interests for Arab Americans focusing on domestic issues in order to create a significant political constituency to influence discourses about Arab Americans that has been historically shaped by non-Arabs or non-Arab Americans. These efforts still face challenges in educating the public about the diversity of Arab American communities and various Arab American and Arab interests in the American context. This study traced the process of groupness of the Arab American consolidated identity-based that was a basis for mobilization. It demonstrated that the mobilization is a pragmatic effort on the part of Arab Americans, who are mainly second or subsequent generation Americans, are very proud to be American and believe in the American political system, while focusing on U.S. domestic policies affecting Arab Americans.

9.2. Contributions

This study has theoretical implications for studies about ethnic mobilization, shedding light on the importance of looking not only at the material/economic and cultural basis of mobilization, but to look for explanations of mobilization efforts in politics. It reveals that the process of assimilation or incorporation into a society is longer and more complex than it is portrayed and discussed in the immigration literature and is not based only on economic success and cultural assimilation. Lack of political

citizenship rights at the collective identity group level contributes to lack of access to political participation in the polity. This lack of access means a lack of tools in the case of the defamation of entire identity groups or lack of access to a voice in the polity. It provokes revival and redefinitions of a groups' heritage identity. Also, this project showed how difficulties in gaining political access and political voice can provoke an awakening of collective identity among ethnic minorities.

Arab Americans are a puzzling ethnic minority for a case study, thereby making them a productive choice for such a study. Their presence in the United States dates back to 1830s and is shaped by their experiences of overall economic success and cultural assimilation. Their political activism does not focus on economic struggle, or fight for civil rights or status, issues that mobilized many other minorities. In contrast, the main focus of Arab Americans is a political one.

The unique characteristics of Arab American mobilization contribute to the understanding of the processes of groupness. In the case of Arab Americans, the consolidation of identities was a response to already existing groupist treatment of Arab Americans in popular and political culture, as mentioned above. In the case of Arab American organizations, their consolidation efforts are geared towards taking ownership over the label and then refuting the groupist understanding about Arab Americans, showing that no one is representative of the communities and that there is a rich heterogeneity in the communities. Thus, this study shows how an already existing label can be reused, reshaped and applied politically. Additionally, this study contributes to the immigration literature about panethnic mobilization as it draws attention to other factors causing, maintaining, or even reviving identity, other than

economic or cultural ones. It pointed out the importance of achieving political voice. Without this voice, incorporation in a society is not complete.

Furthermore, this project contributes to studies about stronger involvement in politics of second and subsequent generations of immigrants initiated by Portes and Rumbaut (2001). The subsequent generations are more comfortable and knowledgeable of the American political system and have a bigger faith in the democratic system. As discussed by my participants, their political activism is also an ultimate expression of citizenship and sense of belonging in the United States where hyphenations are ingrained in the American mosaic.

Furthermore, this study adds to debates about expressions of citizenship and relationship between the state and its citizens. The ultimate goal for Arab American panethnic mobilization is to provide a contribution of political opinions of concerned citizenry that is an alternative to the mainstream, which is often interpreted as loyalty to the countries of their heritage (often assuming their perpetual state of immigrant status). However, panethnic mobilization in this context, as was often reinforced by my respondents, was an ultimate expression of efforts towards political incorporation and expression of citizenship rights and obligations in order to advocate for an unheard voice.

Concluding, it is clear that mobilizing factors, such as critical events and policies, can exercise a powerful identity feedback effect. I provided accounts showing that the consolidated identity frame was re/established through redefining, maintaining, reinforcing, solidifying, and shaping boundaries through political action, coalition building and engagement in the political discourse. Although such feedback

effects do not necessarily reflect what is felt or experienced by participants of an event, a compelling *ex post* framing can exercise feedback effects, shaping successive experiences and increasing the levels of groupness (Brubaker 2004: 16). This is where, organizations' framing, i.e., claims and agendas, came into play. This is where I reinforce Brubaker's approach in regards to the role of identity based organizations, agreeing that the organizations do not represent or act in the name of an entire group they claim to represent. I expand his conceptualization arguing that pre-existing groupist understandings of minority communities that are already pervasive in popular and political culture can create a basis for initiating a process of groupness. This is why, with critical events and influential policies, these negative representations provoked processes of groupness, where minorities can pragmatically decide to organize under an already existing label. This mobilization process is framed at one collective identity level in order to regain control over the ethnic label, often stigmatized. The ultimate goal is to reframe the label showing the heterogeneity under the one identity.

9.3. Implications

I realize that this study has a restricted reach. The situation of political isolation of Arab Americans may be different, for example, in Michigan, where Detroit has the largest concentration of Arab Americans and Arabs in the United States. However, one could argue that access – or the lack thereof – to political voice is most noticeable near centers of political power. The nation's capital, Washington, D.C., is the epic-center of political power. As a result, the ultimate expressions of Arab American political influence on the American political system can be evaluated in the D.C.

Metropolitan Area. However, further studies are advised that would look at political isolation as related to identity mobilization in other geographical locations where Arab American communities are located, and comparing non-Arab minorities that follow the path of successful economic and cultural assimilation but do not have political access and thus are stigmatized, such as Iranian Americans. Studies of political isolation and pragmatic groupness have significant implications on the understanding of incorporation of minorities and mobilization frames.

Looking specifically at the case of Arab Americans, this study has significant policy implications shedding light on possibilities for dialogue for policy makers that would benefit all parties included. The War of 1967 War and 9/11 were significant critical events that united diverse Arab American communities together and created a more consistent fit with resources and interest available for identity mobilization. Thus, without the events, Arab Americans might not have become a more united constituency. However, even though the events created a first push for mobilization, it was reactionary, as consistently pointed out by my respondents. It put Arab Americans on the defensive and as such they do not have the same political leverage as pro-Israeli groups. However, this is the time when Arab American organizations have the chance to change their position of being on the defensive. There is an increased curiosity and interest in Arab Americans after 9/11 which has created an opening for Arab Americans to more actively access the American political system and become more pro-active players in American political life. At this point Arab American communities are in a defensive position, and as long as this is the case, they will not be able to join political debates as equal dialogue partners. This

realization is important for both Arab American activists in particular and American policy makers in general if they are interested in productive dialogue. Additionally, it is important for policy makers and politicians to realize domestically that Arab Americans are a growing political constituency and could be an important asset, especially in swing states. Regarding foreign policy issues, the formation of a consistent Arab American political constituency creates a chance for American politicians and policy makers to forge stable partnerships with this new political collective actor that could be beneficial for all sides included in discussions and problems related to the Middle East.

One way to think about policy implications is by considering missed opportunities that can be traced back to the attitudes and actions of American politicians, like those mentioned in chapter seven. The actions of Walter Mondale and Michael Dukakis, refusing donations from viable Arab American constituencies, were short sighted. Such actions have significant consequences and create obstacles to strengthening the American mosaic of a pluralism of voices. Imagine the benefits from the inclusion of Arab American political constituencies in the political dialogue, both in regard to domestic and in foreign policy. How much impact would such inclusion have on peace processes in the Middle East or on diminishing the consequences of the 9/11 anti-"Arab" backlash? How significant could it have been in dismantling the misrepresentations, simplifications and stereotypes about Arabs and Arab Americans? How many lives could have been saved, how many Americans could have been spared humiliation and unlawful arrests from federal and state security forces as well as hostility from passing and random strangers?

Imagine a situation during which those persons and groups who are the subject of a discussion and who are perceived as a problem are not invited to this discussion and are not a part of the solution and decisions made. How conducive is such situation to a sustainable understanding, trust and cooperation between the constituencies and the politicians?

The answers to the questions are not difficult. Also, ignoring these answers is not conducive to promoting a viable and thriving American democracy, especially as we move into the second decade of the 21st century. However the reality of leaving questions of possible cooperation and political access unanswered is still in place for Arab Americans. This study showed that there is a chance to change this lack of dialogue if those holding political power will start to listen to a growing Arab American constituency and, in action, apply and strengthen the power of American democracy.

APPENDIX 1: Open-Ended Questions Asked of Study Participants

The overarching research question is: What factors trigger Arab Americans to embrace or crystallize multiple categories of collective identities?
THEMES FOR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:
I.   PERSONAL INFORMATION
Gender, age, occupation, national origins, religion (?)
II.   IDENTITIES CLAIMED
III.   MEMBERSHIP IN ORGANIZATIONS
    1.   What are the organizations you are a member of?
    2.   Did you over the past few years change organizations? Or join new ones? Why?
    3.   What are the main activities/agenda of the association(s)?
    4.   When/how/ and did the association(s) increase its membership?
    5.   What compels you to be part of that organization?
    6.   How does/do the association(s) attract members?
    7.   Why do people join the/those association(s)?
    8.   Does/do the association(s) interact with other groups?
    9.   How information is passed to the association members?
IV.   KNOWLEDGE OF LAWS AND POLICIES
    1.   Are you keeping up with political events? In the US/in the world? What events are of most interest to you?
    2.   Did 9/11 have a significant impact on your personal life? How?
    3.   Except for your immediate environment, what has the biggest impact on you, your decisions, alliances that you form?
V.   IMPACTS ON IDENTITY MOBILIZATION.
    1.   Was there some event when you felt that you identified with one label rather than the other more than anytime else (if yes, can you elaborate)? Over an extended period of time?
    2.   Is there another way you express who you are/ your identity besides being a member in the organization?

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