Other Asian and Middle Eastern Americans
West Asian and Middle Eastern immigrants come from a part of the world situated between the area of Western thought and history on one side and the area of Eastern thought and philosophy on the other (Figure 9.1). From Turkey through the Middle East to Bangladesh, the Muslim religion predominates, but the cultures are as diverse as elsewhere in the world.

Although some of these peoples immigrated to the United States before 1965 and had encounters similar to those of earlier racial and ethnic groups, most have come since the 1965 Immigration Act. Their acceptance as strangers and their adjustment to U.S. life have differed from the experiences of pre-1920 immigrants because structural conditions in both the sending and the host countries have changed. As a result of the occupational-preference ranking adopted by the 1965 legislation, many newcomers are professional, managerial, or technical workers. Some are underemployed, but others have found employment in their occupational roles. Either way, most tend to be isolated from informal social contact with other people outside their nationality group. As with many East and Southeast Asians, the social distance between most first-generation West Asian or Middle Eastern Americans and native-born U.S. citizens is considerable.

SOCIOHISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Aside from special legislation of temporary duration allowing political or war refugees to enter the United States, immigration regulations before 1965 effectively limited the number of immigrants from the non-Western world. Because few had migrated to the United States prior to 1890, the year on which the 1924 immigration legislation based its quotas, very few non-Western immigrants were able to gain approval to migrate to the United States. Eliminating this restrictive national-origins quota system thus opened the door to many different peoples who had previously been denied entry.

Since the 1965 change in the immigration laws, a third major wave of immigration has occurred, again creating dramatic changes
in the composition of the nation’s population. For example, immigration from India between 2001 and 2003 nearly tripled that from Germany, Ireland, and Italy combined, previously three of the top suppliers of immigrants. The 2000 census count identified over 400,000 foreign-born Arab Americans, a number that exceeds the combined foreign-born population from Greece and Spain.

**The Push–Pull Factors**

For many non-Western immigrants, overpopulation and poverty so seriously limit the quality of life in their homelands that they seek a better life elsewhere. Sometimes restrictive government actions or limited socioeconomic opportunities push people to look elsewhere. The United States, with its cultural diversity, economic opportunities, and higher living standards, is influential throughout the world and a magnet to those dissatisfied with their situation. For others, the United States offers educational, professional, or career opportunities. Rapid air travel and instant communications, which reduce the psychological distance from a person’s native country, are further inducements.

**Structural Conditions**

The non-Western immigrants discussed in this chapter follow the same patterns as have other ethnic groups that emigrated to the United States. They usually settle
in urbanized areas near their compatriots, with whom they develop close primary social contacts.

Because many are trained professionals or skilled technicians, however, their job situation differs markedly from that of the mostly unskilled poor in the 1880–1920 immigrant groups. They usually do not settle in decaying sections of cities because with their income they can find better places to live. The economic profile of these non-Western Americans ranges from the older and more affluent to the newer and struggling. Some are suburbanites, some live in working-class urban neighborhoods, and others cope with poverty. Wherever they congregate to live and work, various support facilities have arisen: churches or temples, grocery stores and restaurants specializing in native foods, social clubs or organizations, and perhaps their own schools and newspapers. They soon send for other members of their family or write home telling of their good fortune, prompting others to come to the United States. The chain-migration pattern of earlier immigrants recurs.

Many of the new immigrants do not fit the acculturation patterns that worked for other immigrant groups. For instance, prosperity in oil-rich Middle Eastern countries and the Western world’s generalization of Arabs as a single group not only have strengthened that group’s ethnic solidarity in the United States but also have encouraged some to plan to return to their native country eventually. A Saudi Arabian, for example, might return from the United States after acquiring an advanced education or experience that will permit a better life back home. Saudi Arabia collects no taxes whatsoever and offers free education and medical care, and its standard of living is improving rapidly. Although the number of immigrants from Saudi Arabia may be extremely low, a greater number of newcomers from other Arab countries are seeking permanent residence in the United States, as Table 9.1 indicates.

Because many members of this group of non-Western immigrants have marketable skills, they can obtain professional and salaried jobs without first having to adopt a subservient role in the economy. They need not yield to pressures to assimilate fully to gain middle-class respectability. Their income is high enough to enable them to enjoy the lifestyle they want, and as a result, they are free to

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<tr>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>5,170</td>
<td>5,634</td>
<td>16,319</td>
<td>4,229</td>
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continue their own cultural behavior patterns. Some Americanization undoubtedly occurs, but these first-generation immigrants do not have to make substantial cultural sacrifices to “make it” in U.S. society.

Another sizable segment of non-Westerners in the United States consists of nonimmigrant (sojourner) students, workers, and businesspeople. Although they usually remain for only two to five years, their growing numbers make their presence a matter of significant concern in the field of race and ethnic relations. In 2003, for example, nearly 347,000 Asian students arrived in the United States to study, and over 1 million Asians came to this country as temporary business visitors.3

In many respects, these temporary visitors—visible to others in work, residential, shopping, and entertainment settings—resemble U.S. citizens who work for multinational corporations overseas. Even if assigned to another country for a considerable number of years, they seldom lose their sense of ethnic or national identity. They live within the culture and enjoy the available opportunities without contemplating abandoning their own cultural ties and becoming assimilated in the host country. Many aliens working in the United States have no interest in U.S. citizenship or assimilation, whether they work for one of their own country’s multinational corporations or for some U.S. employer. Today’s sojourners may be more sophisticated than their predecessors, but their resistance to assimilation is just as strong. At the same time, however, other non-Western immigrants are highly motivated to become part of U.S. society, as demonstrated by the fact that, among immigrants admitted since 1982, those from Cambodia, China, India, Korea, Laos, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam were proportionately higher than most other countries in becoming U.S. citizens. Since 2001, Asia has been the leading region of naturalizations.4

Societal Reaction

About 5,000 Asian Indians and 325,000 Middle Easterners migrated to the United States between 1880 and 1920. These early arrivals encountered far more prejudice and discrimination in the United States than their compatriots do today. Americans are now more tolerant of the differences in appearance and customs of non-Western immigrants. Terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, in New York City and Washington, DC, however, increased suspicions about Arab Muslims, although their social acceptance remains fairly strong (see Table 1.1). People do categorize others and make judgments based on visible impressions, and this often leads to stereotyping. Distinguishing racial features and distinctive apparel, such as a dashiki, turban, or sari, set the newcomers apart. Although little overt discrimination occurs, limited social interaction takes place in most cases.

In recent surveys of social distance among various minority groups, racially distinct non-Western immigrants scored at the bottom, most notably Arab and Muslim Americans since September 11, 2001.5 Many newcomers find themselves accepted in their professional, managerial, and technical occupational roles by members of the dominant society but excluded from outside social activities. Once the workday or work weekends, they seldom receive social invitations from dominant-group members; thus, they interact mostly with family and compatriots. Economic mainstreaming may have occurred for many non-Western immigrants, but they have yet to achieve social integration.
THE ASIAN INDIANS

Emigration from India to the United States happened in two distinct phases. In the early 20th century, several thousand poorly educated Indian agricultural laborers migrated to the West Coast and settled in rural regions in Washington (lumbering) and California (agriculture). Almost all the early immigrants were Sikh males who came from the Punjab region of northern India. Distinctive in their traditionally worn beards and turbans, they soon experienced hostile racism and violent attacks. In the 1970s and 1980s, a second group of immigrants—many of them provisioned with substantial monetary capital and “cultural capital” in terms of college education or professional training—arrived. Since the 1980s, less educated relatives of earlier immigrants have come, typically entering such family-owned businesses as groceries, motels, and newspaper stores or driving taxis or limos.6

Early Immigrants

Between 1820 and 1900, fewer than 800 immigrants came to the United States from India. In the next two decades, a small wave of almost 7,000 agricultural laborers from northern India journeyed to the West Coast of the United States, and still others entered Canada. Almost entirely male, this group—like so many other immigrant groups—intended to accumulate some savings and then return home. Between 1908 and 1920, a total of 1,656 did leave, and another 249 were deported as undesirable aliens.7

Societal Reaction

Even though the Japanese, Chinese, and Filipinos far outnumbered the Asian Indians, the latter, too, experienced discrimination and dominant-group aggression because of their visibility and identification as Asians. Near a lumber camp in Bellingham, Washington, on September 5, 1907, several hundred whites raided the living quarters of Indian workers, forcing about 700 of them to flee across the Canadian border. Two months later, in Everett, Washington, several hundred whites drove the Indian workers out of town. Racial prejudice manifest itself also in Port Angeles, Washington, where real estate brokers published in the local newspaper the terms of their covenant not to sell to “Hindoos or Negroes.” They justified their action on grounds that wherever these groups settle, they “have depreciated [the] value of adjacent property and injured the reputation of the neighborhood, and are generally considered as undesirable.”8

The San Francisco–based Asiatic Exclusion League quickly included Asian Indians among its targets and warned the public that these people were a “menace.” League officials declared that the East Indians were untrustworthy, immodest, unsanitary, insolent, and lustful.9 National hostility toward Asian Indians from 1908 to 1910 led immigration officials to reject 1,130 would-be immigrants from India at their ports of entry. Proimmigration pressure from the Western Pacific Railroad in 1910 enabled 1,462 of them to enter between 1911 and 1920, but another 1,762 were denied entry, mostly on grounds that they would become public
The popular magazine Collier’s, influenced by the Asiatic Exclusion League’s exaggerated claim that 10,000 Asian Indians already lived in California, printed an article warning its readers about the “Hindu invasion.” Hindu was a popular ethnic epithet for Indians in those days, undoubtedly used because so much of the Indian subcontinent (including 80 percent of India’s population today) was Hindu. However, these immigrant victims were mostly Sikhs, a religious minority composing just 2 percent of present-day India’s population.

In this atmosphere of marked hostility toward Asians, the few thousand East Indians gradually established themselves primarily in California and relied chiefly on agriculture as a means of livelihood. Typically the Indians sought work in groups with a leader serving as their agent in negotiating with employers. Owing in part to the desire of many farmers to break the Japanese monopoly on the labor supply in those areas, they had little difficulty finding employment in the Sacramento and San Joaquin valleys. Also, Indians moved into the Imperial Valley, another rapidly growing agricultural area.

In 1923, the U.S. Supreme Court reversed previous lower-court decisions and ruled that Asian Indians were nonwhites and thus ineligible for citizenship under the terms of the 1790 Naturalization Act. The government then revoked naturalization certificates that had previously been granted to 60 or 70 Asian Indians. The decision also prevented Asian Indians in California from owning or leasing land in their own names because state legislation prohibited alien landholding. The Asian Indians thus became itinerant farm laborers. Few of them had any family life because of the migrant nature of their work and the lack of women they could marry.

Minority Response

Juan Gonzales Jr. pointed out that the social and economic restrictions imposed by discriminatory immigration and miscegenation laws created and magnified the social isolation of the early immigrants. Unable to travel, send for wives or future brides, or marry women outside their own group, East Indian immigrants could neither participate fully in U.S. society nor produce a second generation of U.S. citizens to aid their movement into the mainstream of American life.

About 3,000 Asian Indians returned home between 1920 and 1940. A few hundred more were deported. The population dwindled from 5,441 in 1920 to 3,138 in 1930 and to 2,405 in 1940. A few of those who remained married Mexican American women. Most, however, lived in communal groups apart from the rest of society. Some Sikhs congregated in Stockton, California—the site of a large Filipino community—and built a temple there for worship.

In July 1946, the Luce–Celler Bill removed Asian Indians from the “barred zone” established in 1917 to prevent most Asians and Pacific Islanders from immigrating to the United States. Thenceforth, 100 Asian Indians could enter annually. In addition, males already living here could bring over their wives and children or make marital arrangements with women living in the old country. Finally, Asian Indians were permitted to become naturalized citizens, an opportunity taken by 1,772 of them between 1948 and 1965.

By the mid-1950s, Gary R. Hess reports, the Asian Indian community in Sutter County in north-central California numbered about 900 and had grown
stronger and more unified.\textsuperscript{16} This came about because the men preferred to marry Asian Indian women and because the caste system in India had a negligible influence in the United States, except perhaps in terms of status. Because they rarely intermarried and they retained important aspects of their culture, the rural Asian Indians, Hess concluded, remained only slightly acculturated even though they had adopted certain material comforts, dress, and other features of life in the United States.

Physical appearance was an important factor setting these immigrants apart. In the early 20th century, the full beards prescribed by the Sikh religion were not fashionable. Moreover, all the men wore turbans and were sometimes belittled as “ragheads.” The Indian women who arrived before the Depression—like those who have arrived since the more liberal Immigration Act of 1965—were quite distinct in wearing the \textit{sari}, a lightweight outer garment with one end wrapped about the waist and the other draped over the shoulder or covering the head. Most cultural differences—appearance, food taboos, and social interaction—were an integral part either of the Hindu caste system or of the Sikh religion in India. Therefore, Asian Indians not only seemed strange to non-Indian U.S. natives but had difficulty assimilating because they were reluctant to abandon their customs and practices.

**Recent Immigrants**

Statistics reveal a dramatic change in the number of immigrants from India. Only 15,513 entered the United States over the 65-year period from 1901 to 1965. In the next 5 years, that total was easily surpassed: 24,587 immigrated between 1966 and 1970. Then the immigrant totals sky-rocketed: About 164,000 newcomers from India arrived in the 1970s; 251,000 in the 1980s; 363,000 in the 1990s; and 180,000 between 2001 and 2003.\textsuperscript{17} The Asian Indian presence is now substantial, with nearly 1.7 million in 2000—more than twice the number in 1990. Now the third largest Asian American population, 35 percent of all Asian Indians live in the Northeast, 24 percent in the South, 23 percent in the West, and 18 percent in the Midwest.\textsuperscript{18}

Of the post-1965 immigrants from India, the largest number have been Hindu-speaking, followed by Gujarati, Punjabi, and Bengali speakers. Ethnic Asian Indians also emigrate from East Africa and Latin America, particularly from the Caribbean islands and Guyana, where earlier generations had immigrated as indentured plantation laborers.\textsuperscript{19}

The Immigration Act of 1965 alone does not explain the increase in Asian Indian migration. Conditions in India are another important factor. India is the world’s second most populous country after mainland China, with 16 percent of the world’s population occupying 2.5 percent of the world’s land mass. The population density is nearly 11 times greater in India than in the United States.

The problem of overpopulation is quite serious. India’s population has grown from 439 million in 1960 to nearly 1.1 billion in 2005. The rapid rise is not due to any increase in the birth rate but to a decline in the mortality rate. Even so, 1 million of the 18 million babies born in India each year die before they reach their first birthday, and about 500,000 more from every cohort die before they complete childhood. Hundreds of thousands of people die annually from infectious
or parasitic diseases contracted from contaminated water and other unsanitary conditions in a country where the life expectancy at birth is only 61 years for males and 63 for females. Nevertheless, the population is increasing by about 1.5 million people each month.

With over three-fifths of the population engaged in agriculture, a literacy rate of 70 percent among males and 48 percent among females, and problems of severe poverty, hunger, and inadequate resources, India offers many of its citizens little economic security. However, many recent immigrants to the United States have been professionals such as physicians, dentists, teachers, and skilled workers—the very people India needs most to retain if the quality of life there is to improve. Most developing nations face this brain-drain problem.

With their education and occupational skills, many of these newcomers achieve economic security but also experience cultural strains. For example, they are uneasy with the sexual mores in the United States. Parents have considerable difficulty convincing their children that the Indian custom of not dating before an arranged marriage has merit. Although some second-generation Indian young people still yield to their parents’ traditional prerogative to arrange marriages, this is one area where ethnogenesis is apparent. Most young people tolerate their parents’ introduction to eligible mates but insist that the final choice is entirely their own.
About 68 percent of all newly admitted Asian Indians pursue professional or managerial occupations. The others typically operate convenience stores, gas stations, or family-managed hotels and motels. In fact, as Indian ownership of such establishments now approaches 20 percent across the land, they have found a family-labor economic niche as ubiquitous as the Korean greengrocery. (See the accompanying International Scene box for a description of their jobs in South Africa.)

Racial ambiguity marks the Asian Indian acceptance pattern. The skin colors of Asian Indians range from light brown to almost black, although most of the U.S. immigrants are of a light hue. Americans perceive them as racially different but have difficulty categorizing them. Defined as “white” sometimes, “Asian” at other times, and “brown” or “black” at still other times, Asian Indians tend to classify themselves as “white” and identify with the majority group (see the accompanying Ethnic Experience box.).
ARAB AMERICANS

Arab is a broad term covering people of diverse nationalities, religions, and socio-economic backgrounds. Although Arab Americans may share a sense of peoplehood, they come from 22 nations of North Africa and the Middle East (Figure 9.2). Not surprisingly, many cultural differences separate them from one another, and their ethnic identities remain rooted in their nationalities and specific homelands.

Over 1.2 million Arab Americans live in the United States. About half are descended from immigrants who arrived between 1880 and 1940, and the rest are immigrants or descendants of immigrants who arrived after World War II. More than 250,000 Arab Americans live in southeastern Michigan, giving that area one of the largest concentrations of Arabs outside the Middle East (Figure 9.3).
Dearborn, Michigan, a suburb of Detroit, became a favorite destination of many working-class Arab immigrants after the 1967 Arab–Israeli war. Several thousand Muslim Palestinians, Yemenis, and southern Lebanese arrived there, making it today the largest Muslim community in the United States. Because of the concentration of so many first-generation Arab Americans, Dearborn today resembles more completely a “Little Arabia” than any other Arab American community. Nearby Detroit suburbs, such as Livonia, house large numbers of middle-class Arab Americans.

Despite the large concentration of Arab Americans in some urban areas, they are fairly evenly divided among the four regions of the United States (Figure 9.4). About 27 percent of all Arab Americans live in the Northeast, compared to about
24 percent in the Midwest, 26 percent in the South, and 22 percent in the West.\textsuperscript{25} Arab Americans in the Northeast are more likely to be U.S.-born, whereas those in the West are more likely to be immigrants. Different Arab subgroups are fairly evenly dispersed, although Saudi Arabians are concentrated in the West, Assyrians in the Midwest, and Syrians in the Northeast.\textsuperscript{26}

**Social Organization**

Many of today’s Arab Americans are sophisticated, cosmopolitan people whose lifestyle matches that of other middle- or working-class U.S. citizens. Like many other past and present immigrant groups, Arab Americans have established institutions to help preserve their cultural heritage, strengthen their ethnic identity, and unite the community. More than four dozen Arabic newspapers and some 50 Arabic radio programs broadcast in such cities as Chicago, Detroit, New York, and San Francisco aid in this effort. Religious and community organizations provide important emotional, social, and financial services to help sustain the Arab community. Among professional organizations, two of the better known are the National Association of Arab Americans and the Association of Arab American University Graduates.

As with most immigrant groups, kinship links play an important role in stabilizing community life.\textsuperscript{27} Exchanges of letters, gifts, and family visits help maintain bonds between the immigrants and their relatives back home. Another important
element is belief in an integrated economic family unit. Family members pool their income and resources in a common fund for all to share, even if the family is dispersed. Each month, many Arab Americans send vast amounts of money overseas to their relatives, helping them buy land, build homes, or purchase modern agricultural equipment such as tractors, plows, and irrigation pumps. Ironically, greater acculturation appears to be associated positively with satisfaction with life in the United States but negatively with family satisfaction.28 Perhaps marginality and the clash of values contribute to this outcome.

Residential Patterning

Arab Americans are repeating the pattern of many earlier European immigrants by settling almost exclusively in urban areas. About 94 percent live in metropolitan areas, with Los Angeles, Detroit, New York/New Jersey, Chicago, and Washington, DC, as the top five metro areas of Arab American concentration. They live in all 50 states, but two-thirds reside in just 10 states and half of that number live in California, New York, and Michigan.29 Some first-generation Arab Americans live in recognizable ethnic neighborhoods in close proximity to one another, but others adopt slightly more dispersed residential patterns.

In an extensive field study of almost 3,000 Arab immigrants living in the Paterson, New Jersey, metropolitan area, my investigators and I found them to be a religiously diverse group: 34 percent Muslim, 30 percent Orthodox Christian, 25 percent Melkite Catholic, and 10 percent Protestant.30 As in Paterson, most Arab Americans throughout the country are Christians (Figure 9.5).

Lebanese refugees, mostly of the middle class, tended to live in nearby suburbs; Circassians, Jordanians, Palestinians, and Syrians lived on the northern and southern peripheries of the city, spilling over into adjacent exurbs. This pattern of Arab immigrants settling on the edges of cities instead of in historically inner areas or transition zones has been found in other U.S. cities, too.31

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
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<td>Catholic</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthodox</td>
<td>23%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>23%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Catholic includes Roman Catholic, Maronite, and Melkite (Greek Catholic).
Orthodox includes Antiochian, Syrian, Greek, and Coptic.
Muslim includes Sunni, Shi’a, and Druze.

Source: Based on data from Zogby International, February 2000.
In the Paterson area, we found that a few families would live fairly close to one another but that the next grouping would be situated several blocks away. Nevertheless, a shared sense of community and frequent interactional patterns existed. Ethnic solidarity was maintained through a cosmopolitan network of communication and life-cycle rituals, homeland concerns, political activism, or limited social situations (work, school, and nearby families). Instead of maintaining a territorial ethnic community as other immigrant groups have, Arab immigrants maintain an interactional community.

In the Paterson study, racial composition of the neighborhood did not appear to be a factor in choice of residence or desire to relocate. No interracial tensions or conflicts were reported; Arab Americans shared a common assumption that those who lived where they did—white or black—were respectable people. Coming from a part of the world steeped in religious rather than racial prejudices, Arab Americans appear to be unconcerned about racial differences in the more secular society of the United States.

**Fighting Stereotypes and Group Blame**

Any discussion of Arab American problems with stereotyping or violence must distinguish conditions before and after September 11, 2001, the day of major terrorist attacks on the United States. Although Islamic radicals committed these atrocities, some Americans saw little distinction between those radicals and anyone identified as Arab, Muslim, or both.

Before those attacks, films and television shows rarely portrayed Arabs as ordinary people. More often, they were oil-rich billionaires or cold-blooded terrorists. They ranged from broadly stereotypical TV wrestling villains as Abdullah the Butcher to cartoon villains such as Ali Boo-Boo, the desert rat in a Heckle and Jeckle animated feature. In the 1987 film _Wanted Dead or Alive_, starring Gene Simmons of the rock group Kiss, an Arab terrorist conspired with Arab Americans to poison the people of Los Angeles. The 1992 Disney film _Aladdin_ gave the villainous Jaffar a distinctly Arabic accent, whereas Aladdin and Jasmine sound like typical U.S. teenagers. In _Martial Law_ (1999), Middle Eastern terrorists detonate bombs in New York City, and the federal government forces all Arab and Muslim Americans into detention camps.

Such widespread media portrayals have a cumulative, conditioning effect, and it is not a positive one. Adding to their difficulty in overcoming these stereotypical perceptions, Arab Americans have had to dissociate themselves from real-life terrorism. Bombings of the World Trade Center in 1993 and of U.S. embassies in Africa in 1998 caused the Arab American community some anxiety about the potential stigmatizing of all Arabs for the violent acts of just a few radicals.

The mass destruction and killing of nearly 3,000 people in attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon shocked everyone, including Arab Americans, many of whom had migrated here to get away from violence in their homelands. Although most Americans did not assign group blame, anti-Arab invective and sporadic acts of violence did occur. Such actions were remindful of the backlash that many Irish Americans felt in the 1870s over the terrorist activities of the Molly Maguires or that many immigrants experienced when a bomb exploded in the midst of police officers at an immigrant labor rally at Haymarket Square in
Chicago in 1886. Perhaps, though, it is a tribute to the increased tolerance of U.S. society of 2001 that there were no calls for an action similar to that taken against Japanese Americans in 1942 after the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

However, it became more difficult to be an Arab American. Wanting to fly anywhere made one an immediate subject of intense scrutiny. Verbal abuse, vandalism, and physical attacks occurred. Because some hijackers had lived in communities a year or more, many first-generation Arab Americans found their loyalties questioned. Ingroup–outgroup boundaries solidified more between Arab and other Americans, as reported in the 2001 social distance survey discussed in Chapter 1. Federal arrests of numerous Arab Americans also increased fear and resentment in the Arab American community.

Presented with so much negative stereotyping and suspicions, one might falsely conclude that predominantly Arab nations are our enemy. In fact, the United States maintains friendly relations with 19 of 21 such countries, and most were allies during Operation Desert Storm in 1991. The million-plus Arab Americans living in the United States are normal human beings pursuing the American Dream, but the media seldom report that. Failure to grasp the humanity of the Arab people increases the social distance between non-Arabs and Arabs.

THE SYRIAN/LEBANESE

A number of factors have contributed to a confusion of ethnic identities and a lack of accurate official U.S. statistics regarding immigrants from Syria and Lebanon. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the entire Arabian Peninsula and the lands directly north of it were part of the Ottoman Empire, and its inhabitants were Turkish citizens until the end of World War I. Although much cultural diversity existed in this geographic region, all the inhabitants spoke Arabic and, except for the Sinai Egyptians, used the term Syrian to identify themselves. Still, the immigrants had Turkish passports; U.S. officials therefore identified them as Turkish until 1899, when a separate category for Syrians began. Although approximately 85 percent of the immigrants came from the area now known as Lebanon, only in the 1930s did the term Lebanese gain acceptance. Some Lebanese resisted the change in designation, preferring to continue calling themselves Syrians, whereas some people from what is now Syria began calling themselves Lebanese.

Ethnic Identity

In the past, Arab Americans tended to identify themselves by family name, religious sect, and village of origin. Rarely did they cross religious or village lines to set up common organizations. Instead, social clubs and fraternal organizations had a clannish focus, often leading to factionalism within the community. Neither political authority nor specific regional residence determined group affinity; rather, religion defined the goals and boundaries of the “Syrian” community:

Theological differences of Jews, Christians and Moslems have become translated into social and structural realities with each community becoming socially separate from the others. What the people believe is not so important as the fact
that people who believe similarly are considered to belong to some social order qualitatively different from that of the rest. Since religion deals with things of primary importance, a different religious persuasion turns others into members of a somewhat distinct society or “nation.”

. . . Since the religions of the Middle East were all structurally and socially separate from one another, the Jewish community and the immigrant Moslem and Christian community continued this pattern of separation in the United States.33

Migration and Settlement

Although religious differences kept the three groups separate, the push—pull factors that led them to emigrate to the United States affected them similarly. Essentially, a combination of harsh living conditions—hunger, poverty, and disease—and Turkish oppression, particularly of Christians, led many Syrians to leave. The pull of the United States was the result of reports by missionaries and steamship agents of economic opportunities and religious and political freedom. Emigration to the United States began in the 1870s, reaching an estimated 100,000 between 1890 and 1914 as the harshness of Turkish rule increased. The peak years were 1913 and 1914, when more than 9,000 migrated to avoid conscription into the Turkish army, then being prepared for combat in World War I.

A seven-block area along Washington and Rector Streets in lower Manhattan became a thriving Syrian community during the late 19th century. Other Syrians

Although many Americans think otherwise, the majority of Arab Americans are Christians, and only one-fourth are Muslims. About one-fifth are Orthodox Christians, which includes Antiochian, Coptic, and Syrian sects. This photo shows a priest leading a Sunday morning service at an Antiochian church in Syracuse, New York. (Source: Syracuse Newspapers/Jim Commentucci/The Image Works)
settled in downtown Brooklyn and elsewhere throughout the entire country. Most
Syrian immigrants came either from cities or from densely populated villages;
they usually chose to reside in U.S. cities of 100,000 or more and had little dif-
ficulty adjusting to urban life. Another center for immigration was Worcester,
Massachusetts.34

Between 1890 and 1895, the New York community established three Arab
Christian churches: Melkite, Maronite, and Eastern Orthodox. Before then, Syr-
ians had simply joined U.S. churches. Maronites and Melkites usually became
Roman Catholics; members of the Eastern Orthodox Church generally became
Episcopalians.35

Culture Conflicts

Newly arrived Syrians often replaced departing Irish American residents in old
city neighborhoods. This is an example of the sociological concept of invasion–
succession, in which one group experiencing vertical mobility gradually moves out
of its old neighborhood. It is then replaced by another group living at the previ-
ous residents’ original socioeconomic level. Sometimes hostility develops between
the old and new groups. In the case of the Syrians, religious tension resulted in a
clash with the Irish, as this 1920 account about the Dublin District of Paterson,
New Jersey, reveals:

When the Syrians came to live there, the rentals became higher. This caused hard
feelings between the Irish and the Syrians, which developed into a feud between the
two nationalities. The fight started in the saloon on Grand and Mill Streets, first
with bitter arguments and harsh words, and then threatening fist fights. From the
saloon, the fight came out to the streets. It was like two armies in opposition facing
each other. . . . The police force was called in to put an end to this fight. All they
could do was to throw water on them to disperse them. These fights continued for
days in the evening. Finally, a committee of Syrians went to talk to Dean Mc-
Nulty of St. John’s, explaining to him that they were Christians coming from the
Holy Land, not Mohammedans or Turks, as the Irish used to call them. They were
good Catholics and they wanted to live in peace with everybody. Then the good
Dean, at Sunday masses, urged the Irish to stop fighting with the Syrians, who were
like them, Catholics. He succeeded in stopping this fighting better than the police.36

Another problem the Syrian immigrants encountered before World War I was
racial classification. In 1909, the U.S. District Court in St. Louis ruled them in-
eligible for naturalization on the basis of the 1790 legislation, declaring them to
be nonwhite. Many Syrian Christians were blond and blue-eyed, but the racial
barrier was determined by their country of origin. The Circuit Court of Appeals
reversed this decision. Shortly thereafter, the matter was again raised, this time in
the U.S. District Court in New York, which ruled that they could be naturalized.

Early Patterns

Syrian males usually came alone and then sent for their wives and children. Al-
though poor, most were literate and insisted that their children complete primary
school. Married Syrian women were more emancipated and less dependent on
their husbands than were their counterparts in other ethnic groups at that time.
Both mother and children—after they completed grade school—worked together for the family's economic welfare. The family structure proved to be an important factor in the Syrians' economic success.

Generally, Syrians preferred to work as traders and shopkeepers because trading was a time-honored occupation in their native land. Many Syrians became peddlers and traveled throughout the United States, bringing essential and exotic goods to far-flung communities. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, these peddlers filled an economic need and were welcome visitors to remote homes and communities. About one in three Syrian men became peddlers; others tried various commercial ventures, started restaurants, or in a few cases, worked in factories.

The choice of peddling by so many Syrians expedited their acculturation. It took them into U.S. homes, quickly teaching them the hosts' language and customs. It prevented their cultural isolation by way of ghetto settlement patterns, instead dispersing them throughout the country. By 1914, most Syrian peddlers had switched to being shopkeepers, with the majority operating dry-goods or grocery stores.

**Upward Mobility**

Syrian Americans achieved economic security quickly, often in the first generation. This is especially significant because fewer than one-fourth of those who came were professional or skilled workers. Aiding them in their adjustment, acceptance, and upward mobility were (1) wide dispersal, negating any significant opposition to their presence; (2) business expertise and self-employment, which allowed them greater rewards; and (3) cultural values of thrift, industriousness, and investment that were comparable to the middle-class values of the host society:

Even while they were still in the lower income brackets and in working class occupations, the “Syrians” displayed the social characteristics of the middle classes in American urban centers. Studies of these Arab immigrants in Chicago, Pittsburgh and the South reveal a common pattern: low crime rates, better than average health, higher I.Q.’s, and more regular school attendance among the children, few intermarriages and divorces.37

Coming from a country in which nearly every man owned the house he lived in, determined to be independent, and highly motivated to succeed, the Syrians accumulated money rapidly and invested it either in property or in business ventures. By 1911, Syrians worked in almost every branch of commerce, including banking and import–export houses, and the government reported that their median income was only slightly lower than the $665 annual income of the adult native-born male.

Unlike other immigrant groups who had to wait two or three generations to exert their independence from ghetto life and to satisfy their desire for mobility, it was the Syrian immigrants (first generation) who amassed the wealth that their sons used as a lever for bringing themselves into wider contacts with society.38

Rapid economic success and lack of either unfavorable stereotypes or discrimination barriers once they were known as Syrians rather than Turks allowed Syrian/Lebanese immigrants to assimilate into U.S. society quite easily, so they did
not need to duplicate the host society’s institutions. True, they had social organizations and their own newspapers, but their mobility, wide dispersal, differing religions, and emphasis on the extended family rather than on ethnic organizations resulted in their being assimilated rather easily (see the accompanying Ethnic Experience box).

By the mid-1950s, Syrian Americans had completely abandoned their “nomadic” occupations. They had entered the mainstream of U.S. economic and social life and were represented in virtually every industry and profession. Because they were prosperous, their children were able to enter the sciences, the professions, politics, and the arts, and many have distinguished themselves in these fields.

Over 43,000 Lebanese and 25,000 Syrians have left their homeland for the United States since 1993. Either joining friends and relatives who are already assimilated and dispersed or coming as middle-class refugees, they usually blend in easily with the rest of U.S. society in their work and residence. Syrian and Lebanese Americans maintain a strong social network of communication and interaction in social events. Their extended families have tended to do things together, including vacationing and relocating to different geographic areas.

The Ethnic Experience

First Encounters with U.S. Ethnicity and Language

“I am of Circassian origin, having been born in Syria. My father worked in government with the interior ministry. When the government changed from a moderate socialist to a radical socialist government following the Arab–Israel War in 1968, my father was arrested as a pro-Western sympathizer. He escaped from jail, and we all fled to Jordan, where we received asylum. We migrated to West Germany, but very few Circassians live there, and so we came to the U.S. where other Circassians who had fled from Russia now lived.

“Before we came here, the idea I had about America was that the people were the same, that everybody was an American except the blacks because they were different in color. I thought everybody would be an American, but when we came here—especially as soon as I went to high school—I found everyone identified with their parents’ origin. In other words, they would call themselves Italian-American, Dutch-American, and so on. It was a little confusing to me because I expected them to say they were Americans. Instead they said their nationality first and then said American.

“Most Circassians live in northern New Jersey or in California, and so we settled in New Jersey where my father already knew some people. I did have a lot of trouble with the language here. I spoke two languages—Circassian and Arabic—but starting as a sophomore in high school, I had trouble relating to the people. You know how high school kids are. They’re immature. Sometimes in class I might say something with a super-heavy accent, and perhaps even say it completely wrong, and they would laugh at me. I didn’t have many friends in high school because I worked after school, and besides, we didn’t interact very much with the Americans because the Circassian community had its own activities and clubs. Our language and culture were different and the Americans weren’t so friendly. Besides, once you know you have an accent, that does stop you from even trying to make friends. It’s a barrier. You’re still trying to learn a language and it’s hard. With my brothers I spoke Arabic, with my parents who were so nationalistic we had to speak Circassian, and in school I had to learn English, and it was all very confusing.”

Source: Syrian immigrant who came to the United States in 1968 at age 15.
years, large-scale intermarriage has occurred, which Milton Gordon asserts is the last stage of the assimilation process.41

THE PALESTINIANS

About 100,000 Palestinian Americans now live in the United States, with Palestinian communities clustered in California, Illinois, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, and Texas.42 Most Palestinian Americans are Muslims, although a significant proportion are Christian, mostly members of the Antiochian Orthodox Church. Many Palestinians work as sojourners in other Arab countries and then come to the United States directly from these countries.

Homeland Influence

Until recently, most Palestinian Americans tried to keep a low profile. Faced with stereotypes that labeled them as terrorists, they became disheartened by the actions of Palestinian extremists in their homeland. Yet they also felt bitterness over violent acts against their people, such as when Irgun, the Zionist underground army led by Menachem Begin, prior to the creation of Israel by international fiat later that year, massacred 254 Arab men, women, and children at Deir Yassin in 1948 and stuffed their bodies in a well. In 1998, Palestinian Americans created and passed from city to city a gigantic quilt composed of 418 patches to commemorate the 50th anniversary of that many Palestinian communities eliminated when the Jewish state came into existence.

When the Palestinian intifada uprisings against Israel began in 1988, Palestinian Americans took a strong interest in the cause, watching network news telecasts and listening to shortwave-radio reports. Inspired by the demonstrations and by the Arab League’s recognition of an independent Palestinian state, second- and third-generation Palestinian Americans have gained a new sense of ethnic identity and belonging. Changes in Israeli leadership and government policy culminated in the agreement signed by Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995 that transferred control over much of the West Bank of occupied Jordanian territory to its Palestinian residents. Despite Rabin’s assassination in 1996 and the subsequent impasse in Israeli–Palestinian talks, Palestinian self-rule continues to evolve, and that homeland influence has renewed the pride of Palestinian Americans in their ethnic identity. Continued Israeli–Palestinian conflict, especially the suicide bombers, and links to terrorist motivation against U.S. targets contribute to strained relations between Palestinian Americans and other U.S. citizens.

The American Federation of Ramallah

Many recent Palestinian arrivals from the Middle East lack advanced education or occupational skills for various white-collar positions, so they find employment in various working-class trades. One source of assistance is the American Federation of Ramallah, named after a town of 40,000 inhabitants 10 miles north
of Jerusalem. It is a nationwide ethnic organization, with local and regional social clubs designed to help people of Palestinian heritage adjust to life in the United States. The organization provides financial assistance, guaranteed bank loans, and expertise to enable the newcomers to start mom-and-pop grocery, liquor, and variety stores. The newcomers gradually repay the loans, adding a small percentage to help others who follow them.

The federation also conducts many social activities, such as parties and picnics, through its local branches. These events help maintain ethnic bonding and provide opportunities for young people to meet potential marriage partners. A youth department offers summer-camp programs and cultural-heritage classes.

**Community Life**

For middle-class Palestinian Americans, the community’s mosques and churches serve many purposes. They meet religious needs, of course, but they also function as ethnic centers for social occasions, temporary hostels for new arrivals not yet situated, cultural learning centers for youths, meeting places for Arab organizations, and reception centers for visiting dignitaries.

Working-class Palestinian American males, many of whom live in urban neighborhoods, often congregate in coffeehouses in their free hours, much as ear-
lier Greek immigrants did. These neighborhood social centers provide places to relax, exchange news about the community or homeland, and perhaps learn of work opportunities.

Endogamy remains the norm among Palestinian Americans. Each summer, marriage-age Palestinian American singles throng East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip in search of a spouse. Some engagements last one to two years, but it is not uncommon for a couple—with their families’ assistance—to meet, become engaged, and marry within a few weeks. Most such couples are college educated and happy with the nuptial arrangement because they share the same culture, religion, and expectations as they start new families in the United States.43

THE IRANIANS

Iran, formerly called Persia, is not an Arab country. The great majority of its people speak their own language, Farsi, not Arabic, and their culture has unique qualities that set it apart from the culture of neighboring Arab states. Immigration patterns and societal reaction to Iranian immigrants have fluctuated greatly in the past 30 years depending on the political climate. Immigration to the United States from Iran is a relatively new phenomenon. During the reign of the westernizing Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlewi, about 50,000 Iranian students studied in the United States annually. They maintained a sense of community among themselves, forming associations and interacting with one another. Fear of political repression under the shah kept many from returning to their homeland until after his fall from power in 1979.

Other Iranians living in the United States in the late 1970s were skilled professionals working as sojourners, who had no intention of remaining, or political refugees hoping to return home someday. At that time, only the Iranian college students maintained an ethnic community or network. Other Iranians kept to themselves, partly for fear that members of the shah’s secret police force (SAVAK) would report something about them, bringing harm to relatives still in Iran. Minority emigrants from Iran—Armenians, Baha’is, and Jews—showed great cohesiveness, intending to become U.S. citizens, but they constituted a very small percentage of all Iranian immigrants.

In a study of his fellow Iranian immigrants, Maboud Ansari found that the Iranian migration in the late 1970s consisted mostly of male middle-class professionals. Although physically separated from their families, typical Iranian immigrants still viewed their extended family at home as their only source of primary relations, which they maintained through regular telephone calls. These men did not form a territorially compact community or develop close ties with their compatriots.44 Most remained physically and socially distant from other Iranians in the United States and did not come together except at Now-Ruz, the Iranian New Year, celebrated on the first day of spring:

The Now-Ruz party (which takes place in many major American cities) is the only major national event for Iranians in America. As the only publicly visible ceremony, it creates an atmosphere of national identity and a sense of belonging.
However, it seems that somehow the ceremony has lost the meaning originally attached to it. For example, one of the most important aspects of Now-Ruz is to review or to extend friendships. The Iranians who attend the festivities in America are apt to come together as strangers and leave without exchanging any addresses or gaining any new friendships. Most of the festivities are characterized by a lack of intimacy and excessive self-consciousness in maintaining of social distance.45

In the 20 years since this study, Iranians have become more organized and socially interactive with one another, no longer fearful of Iranian secret police or repercussions against family members still in Iran. Both older and more recent arrivals openly participate in a variety of ethnic activities, and few yearn to return to Iran.

In the 1970s, though, Ansari found that Iranians fell into four self-designated categories. Only about 20 percent called themselves mandegar (settlers), or Persian Yankees. Many of these were older, former exchange students who opted to stay permanently. The majority were in the second category, the belataklif, or ambivalent Iranians. Torn by a nostalgic love and guilt feeling for what had been left behind, yet growing attached to what lay ahead in the United States, the belataklif remained undecided about staying or returning. Yet the longer one remained, the less likely one was to return, thus becoming a mandegar. The other two categories were the siyasi, political exiles who viewed their host society only as a necessary refuge, and the cosmopolitans, who were committed to their profession and not to their nationality—citizens of the world at home anywhere.46 Today, the first and fourth categories primarily describe Iranian Americans.

Anti-Iranian feelings ran high in the United States in 1980 when the hostage crisis at the U.S. Embassy in Iran remained unresolved. Verbal abuse, boycotts, arson against Iranian American businesses, and physical attacks against Iranian students on several college campuses occurred. Iranian Americans who harbored no anti-U.S. feelings themselves became the scapegoats of U.S. frustration, suffering indignities and discrimination. Even into the 1990s, residual hostility was still much in evidence following the earlier “Irangate” controversy in Washington, DC, with revelations about weapons-for-hostages secret arrangements in 1980.

Iranian immigration in the 1980s totaled 116,000, up significantly from 45,000 in the 1970s, dropped to 68,500 in the 1990s, and remains at that level in this decade.47 About half of all Iranian immigrants choose California as their state of intended residence.46 With more than 338,000 Americans now claiming Iranian ancestry, the presence of Iranian Americans is more readily noticed by outsiders. Although found in most major cities, distinct Iranian neighborhoods exist in Queens, New York, and Beverly Hills, California. As in the Washington, DC–Arlington, Virginia, area, classes in Farsi, the primary Iranian language, take place in these enclaves. Also located in these four areas are Islamic centers and mosques, further evidence of the sizeable Iranian community.

Born to mostly middle-class professional parents, today’s second-generation Iranian Americans grow up in a child-centered family with egalitarian norms, quite unlike the patriarchal and authoritarian character of families in Iran.48 Nonetheless, many parents are concerned about preserving their Iranian heritage and make efforts to preserve the positive aspects of the culture, despite the inevitable Americanization process.49
Living as a despised and persecuted religious minority in Iran, many Baha’is have emigrated to the United States, establishing centers in several major U.S. cities. The population of Baha’is in the United States is greater than anywhere else in the world, including the religion’s cradle, Iran.

THE IRAQIS

We must distinguish between the immigrants from Iraq who arrived before and those who came after World War II because political, social, and economic changes in the Middle East have made these groups of immigrants very different. Studying one Iraqi subcultural group of Chaldeans living in the Detroit metropolitan area, Mary Sengstock observed significant pre- and postwar changes caused by the evolution of Iraq into a modern nation-state and the heightened Arab consciousness caused by Arab–Israeli tensions.50

The early immigrants formed a community of village-oriented entrepreneurs whose religious traditions served as their primary identification. They maintained a 
\textit{gemeinschaft} subsociety within the U.S. society. Family orientations were strong, and many Iraqis were self-employed, operating grocery stores and other small businesses. They were, for the most part, a self-enclosed ethnic community.

Not only do recent Iraqi immigrants to Detroit have different value orientations from their predecessors, reflecting their increased education and more urbanized backgrounds, but these newer orientations have had an effect on the self-perceptions and behavior of the earlier immigrants. Although the Chaldeans are Christian, they feel the pull of Arab nationalist loyalties, and this national consciousness is infectious.51 Most now think of themselves as Arabs or Iraqis, not as Chaldeans or Telkeffes, another Iraqi subcultural group. Recent immigrants are less likely to be self-employed and more likely to be involved in bureaucratic endeavors that bring them into contact with people of different backgrounds. Recent Iraqi immigrants thus rely more on formal organizations and interact more with outsiders. They are likely to join non-Chaldean organizations and to develop social relationships, including close friendship ties and marriage, with people from other backgrounds. With new immigrants arriving all the time (the Detroit community now exceeds 8,000), these patterns may well continue and be the norm.

Between 1993 and 2003, nearly 48,000 Iraqi immigrants came to this country.52 With thousands of newcomers arriving annually and following a chain-migration pattern of settlement, this ethnic group has experienced a slow, steady ethnic revitalization.

Interestingly, the 1990 Gulf War against Saddam Hussein’s troops did not generate subgroup-specific hostility against Iraqi Americans living in the United States. Several factors probably contributed to this lack of societal animosity. Given their relatively small numbers and tendency to live within the larger Arab American community, Iraqi Americans are not particularly distinct visually. Furthermore, they were mostly supportive of the brief military action against their homeland’s dictator. It remains to be seen whether the ongoing turmoil in Iraq will increase the Iraqi immigration totals in the future.
THE TURKS

The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service reports that a total of more than 461,000 Turkish immigrants have come to the United States since 1820. Ordinarily, that number would place Turkey in the top 20 suppliers of emigrants. However, various subjugated peoples of different languages and cultures left the Ottoman Empire with only Turkish passports prior to World War I. Over 300,000 people, three-fourths of the total “Turkish” immigrants, entered the United States during this period (see the Appendix). Although immigration officials identified them as Turkish by their passports, they really were Armenians, Syrians, Lebanese, or other nationalities. Over 70,000 ethnic Turks have immigrated since 1981, making this the time of their largest immigration.

Factors against Immigration

Several factors explain the earlier low level of emigration from Turkey in comparison with other poor, undeveloped nations during the great migration period. Perhaps foremost, Muslim Turks had waged a relentless campaign against the Christians within their empire and would hardly be inclined to settle in an almost exclusively Christian country. Second, the Turks had traditionally migrated in large groups. Consequently, there was little beyond the country’s borders to attract families or individuals. In 1923, Turkey barred any emigrant from ever returning, even as a visitor. This law remained in force until 1950. With laws against emigration, few Turks chose to seek a better life elsewhere. Since 1965, however, an increasing number of Turkish immigrants have migrated to the United States because Turkey has been a military ally of the United States for several generations.

Societal Attitudes

Although relatively few Turks emigrated to the United States before World War I, feelings toward the Turks in the United States were mostly negative, primarily because of the Ottoman Empire’s political and religious repression:

Such sentiment towards Turkey as existed in America was largely anti-Turkish. We had of course inherited the ordinary western European prejudice against the Turks as champions of Islam. In addition, many groups in America had espoused the cause of one or another of those Ottoman subject peoples who in the nineteenth century were fighting to gain their independence from the Empire. Immigrants from that Empire had helped foster pro-Greek or pro-Macedonian or pro-Bulgarian sentiments in this country. What had principally aroused American interest in Turkey, however, and what had especially directed that interest towards the non-Turks were certainly the long-standing presence and activities of American missionaries in the Ottoman world. It was chiefly the Armenians’ aspirations and woes to which those missionaries gave currency.53

The Ottoman Empire’s efforts to suppress Armenian and Syrian/Lebanese Christians were often brutal. Annihilation of enemies occurred frequently, and Turkish massacres of thousands of Armenians in the 1890s and again in 1915
stirred the wrath of many Americans. To this day, many Americans of Armenian descent mark the anniversary of these Turkish pogroms. American hostility toward the Turks was common during those times, which helps explain the initial hostility Syrian/Lebanese immigrants encountered in the United States when they were misidentified as Turks. In his survey of social distance in 1926, Emory S. Bogardus found that Turks ranked 27th of 30, above only Chinese, Koreans, and Asian Indians. In 1946, 1956, and 1966, Turks shifted a position or two, finishing 26th in 1966, above Koreans, Mexicans, blacks, and Asian Indians. In the same surveys, Armenians ranked from 5 to 11 positions higher than Turks.

**Immigrant Patterns**

When the Balkan War of 1912 began, many young unmarried Turkish males came to the United States to avoid military service. When war-ravaged Europe achieved peace again in 1919, more than 30,000 of them returned to Turkey. The few thousand who remained settled primarily in New York, Massachusetts, Michigan, Illinois, and Indiana.

Most Turkish immigrants who came before World War II were illiterate and secured jobs as unskilled laborers. They settled mostly in New York City and Detroit, and they kept to themselves. Some gradually became acculturated, while others remained socially segregated within U.S. society.

More recent Turkish immigrants are better educated than their predecessors. Many are professionals or experienced businesspeople who settle in a relatively dispersed pattern. Others are working-class tradesmen and laborers who usually cluster together in urban areas in sufficient numbers to induce the establishment of bilingual programs in neighborhood schools. Annual immigration to the United States numbers in the thousands, helping maintain ethnic vitality. It appears that structural assimilation will be at least a two-generation process.

**THE PAKISTANIS**

In recent decades, immigrants from Pakistan have become a significant presence in the United States. In the 1980s, Pakistani immigration reached over 61,000 and between 1993 and 2003 exceeded 133,000. Three in five are white-collar workers or professionals, and the rest are craftsmen, service workers, or laborers. Another common occupation of Pakistani immigrants in many cities is taxicab driver. In New York City, for example, immigrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India made up less than 0.5 percent of the population but constitute 30 percent of its taxicab drivers. Another common endeavor is family ownership of discount stores.

Pakistani Americans have a widely dispersed settlement pattern, although 25 percent settle in the New York City metropolitan region. The Chicago, Washington, DC, Houston, and Los Angeles metropolitan areas are other locuses of residential clustering. The Pakistanis’ acculturation and assimilation patterns are similar to those of other groups considered in this chapter.
PART 3  ◆ People of Color

OTHER ASIAN AND MIDDLE EASTERN ASSIMILATION

Structural assimilation among immigrant groups is rarely a first-generation occurrence. Because most people claiming ethnicity from this part of the world are newcomers, sufficient time has not yet elapsed to give us a perspective on their assimilation. However, studies are emerging to give us some insights into their acculturation as immigrants. First, though, let us consider the assimilation of those who are not foreign born. This would include the descendants of Asian Indians, Lebanese, Syrians, and Turks who arrived in the early or mid-20th century. For the most part, their multigenerational life in the United States means only vestiges of ethnicity remain, and they are as much a part of the American mainstream as the descendants of European immigrants.

Those recent arrivals of middle-class backgrounds whose education and occupational skills enabled them to settle in upscale urban neighborhoods or suburban communities are part of the economic mainstream, but they often have not yet overcome social barriers to full acceptance. Like similarly situated Asian Americans discussed in the previous chapter, everyday ethnicity is still a real part of their lives, even though they may be living and working in a larger society. They are living in two worlds—private and public—old and new.

Uma Segal examined generational conflicts in Asian Indian families. She found that these conflicts revolved around adolescents’ power struggles for in-
dependence and freedom and around poor communication between parents and teens. Not surprisingly, the clash of cultures over sexual relationships and arranged marriages highlighted problematic areas. As young people identify with the country in which they live, and parents try to instill in their children the values they cherish from their homeland, such conflicts are a normal part of the immigrant experience.

Researchers studying Arab American adults found that acculturation and satisfaction with life in the United States and with family life were stronger with longer U.S. residence, younger age at immigration, not having recently visited their country of origin, and being Christian. Discrimination experiences influenced reduced satisfaction with life in the United States but not with acculturation in general. Such findings would seem to reinforce assimilationist theory that length of residence and cultural affinity are key determinants of adjustment and acceptance.

**SOCILOGICAL ANALYSIS**

The non-Western immigrants discussed in this chapter have mostly arrived since 1965. Because only a few have lived in the United States longer than one generation, their experiences lack sufficient historical perspective to permit full analysis. Furthermore (as noted at the beginning of the chapter), because most are educated with marketable occupational skills, they do not entirely fit the theoretical framework of past immigrants. How well do the three theoretical perspectives explain their situation? As we will see, each provides a focus that promotes further understanding.

**The Functionalist View**

How has the social system been able to adapt relatively smoothly in absorbing the newcomers, many of whom are racially and religiously different? Functionalists would point to the immigration laws ensuring either sufficient earning power in occupational preference (higher admission priorities for skilled workers) or a support system in relative preference (higher admission priorities for close relatives). These better educated, better skilled, better connected individuals quickly adjust, contribute to the economy, and seem to integrate into society with a minimum of problems. Most currently rank low on the social distance scale, but they become functionally integrated fairly easily. Their economic power allows them to live in middle-class neighborhoods, accessible through fair-housing laws. Some may even integrate areas, their comparable values and lifestyle making their native-born neighbors more receptive to them as a racially or culturally distinct people.

Less skilled non-Westerners have helped fill a population void in urban and ex-urban neighborhoods. Although they may encounter some minor problems, these newcomers bring stability to neighborhoods, preventing their decline and helping maintain a racial balance. Urban density gives the immigrants close proximity to one another, enabling ethnic solidarity to develop and be sustained. Living near their work, these newcomers find jobs other U.S. residents are unwilling to take. They also fulfill societal needs. As they struggle to succeed in the United States,
they find better opportunities than they had known in their home countries, while society benefits from their work, purchasing power, and cultural contributions.

The Conflict View

Early non-Western immigrants provide grist for the analytical mill of conflict theorists. Industrialists often used Syrian/Lebanese men as strikebreakers in the Northeast, particularly during the intense labor unrest in the early 20th century. Just as the Syrian/Lebanese offered factory owners a cheaper labor alternative, Asian Indians on the West Coast enabled farmers, lumber companies, and railroads to benefit from their low-cost labor. Other workers resented their presence, fearing that the newcomers’ growing numbers would jeopardize their own positions. Once again, the split-labor-market theory seems applicable. Economic competition between two wage-level groups generated ethnic antagonism and violence.

More recent arrivals suggest a different analysis. In this case, tensions arise in the United States among African Americans and Hispanics at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder who see foreign-born non-Westerners leapfrogging over them. Resentment builds against the new arrivals whose hiring appears to deny upward mobility to native-born minority groups. Foreigners benefit at the expense of U.S. natives, they think. In addition, the movement of non-Western immigrants into white, middle-class apartment complexes and suburban neighborhoods changes the prior racial or cultural homogeneity, which sometimes stirs hostilities among the old-timers against the newcomers.

Although conflict may be less intense regarding these groups than toward previous waves of immigrants, an undercurrent of tension and resentment may exist, as evidenced by occasional eruptions of public protest over the building of a Sikh temple in a suburban community or over the effort to provide bilingual education to a group of Turkish American children in an urban school (two actual incidents). Fear of further terrorist attacks adds to the underlying tensions between the Arab American community and the host society.

The Interactionist View

Because visual clues are a major means of categorizing strangers, people with different clothing or physical characteristics get classified as dissimilar types. Is it surprising to learn that the racially different (Africans and Asians) and the religiously different (Buddhists and Muslims) score lower on the social distance scale? If this perception of others as being very different is coupled with a sense of overwhelming numbers of newcomers, fears of a “Hindoo invasion” or something similar can easily lead to acts of exclusion, expulsion, and violence. Consider the case of the Irish in Paterson who attacked the Syrians moving into their neighborhood, supposing them to be Turks or “Mohammedans.” Only when a respected religious leader from their own community redefined the situation for the Irish did the fighting stop. In recent years, Palestinian Americans have struggled against U.S. natives who presume they are all terrorists because of a few extremists. Misinterpretations about an ethnic group often cause problems for the group’s members, and the peoples in this chapter are no exception.

Because many recent immigrants can join the economic mainstream, their co-workers or neighbors assume that they have integrated socially as well. Interaction
may occur in work-related relationships, but socially, the middle-class newcomers tend to become “unknown ethnics,” at least in primary relationships. Socially isolated except on rare occasions, the non-Westerners by necessity interact with compatriots, remaining a generalized entity in the minds of members of the dominant group. This social segregation appears to result more from an attraction toward similarly perceived others than from overt avoidance. Whatever the reason, non-Westerners are mostly social outcasts in the leisure activities of other U.S. residents. Variety may be the spice of life, but we do not apply that principle to racial and ethnic personal relationships.

RETROSPECT

Relatively few members of the racial and ethnic groups discussed in this chapter came to the United States before 1945. The experiences of those who did were generally similar to the experiences of other non-Western peoples in the United States and depended on the then-prevailing policies and regional attitudes.

For the most part, the immigrant experience of people from central and southwestern Asia is current. Although they are still identifiable because of physical and cultural differences, they usually have little difficulty with the U.S. mainstream because of their occupational status, their urban locale, and the relaxation of U.S. norms about newcomers. Nevertheless, as strangers they are keenly aware of the society in which they find themselves, and U.S. natives generally tend to avoid interacting with them in meaningful primary relationships. These non-Westerners are somewhat unusual in that many are able to secure a respectable social status via education, occupation, income, and residence, but because of their cultural differences, they have minimal social participation with native-born U.S. residents. This often is a two-way arrangement.

As larger numbers of immigrants from central and southwestern Asian countries come to the United States, they are making their presence felt more and more. One aspect of this impact is in religion. Waves of immigrant peoples have changed the United States from an almost exclusively Protestant country to one of three major faiths. Now this Judeo-Christian population composition, if present trends continue, may be modified further as the numbers of Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and adherents of other Eastern religions swell.

As the United States becomes culturally diverse in the areas of religion, physical appearance, and value orientation, more U.S. residents are becoming conscious of the differences in the people around them. Some argue that Americans today are more tolerant because of a resurgence of ethnicity and a more liberal government attitude toward cultural pluralism. Others contend that the past nativistic reaction to Asians in the West and to southern and eastern Europeans in the East is being replicated today against the non-Western immigrants. Riots and violent confrontations may have disappeared, but more subtle and sophisticated acts of discrimination occur, including calls for increased immigration restrictions against non-Western immigrants.

How accurate this analysis is remains to be determined. Recent central and southwestern Asian immigrants are better educated and better trained, often speak English before they arrive, and thus enter U.S. society at a higher socioeconomic level than earlier immigrants did. Their ethnic community is more interactional
than territorial for the most part, although some groups are more clustered and visible than others. They seem to adjust fairly easily to life in the United States, although ingroup socializing is quite common, as was the case with past immigrant groups. Perhaps we are still a generation away from being able to measure the full impact of their role within U.S. society.

**KEY TERMS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brain drain</th>
<th>Invasion–succession</th>
<th>Structural assimilation</th>
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<td>Ethnogenesis</td>
<td>Miscegenation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gemeinschaft</td>
<td>Social distance</td>
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</tbody>
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**REVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. Why do differences in economic power between non-Western immigrants and earlier immigrants make assimilation less necessary now than before?
2. What parallels exist between Asian Indian and east and southeast Asian immigrant experiences, both past and present?
3. How have structural conditions in the home countries reshaped ethnic identity and attitudes among Arab immigrants to the United States?
4. Discuss problems of stereotyping and prejudice encountered by non-Westerners because of outgroup perceptions and the media.
5. What insights do the three sociological perspectives offer about non-Western immigrants?

**SUGGESTED READINGS**

Explores the dynamics of acculturation and the maintenance of cultural traditions in a compact, middle-class Sikh immigrant community in upstate New York.

An ethnographic study of the ethnic infrastructure, family and gender relations, and social activism in one urban community.

A detailed portrait of a cross-section of Arab American families, with detailed information about various aspect of Arabic culture.

A fine collection of essays on the Arab American immigrant experience: adaptation; facing stereotypes, prejudice, and violence; and maintaining values and identities in a new society.
A clear, well-written introduction to Arab Americans, examining their culture and acculturation experiences in the United States.

An ambitious portrayal of a multigenerational saga within a multilingual ethnic group, covering its historical, cultural, and economic elements.

A moving portrait of the Iranian émigré community grappling with life and identity transformation in the United States.

**INTERNET LINKS**

Go to http://www.ablongman.com/parrillo8e for numerous links relevant to this chapter under “Internet Readings and Exercises.”