

ANDRZEJ KULCZYCKI *University of Alabama—Birmingham*

ARUN PETER LOBO *New York City Department of City Planning*

Patterns, Determinants, and Implications of Intermarriage Among Arab Americans

This study examines Arab American intermarriage using 1990 U.S. Census data. The results indicate high rates of intermarriage consistent with an assimilation perspective. Over 80% of U.S.-born Arabs had non-Arab spouses, implying a diminishing ethnic identification. Logistic regressions show that for both sexes, those with part Arab ancestry, the U.S. born, those with strong English-language ability, and the highly educated were significantly more likely to outmarry, as were Arabs of Lebanese ancestry. The cultural and structural assimilation of Arab Americans is facilitating intermarriage, with indicators of acculturation being the strongest predictors, especially for women. The article further discusses ethnic options for children of intermarried couples.

The extent to which ethnic intermarriage occurs is widely accepted as an important indicator of assimilation and identification. In the United States, intermarriage is linked with the metaphor of the melting pot precisely because it erodes so-

Department of Epidemiology and International Health, University of Alabama, 217 Ryals Public Health Building, 1665 University Boulevard, Birmingham, AL 35294 (andrzej@uab.edu).

*Population Division, New York City Department of City Planning, 22 Reade Street, Suite 4W, New York, NY 10007.

Key Words: Arab Americans, Arab children, assimilation, ethnicity, intermarriage, part Arab.

cial, cultural, and psychological boundaries between ethnic groups more thoroughly than do other social processes (Gordon, 1964; Lieberman & Waters, 1988). By contrast, endogamy is widely believed to reflect and perpetuate group divisions, social distance, and unequal power distributions in racially and ethnically diverse societies. One group that has received little study among students of ethnicity, assimilation, and marriage, is the Arab American population. It grew in size by 42% in the 1980s and a conservative estimate suggests that by 1990, it numbered just over 1 million (Kulczycki & Lobo, 2001). Social scientists have yet to examine intermarriage among Arab Americans, who are often stigmatized with pervasive negative stereotypes about their countries of origin. An understanding of the extent and development of intermarriage among Arab Americans may contribute significantly to the study of ethnic intermarriage and ethnic relations.

In the United States during the early twentieth century, endogamy was the rule (Pagnini & Morgan, 1990), but the average odds of in-marriage fell considerably during the course of the century. By 1990, only one-fifth of Whites had spouses with an identical ethnic background (Alba, 2000). The level of Black-White intermarriage has also risen since the 1960s but it remains very low—indicative of the social distance that continues to pervade some groups in U.S. society (Kalmijn, 1993). Religious differences are also of declining significance as barriers to marriage. About half of

all Catholics and Jews marry outside their faiths if religious upbringing is used rather than current religion as the measure of those particular religious populations (Lehrer, 1998; Sander, 1993; Waite & Sheps, 1994). Out-marriage is proportionately less common among Protestants, who account for a larger fraction of the population. Notwithstanding the greater acceptance of racial, religious, and national-origin groups, as well as the increasing rate of intermarriage, most Americans are still likely to choose marriage partners of a similar background.

The closing decades of the twentieth century witnessed a resurgence in immigration, primarily from non-European sources, and a dramatic increase in the number of marriages between partners of different ethnic or racial groups (Schuman, Steeh, & Bobo, 1985; Spickard, 1989). Much research attention has recently focused on the patterns of intermarriage and marital assimilation of Asian and Mexican Americans (e.g., Anderson & Saenz, 1994; Hwang, Saenz, & Aguirre, 1997; Lee & Fernandez, 1998; Qian, 1997; Schoen, Woolrdge, & Thomas, 1989), groups that have figured especially prominently in current immigration flows to the U.S. To the best of our knowledge, however, there exist no published studies of Arab American intermarriage.

This study makes several contributions to the social science literature on intermarriage and on Arab Americans. It provides the first detailed assessment of intermarriage patterns and determinants among Arab American men and women using census data. In addition, it compares intermarried couples for the two major Arab American national-origin groups (the Lebanese and Syrians) and all other Arab Americans on a range of demographic, social, and economic attributes. The article further examines in a multivariate context the relative importance of different predictors of ethnic exogamy among Arab Americans. Finally, it considers the possible consequences of intermarriage on the present and future evolution of the Arab American population, as indicated by the ethnic identification of the children of mixed couples. By focusing on the particular case of Arab Americans, the insights yielded may contribute to a more complete understanding of intermarriage patterns and behavior, providing needed cross-cultural testing to existing empirical generalizations concerning intermarriage as well as of the dynamics of the assimilation experience.

THEORETICAL ISSUES

Most studies of intermarriage have subscribed to an assimilation perspective whereby through a multidimensional process newly arrived groups gradually become more similar to the members of the host society (Gordon, 1964; Hirschman, 1983). Yinger (1985) theorized that assimilation comprises four subprocesses: acculturation, integration, amalgamation, and identification, which constitute, respectively, the cultural, structural, biological, and psychological aspects of assimilation. In this study, we examine the effects of acculturation and integration on the marital choices of Arab Americans.

To analyze the effects of acculturation, we focus on the influences of place of birth, partial Arab ancestry, and the level of English proficiency on the likelihood of out-marriage. Foreign birth may be expected to be associated with endogamy. This is because recent immigrants are more likely to have a stronger cultural adherence to the marital ideals of their country of origin than is found among their U.S.-born offspring. With respect to ancestry, we hypothesize that those persons with both parents Arab are more likely to have an Arab spouse than those with parents from different ethnic backgrounds. The latter group may be more prone to select a spouse from a more ethnically varied pool of potential mates because of the greater likelihood of contact with people of different ethnicities. Another acculturation variable that could affect endogamy rates is host country language-acquisition. We expect the likelihood of out-marriage to be positively related to an individual's level of proficiency in English.

Though many Arab immigrants may not be initially acculturated, they are able to structurally assimilate into the U.S. economy given their high levels of education and skill (see below). This helps ease their cultural assimilation that, in turn, reinforces other processes of assimilation, including intermarriage. To examine the impact of structural assimilation, this article assesses the extent to which education affects the odds of Arab American intermarriage. We expect education to be an especially important determinant of marital choice. Education affects the ability to be attractive to others, weakens ethnic attachments, increases contacts with potential mates from other groups, and leads to a greater movement away from an individual's local area of residence (Lieberman & Waters, 1988; Lievens, 1998). The analysis also considers how marital choice is influ-

enced by differences in income and occupational skill. Like education, these two important markers of structural assimilation are anticipated to be positively associated with intermarriage (Fitzpatrick & Gurak, 1979; Kalmijn, 1993; Sung, 1990).

Arabic-speaking immigrants started coming to the United States more than a century ago. Initially, they were overwhelmingly Christian and from Syria and present-day Lebanon. A second stream of Arab immigrants entered after World War II and the partition of Palestine in 1948. The third and largest wave of Arabic immigration began in the 1970s. It was triggered by the revisions made to the immigration law in 1965, which allowed all countries an equal opportunity to send immigrants (Lobo & Salvo, 1998), as well as by further political upheaval in the Middle East (Abu-Laban & Suleiman, 1989; Orfalea, 1988). The greater diversity of sending countries among recent Arab immigrants means that there are now substantial numbers of Egyptians, Iraqis, Palestinians, and others, to add to the Syrian and Lebanese Arab Americans. Their continued difficulties to organize politically to fight discrimination notwithstanding, Arab Americans have on the whole reached socio-economic parity with most Americans. In 1990, Arab Americans tended to have higher educational levels than all Americans and 83% reported having strong English language skills. The median household income of immigrant Arabs was similar to that for all Americans (\$30,190); for native-born Arab Americans, it was much higher, at \$37,281 (Kulczycki & Lobo, 2001). These factors are expected to favor intermarriage, in accordance with the basic assimilation hypothesis.

Whereas Arab Americans might be expected to conform to the assimilation paradigm and intermarry in the same way as White European ethnics, this assumption need not hold given majority group prejudices against both Arabs and Muslims. Not only has Arab immigration increased in recent years; so has the share of Muslims in this flow (Haddad, 1991). The magnitude of the Muslim presence, however, is unknown because neither census data nor immigration statistics collect information on religion. Although we cannot assess the influence of religion on intermarriage, the analysis that follows does examine the effect of ethnicity, which may be closely related to religious affiliation. We hypothesize that rates of outmarriage will be higher among persons with Lebanese or Syrian ethnicity. These groups have a longer established presence in the United States

and a larger proportion of Christians among their members.

In addition, it is relevant to explore the consequences of Arab intermarriages for the ethnic identification of the children from such unions. This permits us to investigate not just whether Arab Americans conform to the assimilationist paradigm that characterizes White Americans of European ancestry, but also whether ethnic identity has become a matter of option for them as well. For example, Hout and Goldstein (1994) and Lieberman (1985) showed that later-generation descendants of European origin maintain symbolic ethnicities and can choose which part of their ancestral backgrounds they wish to most identify with. They have essentially become "unhyphenated Whites," so that ethnic identity has become a matter of option. Given the availability of such options, we hypothesize that marital assimilation reduces the likelihood of Arab identification of the children from intermarriage involving an Arab. We close with a discussion of the findings as well as of the implications of ethnic options on group number and self-identification.

DATA SOURCES

The data for this study are taken from the 5% 1990 U.S. Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS). The analysis included only currently married couples who were living together in the same household where at least one partner was of Arab ancestry. Individuals were said to have an Arab ancestry if their first or second ancestry was from one of the Arab League states. These consist of the North African countries of Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco, as well as Mauritania, Sudan, Somalia, and Djibouti. They also comprise Yemen, Iraq, and the Gulf states of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates, or U.A.E. They additionally include the countries by the Eastern Mediterranean (Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, as well as Palestine, which is considered an independent state by the League of Arab states) and Comoros, a League member with a very small population size.

Arabs selected could be either fully or partly Arab. Those who are fully Arab have only Arab ancestry reported. Thus, someone who reports being Lebanese on their first and second ancestry is considered fully Arab; so is a person who reports being Lebanese and Syrian on their first and second ancestry, respectively. A person is defined as part Arab if both an Arab and a non-Arab ancestry

are reported. In addition to including a partner of Arab ancestry, couples selected consisted of at least one partner who was either U.S. born or had arrived in the U.S. before age 18. The exclusion of couples where both partners immigrated as adults effectively removes the foreign married. This selection is based on the practical consideration that census data include a large number of in-marriages contracted abroad whose inclusion in our sample would have considerably deflated intermarriage rates and invalidated comparisons between groups. The study, therefore, centers on the marital choices of currently married couples where at least one partner was either native-born or had immigrated as a child, and thus presumably living in the U.S. when the decision to marry was made.

The focus on currently married couples may result in an underreporting of marital exogamy among Arab Americans. This would be especially true if Arabs who out-married were more likely to divorce than in-married Arab couples. Unfortunately, census data do not provide prior marital histories and, hence, the focus on currently married couples. This yields an unweighted sample size of 6,837 Arab men and 5,399 Arab women. The analysis includes in-married couples as a comparison group as well as marriages involving members of the two largest Arab ethnicities (Lebanese and Syrians). These groups constitute the bulk of the Arab American population and have a longer history of immigration to the U.S. than do other Arabs.

To assess the ethnic identification of children in married couple households, where at least one partner was of Arab ancestry, we examine their first and second ancestries. It should be noted that the reported ancestries of children in any household reflect the views of the adult filling out the census form and not necessarily those of the children. It is also possible that census respondents may report the ancestry of spouses differently than the spouses themselves would have reported, had they completed the questionnaires themselves. The subjective responses of census respondents affects all households, however, and not just those of Arab Americans. Nevertheless, it is more likely to be an issue for intermarried couples and for the children in such households.

FINDINGS

Descriptive Results

Table 1 shows the total number of Arab men and women examined in this study by their ethnicity

and that of the spouse classified further by measures of acculturation and integration. Two observations are particularly striking. First, rates of out-marriage are high for both men and women across all categories for nearly all variables. Second, it is evident that Arab women show greater propensity than Arab men to marry within their own group.

In 1990, close to four out of five (79%) Arab men and nearly three out of four (73%) Arab women had non-Arab spouses. The observed gender difference in exogamy may be partially attributable to the shortage of eligible Arab women in the U.S. In 1990, there were 119 men per 100 women; among foreign-born Arabs, the sex ratio was as high as 146 (Kulczycki & Lobo, 2001). This implies that many men will marry outside their ethnic group even if their latent preferences would be for brides from the same birthplace. Just under one in five (19%) Arab men and one in four (24%) Arab women were married within the same Arab group. The percentage of Arab men and women with spouses from other Arab groups is in the order of three percentage points. These exceptionally small proportions of intramarriage reflect the high rates of out-marriage among Arab Americans of either sex, and the small absolute size of the Arab American population. Lebanese and Syrian Americans (especially men) are more likely to out-marry than are all other Arab Americans.

The measures of acculturation point to a diminishing ethnic identification. Among both men and women of partial Arab origin, only 3% are married within the same Arab group (i.e., to those with whom they share a specific Arab ancestry) and 96% are married to non-Arabs. In comparison, among those who are fully Arab, 73% of men and 60% of women out-marry. Rates of intermarriage among the native-born and those with strong English proficiency, two other indicators of cultural assimilation, are also high with only minor differences by sex. The rates of intermarriage for Arab men who are foreign-born (67%) or who speak English only moderately well (55%) are substantially more than those for women with similar characteristics.

Regarding measures of structural integration, a positive association is generally found between intermarriage levels and education. More educated Arab Americans are more likely to intermarry than their less educated counterparts. This relation holds true for both sexes and accords with the basic assimilation hypothesis that predicts a positive association between levels of out-marriage

TABLE 1. IN- AND OUT-MARRIAGE RATES FOR ARAB MEN AND WOMEN BY SELECTED SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

Characteristics	Arab Men	Percent of Arab Men Married to Women in			Arab Women	Percent of Arab Women Married to Men in		
		Same Group	Different Arab Group	Non-Arabs		Same Group	Different Arab Group	Non-Arabs
Total	6,837	18.5	2.5	78.9	5,399	23.5	3.2	73.3
Full/part Arab								
Fully Arab	5,003	24.2	3.2	72.6	3,417	35.3	4.5	60.2
Part Arab	1,834	3.0	0.7	96.3	1,982	3.1	1.0	95.9
Nativity								
U.S.-born	4,348	12.6	1.7	85.8	4,146	13.7	2.3	84.0
Foreign-born	2,489	29.0	4.0	67.0	1,253	55.9	6.2	37.9
English language ability								
Strong	6,296	16.6	2.4	81.0	4,995	19.9	2.9	77.1
Moderate to poor	541	41.4	4.1	54.5	404	67.3	6.7	26.0
Ethnicity								
Lebanese	3,354	14.4	1.4	84.2	2,931	16.5	1.9	81.6
Syrian	1,515	17.8	3.3	78.9	1,309	20.6	3.7	75.8
All other	1,968	26.2	3.9	69.9	1,159	44.5	5.9	49.6
Education								
Less than high school	806	34.2	3.3	62.4	715	43.9	4.2	51.9
High school only	1,305	20.2	2.5	77.3	1,598	27.3	3.7	69.0
Some college	1,947	17.3	2.3	80.4	1,602	19.4	2.8	77.8
College graduate	2,779	14.1	2.5	83.4	1,484	13.9	2.6	83.4
Income (quartile)								
1st	2,098	21.4	3.1	75.5	1,459	40.2	4.7	55.2
2nd	1,546	17.6	2.5	79.9	1,347	22.7	2.8	74.5
3rd	1,613	15.6	1.9	82.6	1,301	17.1	2.6	80.2
4th	1,580	18.7	2.6	78.7	1,292	11.8	2.6	85.6
Occupational skill level								
Less skilled	3,057	20.9	2.7	76.4	2,547	19.2	2.5	78.3
Highly skilled	3,289	14.8	2.3	82.9	1,492	11.4	2.8	85.8

and education. Indeed, among college graduates, over eight in ten Arab men and women had out-married. However, levels of out-marriage were high even among Arab Americans with less than a high school education, with 60% of men and over one-half of women having out-married.

Comparing Arab women of various income levels, those with high incomes are more likely to marry non-Arab men than those with low income. Among women with an income in the 1st quartile, for example, just 55% out-married, compared to 86% of women with an income in the 4th quartile. Among Arab men in the first income quartile, the level of intermarriage (76%) was higher than that for Arab women but increases in income did not always lead to an increase in out-marriage for Arab men. The level of out-marriage for Arab men with income in the 3rd quartile (83%) was actually higher than that for those with income in

the 4th quartile (79%). With occupational skill, another measure of structural assimilation, a positive association is again found with intermarriage for both Arab men and women.

Multivariate Results

Many of the variables shown in Table 1 are correlated; the native-born, for example, are more likely to have strong English language ability. To disentangle these effects, we performed a multivariate analysis with the partial effects of these variables estimated by logistic regression. Our model includes age as a control variable, and given the high levels of correlation among measures of structural integration, education is the sole measure of structural assimilation included.

The partial effects of the independent variables are presented in Table 2, separately for men and

TABLE 2. UNSTANDARDIZED LOGISTIC REGRESSION ESTIMATES OF THE EFFECTS OF ASSIMILATION FACTORS ON THE LIKELIHOOD OF INTERMARRIAGE AMONG ARAB AMERICAN MEN AND WOMEN

Independent Variable	Arab Husbands		Arab Wives	
	Coefficient	SE	Coefficient	SE
Part Arab Ancestry (Full Arab)	1.818**	0.132	2.312**	0.124
Native-born (Foreign-born)	0.774**	0.084	1.411**	0.094
Strong English-language ability (Moderate and weak ability)	0.638**	0.103	0.991**	0.143
Ethnicity				
Lebanese	0.356**	0.086	0.744**	0.098
Syrians (All other Arabs)	0.044	0.095	0.393**	0.111
Education				
High school only	0.297*	0.106	0.092	0.113
Some college	0.456**	0.102	0.486**	0.119
College degree (Less than high school)	0.735**	0.098	0.860**	0.127
Age	-0.023**	0.002	-0.007*	0.003
Constant	0.427*	0.149	-1.945**	0.181
Model χ^2		973.10		1810.50
df		9		9
N		6,837		5,399

Note: Reference categories for independent variables are in parentheses.
 * $p < .01$. ** $p < .001$.

for women. But for age and Syrian ethnicity among men, and high school education among women, all the variables of interest are significant. The standardized coefficients indicate that part Arab ancestry and nativity are the two most important variables in the model (data not shown). The possession of strong English language proficiency (the other acculturation variable considered) is also found to be a significant determinant of intermarriage.

For both sexes, the multivariate results are consistent with the bivariate results presented in Table 1. Assimilation theory would predict that those with part Arab ancestry, the native-born, those with strong English-language ability, and the highly educated would be more likely to out-marry. Indicators of acculturation were very strong predictors of out-marriage. Among men, the odds of intermarriage among those who are part Arab are six times higher ($e^{1.818}$) than for those who are fully Arab. Similarly, the odds of intermarriage among the native-born are twice ($e^{0.774}$) that of the foreign-born. Acculturation had an even stronger effect on out-marriage among women. Part Arab ancestry resulted in odds of intermarriage that were ten times higher than for those who were fully Arab, whereas the odds for the native-born were four times higher vis-à-vis the foreign-born.

Strong English-language ability also had a significant effect for both men and women, with the odds of intermarriage 1.9 and 2.7 times higher, respectively, compared to those with moderate to weak English-language ability.

There is also a significant ethnic effect, with Lebanese men 1.4 times more likely to intermarry than *other Arabs*; there were no significant differences between Syrian men and other Arab men. The odds ratios of out-marriage were even higher for Lebanese and Syrian women (2.1 and 1.5 times higher than those for other Arab women). Compared to men with less than a high school education, the odds of intermarriage were 1.4 times higher for those with a high school diploma, and 1.6 and 2.1 times higher for those with some college and a college degree, respectively. Among women, only those with some college and a college degree had odds of intermarriage that were significantly higher than those with less than a high school education.

The predictors of intermarriage were largely similar for both sexes. However, indicators of acculturation were much stronger predictors for women. Controlling for other variables, the predicted probability of intermarriage for a U.S.-born, part Arab woman with strong English language skills was 76 percentage points higher than

TABLE 3. ETHNICITY OF CHILDREN IN FAMILIES WHERE AT LEAST ONE PARENT IS ARAB

	Percent of Children			Total Children
	Full Arab	Part Arab	Non Arab	
All Arab families	23.5	42.6	33.9	10,508
Both parents are either part or fully Arab	87.6	4.0	8.4	1,755
One parent is part or fully Arab	10.6	50.3	39.0	8,753

for a woman who was foreign-born, fully Arab, and with moderate English language ability. Although the above measures of acculturation were also highly significant for men, the difference in the predicted probability was lower, at 42 percentage points.

Ethnic Options for Children of Intermarried Couples

The recent growth in the numbers of Arab Americans and their high rates of intermarriage raises the interesting question of whether the offspring of such unions are identified with the ethnicity of their Arab or non-Arab parent. Table 3 shows that one major consequence of the high rates of intermarriage is that fewer children are reported as Arab. In 1990, there were 220,100 children (10,508 unweighted sample) in Arab families. Less than one in five lived in families where both parents were either Arab or part Arab. Of these children, 88% were reported to be fully Arab, 4% were part Arab, and 8% were listed as non-Arab. Whereas children are more likely to be identified as Arab in households where both parents report having at least some Arabic ancestry, one in twelve children in such households are reported to be non-Arabs. This indicates a diminishing ethnic identification.

The overwhelming majority of children in Arab households were living in families where only one parent was either fully or part Arab, that is, in families with intermarried couples. Only 11% of the children in these families were reported as fully Arab, whereas one-half of the children were reported to be part Arab and nearly 40% were listed as non-Arab. Thus, in households where only one parent is of Arab ethnicity, children are far less likely to be reported as Arab. This suggests that the ethnic identification of children from intermarried couples can be optional in much the same way as it is for White Americans of European ancestry.

Children of Arab intermarried couples may be less likely to be identified as Arab for several rea-

sons. Most Arab Americans are becoming successfully integrated into the mainstream, which according to the assimilation perspective means individuals will be less attached to their culture of origin and increasingly identified with the more dominant group. Arab Americans are a numerical minority and unlike Whites of European background, hold little political and economic power. Although the physical appearance of Arabs varies, Arab Americans are overwhelmingly White and indistinguishable from White Americans of European ancestry. Some Arab parents, notably those of mixed ethnic origin or who are intermarried, apparently de-emphasize their Arab ethnic origins and identify instead with other groups.

We have shown that the children of Arab intermarried couples are much less likely to be listed as Arab. This is especially the case where one spouse is only part Arab and the other non-Arab (data not shown). This cycle of events will be renewed in subsequent generations, where those of part Arab ancestry will be more likely to out-marry and have children who are reported as part Arab, who in turn are likely to out-marry. The children of intermarried couples have multiple ancestries but the 1990 census allowed the listing of a maximum of two ancestries. Given the ethnic options available to parents for reporting their children, 40% were listed as having only non-Arab (primarily European) ancestries. One cannot tell how often an Arab ancestry would have been stated for these children if more than two ancestries could have been listed. However, it is safe to assume that the lack of such an option may have kept a number of part ancestries that are less common, less understood, or less accepted by mainstream society from being enumerated, including part Arab ancestry.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Assimilation theory posits that the acculturation and socioeconomic integration of newly arrived groups can lead to further assimilation in the form of intermarriage with more established groups.

This study shows that Arab Americans conform to this pattern, which has characterized the experience of different ethnic groups of European origin in the United States. Rates of out-marriage are high among currently married Arab Americans: In 1990, 79% of men and 73% of women had a non-Arab spouse. Acculturation variables played the most important role in increasing out-marriage. Individuals who were part Arab, native born, and with strong English-language ability were found to have significantly higher rates of intermarriage. Structural assimilation, as measured by education, was also significantly and positively associated with intermarriage, especially among younger age groups. The high proportion of exogamous marriages indicates that Arab Americans are assimilating quickly. Whereas some immigrants may return to their country of origin to find a spouse and re-enter the U.S. as a couple, many of those native born are likely to out-marry because the Arab American population is relatively small and far-flung.

One noteworthy feature of Arab American intermarriage patterns is that out-marriage for men is higher than that for women. This is in contrast to the situation for Asian Americans, among whom women are more likely to out-marry (Hwang et al., 1997; Lee & Fernandez, 1998). Arab cultural traditions are heavily patriarchal with very clear role differentiation between men and women. Arab immigrant families bring their cultural traditions with them to the United States and tend to place greater cultural constraints on the marital choices of daughters than on sons (Aswad & Bilge, 1996). In addition, the higher proportion of men among Arab immigrants in part accounts for the substantial difference in intermarriage between foreign-born Arab men and women. Sex ratio imbalances tend to push group members to seek spouses from other ethnic populations (McCaa, 1989). The local shortage of marriageable Arab women may be expected to force foreign-born Arab American men to consider alternatives to marrying a wife of the same origin, and evidently, many do find non-Arab American wives.

Besides high rates of intermarriage, there are several other factors that may work to diminish an Arab ethnic identity. These include the relatively small size of the Arab population, in spite of its recent growth. Compared to Asian Americans, there are numerically far fewer Arab Americans; and although both groups tend to marry those of European ancestry, Arabs and Europeans

tend to be less differentiated by skin color, a strong marker in the ethnic and racial stratification that characterizes the U.S. Moreover, children of intermarried couples are less likely to be identified as Arab. Intermarriage may thus speed Arab integration in the mainstream and diminish an ethnic identity. As has often been noted, high intermarriage rates are a necessary condition for assimilation but they are insufficient alone (Gordon, 1964; Lieberman & Waters, 1988). The high intermarriage rates observed do not in themselves prove that social boundaries between Arabs and the larger society have broken down. Many Americans still view Arab Americans as "outsiders" even if their ancestors may have lived in the U.S. for several generations and even if they can no longer speak Arabic. In addition, the low share among mixed marriages of those who claim to be Arab may not only point to ethnic options available to Arab Americans; it may also indicate continued prejudice against Arabs more generally.

Religious boundaries may be important for many in the choice of a marriage partner because religions tend to require or encourage endogamy. In the United States, the effects of Catholic and Jewish background on intermarriage have declined over time (Lehrer, 1998; Sander, 1993), and educational background assumes a stronger role in mate selection than do divisions by religion or the occupational status of fathers (Mare, 1991; Kalmijn, 1998). However, majority group prejudices against Muslims remain strong (Abu-Laban & Suleiman, 1989). Although data limitations preclude us from studying the influence of religion on the likelihood of intermarriage, it is quite plausible that Arab Americans who are Christian are more likely to out-marry than those who are Muslim. Muslim religious and cultural identity differs from predominantly Christian, mainstream U.S. society and Islam tends to be strongly resistant to interfaith marriages. Indeed, immigrant Arabs, an increased proportion of whom nowadays are Muslim, have lower rates of intermarriage than their native-born counterparts, most of whom are descendants of earlier Christian Lebanese and Syrian immigrants. Nevertheless, among immigrant Arabs, rates of out-marriage are still high, with over one-third of women and nearly two-thirds of men out-marrying. The relatively high share of immigrant Arab women who out-marry is remarkable given that Muslim women are prohibited by Islamic law from marrying non-Muslims, on the grounds that children from such marriages would be lost to Islam. Arab women, particularly Mus-

lims, are subjected to stronger social control, particularly in the choice of an appropriate marriage partner.

The recent increased flows of Arab immigrants may ensure both the growth as well as rejuvenation of the Arab American population. Ethnic identity and consciousness among Arab Americans may continue for these and other reasons, irrespective of the degree of their acculturation. However, the increasing share of immigrants may not significantly reduce the overall Arab American intermarriage rates. First, out-marriage rates among Arab immigrants to the U.S., although lower than those of native-born Arabs, are still high, particularly for men. Second, the successful socio-economic integration of large numbers of Arab Americans will mean that many more are likely to marry non-Arab spouses. Thus, despite current immigration flows, high rates of intermarriage are likely to continue, facilitating the overall assimilation of Arab Americans in the U.S.

NOTE

The views expressed here reflect those of the authors and not necessarily those of the City of New York or the Department of City Planning.

REFERENCES

- Abu-Laban, B., & Suleiman, M. W. (Eds.), (1989). *Arab Americans: Continuity and change*. Belmont, MA: Association of Arab-American University Graduates.
- Alba, R. (2000). The melting pot: Myth or reality? In S. Steinberg (Ed.), *Race and ethnicity in the United States* (pp. 211–222). Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Anderson, R. N., & Saenz, R. (1994). Structural determinants of Mexican American intermarriage, 1975–1980. *Social Science Quarterly*, 75, 414–430.
- Aswad, B. C., & Bilge, B. (Eds.), (1996). *Family and gender among American Muslims*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Fitzpatrick, J. P., & Gurak, D. T. (1979). *Hispanic intermarriage in New York City: 1975*. New York: Fordham University Hispanic Research Center.
- Gordon, M. (1964). *Assimilation in American life: The role of race, religion, and national origin*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Haddad, Y. Y. (Ed.), (1991). *The Muslims of America*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hirschman, C. (1983). America's melting pot reconsidered. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 9, 397–423.
- Hout, M., & Goldstein, J. (1994). How 4.5 million Irish immigrants became 40 million Irish Americans: Demographic and subjective aspects of the ethnic composition of White Americans. *American Sociological Review*, 59, 64–82.
- Hwang, S. S., Saenz, R., & Aguirre, B. E. (1997). Structural and assimilationist explanations of Asian American intermarriage. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 59, 758–772.
- Kalmijn, M. (1993). Trends in Black/White intermarriage. *Social Forces*, 72, 119–146.
- Kalmijn, M. (1998). Intermarriage and homogamy: Causes, patterns, trends. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 24, 395–421.
- Kulczycki, A., & Lobo, A. P. (2001). Deepening the melting pot: Arab Americans at the turn of the century. *Middle East Journal*, 55, 459–473.
- Lee, S. M., & Fernandez, M. (1998). Trends in Asian American racial/ethnic intermarriage: A comparison of 1980 and 1990 census data. *Sociological Perspectives*, 41, 323–342.
- Lehrer, E. L. (1998). Religious intermarriage in the United States: Determinants and trends. *Social Science Research*, 27, 245–263.
- Lieberson, S. (1985). Unhyphenated Whites in the United States. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 8, 159–180.
- Lieberson, S., & Waters, M. C. (1988). *From many strands: Ethnic and racial groups in contemporary America*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Lievens, J. (1998). Interethnic marriage: Bringing in the context through multilevel modelling. *European Journal of Population*, 14, 117–155.
- Lobo, A. P., & Salvo, J. J. (1998). Changing U.S. immigration law and the occupational selectivity of Asian immigrants. *International Migration Review*, 32, 737–760.
- Mare, R. D. (1991). Five decades of educational assortative mating. *American Sociological Review*, 56, 15–32.
- McCaa, R. (1989). Isolation or assimilation? A log linear interpretation of Australian marriages, 1947–60, 1975, and 1986. *Population Studies*, 43, 155–162.
- Orfalea, G. (1988). *Before the flames: A quest for the history of Arab Americans*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Pagnini, D. L., & Morgan, S. P. (1990). Intermarriage and social distance among U.S. immigrants at the turn of the century. *American Journal of Sociology*, 96, 405–432.
- Qian, Z. (1997). Breaking the racial barriers: Variations in interracial marriage between 1980 and 1990. *Demography*, 34, 263–76.
- Sander, W. (1993). Catholicism and intermarriage in the United States. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 55, 1037–1041.
- Schoen, R., Wooldredge, J., & Thomas, B. (1989). Ethnic and educational effects on marriage choice. *Social Science Quarterly*, 70, 617–630.
- Schuman, H., Steeh, C., & Bobo, L. (1985). *Racial attitudes in America: Trends and interpretations*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Spickard, P. R. (1989). *Mixed blood: Intermarriage and ethnic identity in twentieth-century America*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Sung, B. L. (1990). *Chinese American intermarriage*. New York: Center for Migration Studies.
- Waite, L. J., & Sheps, J. (1994, April). *The impact of religious upbringing and marriage markets on Jewish intermarriage*. Paper presented at the annual meetings of the Population Association of America, Miami.
- Yinger, M. (1985). Ethnicity. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 11, 151–180.