

Iranians in Australia

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Abstract

Australian Government policy has been the major determining factor for the composition of the Australian society. By abandoning the White Australia Policy and adopting a Multicultural Policy, the Australian Government created an opportunity for people from different parts of the world, including Iranians, to migrate to Australia. The influx of Iranians into Australia since the late 1970s has added a distinctive minority to the existing diversity of population of this country. In 1986 there were 7,496 Iranians living in Australia, accounting for 0.05% of the total Australian population of 15,602,156. By the year 1991, the number has increased to 12,914, accounting for 0.08% of the total Australian population of 16,847,310.

The aim of this study is to provide a demographic and sociological analysis of the size and distribution of Iranians in Australia as well as the process of their community formation and settlement related needs.

To provide more insight in this study, a comparative approach has been used. Attempts have been made to compare Iranians in Australia with a number of other ethnic groups, the total Australian population, the population of Iranians in the United States, and the population of Iran, in a number of significant areas.

The main data sources for this study were the Australian Population Censuses, including those of 1986 and 1991, as well as data from the publications of the Bureau of Immigration Research. Relevant literature has been reviewed and used throughout the paper.

Analysis of data confirms that the Iranian community in Australia is a multicultural community, including different religions, languages and different ethnic groups. However, Iranians are a community to the extent that they share an identity based on cultural heritage and a sense of ethnic honour.

From a socio-economic point of view, the Iranian community is a highly stratified community. Within the community there is a status mobility contest based on social class. Taking education, occupation and income, these indicate that over 50% of Iranians in Australia in 1986 had no qualifications; nearly one third of the population was placed at the lower end of the occupational classification and a great majority of Iranians had annual incomes of \$26,000 or below in 1986. Only 0.3% had incomes of \$50,000 or more. This indicates that, although professionals constitute a distinctive stratum, the bulk of the population appears to be in lower income brackets. Research clearly demonstrates that the Iranian community, as a small community, while endeavouring to establish its own identity and uniqueness, is experiencing difficulties and facing problems mostly due to settlement-related needs, discrimination, and to overt and silent racism.

The Iranian community with 40.2% post-school qualifications (compared with 30.2% for Australian total population) and 13.9% with a university degree or higher qualifications (compared with 4.9% for Australian general population) experiences one of the highest degrees of unemployment in the country (29.7% for Iranians and 8.5% for Australian total population).

Despite all serious obstacles and barriers which Iranians are facing in Australian society, they do not consider themselves as an oppressed minority, but rather as a group trying to improve their status further. Iranians in Australia are also trying to resist the racism of assimilation by guarding and using

their own cultural baggage. They rationalize the situation in a manner which appears to express a feeling of moral superiority. Culturally based organizations constitute an important source of identity for the first generation.

Data presented in this research clearly demonstrate that there are large gaps between various segments of the Iranian population and a still larger gap exists between the Iranian community and the total Australian population. It should be remembered, however, that once the Australian community agrees to admit them for permanent residence, it has an obligation to ensure they are reasonably comfortable and secure. Thus there is a great need for the intervention and support of the Australian Government to bridge the gaps by enhancing opportunities in the areas of employment and meeting the needs of the elderly and women in having equal access to resources and social services in Australian society.

Introduction

The influx of Iranians into Australia since the late 1970s has added a distinctive minority to the existing diversity of population of this country. Since 1979, when the new Iranian regime came to power, there have been protracted debates about whether the subsequent changes in social and political life in Iran constituted a revolution, and if so what kind of one.¹ These questions have promoted further debates where the Iranian Revolution is compared and contrasted with previous world revolutions.² Some attention has also been given to the problem of the stability of the regime, and how likely the changes brought about with the regime will be economically viable and culturally enduring.³

It is beyond the scope of this paper to deal in any comprehensive way with these large issues. My focus is, however, to provide a demographic and sociological analysis of the Iranians in Australia in the context of Australian Multicultural Policy. Attempts will also be made to describe the dynamics of social interaction of Iranians in the process of their community formation. This includes shedding some light on the participation of the Iranians in Australian social and economic structures as well as on their cultural expressions and experiences of the migratory process.

In doing so, I will also attempt to give a brief account of the major factors which cause international migration of Iranians. In this context, major contributing factors are: internal war, the Iraq-Iran war, a deteriorating economy, political instability, and socio-cultural insecurity.

An important factor which precipitated the pronounced redistribution of population in Iran was an internal war which began two months after the rule of the new government in March 1979. The war was between government troops and opposition factions in three provinces of Kurdistan, West Azarbijan and Turkeman Sahra; and it continued for several years.

The Iraq-Iran war, which began in 1980 intensified the situation. As Anthony has pointed out,

¹ For example, Nikki Keddie, in her account of the Iranian Revolution ("Comments on Skocpol", *Theory and Society* 11 (1982): 285-29) explains that the Iranian Revolution lacks peculiarities based on Islamic ideology. In her analysis, she points out that "Although the ideology and organization of Iranian Shi'ism were particularly conducive to supporting a revolution, which expressed a series of economic, social, cultural and anti-imperialist grievances, one should not suggest that only Shii Iran could have such a revolution. For religious movements and ideologies are continually changing, and although Iran's revolution is built on certain shii traditions, such traditions can be found or 'interpreted when a need for them is felt'".

² Professor Theda Skocpol ("Rentire State and Shi'a Islam in the Iranian Revolution", *Theory and Society* 11 (1982): 265-285) considered the Iranian Revolution to be one of the few major revolutions in the contemporary world. She also explains how the peculiarities of Iranian Revolution has challenged her previous framework of analysis of previous world revolutions. She points out that "the initial stages of the Iranian Revolution obviously challenged my previously worked-out notions about the causes of social revolutions". In explaining the causes of Iranian Revolution, she goes on to write that "there can be no question ... about the sharp departure of the outbreak of the Iranian Revolution from the causal configurations that occurred in the outbreak of the French, Russian, and Chinese Revolutions".

³ Walter Goldfrank ("Commentary on Skocpol", *Theory and Society* 11 (1982): 301-304) explains that "it is of course too early to forecast with much assurance the stabilization of clerical rule, but agricultural development (or the lack thereof) may well play a role in determining the regime's future along with oil and geopolitics".

"wars tend to create rather cruel conditions, that is, governments tend to bury any source of domestic trouble which, in their eyes, might pose a threat to the successful pursuits of the struggle".⁴ The Iraq-Iran war resulted in the destruction of hundreds of cities, towns and villages from provinces of Khuzistan, Luristan, Kermanshahan, Kurdistan and Eilam. This caused a mass migration of inhabitants from these areas to other parts of the country and to other countries of the world. In this process, Tehran, and some other capital cities of provinces, such as Kermanshah, received a much greater share of the influx than other cities.⁵ Interestingly, many government employees and members of *nouveau riche* families migrated to Tehran in order to seek work or prepare themselves to migrate abroad.

Accompanying the structural changes in Iranian society was a deteriorating economy, which in its turn, contributed to increasing unemployment and to the government's decision to discontinue subsidies of food. Khonsari, an Iranian economist, writing in the *International Herald Tribune* on 14 July 1982, said that "the once prosperous economy now has five million unemployed". Before the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, there were over one million foreigners in Iran working within different sectors of economy. At that time the buying power of the new middle class broke national boundaries. Hoveyda wrote that "with the mounting prosperity Iranians started looking to the outside world in increasing numbers. Not only the rich, but the middle classes too started buying property in Europe and the United States".⁶

Political instabilities and socio-cultural pressures on religious minorities and middle class families have resulted in the migration of many families in these areas to Tehran or indeed, to other countries of the world. For example, in the city of Kermanshah, out of some 194 Jewish families and 210 Christian families in 1966, there remain only 20 and 30 families respectively in 1984.⁷

All these factors not only encouraged rural-urban migration but also sometimes forced people into it. Furthermore, the large-scale migration of minorities of higher and middle class families to other countries of the world has become commonplace. Although there is a lack of accurate data, it is estimated that over one and a half million Iranians from among the intelligentsia and professional classes left the country during the early months of the revolutionary regime.⁸

The Iranian Population in Australia

The first official figure of the size of the Iranian residents in Australia dates back to 1981. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics in 1981, about 3669 Iranians were living in Australia. The sex ratio was 106 males per one hundred females indicating that family migration has been the dominant pattern of migration in this period.

By taking the period of residency, which is only available for the State of South Australia, 13.8% of Iranians had residency period of ten years and more in 1986. Based on this information it can be estimated that up to 1975 about 500-600 Iranians were living in Australia.

In 1986 the number of Iranians increased and according to the 1986 Population Census, there were 7496 Iranians living in Australia counting for 0.05% of the Australian total population of 15,602,156. This comprehensive data on Iranians will constitute the basis of my analysis here. However, I have used other data available from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Bureau of Immigration Research as well as local data and information throughout this paper.

⁴ J.D. Anthony, "Regional and World-wide Implication of the Gulf War", in M.S.El Azhary (ed.), *The Iran-Iraq War: A Historical, Economic and Political Analysis*, London, 1984, p. 118.

⁵ H. Adibi, "Population Redistribution in Iran: The Case of Kermanshah City", *Urban Geography*, 10/3, (1989): 270-280.

⁶ F. Hoveyda, *The Fall of The Shah* (trans. R. Liddell), London: 1978, p. 7.

⁷ J.J. and B.D. Clark, *Kermanshah: an Iranian provincial city*, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1969, p. 37.

⁸ A. Pahlavi, *Faces in a Mirror from Exile*, Englewood-Cliffs, N.J., 1980[4], p. 211.

Multicultural Australia and the Iranian Community

Australian Government policy has been the major determining factor for the composition of the Australian society. It was under the Multicultural Policy that Iranians were encouraged and able to migrate to Australia. Before discussing the impact of the Australian Multicultural policy on the Iranian community, it seems useful to explain briefly the major characteristics of the government policies prior to multicultural policy as well as those factors influencing the adaptation and implementation of multicultural policy.

The major government policies in the area of population can be grouped into the following categories:

1. The first category of the Australian Government policy is known as the White Australia Policy. This policy is associated with a policy of restricted immigration. Although the British Government had a policy to keep Australia as "a preserve for the English race" during the early 1800s, the White Australia Policy came into operation in 1901 as the Immigration Restriction Act - one of the first acts of parliament passed after Federation. Under this policy, the government's intention was to keep unchanged the Anglo-Celtic composition of Australian society.

It is interesting to note that not only the Australian Government, through restrictive legislation, was in support of White Australia Policy, but also unions and industrial courts were supporting it. In explaining this situation, de Lepervanche writes: "In the old days it was 'the unions' who were against non-European immigrants. This is undoubtedly true, and the extent to which the AWU's behaviour to coloured aliens was based on economic fears is abundantly clear from a reading of its Annual Conference Reports."⁹

It is not difficult to understand why 'unions' were supporting White Australia Policy. The main reason lies in the Australian wage structure. As Bailey puts it:

Most of the disabilities that aliens in Australia have endured were devised to preserve wage standards and to prevent foreign competitors from understanding locals; the legal and administrative discrimination against resident aliens was therefore 'the corollary of the immigration policy of the Commonwealth'... and cry for maintaining a 'White Australia'.¹⁰

Despite this support, the White Australia Policy was opposed by a number of institutions after the Second World War. An unusual juxtaposition of believers emerged "when the Australian Communist Party, Roman Catholic Archbishop Mannix and the Presbyterian General Assembly all supported a quota system of Asian immigration".¹¹ Also the Nation advocated change in the White Australian Policy in 1958. Yet it was not until 1965 that "both the Country Party and the Australian Labor Party (ALP) dropped the phrase 'White Australia' from their platforms".¹²

Modifications to the White Australia Policy included a new category for entry and extended stay for well-qualified Asians. These modifications were supported by various churches and immigration reform groups. London (1970:18) explains that "Reformers invoked humanitarian grounds for changes and criticised the political ineptitude of a discriminatory policy that antagonised near-Asian neighbours".¹³

There were other contributing factors for these changes as well. Among them are the following:

A. In order to promote industrialization, Australia increasingly needed skilled as well as unskilled labour after the Second World War and this helped foster discussion about and advocacy for changes in immigration policy.

B. The post-War world which led to the independence of non-European nations,

⁹ M.M. De Lepervanche, *Indians in White Australia*, Sydney, 1984, p. 69.

¹⁰ K.H. Bailey, "The Legal Position of Foreigners in Australia" in N. Mackenzie, (ed.), *The Legal Status of Aliens in Pacific Countries.*, London, 1973, p. 46.

¹¹ Immigration Reform Group, *Immigration: Control or Colour Bar?* Melbourne, 1962, p. 26.

¹² K. Rivett (ed.), *Australia and the Non-White Migrant*, Melbourne, 1975, p. 29.

¹³ H.J. London, *Non-White Immigration and the White Australia Policy*, Sydney, 1970

exercised great influence on changing immigration policy in Australia.

All these factors resulted in the change of Australian migration policy. On 2 December 1972, a Labour government was returned to power in the Commonwealth, and Al Grassby became Minister for Immigration. In the course of an interview after a few months in power, Grassby remarked that "it is a trans-global edict that people will be regarded as individuals. In the past, there has been discrimination on these [racial] grounds and on geographical grounds ... But in future people will be treated for what they are, not on their complexion or the shape of their nose".¹⁴

Since the mid-1960s, the White Australia Policy was referred to as policy of integration, although it certainly was assimilationist. Abandoning White Australia Policy did not mean that government and society would be prepared to adopt a multicultural policy in its comprehensive sense. Rather the government policy in the early 1980s can be classified as an assimilationist policy.

2. The second category of the Australian immigration policy is known as 'Assimilation/Integration Policy'. The term assimilation covers a wide range of processes in which people of different cultural backgrounds interact and eventually come to resemble one another. Assimilation has its roots in an anthropological concept of acculturation. Gordon refers to acculturation as behavioural assimilation. In a broader context, assimilation means that immigrants abandon their culture and mould their behaviours to the values and norms of the majority.¹⁵

In Australia, assimilationist policy was based on this demand that migrants should assimilate quickly and totally to the 'Australian culture'. This policy implicitly asserted the superiority of 'Australian culture' over that of the migrants. Assimilationist policy was mainly oriented towards people from non-English speaking backgrounds. Assimilation had also important aspects: "for an overt racist exclusivity based on the supposed superiority of certain racial-biological features, it substituted a covert racism based on the proposed incompatibility of certain cultures; and it drew the limiting line at which this incompatibility began, namely where a culture ceased to be 'European'".¹⁶

The Assimilationist programme as "the semi-official ideology", as Martin puts it, did not succeed.¹⁷ The inevitable failure of assimilation policy has led to an increase in services under the rubric of multiculturalism.¹⁸

Although in the mid-1960s, the White Australia Policy was abandoned and this might seem to indicate fundamental changes in Australian society, Castle *et al.* have explained that, on closer examination, the reality is far from impressive. For example William Snedden, the Liberal Minister of Immigration in 1968, explained clearly that the government goal was eventual and complete assimilation to an 'Australian' mainstream culture. He stated: "We ask particularly of migrants that they be substantially Australians in the first generation and completely Australians in the second generation".¹⁹ This clearly indicates that although a multicultural programme was accepted, the cultural goal was similar to that of the late 1940s.

However, during the 1960s, due to international and internal pressure, the Australian Government moved toward adopting cultural pluralism or what is termed later as multiculturalism. Some of the factors which exercised significant influence in this process were as follows:

A. By the mid-1960s high rates of growth in Northern Europe meant that new migrants from preferred source countries were becoming harder to find and that substantial re-

¹⁴ *Australian Financial Review*, March 26, 1973.

¹⁵ M. Gordon, "Assimilation in American Life" in his *The Role of Race, Religion and National Origins*, London, 1964.

¹⁶ S. Castles, B. Cope, Bill, M. Kalantzis and M. Morrissey, *Mistaken Identity*, Sydney, 1990, p. 45.

¹⁷ J. Martin, *Migrants: Equality and Ideology* (Meredith Memorial Lectures, La Trobe University), Melbourne, 1972, p. 14.

¹⁸ E. Vasta, "Gender, Class, and Ethnic Relations: the domestic and work experiences of Italian migrant women in Australia", in G. Bottomley, De Lepervanche and Martin (eds.), *Intersections: Gender/ Class/ Culture/ Ethnicity*, Sydney, 1991, p. 175.

¹⁹ Castles *et al.*, *loc. cit.*, p. 51, cf. A. Jakubowicz, M. Morrissey and J. Palser, *Ethnicity, Class and Social Policy in Australia*, Sydney, 1984.

migration from Australia was taking place.

An estimate for the period 1959-65 suggested the total settlers loss was over 16% of settler arrivals. Detailed figures revealed that German, Dutch and Italian return rates rose sharply in the early 1960s and by 1966 over one-fifth of all post-war German settlers had departed, as had about 18% of Dutch and 13% of Italians".²⁰

B. In the domestic area, the increasing militancy of Aboriginal groups and organizations resulted in the referendum of 1967, which for the first time granted citizenship to Aboriginal people. Also migrants were demanding a more active participation in society. As Martin²¹ puts it, "A migrant wants participation in the political process as well as opportunity for some degree of self-determination. They no longer accept the situation where their scale and identity are defined entirely by outside institutional forces". It was in this period, late the 1960s and early 70s that the first wave of semi-skilled blue-collar workers from Iran migrated to Australia. The numbers were small but they were included in substantial numbers of immigrants from West Asia.

C. By the mid-1960s, the nature of arrivals from source countries was changing rapidly in the direction of people less obviously assimilable. In 1968 the Turkish immigration agreement was signed, permitting the immigration of the first group of people of largely Islamic background.

The factors detailed above ensured that the retreat from assimilation and White Australia policies took place with relatively little controversy. Yet under these policies Iranians were not able to migrate to Australia. Thus the Australian Multicultural Policy can be considered as corner-stone for opening the avenue for Iranian migration. Before discussing the impact of the Australian Multicultural policy on the Iranian community in Australia, it seems useful to explain its major characteristics as well as to evaluate its implementation in Australian society.

3. The third category of the Australian Government Policy is known as "Cultural Pluralism or Multiculturalism". Cultural pluralism or in Australian terms Multiculturalism stresses the distinctiveness of ethnic groups and the need for them to live in a kind of separate-yet-equal harmony. Unlike the assimilation, multiculturalism is based on an appreciation of cultural differences. Multiculturalism commenced from some account of NESB migrants' inequality. It also was devised as part of their solution. Thus it has a double aspect, as Bottomley puts it: "a demand for the right to pursue cultural differences in Australia and a demand for the forms of political organization (lobby groups, etc.) necessary for this."²²

Multiculturalism appears to have began with Grassby during the Whitlam years of 1972-75, but developed as a product of the Fraser government of 1975-83. However, major characteristics of multicultural policy are stated as follow:

Cultural Identity: The right of all Australians, within carefully defined limits, to express and share their individual cultural heritage, including their language and religion.

Social Justice: The right of all Australians to equality of treatment and opportunity and the removal of barriers of race, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, gender or place of birth.

Economic Efficiency: The need to maintain, develop and utilize effectively the skills and talents of all Australians, regardless of background.²³

This document is predominantly more concerned with increasing the equality of educational and occupational opportunities than with cultural pluralism. Yet a mere statement of principles cannot in

²⁰ J. Western, *Social Inequality in Australian Society*, Sydney, 1983, p. 255.

²¹ Martin, "Ethnic Pluralism and Ideology", in S. Murray-Smith, (ed.), *Melbourne Studies in Education, 1976*, Melbourne, 1976, p. 16.

²² In Bottomley, De Lepervanche and Martin, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

²³ Office of Multicultural Affairs, *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia*, Canberra, 1989, p. 7.

itself remove the gap between the ideology of equal rights for all Australians and the reality of exclusion of non-Anglos from the centres of economic and political power. Based on these contradictions, multiculturalism has been criticized from two different perspectives: conservative and radical-liberal.²⁴

A. From a conservative perspective, the major criticisms can be summarized as follows: Multiculturalism tends to create cultural ghettos²⁵ and is a threat to Australian social cohesion. It locks children into family and religious moves which prevent them contacting and profiting from the greater freedoms of their country of adoption, and more and more, of birth.²⁶

There are large sources of literature and research findings²⁷ that refute this claim and provide strong evidence that Asians and ethnic communities have not undermined or even come near to threatening the social cohesion of Australian society.

Another criticism relates to this claim that immigrants are the major cause of unemployment in Australia. It is well documented in the literature²⁸ that immigrant work force in the past has been more skilled than the domestic work force and by implication more productive.

The third criticism relates to the political isolation of ethnic communities. It is argued that multiculturalism unnecessarily creates ethnic political constituencies, with all the consequences of reciprocal and political exploitation. Yet there is strong evidence in the literature²⁹ that there is very little opportunity for migrants to participate in most of political institutions, parliaments and political parties while being grossly under-represented in the leadership and administrative structure of unions.

The last criticism relates to the quality of loyalty or emotional attachment of migrants to Australia. From the point of view of the assimilation policy, the valid proof for a migrant's loyalty to Australia is considered to be a complete assimilation of the migrant and a destroying of all feelings of attachment to the country of birth. In dealing with this issue and the failure of the assimilation policy, strong evidence suggests that it is possible to be loyal to both countries at the same time. Putnis writes that "an immigrant can feel emotionally attached to Australia without losing his attachment to his homeland."³⁰ There is no logical reason which prevents identification with both host and immigrant groups simultaneously. This involves not just feeling half host and half ethnic, but to feel strong identification with both the ethnic and host groups.

B. Critics from radical-liberal points of views have also criticised Multiculturalism. One of the criticisms relates to the framework of multiculturalism which is not comprehensive in covering all significant aspects of social life in an ethnically diverse society such as Australia. The emphasis is placed more on cultural diversity than other areas. Jean Martin, in elaborating on this point, comments that Multicultural means something more than cultural diversity; all large-scale, modern societies are culturally diverse. What I take us to mean by multicultural, however, is the existence within the one society of distinct patterns or systems of interrelated

²⁴ [See also N. Habel (ed.), *Religion and Multiculturalism in Australia: essays in honour of Victor C. Hayes*, Adelaide, 1992. Ed.]

²⁵ G. Blainey, *All for Australia*, Sydney, 1984.

²⁶ D. Jaensch, and M. Teichmann, *The Macmillan Dictionary of Australian Politics*, Sydney, 1984, p. 132.

²⁷ London, *op. cit.*; R. Hassan, and G. Tan, *Asian Migrants in Australia: a socio-economic study*, Adelaide, 1985; J. Sloan, M. Wooden *et al.*, *Australian Immigration: a survey of issues* (Immigration Research Bureau), Canberra, 1990.

²⁸ A. Jamrozik, *Social Welfare Policy for a Multicultural Society*, Canberra, 1988; Jamrozik, R. Urquhart, and M. Wearing, *Contribution of Immigration to Skill, Development and Occupational Structure*, Melbourne, 1990; Jamrozik, *Class, Inequality and the State: social change, social policy and the new Middle Class*, Melbourne, 1991; S. McIntyre, *Winners and Losers: the pursuit of social justice in Australian history*, Sydney, 1985; R. Morris, *Rethinking Social Welfare: why care for A stranger?* New York, 1986; J.M. Najman and J.S. Western (eds.), *A Sociology of Australian Society*, Melbourne, 1988.

²⁹ C. Collins, "The Political Economy of Post-War Immigration", in E.L. Wheelwright, E and K. Buckley, (eds.), *Essays in the Political Economy of Australian Capitalism*, Sydney, 1975, vol.1, pp. 105-29; G. Zangalis, G (1976) "Our Unions or Theirs", in D. Storer (ed.), *Ethnic Rights, Power and Participation*, Melbourne, 1976.

³⁰ A.L. Putnis, "Immigrant Adjustment: A Note on Kovac's and Cropley's Model", *Australian Journal of Social Issues* 11 (1976): 209-212.

ideas, values and forms of behaviour, which are identified with particular ways of life that have been developed by separate communities over certain historical periods.³¹

The second criticism is directed to the attitudes of elite, in areas such as media. The focus of media is more on cultural rights than social or political rights of migrants. In de Lepervanche's words (1984:171), "Ethnic communities were invited to celebrate their ethnicity".³² Cox (1990:2) in referring to the existing attitudinal problems in the wider society writes:

If we do decide to accept the challenge that multiculturalism presents, we should acknowledge, first and foremost, that we have an attitudinal problem. There are probably still many among us who would prefer that immigration be stopped and that those who elect to stay here conform to 'Australian ways', however they define those ways. If such attitudes are pervasive, little can be achieved, and the multicultural policy statement will be rhetoric seeking to disguise a reality of injustice, inequality and packets of disadvantages.³³

The third criticism relates to the contradictory nature of Multiculturalism which is both liberating and marginalizing. On one hand, it has provided necessary services for migrants; on the other hand, it ignores the structural inequalities experienced by many migrants. There are strong signs that, although immigration policy officially has moved away from assimilation and integration into multiculturalism, yet the dominant component of this policy is perceived in terms of those traits. Martin, in describing the characteristics of the phases which relates to the fifties and early sixties and multiculturalism in the late sixties and early seventies points out that "the first two definitions emphasize the transient, marginal status of new-comers as migrants; the third conceives of culturally diverse groups as an appropriate term to convey the claim to dignity of which this definition implies".³⁴ One of the obvious implications of the multicultural policy's bias toward assimilationist policy is reflected in the power structure of Australian society. It has become obvious that placing major stress on the expression of ethnicity and maximizing opportunity for social mobility has overshadowed the rigidity of existing power structures. Cox, in expressing this view, writes: "Ideologically, the thrust for ethnic power on the basis of ethnic structures is in many quarters not acceptable, mainly because it encourages structural pluralism and enhances the possibility of a divided society".³⁵

This dilemma has been expressed by many writers in the literature and the message is clear that it is not possible under existing structural arrangements for ethnics to express fully their identifications for ethnicity and, at the same time adapt the normative and relational characteristics of the dominant Anglo-Australian sector in pursuit of more equality. Delaruelle allocates much of his article to discussing the misrepresentation of ethnic communities as well as unjust distribution of power in Australian society.³⁶ Class analysis has also been rather out of focus in multicultural policy. Finally, there is the widespread uncertainty about cultural and national identity.

All this suggests that Australia's multicultural policy needs to go through a profound change with regard not only to the ethnic communities within Australia but to the fact that Australia is part of the international community and needs to enhance its understanding and expand its relation with its neighbours in the region. There is a strong view that, as the international global village grows closer, Australians will also have to conform more clearly to the geopolitical location of the continent that they inhabit. Many might not still agree with the views of Bill Hayden, the former Minister for Foreign Affairs and now Governor-General, but they cannot ignore their implications:

We are an anomaly as a European country in this part of the world. There is already a large and growing population in Asia and it is inevitable in my view that Australia will become a

³¹ Martin, *The Ethnic Dimension* (ed. S. Encel) Sydney, 1981, p. 18.

³² In Bottomley *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 171

³³ D. Cox, "Social Work and Multiculturalism", *Australian Social Work* 43/30, (Sept. 1990): 2.

³⁴ Martin, in Bottomley *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

³⁵ Cox, *Migration and Welfare: an Australian perspective*, Sydney, 1987, p. 209.

³⁶ J. Delaruelle, "Beauty's Mask: Multiculturalism Today, a Personal View", *The Age Review*, August 1985.

Euroasian Country over the next century or two. I happen to think that it is desirable. This means we are becoming part of the mainstream of this region.³⁷

By analysing these views, it is obvious how, on the one hand, the Australian Government policy has been influencing the migrant's life in Australia, and on the other that there is a growing trend among people to demand fundamental change in society as a result of implementing of the multicultural policy. It also becomes clear that Australia's successful future relies on how she is able to bring profound change in relation to ethnicity, gender and social class as well as in establishing a positive, steady and permanent relationship with her neighbours and becoming part of the mainstream in the region.

Despite such susceptibility to criticism, as Castles, Alcorso, and Vasta have put it:

Australia has changed substantially since the days of the White Australia policy and assimilation, and indeed has one of the most successful immigration and ethnic affairs policies in the world. Multiculturalism still has a long way to go to overcome racist practices and cultural domination, but it provides a permanent public arena for debate on the significance of diversity for national identity.³⁸

It is in this context of reality and aspiration for the future that I am attempting to examine some of the implications of multicultural policy for the Iranian community in Australia.

Iranian Immigrants to Australia: the Historical Background

The history of Iranian migrants into Western countries dates from the late nineteenth century. Since this first significant diaspora a national bourgeoisie emerged and began to develop in Iranian society during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and Iran became more complex and differentiated. Therefore the economic development of the country added to the traditional classes of landlords, peasants and middle class - consisting of merchants, craftsmen - a new industrial, commercial and financial bourgeoisie and an industrial working class. Although these newly developed classes remained very small until the First World War, they were to play an increasing role after it.

In this process, the need for an extension of commerce and the establishment of new industries became very pronounced. The need for political relationships with Russia and other European countries became vital as well. The latter need became of immediate importance when Iran was faced with Russian military threats in the early nineteenth century. All these forces required implementing new technology, a quest for new ways of developing the country, and the education of new social groups.

In this process emphasis was placed on the new social groups and a major shift had to take place to meet their educational needs. This resulted in the establishment of new schools both with new programmes inside the country and a students-abroad policy. The underlying assumption of this activity was that, in order to improve the situation of the country and bring about modernization, there was a need for Western-educated Iranians. It was believed that the new system of education was the major reason for the industrialization of the Western countries, and therefore acquisition and use of new education seemed a necessity.

The establishment of state capitalism and the extension of bureaucratic machinery with the modernizing of the military resulted in the expansion of new social groups, the major characteristics of which were the new education and the capability of performing tasks in technical areas. The number of participants in state capitalism, in the military apparatus as well as in higher education, rose to prominence after World War II. In 1941 there were approximately 5,000 college graduates, of whom over 1,000 were educated in Western countries.³⁹

³⁷ Cited in G. Sherington, *Australia's Immigrants*, Sydney, 1990, p. 170.

³⁸ Castles, C. Alcorso, G. Rando and Vasta, *Australia's Italians: culture and community in a changing society*, Sydney, 1992, p. 222.

³⁹ H. Adibi, "Rural-Urban Migration In Iran", *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology* 13/2, (June 1977).

In the 1960s and 70s, due to the requirements of the rapid economic development, the schools, students and employees on different educational levels rapidly increased. In the area of higher education the decade of 1970 is of special importance. The number of students in higher institutions within the country increased from 19,800 in 1960 to 60,000 in 1970 and to 123,144 in 1974. In 1971, according to the statistics released by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (excluding data from England and the state of Illinois in the United States) some 20,535 Iranians were studying in colleges and universities abroad. In the academic year of 1973-74, there were 123,144 students in colleges, universities and institutions of higher education throughout Iran itself, with 5,025 instructors.

The growth of higher education both in and outside the country reveals the fact that, Iran, due to her economic development process, needed a great number of highly trained professionals in different fields. This very process led also to the expansion of the occupational activities, resulting in opening new jobs and expanding other occupations. Therefore occupation has become one of the major factors in shaping the composition of the rising social groups.

Rising development of these new social groups, which we may classify as the "new middle class", accelerated the international migration of Iranians before and after the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran. However, during the last decade the migration process has been changing drastically in kind - into a mass migration. This movement not only entailed the new middle class but varied strata of population and social groups of different parts of Iranian society.

One of the distinctive features of Iranian migration to Australia is that it occurred mainly after a revolution that substantially altered social and political conditions in Iran. In comparing Iranian migrants before and after the establishment of the Islamic Republic, Iranian statistics indicate that the number before 1979 was minimal in comparison to recent phenomena.

Another distinction needs to be made in relation to the motives of migration for both groups (i.e., before and after the revolution). People who migrated to Australia after the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, consist of a substantial number of refugees, in contrast to the earlier cohorts of students and economically-motivated immigrants.

Data on the Iranian Population

Population growth in Iran until the end of the first quarter of the twentieth century was slow. It has been estimated (by Bharier)⁴⁰ that from 1900 to 1926 the average rate of population growth was less than one percent per year. Through the modernization process and by improvements in the standard of living, the rate of population growth doubled during the second quarter of the century. After World War II, the rate of population growth accelerated further, due primarily to improvements in public health.⁴¹

Between 1941 and 1956, the annual rate of population growth averaged 2.2%. By 1966, the population of Iran had reached 25.7 million, implying an average annual rate of growth of 3.% during 1956-1966.⁴²

The establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979 marked a dramatic turning-point in the population policy of Iran. The new government abandoned the previous government's policy of family planning and population control. In addition, the government strongly endorsed early marriage. This led to the further increase of population growth. Table 1 shows that the population of Iran increased from 9.9 million in 1900 to 49.4 million in 1986.

⁴⁰ J. Bharier, "A Note on the Population of Iran", *Population Studies* 22 (1968): 273-279.

⁴¹ A. Banani, *The Modernization of Iran*, Stanford, Ca., 1967.

⁴² A. Aghajanian, "Population Change In Iran, 1966-86: a stalled demographic transition?" in *Population and Development Review* 17/4 (Dec., 1991): 703-715.

Table 1: Population Growth In Iran

Year	Population (millions)	Average annual growth rate (percent)
1900	9.9	-
1927	12.0	0.8
1935	13.5	1.5
1941	14.8	1.5
1956	18.9	2.2
1966	25.7	3.1
1976	33.7	2.7
1986	49.4*	3.8

Sources: Bharier;⁴³ Iranian Bureau of Statistics, Population Census of 1976 and 1986.

* Includes 1.8 million refugees from Afghanistan.

Table 1 indicates that during the decade 1966-76 the population of Iran increased rapidly, but the rate of growth began to slow down. During the succeeding decade, from 1976 to 1986, this downward trend in fertility was reversed and the rate of population growth once again accelerated dramatically. The size of the population rose from 33.7 million in 1976 to 49.4 million ten years later. This implies an average annual rate of growth of 3.8% during the decade, one of the world's high rates of national population.

This population growth with the influx of 1.8 million refugees from Afghanistan placed heavy pressure on the country's resources and employment opportunities. In addition, the closure of universities for two years in 1980 and increasing demands for tertiary education all led to the increase of Iranian out-migration. Yet the population of Iran continued its growth and according to the Iranian 1991 Population Census there were 55,837,163 people living in Iran in 1991.

Population By Age and Sex

The age structure of the Iranian population is such that 13.4% of the population is under 14 years of age, 80.9% of working age (i.e., 15-64), and 5.6% 65 and over. In order to extend our understanding of these ratios, and the structure of the Iranian population in Australia, there is a need to compare them with the total population of Iran and Australia. Also, since the United States has the highest number of Iranians living outside of Iran, it is usefully included in this comparison as well. For this purpose, Table 2 sets out the age structure of Iranian population and throws some light on the similarities and differences with these populations on various age groups.

⁴³ Bharier, *loc. cit.*, 275.

Table 2: Comparative Age Distribution of Iranian population In Australia (Percent)

Age groups	Iranians In Australia		Australian Population	Iranian Population In Iran	Iranians in USA
	1986	1991	1991	1986	1980
0-4	2.6	1.3	7.2	18.3	2.7
5-14	10.8	13.2	14.9	27.2	8.0
15-24	17.7	13.6	15.9	19.0	33.0
25-34	24.9	25.3	16.2	13.4	28.9
35-44	20.6	22.8	15.2	7.6	13.4
45-54	10.3	11.7	10.8	6.4	7.1
55-64	7.1	6.5	8.5	5.1	3.6
65+	5.6	5.6	11.3	3.0	3.3
Total populat'n	7,496	12,914	16,850,540	49,445,010	122,890

Source: Iranians in Australia are taken from the Bureau of Statistics, Population Census 1986 and 1991 (ABS), Canberra; the figures for Iranians in the United States are taken from: Momeni;⁴⁴ and Iranian population in Iran from the Iranian Bureau of Statistics, Population Census 1986, Tehran.

Table 2 indicates that over 31.1 % of Iranians in Australia in 1986 were under 25 years of age. This percentage dropped to 28.1% in 1991. The corresponding ratio for the total population of Iran in 1986 was 64.5%, more than twice of the same age group. This comparison indicates that Iranian population in Australia closely resembles the Australian population in this age group (38) rather than the population of Iranians in the United States (43.7). Further analysis of this Table shows that 13.4% of the Iranian population in Australia were under 15 years of age whereas the corresponding ratio for total Iranian population in Iran was 45.5%, three times higher, indicating that Iran has a young and growing population.

In comparing the ratios of various age groups, Table 2 also indicates that there are significant differences between the Iranian population in Australia and the total Australian population, as well as the population of Iranians in the United States. There are two possible explanations for these differences. The first explanation relates to the nature of the migration process and settlement. This means that the Iranian migrants have been self-selective, based on the social values they hold. In other words, people who migrated abroad were in all likelihood familiar with modernization and more inclined to adjust to this process. Thus self-selection in the decision-making process to migrate, as well as the migration process itself, has influenced the structure of the population with regard to the age and sex.

The second explanation lies in the composition of the Iranian population in Australia and in the United States. The majority of Iranians in the United States are Muslim, whereas in Australia Muslims are in minority within the Iranian community comprising only 20% of Iranian population. Other groups include Armenians, Assyrians, Baha'is and Zoroastrians.

⁴⁴ J. Momeni, "A Statistical Note on Iranian Population In the United States", *Iran Nameh* 11 (1985): 17-21.

Another observation of the Table 2 relates to the age 65 and over. The percentage of Iranians is much larger (5.6%) than the ratio for Iranians in Iran (3%). But in comparison with the ratio of Australian population in this age group (10.6), it is significantly low. However, if we consider the age 60 and over, for Iranians in Australia, the percentage is significant and has implications in many areas such as pension and health care. In health care, as McCallum puts it,⁴⁵ "the relationship between health, culture and ethnicity in old age can be depicted as a mosaic made up of a complex pattern of factors". The aged population of Iranians in Australia has its own needs and require its own culturally appropriate services. Table 2 also shows that there is considerable difference between the ratio of working age groups (15-65) in Iran (51.4%), and the Australian population in 1986 (66.2) with Iranians in Australia (81%). This indicates that the ratio of the working age group of the Iranian population in Australia is over one quarter percent larger than the Iranian population in Iran and over 15% higher than the ratio of the same age group of total Australian population. Although this seems a significant advantage over the Australian population in contributing to economy, yet, due to major difficulties that Iranians are facing in Australian society, this potential advantage is lost.

Table 3 is constructed to compare the sex ratios of the Iranian population in Australia with those of Iran, total Australian population and Iranians in the United States.

Table 3: Comparative Age Distribution of Iranian Population in Australia, and Other Populations (Percent)

Age groups	Iranians In Australia		Australian Population	Iranian Population In Iran	Iranians in USA
	1986	1991	1991	1986	1980
0-4	103	113	105	103	115
5-14	117	108	105	105	115
15-24	126	126	103	103	200
25-34	101	114	98	101	225
35-44	113	120	99	99	153
45-54	120	143	103	111	147
55-64	87	100	100	118	129
65+	88	94	76	104	98
Total populat'n	7,496	12,914	16,850,540	49,445,010	122,890
Average Sex Ratio	109	117	99	105	148

Source: Iranians in Australia are taken from the Bureau of Statistics, Population Census 1986 and 1991 (ABS), Canberra; the figures for Iranians in the United States are taken from: Momeni (see n. 44); and Iranian population in Iran from the Iranian Bureau of Statistics, Population Census 1986, Tehran.

Table 3 indicates that the sex ratio for Iranians in 1986 were 109 males per 100 females. This has increased to 117 in 1991. This is much higher than the corresponding ratio for the total Australian population which was 99 males for 100 females in 1991. The sex ratio of Iranians in Australia was

⁴⁵ J. McCallum, "The Mosaic of Ethnicity and Health in Later Life", in J. Reid and P. Trompf (eds.), *The Health of Immigrant Australia*, Sydney, 1990, p. 312.

also higher than Iranian population in Iran (105) but much lower than the sex ratio of Iranians in the United States (148). While these differences are a good indication of the influence of migration over the population structure, they also enhance the opportunity for mixed marriages among Iranians in Australia and the United States.

It is interesting to note, however, that the sex ratio of Muslim Iranians in Australia (numbering 1549 and comprising 20.6% of the Iranian population in Australia) is much higher (129) than the average sex ratio for the total community.⁴⁶ This clearly indicates that they are more likely to intermarry than other groups of Iranians. This will be enforced by the fact that the Iranian Muslims are the only group who do not have a worship place for their own religious community. They attend Muslim mosques in the community and share prayers with Muslims from other countries. This also provides opportunity for intermarriage.

Marital Status

Until 1906, when the Iranian Constitution was established, the patriarchal family was the dominant type of family in Iran. The Constitutional Revolution led to spreading new Western ideas concerning the human potentiality and rights. As a result of this process, the Iranian family has gone through a transition period. Although the traditional form still is influential, there is a process of struggle and coexistence going on between the old generation and some segments of the new generation.

It should be stated here that this conflict is not what is termed the 'generation gap' in Western societies. Rather, it is a changing process from which family unit provided everything for its members in the old days through the transference of some of its functions to the social institutions. However, the Iranian family is still the most stable and fundamental social unit.

Marriage in Iran is very popular, and the reasons are usually due to economic conditions and the social and cultural value system. It has an important religious function and it should be registered in the Civil Bureaus where the registrar himself is a religious representative. There is a period of time between the registration in the Civil Bureau and the consummation of a marriage. The engagement period is so long that sometimes it starts from the moment of birth. In marriage of this kind between two people, who are usually niece and nephew, it is believed that they have been 'engaged in the heavens' before their births.

With regard to the minimum age of marriage, according to the Civil Law passed in 1935, the lowest marriageable age for women was fixed at fifteen and for men at eighteen.⁴⁷ This is very similar to the minimum age of marriage in Australia which is 16 for females and 18 for males.⁴⁸ The Family Law in Australia also indicates that in 'exceptional and unusual' circumstances, a court may authorize a marriage if one of the parties is no more than two years below the minimum age.

Considering average age differences, it should be noted here that the average age differences between husband and wife is six to seven years, while this figure in Australia is two to three years of age.

Also it is worth observing that Australian law gives people considerable freedom to marry or not to marry whomever they like. There are very few formalities that have to be complied with. Many of the legal effects of marriage also apply to couples who are not formally married but are in a *de facto* relationship. This is not the case in Iran. There, rather, marriage is considered to be the only legitimate way of establishing a sexual relationship. This is one of the problems Iranians have to face in Australia. It is hard for them to change their values on the marriage institution and accept *de facto* relationships as marriage. The marital status of traditional Iranians does not include any *de facto* relationship. This is not only true for Iranian Muslims, but also it is true for Iranian Christians, Baha'is, Zoroastrians and Iranian Jews.

⁴⁶ Farhat Yusuf, "Demography of Muslims In Australia", *Journal of Biosocial Sciences* 22 (1990): 82.

⁴⁷ Ali Shygan, *Civil Codes of Iran*. Tehran, 1950.

⁴⁸ A. Ray, 'Family Law in a Multicultural Society' (Paper presented to Melbourne, Proceedings of the Family Law Conference), Melbourne, 1988.

In analysing data on marital status, of the total Iranian population of 15 years and over, 62.8% were married. This is higher than the percentage for total Australian population; but lower than the percentage for Muslim population in Australia.⁴⁹

Table 4 provides detailed information on various categories of marital status. As Table 4 indicates 27.8% of Iranians never married. This is higher than the Muslim population but lower than the total Australian population. To some extent the differences in marital status reflects age structures. For example, only 5.1% of the never married group of Iranians were 45 years and over. In the married group of Iranians, 50% were in the age group of 30-45. In comparing younger age groups, it is interesting to note that 14.1% of Iranians aged 15-24 years were married which is higher than the proportion of married people in the total population aged 15-24 years (12%), whereas 29% of Muslims aged 15-24 years were married, more than twice the proportion of married Iranians and of married people in the total population aged 15-24 years. In the 25-34 year age group, 67.7% of Iranians were married compared to 81% of Muslims and 65% of the total population of the same age group.

Table 4: Marital Status of the Iranian population, Age 15+ Years (Percentage)

Marital Status	Never Married	Married	Separated	Divorced	Widow ed	Total Population
Iranians in Australia	27.8	62.8	2.3	3.0	4.1	6,510
Muslims in Australia	25.2	67.8	2.4	2.4	2.2	69,600
Total Australian population	28.4	57.8	2.6	4.7	6.5	11,965,300

Source: Figures are taken from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Population and Housing Census 1986, (ABS) Canberra.

It should be stated here that there are many misconceptions exist concerning polygyny. The belief that Muslim men may take more than one wife is well-known. But the condition that husbands must be able to love each wife equally, obtain the first wife's permission and support each wife equally seems less well-known. The Family Court in Iran has put serious restrictions on polygyny. Article 14 of the Collection of the Family Laws in Iran states, for example, that "in order to have more than one wife, a husband must ask permission from the Family Court". The court has to find out if the husband can afford to have two wives and do justice to them.

In considering divorce in Iran, it should be emphasized here that divorce is considered to be a last resort and is not encouraged. Attempts at reconciliation must be made beforehand, with both parties' views equally respected. Due to constitutional change in Iran and principles based on Family Law, divorce became a legal act as well as a moral one. According to the Family Law, a man cannot divorce his wife without having a proper reason. Any dispute and discrepancy among the members of a family must be solved in the Family Court. Although the divorce laws have been liberalized for women, divorce is still socially and religiously disfavoured; and life is difficult for a divorced women within the society itself.

In considering the divorce rate among the Iranians in Australia, it is noticeable from the Table 4 that the rate of divorce and widowhood among Iranians are more than Muslim population and

⁴⁹ Adibi, 'A Study of Muslim Population In Australia' (Paper presented to the Australian Sociological Annual Conference, Adelaide, Adelaide, 1992.

substantially less than the total population of Australia. The divorce rate of Iranians in Australia is much higher than the national rate in Iran (0.6%), indicating a change in family structure. There are two possible explanations for this: a) first, that Iranian women are becoming more aware of their rights in Australia and as a result, their financial support and economic dependency rates on husbands are reduced; and b) a second explanation lies in the experience of migration and the changing traditional roles of partners, including coping mechanisms with these changes which are associated with the process of settlement.

Another observation of Table 4 relates to the rate of widowhood. As Table 4 shows, the rate of widowhood among Iranians in Australia is higher than Muslims and lower than the Australian population. The higher rate among the Australian population is mostly due to the greater life expectancy. However, in comparing with corresponding rate in Iran in 1991, which is 6.6% for both sexes and 10.6% for women, there arises a different explanation. Out of 10,432,731 married women of 10 years and over, there have been 1,107,475 women losing their husbands during both the civil war and eight-year war with Iraq. This is an obvious example of the distractive impact of wars over families in Iran.

Educational Attainment

Compulsory education in Australia ceases at age 15 years (16 years in Tasmania). After that, young people may stay at school to complete their secondary education before perhaps continuing on to tertiary education, or they may cease education altogether. Overall, 61% of people aged 15-24 years in 1986 were no longer attending an educational institution.

In the area of educational attainment, 40.2% of the Iranian population in Australia held a post-school qualification. This is significantly higher than the Australian population (30.2%) as a whole and nearly twice the percentage of Muslim population in Australia. Table 5 is constructed to provide information in various categories of educational qualifications for Iranians in comparison with the Muslim population in Australia - as well as with the total Australian population. It can be observed from the Table 5 that 13.9% of the Iranians 6 years and over had a degree or higher qualification. This is substantially (2.8 times) higher than Muslims as well as the total Australian population.

Table 5 Iranians By Educational Attainment (Percentage)

Groups	Degree Or Higher	Diplom a	Trade	Others	Not qualifie d	Not Stated	Total Population
Iranians in Australia	13.9	3.2	4.8	18.3	50.3	9.5	6,510
Muslims in Australia	4.9	1.6	6.0	10.8	76.7	-	69,600
Total Australian population	5.0	3.5	9.8	11.9	60.2	9.6	11,965,300

Source: Figures are taken from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Population and Housing Census of 1986 (ABS), Canberra; and from Australian Bureau of Statistics, Religion In Australia, Catalogue No. 25100, Canberra.

It is also interesting that this percentage is twice higher than the percentage among native urban population in Iran. According to the Population Census of 1976, of the total urban population of 6 years and over, 7% held a degree or higher qualification. Yet the percentage of Iranians in Australia holding a degree or higher qualification is significantly lower than those in the United States. Bozorgmehr indicates that based on 1980 Population Census in the United States, about 23% of

Iranians had a graduate university education.⁵⁰

Table 5 also indicates that over 50% of the Iranians in Australia did not hold any qualification. This is still much lower than the total population of Australia (60.2%) and substantially lower than Muslim population (76.7%) with no qualifications. But 50% of Iranians with no qualifications indicates the limited opportunity for labour force participation as well as higher dependency rate in economic sense.

It is also interesting to point out that 14% of non-qualified persons were 60 years of age and over. This is significant, not only from occupational point of view, but from the level of English literacy as well. This segment of population is most likely to face social isolation from the Australian society and also less likely to have enough knowledge for using social and welfare services available in the society. The problem becomes more serious when it is put into the context of reality - considering the size of Iranian community, which is small and lacking in umbrella community organizations to provide support for Iranians. As a result, there is not much information available on various aspects of the Australian welfare system in Persian language.

Labour Force Participation

Iranians with 52.6% of the population in labour force in 1986 had a higher participation rate than Australian population as a whole (50.2). This is also much higher than the Iranians in the United States which was 41.1%.⁵¹ Table 6 provides more information on labour force participation and unemployment rate for the Iranians in comparison with other Middle Eastern countries, Asian countries and Australia as a whole.

Table 6: Participation of Iranians in the Labour Force In Comparison with other Migrant Groups

Migrant Groups	Employed		Unemployed		Total labour Force
	Number	%	Number	%	
Iranians*	2,776	70.3	1,189	29.7	3,946
Migrants From Other Middle Eastern Countries**	47,633	74.8	16,034	25.2	63,667
Migrants From Asian Countries (Total)***	230,316	81.4	52,524	18.6	282,840
Australians (Total)	7,176,700	91.5	663,100	8.5	7,839,800

Source: Data is taken from: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Population and Housing Census 1986, (ABS), Canberra.

* In ABS Population Census of 1986, Iran is grouped under Southern Asia. This group includes: Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and other Southern Asia.

** Other Middle Eastern countries include: Cyprus, Iraq, Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, Other Western Asia (Middle East).

*** Total Asia includes: South Eastern Asia (Singapore, Thailand, Timor, and Vietnam) Southern Asia, and Western Asia (Middle East).

⁵⁰ M. Bozorgmehr and G. Sabagh, *High Status Immigrants: a statistical profile of Iranians in the United States* (Iranian Studies 1988), New York, 1988, pp. 5-35.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

As Table 6 indicates, Iranians with 70.3% of employment rate had the lowest rate of employment among the groups listed in the Table. This also indicates that there exist much larger gaps between the Iranians and other groups when we consider unemployment rate.

The unemployment rate for Iranians were 29.7% more than three times higher than that for the total Australian population of 8.5%, and nearly two times higher than the rate for total Asian population and more than one fifth higher than the other groups. However, further comparison on unemployment rate will shed more lights on its explanation. According to Price the groups that in mid-1986 were consistently having the hardest time were Turks, Lebanese and people from West Asia and recent refugees from Indochina: "high in unemployment, low in income, sometimes trying to support very large families, low in skill and qualifications and often poor in Australian English". In providing an explanation, Price simply states that "they simply lacked the capacity and resources to do much better".⁵²

In comparing Iranians with these and other ethnic groups, it can be said that unemployment rates of Iranians were lower than Lebanese (32%), Turks (30.6%) and Vietnamese (31.9%) only. Thus Iranians had the fourth highest unemployment rate among all ethnic groups in Australia.

There could be several possible explanations for this. One assumption would be that higher unemployment rates relates to the lower qualification. Yet in the case of Iranians, this is not the case. 14% of Iranians had a degree or higher qualification and only 50.3% were with no qualifications. The rates of people with no qualifications from other countries were: "Greece 79.2%, Italy 69.4%, Malta 70.1%, Lebanon 76.4%, Turkey 76.7% and Vietnam 80.4%".⁵³ These figures and other comparisons reveals that the rate of qualifications among Iranians are significantly higher not only in comparison with those countries but also in comparing with some other countries in Asia and Europe as well. This requires us to seek other explanations for the existence of such a high unemployment rate.

The second explanation of this high rate relates to the existence of serious barriers in the recognition of qualifications. Historically, there has been an uneven pattern of recognition of overseas qualifications.⁵⁴

Findings of these studies demonstrate that the Australian labour market devalues pre-migration schooling, qualifications and work experience, especially when English language competence is poor. Findings also demonstrates that some countries get lower returns to their schooling and qualifications. Problems with the recognition of qualifications of Iranians relates to two factors:

a) Most Iranians were not aware of the need to get their qualifications recognized upon the first stage of their settlement;

b) Iranians have been in disadvantaged position due to the fact that Iran is not an English-speaking country. This is consistent with the findings of Mitchell, Trait and Castles. These authors clearly state that "Those who had the highest success rates (in the process of qualification assessment) were those with qualifications for English-speaking countries".⁵⁵

Other research⁵⁶ also demonstrates that the country of qualification is the most significant factor determining success and recognition. The widespread existence of reciprocity arrangements, a legacy of the British imperial era, was a cause of direct discrimination. These arrangements grow up to facilitate the transfer of professionals between nations of the Commonwealth. Many still exist though the Fry Committee called for their cessation.⁵⁷ While most people from English-speaking

⁵² C.A. Price, "Ethnic Groups in Australia" in J. Jupp (ED.), *The Challenge of Diversity* (Office of Multicultural Affairs), Canberra, 1989, p. 14.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁵⁴ R. Fry, *The Recognition of Overseas Qualifications in Australia*, Canberra, 1982; B. Bullivant, *Getting a Fair Go*, Canberra, 1986; R. Iredale, "The Recognition of Overseas Qualifications and Skills". in Jupp, *op. cit.*; *idem*, *New Assessment Procedures for Overseas Medical Practitioners in Australia*, Wollongong, 1990; C. Mitchell, D. Tait and Castles, *The Recognition of Overseas Professional Qualifications*, Wollongong, 1990.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

⁵⁶ E.g., Iredale, *loc. cit.*, p.171.

⁵⁷ Fry, *op. cit.*, p. 42

countries (90%) tend to get their qualifications recognized, those from non-English-speaking countries have much lower success rates.

c) There are people in the Iranian community who, after living for sometime in Australia, do not have a clear understanding of the procedures of assessment for their qualifications. This is not, of course, due to their lack of existing knowledge; rather the main reason lies in the area that procedures are not clear or more complicated than they seem. Iredale explains that

Currently, the most common practice of controlling entry to the workforce is that only those people who have undertaken a training program, which may include provision for Australian practical experience accredited by the controlling body, are eligible for membership, registration or licensing.

The author goes on to state that "most of those trained in Australia qualify automatically, but many overseas trained workers find that their formal qualifications are not acceptable to the accrediting body".⁵⁸ In addition to these situations, there are many professional and technical assumptions that have not fallen under the umbrella of COPQ. In some of these, such as membership of the professional or technical association, may be a prerequisite for employment.

Finally it is stressed by the National Population Council (NPC) Expert Working Party that "current processes are slow, inefficient, complex, inconsistent and inequitable in outcome".⁵⁹ Currently, the most common practice of controlling entry is that only those people who have undertaken a training programme are eligible for membership, registration or licensing. Most of those trained in Australia qualify automatically, but many overseas trained people, including Iranian professionals, find that their formal qualifications are not acceptable to the accrediting body. Iredale (1989:166) expands on this point by stating that:

Examinations have been developed in a variety of ways: under the umbrella of the Council of Overseas Professional Qualifications by professional associations, by accrediting bodies and government departments as well. But candidates are frequently given limited information and opportunity for training and practice before the examination. In many instances they do not know what they are expected to achieve and, if they fail, they are frequently given no advice about strategies to be followed to enable success.⁶⁰

This clearly indicates what Fry presented as major problems in recognition of overseas qualifications more than a decade ago still exist. He pointed out that there are three major problems with current qualification recognition arrangements: 1. the emphasis given to formal qualifications rather than skills, 2. second, the system is highly fragmented, 3. and third, the system is discriminatory, at least in its outcomes.⁶¹

Therefore the problem with the assessment of qualifications goes beyond the technical and procedural reforms and has a foundation of racism. But before we discuss that, it is important to explain briefly other suggestions that have been made recently to improve the situation. Castles, Morrisey and Pinkstone state that

Urgent measures are needed to improve and speed up the procedures for recognising overseas qualifications. Upgrading the Council on Overseas Professional Qualifications (COPQ) to a statutory authority would be an important step. There is a need for consultation with professional bodies and trade unions, and possibly for new legislation. The process of assessing and recognising qualifications should be started before the applicant's migration, by linking data base on visa applications with those concerning qualifications.⁶²

The authors also emphasized that qualification recognition must be linked to reforms in the labour

⁵⁸ Iredale, *loc. cit.*, p. 166.

⁵⁹ Castles, Iredale, A. Matheson, M. Abdallah, J. Campbell and C. Choo, *Recognition of Overseas Qualifications and Skills*, Canberra, 1988, p. 1.

⁶⁰ *Loc. cit.*, p. 166.

⁶¹ *Op. cit.*

⁶² In Jupp, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

market designed to introduce multi-skilling and flexible career paths. Immigrants must be able to have their skills and qualifications assessed quickly and efficiently.

Racism is another major barrier for employment that Iranians, like many other ethnic groups, are facing in Australia. The terms ethnicity and race are used in different contexts by different writers. Some writers (for example Rex and Mason) make an analytical distinction between them. They see race socially defined on the basis of physical criteria whereas ethnicity is socially defined on the basis of cultural criteria.⁶³ It is interesting to note that the Iranians are racially Caucasian as are most Australians, but many Australians perceive them as racially different. Race and ethnicity, as Anderson has it "are not 'natural' even though, they are often represented as if they were".⁶⁴ Race and ethnicity are ideological entities, made and changed in struggle. As Pettman explains,

They are discursive formations, signalling a language through which differences which are accorded social significance may be named and explained. They also carry with them material consequences for those who are included within or excluded from them.⁶⁵

Research findings point to the fact that race and ethnicity are about difference. They demonstrate that differences are indications of sites of power.⁶⁶ The implication of racism is that it is part of the politics of boundary-making. As Prager summarizes, "They play a refractive role".⁶⁷

Racism and ethnicity are fundamentally about what is fair, who is Australian and about what that should mean.⁶⁸ Racism in Australia is not dead, "it re-surfaces regularly in public debates on immigration and identity, in discriminatory practices against minorities, and in racial violence and harassment, but above all in the continuing marginalisation of Aborigines."⁶⁹ Marginalization of the Iranian community in Australia is at two levels:

1. When Iranians are portrayed in the media, they are usually linked with war, fighting, capital punishment, polygamy and crude practices.

2. Iranian society and culture has been ignored by academia in tertiary institutions as well as research centres. There is almost no academic course on Iranian society and culture throughout Australian universities,⁷⁰ whereas in many well-known universities such as Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard, UCLA, Columbia, to name a few, Iranian society and culture constitute an appropriate programme for research and study. There is a common feeling among Iranians in Australia that the host society accords them low prestige and discriminates against them. This is seen in a wider context of the unequal distribution of power between white and non-white in Australia.

Racism has been experienced by Iranians at the personal and community levels. When Iranian migrants came to Australia, they all looked towards a brighter future. Overall they did not have any apprehension about the possibility of finding the new culture or language difficult to adapt to, nor had they considered that Anglo-Australians might not receive them with at least some sort of acceptance. Their treatment on arrival and the arduous, dirty work, for some, was never anticipated. This may relate to the wider issue of the structure of Australian society.

In Australia, emphasis on immigrant assimilation or on ethnic or racial groups per se or on multiculturalism simply obscures the issue of race discrimination and class relations. There is a body of literature which focuses on race and ethnicity by denying the relevance of class as a force in capitalist society;⁷¹ and yet we have to face up to the polarization of the Iranian community in

⁶³ J. Rex and O. Mason (eds.), *Theories of Race and Ethnic Relations*, Cambridge and New York, 1986.

⁶⁴ B. Anderson, B., *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, London, 1983.

⁶⁵ Pettman, "Racism, Sexism and Sociology", in Bottomley, Gill et al. (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 188.

⁶⁶ M. Barrett, and M. McIntosh, *The Anti-Social Family*, London, 1982, p. 35.

⁶⁷ J. Prager, "American Political Culture and the Shifting Language of Race", *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 10/1 (1987): 68.

⁶⁸ Pettman, "Whose Country Is It Anyway? Cultural politics, racism and the construction of being Australian", *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 9/1 (1988): 1-24.

⁶⁹ Castles, Alcorso et al., *op. cit.*, p. 230.

⁷⁰ [The one significant exception is in the School of Studies in Religion, the University of Sydney; and note the emergence of the Centre for Central Asian Studies in the Department of Archaeology. Ed.]

⁷¹ N. Glazer and D.P. Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot*, Cambridge: Mass., 1970 edn.

Australia along lines of social class.

All this indicates that race prejudice and cultural differentiation have justified this discrimination and validated the further exclusion of such a small community as the Iranian one from voluntary associations and other social combinations.

It should be also mentioned here that there are some other factors which create more obstacles for getting employment for Iranians. Take job hunting; it requires, in many instances, local experience which in turn will add to the waiting time for employment.

However, the distribution of employed Iranians were such that 34% were employed in managerial, professional and para-professional areas in comparison with 26.3% for the total population. At the other end of occupational classification, 26.8% of the Iranians were employed as plant and machine operators as well as labourers. This is slightly higher than the ratio for the total population which is 22.8%. The remaining 39.2% of the Iranians were employed in the areas of trade, clerical, personal services and sales. The corresponding figure for the total employed was 49.1% for the total population (see Table 7).

Table 7: Major Occupation Groups, 1986

Occupation Groups	Iranians		Australian Population	
	Number	%	Number	%
Manag./Admins.	207	7.5	761,955	11.8
Professionals	535	19.3	769,699	12.0
Para-Profes.	199	7.2	421,644	6.5
Trade.	329	11.9	996,810	15.5
Clerics	387	13.9	1,112,779	17.3
Sales & Personal Services	309	11.1	808,926	12.6
Mach. Operator & Drivers	264	9.5	535,019	8.3
Labourers & Related Workers	480	17.3	936,020	14.5
Inadequately Described	66	17.3	97,711	1.5
Total Employment	2,776	100.0	6,440,563	100.0

Source: The figures are taken from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Population and Housing Census of 1986, (ABS), Canberra.

In order to see recent changes in terms of the composition of occupational groups, there is a need to compare these figures with 1991 Population Census which was available at the time of writing. However, I have attempted to compare these data with data from the Bureau of Immigration Research which is based on settler arrivals 1990-1991. Based on this data the total arrivals of Iranians in 1990-91 numbered to 977 individuals of which 339 persons were not in workforce. The distribution of the remaining 578 Iranians in the area of occupational groups are shown in Table 8 in comparison with other Middle Eastern countries.

Table 8: Major Occupation Groups (1990-1991)

Occupation Groups	Iranians		Other Middle- Eastern Countries	
	Number	%	Number	%
Manag./Admins.	28	12.4	99	5.3
Professionals	86	38.0	514	27.4
Para-Profes.	14	7.2	73	3.9
Trade.	27	11.9	534	28.4
Clerics	19	8.4	116	6.2
Sales & Personal Services	9	3.9	97	5.2
Mach. Operator & Drivers	5	2.2	40	2.1
Labourers & Related Workers	5	2.2	175	9.3
Unemployed	33	14.6	231	12.3
Total	226	100.0	1,879	100.0

Source: The figures are taken from the Bureau of Immigration Research, Settlers and Arrivals 1990-1991, Australian Government Publication.

* Other Middle Eastern countries includes: Bahrain, Gaza Strip, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, United Arab Emirate, West Bank and Yemen Arab Rep.

As Table 8 indicates 56.6% of Iranians were employed in managerial, professional and para-professional areas. In comparison 36.6% of people from other Middle Eastern countries were in these positions. The Table also indicates that there is a substantial increase in the percentage of Iranians in these areas in comparison with 1986 figures which was 34%. This trend indicates that the Iranians are increasingly occupying positions in the managerial, professional and para-professional areas while the percentage of the lower end of the occupational scale has decreased from 26.8% in 1986 to 4.4% in the area of labourers and machine operators.

Income

Comprehensive data on income for Iranians in 1986 Population Census is not available for the total Australia. Since over 60% of Iranians were living in the State of New South Wales, however, which counts for 0.1% of the population of this state, data on income for Iranians is available only in this state. Based on this data Table 9 is constructed.

Table 9: Income Distribution of Iranians In New South Wales (1986)

Income Groups	Iran		Other Middle-East		Total Asia	
	Numbers	%	Numbers	%	Numbers	%
No-Income	765	19.2	13,457	19.9	42,503	19.9
\$1-\$9000	1,233	31.0	19,524	29.0	54,959	25.7
\$9001-\$18,000	1,078	27.1	21,247	31.5	64,018	29.9
\$18,001-\$26,000	417	10.5	5,726	8.5	23,549	11.0
\$26,000-\$40,000	208	5.2	1,746	2.6	11,621	5.4
\$40,001-\$50,000	22	0.5	191	0.3	1,781	0.8
\$50,000+	13	0.3	212	0.3	2,074	1.0
Not Stated	243	6.1	5,315	7.9	13,584	6.3
Total	3,979	100.0	67,417	100.0	214,086	100.0

Source: Figures are taken from Australian Bureau of Statistics, Population and Housing Census of 1986, New South Wales Office.

As Table 9 indicates almost one fifth of Iranians had no income, almost twice the rate for Australian population which was 11.1%. Also 68.6% had annual incomes of \$26,000 or below. A similar situation exists among other Middle Eastern countries as well as among total population from Asia. Almost one fifth of their population had no income and 69% of people from other Middle Eastern countries and 66.6% from total Asia had incomes of \$26,000 or below. Considering the highest categories of income, only 0.3% of Iranians had income of \$50,000 or above. Although people from other Middle Eastern countries were in the same situation, yet 1% of the population from total Asia had annual incomes of \$50,000 or above, almost three times higher than Iranians and people from other Middle Eastern countries. In comparison the annual income of the total Australian population of \$50,000.00 and over is more than six times higher than Iranians and two times higher than the annual income of people from Asia.

Geographical Distribution of Iranians

Over three fourth of Iranians were living in two states of New South Wales and Victoria. The remaining one fourth were living in six other states and territories in Australia. Table 10 is constructed to provide information on the geographical distribution of Iranians in Australia.

Table 10: Geographical Distribution Of Iranian Settlers By Given Years

	1981			1986			
	Males	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	%
NSW	1,336	1,256	2,592	2,360	2,175	4,535	60.5
Vic	297	284	581	683	544	1,227	16.4
Qld	82	68	150	228	172	400	5.3
SA	54	77	117	269	226	495	6.6
WA	80	10	157	352	295	647	8.6
Tas	12	5	22	13	15	28	0.4
NT	2	20	7	25	25	50	0.7
ACT	23	63	43	57	57	114	1.5
Total	1,886	1,783	3,669	3,987	3,509	7,496	100.0
%	51.4	48.5	100.0	53.1	46.8	100.0	

Source: The figures are taken from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Population and Housing Census 1986, (ABS), Canberra.

As Table 10 indicates, in 1986 more than 60% of the Iranians were living in N.S.W, 16.3% in Victoria, 8.6% in Western Australia, 6.6% in South Australia, 5.3% in Queensland, 1.5 % in Canberra, 0.7% in the Northern Territory and 0.4% in Tasmania.

Refugees

Based on data available from Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs, at the end of 1989, there were 953 individuals considered to be refugees. This accounts for 8.3% of the total Iranian population of 11,421 in 1989. Of the total refugee population there were 81 individuals under 16 years of age which counts for 8.5% of the Iranian refugee population.

Table 11 is devised to illustrate the distribution of refugees of 16 years and over. Table 11 also compares the distribution of migrant population with those of refugee in 1989. As Table indicates 32% of the refugees were living in NSW, 22.3% in Victoria, 16.2% in South Australia, 15.3% in Western Australia, 13.4% in Queensland, 0.7% in Tasmania, and 1.1% in Canberra.

Table 11: POST-SCHOOL ADULT POPULATION 16 YEARS PLUS: 1988-89

	Migrant		Refugees		Total	
	Numbers	%	Numbers	%	Numbers	%
NSW	406	51.6	69	32.0	474	54.3
Vic	102	15.5	48	22.3	150	17.2
Qld	28	4.3	29	13.4	57	6.5
SA	38	5.8	35	16.2	73	8.3
WA	69	10.3	33	15.3	102	11.6
Tas	5	0.8	1	0.07	6	0.06
NT	-	-	-	-	-	-
ACT	10	1.5	-	1.1	10	1.1
Total	657	100	215	100	872	100

Source: Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs, 1990 Report, Australian Government Publication.

Community Formation of Iranians in Australia

This part attempts to provide a brief description of the process of community formation with the Iranian population in Australia.

In Australia, analysis of the structure of the host society and the composition of immigrant settlements are crucial for understanding the kind of social action in which the immigrants engage. Iranian migration to Australia took place at a time when Australia had formally abandoned White Australia policy in 1970s. Yet emphasis on immigrant assimilation or on ethnic or racial groups per se simply obscures the issue.

The Iranian community in Australia is in the initial stage of community formation. The creation of informal networks can be considered as an initial stage of this trend. It is still a long way to go for the establishment of formal community structures such as clubs, welfare associations, cultural foundations across Australia.

The Iranian community, with its cultural societies, has undoubtedly provided the immigrants with some cultural continuity and solid anchorage in tradition - which help them to adjust to change. The involvement of Iranian migrants in cultural practices is partly due to the formation of their identity and partly is a reaction to the exclusionary practices of the dominant 'Anglo-Australian culture' and institutions. The dominant culture, which is regarded by the Iranians as a young and 'immature culture' in comparison with Iranian culture which has its roots in antiquity, has created a feeling of difference.

The cultural practices as a major means of identity formation work in a number of ways. Iranians in Australia do not make up a single homogeneous and cohesive community, but rather a number of communities in Australia. This means that people can belong simultaneously to different Iranian communities. There are large minorities who are born and lived in Iran for generations but they belong to another large community in neighbouring countries. These are Armenians, Assyrians, and Kurdish people. The Armenians are inheritors of the Armenian branch of Oriental Christianity and maintain their own language and culture. Likewise, the Assyrians are descendants of the ancient Assyrian people of the Upper Tigris who became Christians quite early and retained their faith and their ancient Syriac liturgical language. In Australia Iranian Christians belong to a large communities of Armenians and Assyrians, Iranian Baha'is to a larger Baha'i organization, Zoroastrians to a larger

Zoroastrian community, Kurds to a larger Kurdish community, Jews to a larger Jewish community and Muslims to a larger Muslim community in Australia.

Nevertheless, there exists a "sense of community" which is tied up with Iranian history, culture, traditions and the Persian language as the key factor. Iranians in Australia are proud of their cultural heritage and have resisted the racism of assimilation by guarding and using their own cultural baggage. They express a feeling of moral superiority and 'prejudice' which should not be mistaken by 'reverse racism'. Rather it should be considered as a defensive mechanism in a situation of discrimination and marginalization. In fact, many Iranian customs and traditions not only symbolize the need for attachment to common history and origin, but also the need for reference groups when cultural confidence is diminished. The celebration of Now-Ruz, the Iranian New Year, for example, and Sizdeh-Bedar, the Day of Iranian National Picnic, for both older and younger generations, provide forums for community solidarity and the development of new cultural competencies.

It is important to stress here that culturally based organizations constitute an important source of identity for first-generation of Iranians in Australia. These can be considered as a means of articulating collective demands. Some Iranian organizations such as the Iranian Welfare Association, are government assisted and others are autonomous.

The presence of Iranians in Australia has meant increased personal contacts with Iran to keep up links with their past. Iranian settlement in Australia has led to closer trade links, creating demands for Iranian goods. There are increasing numbers of Iranian post-graduate students admitted to Australian universities to pursue their studies and return home. The second generation of Iranians in Australia who return to Iran have a foot in both countries. As transport and communication improve, it becomes possible for them to form a permanent bridge. Their multiple identities are rooted in two societies, and they can help develop a process of interaction which embraces both cultures.

The Iranian value system is centred around family and societal goals. In Iran the family still is the primary source of help and support for its members. The family is centred around parental authority, but also individuals are governed by social control being achieved through social obligations towards their families as well as to society as a whole.

Iranians are willing to adapt in many ways but they are not willing to give up their food, language, music or marriage customs. Iranians are critical of Australian values. To Iranians Australians are inhospitable. They have been invited to Iranian parties and official functions but they never invite Iranians in return. Others find fault with Australians for abandoning their old people in homes for the aged, drinking, gambling and setting a bad example to the young. Whereas Iranians hold respects for their elders and are critical of Australian moral standards.

Iranian parents treat their young children affectionately, even at times indulgently. Older children look after young siblings. Teenage boys also seem more at ease with younger children than do their Australian counterparts. On the whole, children seem to be less demanding than many Australian young people. Iranians hold high aspirations for their children and are prepared to support them through tertiary institutions. Iranian parents value education and are willing to pay for their children to get it. In Australia, education has been traditional avenue to upward status mobility and Iranians, like other immigrants, have taken advantage of it.

Iranians talk a great deal about family relationships and the importance of kin ties. Iranian parents regularly remind their children of the proper way to behave, and in doing so frequently cite from cultural stories an example to follow. Although in Australia the Iranian family structure and traditional roles of husband and wife are changing, Iranian girls still are not permitted the freedom allowed to teenage boys who sometimes attend dances and other public functions. In this group Iranian teenage girls are very much tied to the parental house. If they go out they usually visit or shop with their mothers or with an older kinswoman. Parental authority with sons is not entirely lax. Boys are permitted more freedom but most conform to parents' wishes and ideals, and many follow father's career.

There is no sex segregation in the Iranian community; yet there is a tendency that at public functions or at parties, after the meal, women may have their own informal group and men tend to have theirs

likewise. At the same time there may be constant interactions between the two groups. In parties at private houses women gossip with women and men with men. Although Iranian women are encouraged to work for outside employers, yet they do almost all domestic chores as well. They have an important say within the domestic circle and often beyond.

Conclusion

Although the influx of Iranians into Australia is a relatively recent phenomenon and dates back to 1970s, yet during this time they have been able to establish themselves as a distinctive minority among other groups in Australia. Data on the pattern of migration indicates that family migration has been the major feature of this process. Sex ratio among Iranians is higher (117 males for 100 females) than the ratio among general population in Australia (99 males for 100 females), indicating a significant need and opportunity for mixed marriages among Iranians.

Analysis of data confirms the fact that the Iranian community in Australia is a multicultural community, including different religions, different languages and different ethnic groups. Another distinctive characteristics of the Iranian population is that the rate of qualifications among Iranians is substantially higher than among the Muslim population as well as the total Australian population.

From the socio-economic point of view, however, Iranian community in Australia is a highly stratified community. Taking education, occupation and income, these indicate that over 50% of Iranians in Australia had no qualifications; nearly one third of population was placed at the lower end of the occupational classification; and a great majority of Iranians had annual incomes of \$26,000 or below. Only 0.3% had incomes of \$50,000 or more.

There is a common feeling among Iranians that the host society accords them low prestige and discriminates against them. This is seen in a wider context of the unequal distribution of power between whites and non-whites in Australia. Government and official rejection of the White Australia Policy has not altered all the attitudes of those brought up and educated under its influence.

The Iranian community faces discrimination in the larger Australian society in many forms. However, within the Iranian community there is 'status mobility contest' based on social class. The major indicators are occupation, income, housing, life-style, fluency in English and knowledge about Australian society. However, it is important to emphasize here that Iranian culturally-based organizations constitute an important source of identity for the first generation of Iranians in Australia. These can be considered as a means of articulating collective demands.

In addition to settlement-related problems, currently the Iranian community is concerned with linguistics and cultural maintenance and with the problem of caring for an aging population.

All these things signal that there are large gaps between various segments of the Iranian population and a still larger gap exists between the Iranian community and the total Australian population. The unemployment rate among Iranians is three and half times higher than with the total Australian population. But it should be remembered that once the Australian community agrees to admit them for permanent residence, it has an obligation to ensure they are reasonably comfortable and secure. Thus there is a great need for the intervention and support of the Australian Government to bridge the gaps by enhancing opportunities in the areas of employment and meeting the needs of elderly and women in having equal access to resources and social services in Australian society.

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Opening of the Cyrus Monument, Homebush Park,
and Conferees at the Seminar