

Homeland Interests in Hostland Politics:

Politicized Ethnic Identity among Middle Eastern Heritage Groups in the United States*

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ABSTRACT

Diaspora ethnic communities differ in their readiness for mobilization on behalf of homeland interests. Using three ethnonational groups in the United States, each of which has ties to the Middle East, this paper develops and tests a multilevel model of politicized ethnic identity. The empirical analysis confirms that individuals differ in their readiness for mobilization based on the strength of ties to the ethnic community and, net of such differences, each group varies based on the contexts of exit and reception at the time of immigration.

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In an age when diasporas are increasingly recognized as influential actors in transnational politics (see, e.g., Davis and Moore 1997), why do some ethnonational communities cohere tightly around homeland political interests while others do not? Despite its importance, the question has been subject to very little analysis.¹ This paper begins to fill the gap by comparing the level of politicized ethnic identity displayed by three ethnonational groups in the United States: Arab-American Christians, Arab-American Muslims and American Jews. While all three ethnic communities have a putative stake in American Middle East policy, the study explores differences within and across the three groups in the disposition to make homeland concerns central to their own political agenda.² Through survey analysis, it assesses the readiness of the groups to mobilize politically in the United States on behalf of homeland needs and interests.

In addressing an under-explored question about diaspora political involvement, we focus on mass political behavior rather than interest group politics. Most theories about diaspora influence on American policy are rooted in assumptions about the elite nature of the foreign policy process. From this perspective, diaspora group effectiveness is largely determined by access to key elites who dominate the policy-making apparatus. Consequently, the research emphasizes the role of organization, information and other tangible resources that matter in the world of “insider” politics (Shain and Barth 2003, 461-2; Smith 2000, ch. 3). While that focus is certainly appropriate and necessary to understand short-term policy changes, the influence of any diaspora, like interest groups generally (Kollman 1998), also rests in large part on a supportive constituency available for mobilization. This study thus brings into the discussion of diaspora influence the heretofore overlooked contribution of micro-level diaspora political consciousness.

The paper begins with a discussion of the nature and sources of politicized ethnic identity, the disposition of ethnic communities to factor homeland needs into political

considerations about the host society. We offer a preliminary theory about aspects of the diaspora experience that may either encourage or inhibit the development of a political consciousness devoted to homeland concerns. After characterizing the three cases in terms of the theory, the hypotheses about group behavior are tested empirically.

The Sources of Politicized Ethnic Identity: A Preliminary Theory

The concept of politicized ethnic identity refers to the tendency of nominal members of an ethnonational diaspora to accord priority to the homeland in their political thinking and behavior (Sears et al. 2003, Simon and Klandermans 2001).³ Individuals exhibit such consciousness when they “perceive the sociopolitical landscape from the vantage point of the ethnic group” Lapid (1987, 4). Although it is easy to imagine that membership in a diaspora inevitably generates such a disposition, this essentialist assumption is wholly unwarranted (Brubaker 2001, Tölöyan 1996). Individuals can and do differ appreciably in the degree to which ethnic heritage is central to their self identity and political calculations. For any ethnonational group, politicized ethnic identity is likely to depend on the individual traits of those within it and group/collective properties. In the same manner as we distinguish statistically between within-group and between-group variance, we need to examine both personal background factors that operate differentially on members of the group and the collective properties of the group that may distinguish members of one ethnonational community from another. This paper presents such a multi-level model.

Constructivist approaches to ethnic identity emphasize the contingent nature of group attachment (Conzen et al. 1992). In line with this position, empirical research has suggested that collective identity among individuals from a common ethnic background is largely a function of

cultural, social and psychological ties to the group (Kotler-Berkowitz 2005). In turn, as previous research has demonstrated, the more individuals participate in culture-forming ethnic organizations, maintain endogamous social life, and develop powerful symbolic ties to the ethnic community, the greater their propensity to grant centrality to the homeland in their political calculations (Wald and Williams 2006a, 2006b). To model the level of politicized ethnic identity requires incorporating measures of cultural, social and symbolic ethnic ties.

Yet a purely individualist model of politicized ethnic identity overlooks important considerations. In the classic studies of collective behavior by Durkheim and Simmel, groups, qua groups, undergo certain experiences that transcend the individual, imparting a collective consciousness that is widely diffused among individual members. Such collective experiences may generate a group tendency to put homeland concerns at the top of the host society's political agenda. The development of such politicized ethnic identity depends largely on the contexts of exit and reception, Portes and Rumbault's (1996) phrase for the circumstances that attend the community's departure from the homeland and the conditions of the host/destination society to which the emigrants relocate. With regard to exit, the diaspora literature distinguishes between immigrants and refugees, treating the former as voluntary travelers who are "pulled" by the attractions of the destination versus those diasporas created by "push" factors that make continued residence in the homeland dangerous or problematic (Van Hear 1998). The reasons for exodus are likely to resonate in the behavior of the diaspora community when it reaches the destination society. At the same time, no matter whether migrants consider themselves refugees or immigrants, conditions in the host society independently affect the likelihood of political cohesion among diaspora communities. The study focuses on two such host society forces, the seniority of the diaspora and its reception by the society of destination.⁴

Although the reason for emigration is in the eye of the beholder and subject to complex and conflicting accounts, most diasporas develop a narrative that treats departure from the homeland on a continuum from opportunity-driven to expulsion. *This paper assumes that groups formed by voluntary migration are likely to develop lower levels of politicized ethnic identity than groups who were pushed out of their homeland.* By their very willingness to leave home in search of better conditions and, in time, to remain in the new society rather than return, those who made the decision to travel abroad on their own volition exhibit a lower level of homeland commitment. By contrast, groups that were expelled or otherwise left unwillingly/reluctantly may pine for the day when they can end their “exile” by returning home. While abroad, they might well see themselves as duty-bound to advance the homeland’s interests in their temporary abode. Of course, these broad statements do not hold in all cases. People who leave voluntarily may still pine for the homeland and victims of forced expulsions may develop enormous antipathy to the homelands that didn’t want them as inhabitants. Notwithstanding these nuances, the broad strokes approach offers a useful first take on the phenomenon of politicized ethnic identity.

Once an ethnonational group arrives in the host society, the United States in this case, other processes will operate to stimulate or retard the development of politicized ethnic identity. One factor is time of arrival. At the individual level, consciousness of ethnic identity is typically highest at time of arrival and erodes over time and across generations.⁵ Beyond the individual effect, time of arrival is also a group property likely to leave a lasting impact on subsequent immigrants from the group. On arrival, a group’s folkways, encompassing traditions, cultural practices and public behavior, may arouse nativist fears about the “threat” to national identity. Time allows the group’s ways become less exotic or threatening to earlier arrivals, enabling

migrants gradually to think of themselves as full members of the national community in the host society and to be considered as such by those with more seniority. All other things being equal, groups that have a long pedigree in the United States are likely to be accepted as legitimate participants in society while members of newly-arrived ethnonational diasporas may well feel much less secure in their status. On the assumption that politicized ethnic identity reflects at least in part a sense of otherness, it makes sense to posit *that groups that arrive en masse earlier in time will exhibit lower levels of politicized ethnic identity than groups arriving later.*

Not all groups find it equally easy to accommodate to American life, to lose a reputation for otherness. A durable research tradition links receptivity by the host society to the cultural compatibility of the ethnic community, its “fit” with the perceived norms of American society (Guarnizo et al. 2004, 1217). Groups are more likely to be well-received by the host population if they are white, English speaking, relatively small and geographically dispersed, and share the dominant Christian faith of the American people. Clearly, race and language remain central divides in the United States and strong factors that impede the incorporation of non-white and foreign language groups. Similarly, large, highly-concentrated groups may “stick out,” generating resentment and resistance from nativist elements. Religion, though less-commonly cited as a factor in receptivity, is undoubtedly part of the package. From its founding, the United States has been a society with a large Christian majority and Christian values and understandings are widely suffused throughout the population, even among those who seldom enter a house of worship (Reimer 1995). Accordingly, groups that partake of the Christian tradition are likely to find fewer obstacles to widespread social acceptance and assimilation. On the assumption that acceptance as part of the national community encourages assimilation rather than the maintenance of particularism, we argue that *politicized ethnic identity is most likely to develop*

among groups characterized by non-white status, foreign language usage, large size, geographical concentration, and non-Christian religion.

This account suggests three factors of the diaspora experience likely to affect the degree of cohesion manifested by ethnic groups—whether a group left the homeland as voluntary migrants or involuntary refugees, when the group arrived in the United States, and the cultural similarity of the group to the native-born population. A comprehensive theory of immigrant political cohesion requires a much larger set of variables to take account of institutional networks, economic conditions in the host society, the probability of segmented ethnicity, the role of political opportunity structures, and other factors. The more modest goal of this study is to delimit and test a set of factors that helps account for differences in politicized ethnic identity across diaspora groups in the contemporary United States.

The Cases

The next step involves applying these assumptions to the three ethnonational groups with putative interest in American Middle East policy. For each community, we examine homeland conditions at the time of emigration, the time of arrival in the United States, and the cultural similarity between each immigrant cohort and the native population.

Arab-American Christians exhibit the traits likely to generate the lowest level of politicized ethnic identity. Speaking in general terms of what is a variegated population, the literature portrays this community as third and fourth generation descendants of voluntary migrants whose social and demographic traits facilitated receptivity by the host society. Most of the current Arab Christian population in the United States dates from immigrant cohorts that arrived during the period from the late nineteenth century to the outbreak of the First World War

and in smaller waves before 1948 (Pulcini 1993, 27). During the era of mass immigration that preceded World War I, the United States was a powerful destination for aspiring young people from the predominantly Christian sectors of what are today Lebanon and Syria.⁶ Once characterized as victims fleeing religious persecution, contemporary historiography now emphasizes the volitional nature of this predominantly Christian migrant stream, describing the attraction of the United States as a locale offering opportunities for advancement not available in the home country (Hourani 1992, 4-5; Naff 1992, 142-5). Scholarly accounts emphasize the almost complete lack of political identity among the early migrants who were socially located among family, clan, region and faith (in ascending order of abstraction) but without any sense of membership in a putative Arab nation (Ismael & Ismael 1976, 393; Kayal 1980, 115-18; Naff 1992, 142). Indeed, “Arab” was taken by the early generation of migrants not to represent themselves but rather to designate the Ottoman Turks, their oppressors. Ambivalent about maintaining an Arab identity that “marked them as backward, inferior, non-Christian and hostile to the United States,” they had little incentive to preserve their old world ethnic heritage (Kayal 1995, 252). Although American culture entertains rather exotic notions of Arabs as cultural “others,” historians stress the relatively smooth adaptation of the early Lebanese-Syrians owing in part to their small size and geographical dispersion—which rendered them little threat to dominant groups—and to their Christian religious identity (Naff 1983, 18; Naff 1992, 141, 150; Kayal 2002, 93-4). Primarily members of religious traditions anchored in Eastern Christianity, most Arab Christians made the transition to Western confessionalism: Eastern-rite Catholics moved into the Roman Catholic ambit and the Orthodox often made their way into the Episcopalian communion (Kayal and Kayal 1975).⁷

Scholarly accounts of this population almost universally invoke assimilation as the master frame (Aboud 2000, 659-60). Through inter-marriage to non-Arabs, gradual erosion of the ethnic church, adoption of anglicized names, and loss of Arab fluency, Kayal (1995, 253) reports, the community was “Americanized to the point of extinction.” To later Muslim immigrants, many Christian descendants of the old cohorts were hopelessly assimilated (Abraham and Abraham 1983, 3)—dismissed by one authority as “fourth generation, English-speaking, disassociated, mixed breed Americans with Arab last names” (Kayal 1995, 259-60). The Syrian-Lebanese in the United States were largely disconnected from political currents in the Arab world, missing the pan-Arabism that emerged in the 1950s and thereafter, reacting to developments in the Middle East “primarily as Americans and only secondarily as Arabs” (Naff 1983, 21). Although their sense of ethnic heritage was stimulated by the defeat of the Arab armies in 1967, the renewed sense of attachment took the form of “a historical and emotional affiliation, rather than active participational identity and involvement with ethnic organizations” (Kayal 1995, 251-2). A survey of the largely Christian Arab community in Springfield, MA found “a strong latent attachment to the Arab cause” but views that were “somewhat incoherent and clouded with ambiguity” (Aruri 1969). Descendants of Palestinian Christians were also notably ill-informed about Middle East politics when surveyed by Barghouti (1989). To the extent they were politically engaged in an Arab cause, the principal goal of Christian Arabs—fighting discrimination based on Arab ancestry--was a means to achieve fuller integration in the United States (Nagel and Staeheli 2005). When membership in the Arab-American community came to be defined largely in political terms by active support for the Palestinian cause, many Christian Arabs were essentially written out of the community (David forthcoming). As

voluntary immigrants, early arrivals, and persons fairly easily assimilated in cultural terms, the Christian Arabs should exhibit low levels of politicized ethnic identity.

By contrast, Arab American Muslims display en masse the qualities likely to generate high levels of politicized ethnic identity. They are a fairly recently arrived population consisting of people who often regard themselves as exiles and whose pronounced social differences with the host society are likely to inhibit rapid assimilation. Whereas accounts of the Arab Christians emphasize their rapid absorption, the story of Arab Muslims instead stresses continuing social, religious and political distinctiveness (Haddad 2002, 115).

Although Muslims were part of the early Arab migration to the United States, most Muslims did not arrive until after World War II and even more so after the liberalization of American immigration law in 1965. In the early post-World War II period, most of the Muslim migrants were part of the intellectual elite of the Arab world, fleeing disorder and repression in the Middle East. Hardly a proletarian diaspora, members of this group brought with them advanced educational and occupational skills (Naff 1994, 24; Suleiman 1994, 46). Later migrant waves were composed primarily of Muslims displaced during the Arab-Israeli wars and civil conflicts in Arab states. Unlike the relatively benign reception accorded the earlier Arab Christian immigrants, the post-war Muslim newcomers faced a political climate that essentialized Arabs and particularly Muslims as fundamentalist, patriarchal, extreme, and violent (Merskin 2004). They were assigned a subordinate social status enforced by “measurable public policies, mainstream representations, social patterns of prejudice, discrimination, and stereotyping, civic and political exclusion . . .” (Cainkar 2005, 182). Even had their reception been warmer, the post-war Muslim Arab migrants probably would have defined themselves as

refugees and Arab nationalists in temporary exile. As the prospect of return dimmed, they continued to frame their situation in exilic language.

Religion powerfully distinguished the Muslim immigrant community of the postwar era from the Arab Christians who came before them. Adherents of an “Eastern” religion that was not well-understood by Americans, Muslims were often perceived by nativists as outsiders with alien and threatening ways. As strangers in a strange land, many Muslims clung to Islam as the primary means of expressing Arab identity and maintaining contact with the larger Arab world. The Muslim migrants viewed Arab nationalism in largely religious terms, developing a politicized identity driven principally by Middle East concerns (David and Ayouby 2002, 113). Indeed, they were often derided by more veteran Arab Americans for what seemed like an obsession with “back-home” issues to the virtual exclusion of other matters (McCloud 2003, 173-4; Khan 2003, 179). While the descendants of the older Christian migrants valued ethnic ties as an end in themselves, the more recent and predominantly Muslim migrant streams perceived ethnic cohesion as instrumental means to a political end (David and Ayouby 2002, 132). Despite their minority status within the Arab-American population, the Muslims constituted “the active and organized element of Arab nationalism” (Elkholy 1969, 6) and mosques became important centers of political education and mobilization (Jamal 2005). As refugees, late arrivals to the United States, and adherents of a Third World religion, Arab-American Muslims should exhibit a higher level of politicized ethnic identity than Arab Christians.

The scant empirical data available for Arab Americans bears out these general claims. Suleiman (1992) surveyed of politically-active Arab Americans, comparing those of Lebanese-Syrian descent to others. Consistent with the portrait painted by historians, the Lebanese were significantly more likely to be American-born, Christian, and English-speaking--and much less

politically engaged by Arab issues. They were less inclined to cite ethnic concerns for seeking office, to support ethnically-based political organizing, and to feel that Arab Americans had been excluded from public life or targeted politically by American Zionists. The same gap based on immigration date was apparent in Sandoval and Jendrysik's (1993) national survey of Arab Americans during the first Gulf War. Convergence with the political views of other Americans was strongly related above all else to the date of family immigration to the United States, revealing that the descendants of predominantly Christian cohorts who arrived before World War I were indeed less distinctive than the more recent, predominantly Muslim immigrants.

In terms of the three factors hypothesized to generate politicized ethnic identity, American Jews stand somewhere between the Arab Christians and Muslims. Jews share with Muslims a self-image as refugees displaced by war and upheaval as well as a cultural trait, religious affiliation, which both marks them off from the native population and promotes a sense of group distinctiveness. Unlike the Muslims but much more like Christian Arabs, American Jews arrived in the United States during the great age of immigration and thus have accumulated considerable seniority that has allowed their folkways to become familiar to most Americans.

Most Jewish migrants to the United States during the immigration era came from villages and small towns in the Eastern European Pale of Settlement. Even before the rise of Fascism in the 1930s, their situation was precarious because of virulent anti-Semitism in Poland and Russia. Migration was certainly influenced by the "pull" of the United States for impoverished shtetl-dwellers but was more powerfully driven by periodic outbreaks of pogroms and institutionalized discrimination. Although Jews enjoyed a measure of civil equality in the United States and faced a much more benign type of anti-Semitism than in the old country, Judaism still marked the community as different in meaningful ways. Isolated initially from other Americans by their

unique languages and religious background as well as by anti-Semitism, the newcomers quickly replicated their old world communes, establishing ethnic enclaves with tight social networks, a rich array of institutions, and cultural unity. In their synagogues, group identity was reinforced by a theology that promoted “an awareness of Jews’ common ancestry, their existence as a chosen people, the special sanctity of the land of Israel and of the Temple in Jerusalem, the divine election of the Davidic dynasty, and the coming of Messianic redemption” (Moore 1981, 389). Conditions in these ghettos fused religious sentiment, ethnicity, nationality and culture, imparting all with a distinctive group cast (Liebman 1973, 20). Imbued with this collective orientation, Jews understood themselves as a “‘nation’ or people rather than simply a religion” (Waxman 1999, 7).

If two of the three factors that promote ethnic cohesion—refugee status and cultural differences—encouraged a distinctive Jewish ethos, the third, time of arrival, may have mitigated the effect. Within the span of one generation, Jews moved out of ghettos into suburbs and spread across the United States. In relatively short order, Jews lost many Old World traits and became active players in American life, first as community organizers, then as labor activists and party workers, eventually as candidates, office holders, culture makers, and leaders in business and the professions. They assimilated so rapidly in fact that community activists soon worried about the dangers to Jewish continuity posed by high intermarriage rates, low levels of connection to the (Israeli) homeland, the loss of Yiddish and Hebrew, and other indicators of declining distinctiveness. Before concluding that success diminished Jewish cohesion, however, it is important to consider countervailing forces that simultaneously stimulated group awareness-- the Holocaust and the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. The trauma associated with genocide and concern for the security of Israel consequently became central to the political

culture of American Judaism (Woocher 1986).⁸ We anticipate that members of the Jewish community will outpace Christian Arabs in levels of politicized ethnic identity.

Based on group experiences, then, we should find that Jews and Muslims are likely to exhibit higher levels of politicized ethnic identity than Christian Arabs. The model is not clear about which of these two groups will have the highest level. Jews and Muslims score equally highly on two precursors of ethnic consciousness—forced expulsion from the homeland and a less receptive host society culture—while Muslims, as fairly recent arrivals, have an additional impetus to politicized ethnic identity. However, the greater seniority of American Jews, a factor that normally diminishes collective behavior, might well be offset by the trauma of the Holocaust and pride in the creation of the state of Israel. Of course, it is important to remember that ethnic affiliation is just one of the factors likely to influence the centrality accorded to homeland political interests. Variations among individuals are likely to matter considerably as well. Our concern is whether group membership matters when we control for the other predictors.

Data and Measures

The data for this study were derived from the “Culture Polls” conducted by Zogby International. An omnibus survey of the adult population was in the field from December 14, 1999 through February 7, 2000. The survey yielded 589 Jewish respondents and 501 Arabs. Respondents were contacted by telephone from the Zogby International headquarters in Utica, New York. The resulting data were weighted slightly by region, age and gender to more closely approximate the resident Jewish and Arab populations of the United States.⁹ The survey of Jews was conducted in cooperation with the *New Jersey Jewish News*.

The dependent variable, politicized ethnic identity, was created from four items that scaled appropriately (Cronbach's alpha = 0.75):

Which of the following statements best describes the importance of the Arab-Israeli conflict to you personally?

1. It is the single most important issue for me
2. It is among the top three most important issues for me.
3. It is among the top five most important issues for me.
4. It is not among the top five most important issues for me.

In the next national elections, how important will the candidates' positions on the Arab-Israeli conflict be in your voting decision – very important, somewhat important, or not important?

Which of the following statements best describes the importance of U.S. support for Israel to you personally?

1. It is the single most important issue for me.
2. It is among the top three most important issues for me.
3. It is among the top five most important issues for me.
4. It is not among the top five most important issues for me.

Have you ever “written a letter, made a telephone call, or done anything else to express your views on the Arab-Israeli conflict directly to a government official, newspaper, or magazine? (Yes/No)

These items assess directly the salience of the Middle East conflict as a political issue, a factor in presidential vote choice, and a source of action—precisely what we mean by politicized ethnic identity. The literature on issue salience makes clear that respondents will only act on such orientations when the issue has personal meaning for them (Lavine et al. 1996), making the framing of these questions especially appropriate.

Previous analysis suggests that individuals within each community will differ on this variable according to the strength of their cultural, social and psychological/symbolic ties to the ethnonational group (Wald and Williams, 2006a, 2006b). The principal source of cultural socialization, religious institutions, is represented in the equation by the frequency of attendance at worship services. The surveys are amply supplied with indicators of the social domain of

ethnic attachment: ethnic composition of the neighborhood, the maintenance of ethnic friendship networks, the use of a foreign language, and stated intention of visiting the homeland in the next year. These measures of integration are coded such that higher values are assigned to more frequent and intense interaction with fellow members of the ethnonational community. The model will also include generation of one's family in the United States and a measure of economic resources, both of which typically index assimilation rather than ethnic integration (Zsembik and Beeghley 1996), and should thus be negatively related to politicized ethnic identity.¹⁰ The final variable under the heading of social factors is age. Although there is some debate about whether age enhances or retards ethnic attachment, the findings from earlier studies suggest that age is a positive influence. The last domain, symbolic/psychological ethnic attachment, involves the purely cognitive tie (if any) linking the individual to the group. In the model, this construct is operationalized by a composite measure based on questions about pride in ethnic heritage, centrality of ethnic heritage to personal identity, and emotional tie to the homeland. The alpha of 0.61, lower than we would have preferred, is high enough to warrant a composite scale.

The model includes three other control variables. Recognizing a strong research tradition linking the experience of discrimination to the development of politicized consciousness, the model has a dummy variable for respondents reporting personal experience of ethnic discrimination. Some scholars have speculated that men might be more attuned to international affairs than women and there is a dummy variable for males to capture any such effect. The final control is a response to the symbolic politics tradition that emphasizes the power of group affect in judgments about contentious public issues (Sears et al 1980). To prove that attentiveness to the Arab-Israeli conflict is not driven solely by personal allegiances to one side or the other, the

model also includes a measure of group affect. The variable assigns the highest value to respondents who sympathize primarily with their own group (rather than to both groups equally, neither group, or the other group) in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The ethnic dummies that will gauge group effects are based on screening questions. Respondents were asked to identify the ethnic label that best applied to them. The analysis includes persons who identified themselves as “Jewish” or “Arab American” in the screening question. Arabs were subdivided by religion with a question that asked them to select one affiliation. Respondents who identified as Catholic (including Maronite and Melkite), Orthodox, or Protestant are represented by the Christian dummy, leaving self-identified Muslims as the other category for Arab Americans.

Analysis

Before undertaking multivariate analysis, it is important to confirm that the three groups differ as hypothesized on the predictors of politicized ethnic consciousness. In compositional terms, the three groups are distinctive as predicted by the scholarly literature (see Table 1 below). Consistent with their status as the most recent newcomers and relatively least assimilated of the three groups, Arab Muslims are much more likely than Jews and Arab Christians to be younger, first-generation Americans, to speak a foreign language at home, to exhibit lower levels of economic integration and to manifest high levels of ethnic pride. Although the differences aren't always large, Arab Christians show signs of assimilation.¹¹ Compared to the other two groups, they are older (suggesting both lower birth rates and attrition of ethnic identity among the young), less likely to live in ethnic neighborhoods or maintain ethnic friendships, and least likely to report discrimination based on ethnicity. If the data set contained information about the

religion of the spouse, that indicator would no doubt demonstrate very high rates of out-marriage as well (Kulczyki and Lobo 2002). Jews are more integrated than the other two groups based on length of residence and level of education. On some variables, such as age, foreign language use, friendship patterns, and ethnic pride, they are closer to or virtually indistinguishable from Arab Christians while they match Arab Muslims only in a tendency to live in ethnic neighborhoods and to sympathize with their “side” in the Arab-Israeli conflict. These results generally conform to the assimilation paradigm (as would marriage patterns if such data were available in the study). Yet in another sense Jews exhibited the traits of a classic outsider group—an appreciably greater tendency to report a personal experience of discrimination and to identify with their coreligionists in the ongoing Middle East conflict. Assimilation aside, American Jews remain notably wary about their status in the United States and connected via sympathy to the homeland, factors likely to contribute to high levels of politicized ethnic identity.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Bivariate analysis also validated expectations about the determinants of politicized ethnic identity (analysis not shown). Using the tau-beta correlation statistic, politicized ethnic identity is significantly related in the anticipated direction to age, generation in the United States, ethnic pride, economic integration, ethnic residence, friendship and travel patterns, discrimination, religious attendance, Middle East affect, and foreign language use. Only one variable, education, fails to correlate significantly with politicized ethnic identity and there is just one counterintuitive finding, the tendency for male respondents to report significantly lower rates of Middle East salience.

Do the three groups differ as forecast in terms of their politicized ethnic identity? They do indeed. The groups line up on the dependent variable with Arab Christians at the bottom

(mean = 3.29), Arab Muslims at the top (5.20) and Jews in the middle with an average of 3.82 (all differences significant at $p < .01$). Whether these differences are simply the result of individual variation or also reflect group membership per se can only be determined by modeling politicized ethnic identity as a function both of the individual traits that have been used in prior research (cultural exposure, social interaction, and psychological commitment) and of nominal group membership. Testing this conjecture requires multivariate multilevel analysis of politicized ethnic identity. The effect of group membership will be determined by dummy variable analysis. The size and significance of the ethnonational dummy coefficients tell us whether the groups differ in politicized ethnic identity net of individual differences known to influence the dependent variable. This ethnonational dummy operates as a proxy to represent the contexts of exit and reception.

Table 2 below presents ordered probit analyses (with robust standard errors) of politicized ethnic identity. The first model includes dummy variables for Jews and Christian Arabs. This equation enables us to determine if Jews and Christian Arabs are more or less politicized in terms of ethnic identity than Muslim Arabs, the omitted category. The second equation with Muslim and Jewish dummies reveals whether Christian Arabs differ from Jews in politicized ethnic identity. Because twelve of fourteen predictors are significantly related to the dependent variable in the simple bivariate analysis, we use one-tailed tests of significance to evaluate the multivariate models. In practice, this makes very little difference to the conclusions.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

We start with the individual-level factors hypothesized to promote high levels of politicized ethnic identity. As a rule, the performance of individual-level variables largely conformed to previous research findings.¹² As expected, the measure of cognitive ethnicity exerts

a large, significant and positive influence on the dependent variable. In fact, judging by the effects coefficient (Long 1997), the level of ethnic pride exerts twice the impact on politicized ethnic identity of any other single variable in the model. Several of the measures associated with the social dimension of ethnicity also enhance the political priority respondents assign to homeland interests. Age, closeness to the immigrant experience, living in an ethnic neighborhood, speaking a foreign language and visiting the homeland are all conducive to high levels of politicized ethnic identity. Attendance at religious services, which taps the domain of cultural ethnic attachment, also promotes the salience of the Arab-Israeli conflict to diaspora members. Of the control variables, experiencing discrimination based on ethnicity and sympathizing with one's own people in the Middle East both enhance politicized ethnic identity to a significant degree.

Above and beyond the influence of these compositional factors, does membership in the three ethnonational groups influence politicized ethnic identity? That question is answered by the coefficients for the ethnic dummy variables. With compositional differences controlled, Christian Arabs are much less politically focused on the Arab-Israeli conflict than either Muslim or Jewish respondents. The literature emphasizing the lack of political engagement with this issue among Arab Christians appears very much on target. Because they shared outsider status in some respects, we were uncertain whether Jews or Muslim Arabs would have higher levels of politicized ethnic identity. Before controlling for compositional differences, Muslims registered significantly higher scores than Jews. But according to equation 1, this difference erodes once individual differences are taken into account. In the multivariate analysis, Jews score lower than Muslims on the dependent variable but the differences are small and statistically insignificant. Figure 1 below graphs the predicted distribution of politicized ethnic identity for respondents

who differed from each other only by ethnic group membership. Visual inspection confirms the distinctiveness of Christian Arabs, who lag behind the other two ethnonational groups, and the close tracking of scores for Jews and Muslim Arabs.

FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

Discussion

This paper was animated by curiosity about mass-based differences in politicized ethnic identity, a quality likely to influence the effectiveness of diaspora mobilization in foreign affairs. In comparing three ethnonational diasporas with putative interest in the Middle East, we anticipated that political concern for the homeland would respond both the individual-level differences among members of all the groups and to group membership per se. Net of the compositional differences established in previous research, we hypothesized that groups would differ from one another based on their unique contexts of emigration and reception.

Individual differences aside, the multivariate analysis confirms that the groups differ in the political salience they accord the Middle East in their host country political calculations. Specifically, Arab-American Christians are appreciably less likely than either Arab-American Muslims or American Jews to assign political priority to the Middle East conflict. Based on their voluntary exit from the homeland, relative seniority in the United States and conditions of reception in the host society, this pattern is entirely consistent with expectations.

The case of Jews and Arab Muslims is less clear. Once compositional differences are controlled, the two groups are indistinguishable in politicized ethnic identification. This convergence is puzzling because the two groups differ so significantly on many factors linked to collective political consciousness--length of residence in the United States, age, education,

foreign language use, travel patterns, ethnic friendships, ethnic pride and so on. As a rule, Jews are appreciably closer on these measures to Arab Christians than the Muslims with whom they share high levels of politicized ethnic identification.

However, two traits both unite American Jews and Arab-American Muslims and differentiate them clearly from Arab-American Christians—religion and refugee status. Judaism and Islam are religious “others” in the United States, a country where more than three-fourths of the population (and 95% of those who volunteer a religious affiliation) still identify with Christianity (Kosmin 2001). In terms of generating politicized ethnic identification, this common status appears to outweigh the notable differences between Jews and Muslims and distances them from the Christians with whom they share some politically relevant traits. It is reinforced by the tendency of members of both groups to consider themselves refugees with strong personal ties to the homeland.

Religion is likely to play such a large role because it is an important signifier of cultural difference. Individuals who share the dominant religion of the host society have access to social integration by virtue of their embrace of a societal norm whereas outsiders are segregated in niche environments and likely to develop some doubts about their membership in the national community.¹³ Unlike most white Christians, who experience religious fellowship in non-ethnic congregations, Jews and Muslims are more likely to inhabit a religious space that reinforces ethnic consciousness.¹⁴ Given the documented power of congregations to generate common political consciousness (Wald et al. 1988, Jama1 2005), the religious environment of Jews and Muslims further encourages the development of more sectarian outlooks.¹⁵ By describing religion in this manner, we certainly should not overlook the constitutional framework that renders religion formally irrelevant to American citizenship and the social reality that even

religious outsiders enjoy an astonishing degree of acceptability in social practice. Yet simply knowing that one is part of a religious minority seems to sensitize individuals to the ethnic homeland and to promote homeland concerns when diaspora members participate in political life in the host country.

Part of the apparent tension between American religious pluralism and the maintenance of ethnonational cohesion may also owe to the nature of the data available for analysis. Respondents were classified as Arab Christians, Arab Muslims or Jews if they selected such terms when prompted by survey interviewers. In a society where ethnicity and religion are increasingly matters of volition rather than ascription, people with Arab or Jewish heritage may not identify as such because they live their lives with little cognizance of or connection to the ethnic community. That is the very nature of ethnic attachment in the post-modern era. Hence respondents who select the labels are by definition willing to associate themselves with these communities and should therefore be somewhat more disposed than those with no ethnic engagement to factor ethnic concerns into political judgments. This does not mean our substantive interpretation has to be abandoned. Respondents willing to identify themselves as Arabs and Christians stand out from the two other communities in the study by a lower level of politicized ethnic identity. Nonetheless, the differences we observed may be somewhat sharper because the study omitted persons of ethnonational heritage who disclaimed such identity in the screening process.

As noted above, this paper does not develop a full theory of diaspora influence; it only identifies some promising lines of inquiry to help understand why ethnonational communities differ in their readiness to promote homeland interests in the society of destination. No doubt, comparative diaspora influence in policy-making depends on factors such as group size,

economic resources, organizational density, leadership quality, networks of influence, population distribution, access to elites and other traits commonly cited to explain power disparities from one group to another. But it also matters that some diasporas enjoy stronger political support among their “natural” constituencies than others, are primed to activate latent mass loyalties on short notice, and thus have the capacity more fully and effectively to mobilize on behalf of homeland interests. With more case studies that incorporate perspectives from mass political behavior, it will be possible to gain additional purchase on the problem of diaspora participation in American public life.

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Table 1

Comparison of Three Ethnonational Groups on Selected Measures

	Arab Christian	Arab Muslim	Jewish
Percent 1 st & 2 nd generation American	59.1	90.8	32.4
Percent college graduate	48.9	44.0	60.6
Percent live in predominantly ethnic neighborhoods	2.8	15.7	13.1
Percent only ethnic friends outside work/school	6.4	14.0	9.5
Percent use other language than English at home	21.3	56.0	5.6
Percent experienced ethnic discrimination in US	38.4	40.7	59.2
Percent favor own group in Middle East conflict	50.7	59.7	66.3
Mean age	52.3	42.8	48.4
Mean economic resources (4-8)	7.16	6.47	7.21
Mean ethnic pride (standard scale)	-0.07	1.07	-0.14
Mean politicized ethnic identity (0-9)	3.29	5.20	3.82
Maximum N	(362)	(109)	(589)

Table 2

Results of Ordered Probit Analysis of Politicized Ethnic Identity
(N = 782)

Independent Variable	Coefficient	Robust Standard Error	Z	P> z *	Effects Coefficient
Cognitive Ties					
Ethnic Pride	.1621762	.0200675	8.08	0.000	.11688583
Social Ties					
Age	.0100504	.0024972	4.02	0.000	.05754844
Generation in US	-.1133161	.044192	-2.56	0.010	.03545595
Economic Resources	-.0305365	.0481252	-0.63	0.526	.00954683
Education	.0614441	.0538979	1.14	0.254	.01452224
Ethnic Neighborhood	.1488121	.0784758	1.90	0.058	.02310067
Ethnic Friendships	.1282377	.1558089	0.82	0.410	.01005373
Foreign Language	.3180966	.1473126	2.16	0.031	.02505754
Middle East Visit	.2894389	.1636838	1.77	0.077	.02283119
Cultural Ties					
Religious Attendance	.0997537	.0394883	2.53	0.012	.03099277
Controls					
Male	.0150484	.0831651	0.18	0.856	.00117535
Discrimination	.2213899	.0807053	2.74	0.006	.01728252
Middle East Affect	.3180966	.1473126	2.16	0.031	.03813844
Group Membership					
Christian (with Muslim omitted)	-.5979802	.1582897	-3.78	0.000	.04681404
Jewish (with Muslim omitted)	-.1397032	.1669815	-0.84	0.403	.01088139
Muslim (with Christian omitted)	.6075254	.1628107	3.73	0.000	.04773607
Jewish (with Christian omitted)	.4530483	.1078506	4.20	0.000	.03528698

Wald $\chi^2(15) = 249.15$

Prob > $\chi^2 = 0.0000$

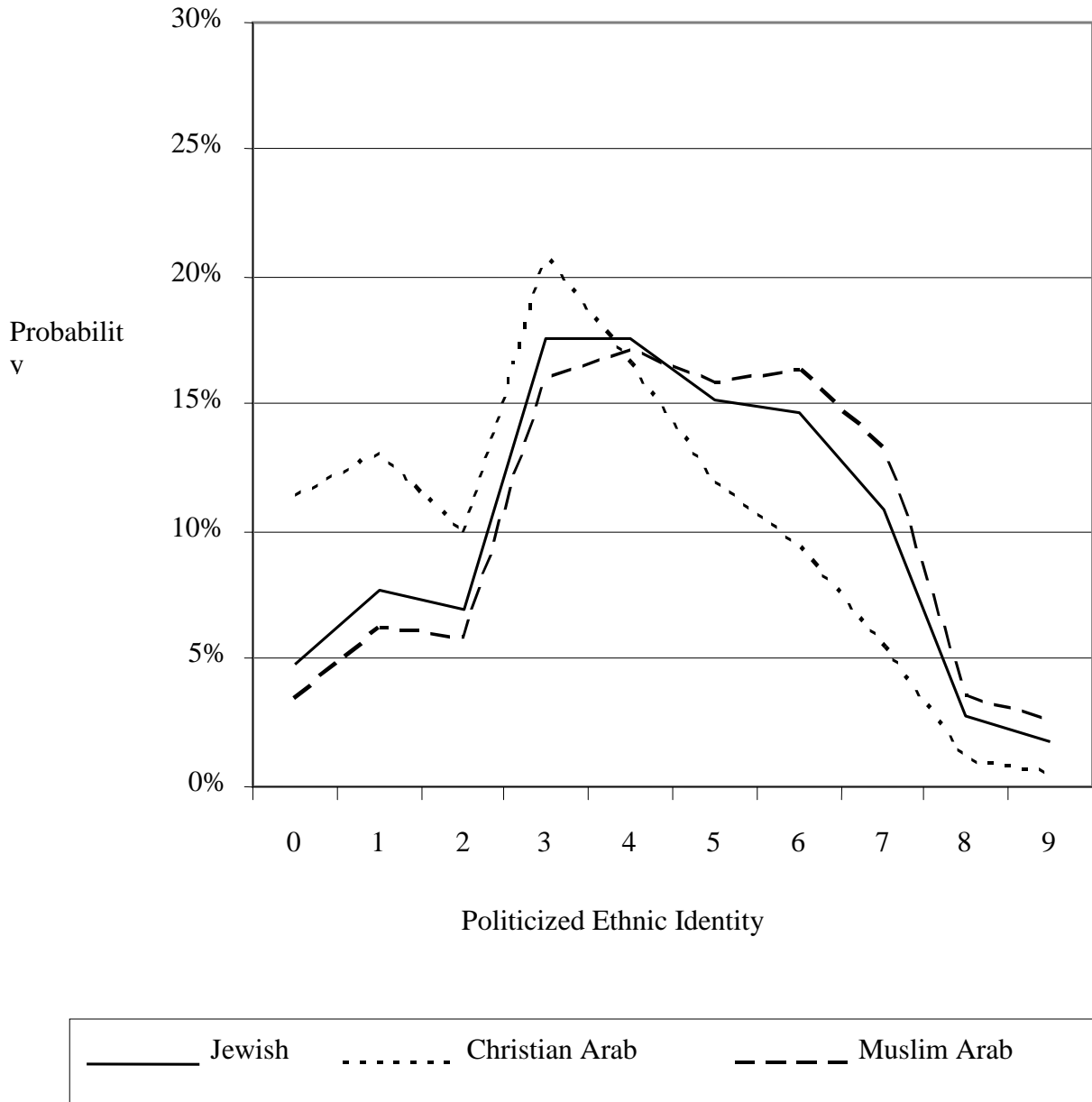
Log pseudo-likelihood = -1581.5095

Pseudo $R^2 = 0.0801$

*To calculate the one-tailed significance level, simply divide the table entry by 2.

Figure 1

Predicted PEI Scores for Respondents with Average Characteristics by Ethnonational Group



Notes

¹Shain and Barth (2003) classify diaspora members as core, passive (also called rear-guard or occasional recruits in Shain 1999, 96) or silent, recognizing the variability in homeland salience across communities but not attempting to account for it. In the other major theoretical statement about diasporas as foreign policy actors, Sheffer (2003) recognizes that diaspora membership depends on individual decisions about ethnic identity but does not identify nor assess the determinants of such choices. The sole empirical study to classify immigrants in terms of homeland connections, Guarnizo's et al's (2003) survey of Colombians, Salvadoreans and Dominicans in the United States, focused on direct migrant participation in home country politics rather than political action on behalf of the homeland in the United States.

²"Homeland" may refer to a specific geographical area from which the individual claims descent or to a place that engenders a sense of obligation and allegiance from individuals who may never have set foot in it.

³Politicized ethnic identity may be directed to "over here" or "over there" issues. In practice, as shown by Tarrow's (2005) work on "rooted cosmopolitans" and Nagel and Staeheli's (2004) study of Arab diaspora activists in the United States, persons with a strong sense of politicized ethnic identity are likely to address both kinds of issues.

⁴Shain and Barth (2003, 463-4) identify two additional host society qualities that may affect diaspora effectiveness, the importance of the host society's foreign policy to the homeland and the openness of homeland foreign policy to domestic influence. With a case study of groups in the United States, these factors are assumed as constants.

⁵Consistent with folk wisdom, Gans (1997) noted that assimilation more often follows a bumpy than a straight line as members of the third generation, native-born grandchildren of immigrants, often embrace group particularities that the preceding two generations tried to shed in establishing their American credentials. Nonetheless, Alba and Nee (2003) have documented the gradual erosion of ethnic consciousness over time in a manner consistent with the classic formulations of the concept.

⁶Using the Public Use Micro Sample of the U.S. Census for 1980 and 1990, Kulczycki and Lobo (2001) found that roughly 60% of Americans with Arab ancestry (approximately 1 million) were of Syrian and Lebanese descent and that two-thirds to three-fourths of the Lebanese-Syrians were born in the United States. Haddad (1994, 63) argues that 90% of the Arabs who arrived in the United States up to the 1950s were Christians. The U.S. Census does not collect data about religious affiliation but this estimate is widely reported in the scholarly literature.

⁷As a measure of the attrition in Eastern Christianity, Orfalea (1988, 318) estimated that the six largest Eastern Rite Christian traditions had less than 300,000 members out of a predominantly Christian population estimated at 1 million.

⁸Two other factors also mattered. Unlike Arab Americans who were divided by national, religious, ethnic and other cleavages, American Jews were relatively homogeneous in these terms. Moreover, as Goldscheider (1986) has demonstrated, upward social mobility did not diminish Jewish cohesion because Jews moved en masse into the same occupations, suburbs, schools, and other environments, reinforcing a sense of collective identity.

⁹As the survey was conducted during the period before the second intifada and the outbreak of war on the Lebanese and Gaza fronts, it represents something of a “normal” time. Subsequent events may have rendered the Arab-Israeli conflict more politically salient to the three ethnic communities but it is not clear that military action would change the determinants of politicized ethnic identity.

¹⁰The income question had unacceptably high levels of missing data and the survey did not ask about occupation. The economic resources scale ($\alpha = 0.63$) was based on possession of a credit card, savings account, stocks and/or bonds, and a retirement fund. This is probably closer to a measure of economic integration with American society than the typical income or status items in most surveys.

¹¹A higher proportion of Arab-American Christians were fairly recent immigrants than the literature would have suggested, possibly reflecting the immigration of Lebanese Christians during the 1975-1990 civil war in that country and the continuing exodus of Palestinian Christians from the West Bank. Nonetheless, Arab Christians still had appreciably longer family histories in the United States than Arab Muslims.

¹²The two models were identical except for the identity of the omitted ethnic group. The coefficients for the individual-level predictors were virtually identical across equations and we use the first model for all coefficients except for the last two ethnic dummies.

¹³Although there is no evidence in the data to support it, it’s quite likely that this dynamic operates more fully for religious groups that resemble the dominant population in terms of race. African-American Christians and Latinos probably find themselves less welcome than white Anglos despite common religious heritage.

¹⁴This argument should not be overstated. Arab Americans are less numerous among Muslims than either South Asians or African Americans and may therefore be minorities in mosques. Some Jews, particularly people in mixed marriages and the so-called “Messianic” Jews, may attend congregations where they are a religious minority. It’s also true that some Christian confessions, such as Greek Orthodox or Latino Protestants, remain as ethnically homogenous as the old ethnic parishes of the American Catholic church. Nonetheless, the general statement still holds.

¹⁵Because of the low level of mosque attachment by Arab Muslims, the effect is primarily registered among Jews.