

## Introduction

*You are part of this economy, integral to the health of the U.S., accounting for \$40 billion in commerce each year. . . . It won't be long before you are known as people and families who are deeply, passionately, knowledgeably, involved in making our beloved United States of America what it should be.*

WHEN FORMER VICE PRESIDENT Al Gore spoke these words at a 2002 convention of motel owners, he was not the first—nor would he be the last—high-profile politician to do so.<sup>1</sup> President Bill Clinton, Senator Bob Dole, Senator Christopher Dodd, Congressman Newt Gingrich, and two-time presidential candidate and publisher Steve Forbes, among other notables, also have addressed this group. Such a lineup is especially noteworthy because the attendees of this convention are not the typical collection of U.S. business owners. Practically all of the audience members were Asian Indian American. These motel owners have created what likely is the largest ethnic enterprise in U.S. history. They claim about half of all the nation's motels and hotels, with a concentration in lower- and middle-budget motels.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, these leading Indian American motel owners have accrued enough wealth and resources to command attention and bring powerful, wealthy, white men in as speakers.

Indian American motel owners appear as the American dream incarnate—self-employed, self-sufficient, boot-strapping immigrants who have become successful without government intervention. Regardless of their political ideology, these keynote speakers invoke the

“model minority” stereotype to describe Indian American motel owners, praising them as a group that has overcome obstacles on the road to great achievements and implying that racial or cultural inequality is no longer an issue. In his address to the 2004 Asian American Hotel Owners Association (AAHOA) convention attendees, former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich said: “I am proud to be here with you. You are what the American dream is all about. . . . You will make America a better country for us and our kids and grandkids.”<sup>3</sup>

Nor is it just politicians who have embraced this narrative. Popular media have made similar points. For instance, a 2004 *New York Times* story complimented the growth of motels owned by first- and second-generation (that is, immigrant parents and their U.S.-born children) Patels by profiling a typical owner, saying:

Morning and night, Mr. Patel, an immigrant from the Indian state of Gujarat, manned the front desk and did repairs on a 60-room Econo Lodge in Bordentown, New Jersey, while his wife, Indu, and two children hauled suitcases, made up beds, and vacuumed rooms. And the work paid off. At age 57, Mr. Patel owns not only the Econo Lodge but, with relatives, four other hotels. . . . At hotel schools like those at Cornell University, New York University, and San Diego State University, as well as more general business schools, the children are studying how to manage chains of hotels, work in corporate offices of name-brand franchisors, and acquire more upscale properties like Marriott and Hilton. Call them the Cornell hotel Patels.<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, a *USA Today* article published in 2007 conveys this motel phenomenon through the lens of an everyday Indian American, Dinu Patel, and his upscale Four Points motel in Connecticut:

Thirty-five years after the arrival in the United States of the first Indian motel keepers—almost all with roots in the western India state of Gujarat and most with the surname Patel—up-by-the-bootstraps tales like that of Dinu Patel have become common. . . . The influence of Mahatma Gandhi, a Gujarati who preached self-reliance and simplicity, may also have an influence in their business culture.<sup>5</sup>



A second-generation Indian American, owner of a lower-budget franchise in Ohio, works the morning shift.

Although these newspaper articles note challenges owners can face, the narrative of Indian Americans having pulled themselves up by their *ethnic* bootstraps has become accepted doctrine.<sup>6</sup>

Other depictions of the challenges faced by Indian American motel owners, however, are far less positive. The celebrated film *Mississippi Masala*, by director Mira Nair, depicts an Indian American family from Uganda that works in a motel in a small town in the South, a region with a large representation of Indian American motel owners (Bal 2006). They encounter racist comments from customers who decry seeing yet another motel owned by Indian immigrants. Worried about bringing in money, they occasionally rent out rooms by the hour for likely illicit affairs. Nor are their personal lives content. They are caught up in the class hierarchies of their local Indian community and harbor longings for the country they left behind. Indeed, films and television programs routinely depict motels, no matter the

ethnicity of the owners, as isolated, run-down, and possible havens for crime.

Although both portrayals of motel owners are exaggerated, which more accurately reflects Indian Americans' experiences and small business owners more generally? And how can they both have relevance at the same time for the same owners? Using observations and in-depth interviews, I concentrate primarily on Indian Americans who own lower-budget establishments—both independent and franchise—and secondarily on those with middle-budget franchises. These two groups make up the bulk of Indian American owners and have received both the praise and the critique indicated. Lower-budget (broadly defined) motel brands that Indian Americans commonly own include Comfort Inn, Days Inn, EconoLodge, Knights Inn, Sleep Inn, Super 8, and Travelodge. Middle-budget motels include Best Western, Country Inn and Suites, Hampton Inn, and Holiday Inn (and Express). Indian Americans have slowly been entering the higher-end motel market and even the full-service hotel market (for example, boutique hotels, Courtyard by Marriott, and Hilton).<sup>7</sup> To appreciate better the contradiction in appraisals of motel owners, I elaborate on both.

### Indian Americans' Motel Success Story

Chances are that anyone who has stayed in motels in the last decade has stayed in at least one owned by an Indian American, even if that is not apparent to the guests. Indian Americans own almost two million rooms with property values of well over \$100 billion.<sup>8</sup> About a third of Indian American owners have independent properties, typically all lower budget.<sup>9</sup> Indian Americans own about 60 percent of budget-oriented motels generally and over half of some motel chains.<sup>10</sup> Of franchise motels built in the last few years, those owned by Indian Americans comprise more than 50 percent. The motels can be found nationwide. They are in major cities, suburbs, and exurbs, and off interstate highways. This accomplishment is all the more remarkable when one considers the small segment of India from which most owners descend. Seventy percent of Indian American owners share the same surname, Patel, although they are not all re-

lated.<sup>11</sup> They come from the Indian state of Gujarat, either directly or from elsewhere in the diaspora (for example, the United Kingdom or East Africa). And a majority originate not just from Gujarat but from within a 100-mile radius of the central region of the state. Patels alone own about one-third of all the nation's motels. It is no wonder that politicians and the news media often celebrate them.

Contrary to popular perception, Patels did not own motels before emigrating. In fact, they arrived with few resources, entered the motel industry at the lowest level, and typically generated sufficient income to provide for their families. Although often familiar with English, many are not fluent. And they do not live and work in ethnic enclaves that serve co-ethnics, as is often the case for immigrant entrepreneurs. Instead, with motels, they are at the nexus of the expanding highway system and the growth of leisure time—quintessential markers of American life.

### Citizenship, Neoliberalism, and Entrepreneurship

Political rhetoric and media discourse suggest that Indian American motel owners have attained full citizenship, that is, economic opportunities, respect of culture, and political opportunities equal to the majority (Glenn 2002; Maira 2009). This suggestion contrasts with more common depictions of Indian and other Asian Americans as foreigners (Lal 2008; Tuan 1998) and is challenged in the next section, but it can shape impressions of them and the nation. This presumed full citizenship results not just from the economic progress of Indian American motel owners but from the means of their progress: small business ownership. Small business owners embody neoliberal ideology, which in turn helps them gain acceptance.<sup>12</sup> Along with increased privatization and a limited government that promotes free markets, neoliberalism values self-sufficiency (Melamed 2006; Ong 2006). Ong (2003) writes that within today's neoliberal state, "increasingly, citizenship is defined as the civic duty of the individual to reduce his or her burden on society" (p. 12).

Entrepreneurship and small business are inherently part of neoliberalism (Harvey 2005). A neoliberal state frames its citizens as

entrepreneurs, that is, as people who take care of their own needs without relying on public assistance (Brown 2006). Entrepreneurs are perceived as being self-initiated, autonomous, creative, and able to handle ambiguity, all desirable traits for citizens generally (Swedberg 2000). Family-run businesses represent neoliberal aspirations more than other types of businesses. In addition, they frequently employ or otherwise support other immigrants, often kin of the owners, and so absolve the government from a responsibility to assist newcomers, even as their labor is needed to support the economy (Reddy 2005). In other words, Indian American moteliers have attained their level of industry dominance because of their hard work, and they receive praise because of their perceived ideological fit with the nation.

The bootstrap, Horatio Alger-style aspect of this narrative not only serves Indian Americans' public image but also benefits the image—not to mention the economy—of the nation. Their success and resulting “acceptance” represent what is possible in the United States. In turn, the notion of U.S. exceptionalism is strengthened (Pease 2000). The United States appears as a morally just country when its immigrants and minorities attain full citizenship. This also makes the nation's global economic and political hegemony appear benign and even beneficial, rather than imperial, which furthers the United States' global status (Melamed 2006). With this public front, inequalities that the United States inflicts on its own minorities and on other nations can more easily be ignored or explained away.

### Uncovering Inequalities

The rise of Indian Americans in the motel industry has national and international implications. As immigrant business owners, they become framed publicly within the rhetoric of the American dream, regardless of their economic and social realities (Abelmann and Lie 1995). But how much do their actual professional and personal experiences fit this model? Framing moteliers' success solely within neoliberal doctrine and as conferring full citizenship obscures the reality of their tenuous position within the hierarchies of capitalism, race, gender, economic and political oppor-

tunity, and culture. Economic recessions and other challenges to leisure or business travel (for example, the September 11, 2001, attacks) create severe financial burdens for owners. For instance, at a 2010 convention held by AAHOA—a professional association representing almost exclusively Indian Americans (at whose past conventions the noted politicians spoke)—about half of the hundreds of owners at a plenary session indicated they would seriously consider leaving the industry completely given how poor the economy had been.<sup>13</sup>

Furthermore, a wide variety of individuals with diverse experiences comprise the Indian Americans who dominate the motel industry. Although some own middle-budget and higher-budget establishments, Indian Americans most commonly own lower-budget establishments and as such do not fit the standard depiction of Indian Americans as elite professionals (for example, physicians, venture capitalists, hedge fund managers). Owners of lower-budget motels and their families often work with limited or no staff, struggle to make ends meet, go without health care for themselves and their workers, and lack social prestige in their local community even while the ethnic group as a whole is praised. They worry about the proliferation of motels and oversaturation of the market. They refer to themselves as laborers at the mercy of customers, franchisors, and/or the government. Very low-budget motels have become associated with prostitution, drug dealing, and other crimes (a stereotype that is often misplaced and that ignores similar activities within upscale motels). Cities depend on motels to house otherwise homeless persons (Jain 1989).

Indian American owners of middle- and higher-budget properties have not encountered the same degree of marginalization. Still, they complain of a lack of autonomy from the franchisors, as seen, for example, in the franchisors' collection of fees that are not based on the owners' earnings (see Mathew 2005). Female motel owners cite disrespect in their daily negotiations with vendors. A number of Indian Americans also note that franchisors give them due attention but still seem to view them differently from other owners—as immigrants rather than “ordinary” Americans. Such problems, although not debilitating, lie in sharp

contrast to the presumably equal treatment granted to successful entrepreneurial immigrants. In addition, customers may still avoid Indian-owned motels across all budget levels. Indian American motels can be racialized as dirty, poorly run, and managed by “untrustworthy foreigners.” “Patel motels,” a common industry phrase, have been maligned as smelling like curry (Lal 2008).

Tied to the professional challenges have been the personal hurdles facing owners and their families, in particular the large percentage in lower-budget establishments. Not only did they emigrate from a country halfway around the world, but they also moved repeatedly across the United States looking for a good deal on a motel. The search for an affordable property could land them off interstate highways, in rural areas, or in commercial districts, apart from the support provided by co-ethnic networks. In these settings, they can face cultural and racial schisms with local residents. When they do reside near fellow co-ethnic motel owners, relationships may be compromised by business tensions. Also, living inside their motels contradicts the standard notion of a home. As a result, some owners and their families have felt resigned to their business and personal lives rather than enthusiastic about them. Sometimes their businesses perform poorly and their family life suffers, and although most families find ways to respond to these problems, a few regret having migrated to the United States. So, Indian American motel owners often have a precarious relationship to the image of the small business owner promulgated by Al Gore and Newt Gingrich and instead resonate with the depictions in popular film. By focusing on those in lower- and middle-budget motels, *Life Behind the Lobby* moves away from a depiction of Asian Americans as only highly successful professionals.

### Theorizing Immigrant Adaptation Within the Diaspora

The world of Indian American moteliers holds a paradox: their entrepreneurial acumen, business ownership, and industry dominance represent the American dream, but owners and their families are caught up in embedded economic, racial, gender, and immigrant-specific hierar-



chies. How can these dual trends coexist, and should one side be read as truer than the other?

This paradoxical dynamic also applies to other groups outside the white, masculine, heteronormative ideal. For instance, other Asian Americans, Caribbean Americans, Jewish Americans, and certain Latinos and African Americans also are considered successful and hard working but are not fully accepted as Americans. Women make up a greater percentage of college students than men but still live within a patriarchal education system, labor market, and domestic sphere. Gays and lesbians are sought-after members of cities because of the seeming advantage of “diversity” to creative growth even while homophobia remains entrenched in legislation, the labor market, and public opinion.<sup>14</sup> And the denial of full equality to such groups despite their meaningful gains has historical roots in white, male, capitalist privilege (Glenn 2002).

In the case of Indian American moteliers, however, this dilemma is all the more perplexing and unexpected given how synonymous their ethnicity has become with the hospitality industry. How should we make sense of their simultaneous achievements and upward mobility alongside their continued challenges? How immigrant minorities experience and respond to such dilemmas, which are relatively common, has not been adequately explained.

Current formulations of immigrant adaptation typically pick a side in this paradox and characterize nonimpoverished communities either as increasingly integrated and generally free of troubles or as defined by their troubles—a perspective that downplays the significance of their accomplishments. A large number of academics who study immigration have argued that ethnic minorities in the United States can gradually achieve socioeconomic mobility and possibly full citizenship. I call this camp “integrationists.” Integrationists recognize that poverty, racism, and other constraints can handicap immigrants. Yet integrationists do not consider such barriers to be endemic. There are no hierarchies embedded in white privilege, capitalism, or patriarchy. Groups can gradually integrate as they take advantage of economic and educational

opportunities and adopt useful parts of mainstream culture (for example, standard English) while also relying on resources within their ethnic group (Alba and Nee 2003; Gibson 1988; Portes and Rumbaut 2006; Zhou and Bankston 1998).<sup>15</sup> The integrationist perspective prioritizes groups' success even as it recognizes challenges. As evidence of a group's successful integration, scholars point to educational attainment, economic status, interracial marriage rates, and other measures (Sakamoto, Goyette, and Kim 2009).

From this cautiously optimistic perspective, Indian American motel owners' trajectory of gradual integration and economic security, especially relative to their other occupational options, becomes highlighted (Cohen and Tyree 1994; Portes and Bach 1985; Yoon 1997). Motel owners may face prejudiced customers, oversaturation of the market, and a compromised personal life, but the emphasis falls on how they are able to handle these problems effectively (Lee 2002; Min 2008). According to the integrationists, the success of these entrepreneurs is real and should come as no surprise. It stems from having a fortunate set of resources, access to business opportunities, and a lack of significant hurdles. The challenges facing Indian American motel owners in building professional and personal lives are downplayed within this perspective and, instead, are read as temporary inconveniences that can be overcome.

According to the second camp on immigrants' livelihood, which I refer to broadly as "critical race theorists," the nation is defined by inequalities that bestow privilege on heterosexual, U.S.-born, white men (Bonilla Silva 2003; Glenn 2002; Lipsitz 1998; Spickard 2007). The paradox of success along with marginalization tilts heavily toward defining immigrant minorities by their troubles, thereby downplaying their accomplishments. As Golash-Boza (2006) writes of Portes and Rumbaut (who consider race more than do other integrationists), "These scholars do not address the extent to which whiteness is a prerequisite for assimilation into dominant culture" (p. 29). The United States is an imperial, not immigrant, nation that has uplifted white men through genocide, slavery, colonization, internment, patriarchy, and war (Glick Schiller 2005; Pease 2000). Even economically successful immigrant groups, such as many

Asian Americans, experience a “differential inclusion” into the nation (Espiritu 2003; Kim 2008). They receive praise when assisting white elites but overall encounter an economic and social subordination. To demonstrate immigrants’ inequalities, scholars highlight variables that are different from those within integration studies. These measures include a lack of promotions in the workplace, the “model minority” rhetoric that attributes success to a foreign culture, hate crimes, resistant transnational ties, and everyday experiences of racism (Chou and Feagin 2008; Das Gupta 2006).

Ethnic entrepreneurs’ experiences, including those of Indian American motel owners, can be understood within this perspective as well (Kim 2000; Light and Bonacich 1991; Park 1997). Owners may accrue profit, but it requires exploiting themselves, for they often serve big capital while being scapegoats for other minorities’ frustrations (Min 1996). In addition, business competition strains ties to one’s ethnic community (Yoon 1997). Strain also arises from tense relations with various other constituencies, as well as from the long hours and having to live where one works. Owners’ collective agency to resist their problems may bear some fruit, but it furthers divisions and hostilities from other groups (Bonacich 1973). The result is not the American dream for ethnic entrepreneurs like Indian Americans, but a weak economic position and the denial of full belonging (Abelmann and Lie 1995).

The academic literature’s depictions of ethnic entrepreneurs correspond to those in popular media. These appraisals of immigrant minorities’ adaptation have merit but are individually insufficient. Racialization and anti-imperialism theories have not adequately explained how some immigrant minorities readily identify with the American dream and have considerable achievements even while being differentially included. As a result, integration scholars can downplay this highly critical perspective as less consequential compared with their “more substantial” variables of income, educational attainment, and so on. Conversely, because integration literature glosses over the degrading treatment of immigrant minorities and their personal sacrifices, its claims of multiculturalism and gradual equality ring hollow. These competing theories talk past one

another, leaving the experiences of such immigrant minorities insufficiently understood.

### Bridging Mutually Exclusive Perspectives

*Life Behind the Lobby* explains not only Indian American motel owners' accomplishments and simultaneous economic and social marginalization, but also how individuals respond in ways that sustain this duality. First, invoking a transnational perspective on Patels' origins in Gujarat and elsewhere in the diaspora, it explains why Indian Americans immigrated to the United States (Chapter 1) and how they became so prolific as business owners compared with other ethnic entrepreneurs (Chapter 2). In other words, how were they able to make Vice President Gore and others refer to them as the torchbearers of America's ideals? Second, it explains how continued challenges within the motel owners' professional lives (Chapter 3) and personal lives (Chapter 5), reminiscent of film portrayals, take place concurrently with their integration, thus creating the paradox of high achievement along with sustained inequalities. Third, *Life Behind the Lobby* explains how Indian American motel owners respond to this paradox in ways that confront it yet, ironically, help sustain it (Chapters 3 and 4). Generally speaking, rather than trying to fully overcome economic, racial, gender, and cultural inequalities, owners took the more feasible route and worked within them. Indian American moteliers became successful and comfortable enough to make claims on the American dream, but in the process they did not fully challenge, and at times inadvertently sustained, the basis of their subordination. They lessened the inequalities they faced, but never in ways that let them move beyond them entirely. The result is practically living the American dream but within an enduring marginalization.

I am not the first to try to reconcile theories of adaptation by analyzing immigrants' experiences of both mobility and subordination. But in arguing the mutual relevance of integrationists and more critical scholars, others have duplicated the notion of mutually exclusive trajectories without retheorizing adaptation to deconstruct it. A few well-respected examples dealing with disparate groups illustrate this. Telles and Ortiz

(2008) aim to move past the dichotomy of assimilated versus racialized framings in the adaptation of Mexican Americans.<sup>16</sup> Assimilation is occurring in some cultural dimensions (for example, language) for Mexican Americans but not in key socioeconomic ways (for example, education), which is defined by racialization. So although both trajectories take place, they remain mutually exclusive because they apply to distinct aspects of the group.

Kibria (2002) offers the concept of racialized ethnicity (citing Tuan 1998) as a way to recognize the relevance of both assimilation and critical race (or what she refers to as “racial minority”) theories in defining the adaptation of middle- and upper-class Asian Americans. For these Asian Americans, racialized ethnicity means being attentive to their treatment as racial minorities. Still, racism may not be so significant to them that they form hostilities against whites. The second generation expects to have a comfortable lifestyle. Therefore, racialization and greater integration both take place. This attempt to move beyond the either/or notion of adaptation is useful. But in contrast to assimilation theory, the racialized ethnicity perspective emphasizes how minorities experience racial marginalization despite any economic success. Race and ethnicity continue to matter; the only question is how much. The more they matter, the stronger are the ethnic and pan-ethnic boundaries, and the weaker the integration.<sup>17</sup>

Rather than sidestep the contradiction between reigning theories, I bring them together. *Life Behind the Lobby* does not downplay Indian Americans’ achievements and challenges, nor does it suggest that they pertain to distinct parts of their life (for example, professional achievements versus personal struggles). Generally speaking, Indian American motel owners have become successful, which is applauded here. Yet this does not support the neoliberal or (segmented) assimilationist trajectory of full incorporation into the economic and social mainstream simply through integration into dominant institutions and reliance on ethnic capital. Nor does it accept the integrationists’ liberal assumption of an exceptional nation-state whose immigrant minorities will be on par with whites if minor adjustments are made to key institutions. Instead, this

analysis of how individuals sustain their achievements within embedded inequalities makes an epistemological point: it is possible to analyze inequalities within narratives of how a minority group has come to its achievements. At the same time, just because inequalities constrain individuals does not mean real advancement is not occurring. The assumption across theories of immigration and race continues to be that economic parity with and cultural acceptance by whites means that race is insignificant. To demonstrate racial inequalities, scholars often point to the hardships minorities face. Yet a focus on individuals' agency within constraints demonstrates how achievements and impediments occur simultaneously.

### Patel Motels

Who are these ethnic entrepreneurs, and what exactly is a motel? The most significant portion of motel owners, both historically and currently, are Patels from central and southern Gujarat, although some originated from northern Gujarat and elsewhere in India. Gujarati Americans are most known for their presence in the hospitality and diamond industries, followed by their presence in engineering and the sciences (including medicine), and with relatively little representation in the high-tech industry compared with co-nationals (Sheth 2001). In fact, Gujarati Americans are significantly more likely to be self-employed than non-Gujarati Indian Americans (Kim, Hurh, and Fernandez 1989). Gujaratis are the largest segment of the Indian American population, at about 20 percent.<sup>18</sup>

Motels are lodging establishments with guest rooms all within the same building and with a surrounding parking lot. They typically lack the distinctions of hotels, with their extravagant lobbies, restaurants with room service, elevators connecting multiple floors, and large conference facilities. Today's motel descended from cottage courts, in which individual rooms were in their own small building or cabin, and before that, 1930s tourist camps, where rooms were attached to gas stations and general stores, and guests paid for each "amenity" separately (for example, a mattress would cost 25 cents) (Wood and Wood 2004). The cottage courts transformed into motor courts reflect the contemporary motel, or

motor lodge. More and more were built along the expanding highway systems, and many developed into franchises.

Indian Americans dominate the motel industry. They are represented by AAHOA, which has more than 10,000 members, most of whom are Indian American owner-operators. Three-quarters of AAHOA members own limited-service properties, that is, motels that do not offer cooked food or drink (they lack a restaurant, a bar, room service, and so on but may have simple breakfast items).<sup>19</sup> Almost two-thirds of AAHOA members own a franchise motel. Among Indian Americans at large, however, this percentage is lower because owners of an independent, lower-budget motel are less likely to join the organization than are franchisees. (Although some of the owners profiled in this study do have transnational business ventures, Indian owners of luxury hotels in India or major diasporic cities are not connected.)<sup>20</sup>

I have been referring to lower-, middle-, and higher-budget motels. Moving forward, I also refer to more specific categories: low, low-middle, middle, higher-middle, and high (and in the industry, even more specific breakdowns are used). A low-budget motel is typically an independent, mom-and-pop establishment. Estimates are that one-third of Indian American-owned motels are independents.<sup>21</sup> These motels are small (generally thirty rooms or less), offer very low rates, and often serve truckers as well as long-term stays (guests staying for weeks or months at a time). They also have few amenities and cheaper-quality supplies. At a motel convention, I spoke with a towel vendor who stated that the cheapest towels, which are also the lowest quality, are more likely to be in low-budget motels because they are more easily replaced if stolen.<sup>22</sup> (Extended-stay motels are categorized separately from independent motels, where guests may end up staying for weeks at a time. Extended-stay motels are intentionally oriented toward those staying for longer stretches and are not inexpensive. Extended-stay units, unlike most independent motels, typically have a kitchen and supplies that longer-term guests would require, as well as the internal wiring necessary to support such stays. Few Indian Americans own extended-stay motels.<sup>23</sup>) Low-budget motels are less likely to be located off interstates; they are more commonly

found in urban downtowns, possibly in higher-crime areas. They have very few, if any, employees.

A higher tier of motel but still lower budget is the lower-middle-budget motel. Although some independent motels fall under this category, the lower-middle-budget motels consist primarily of such franchise motels as Days Inn, EconoLodge, Motel 6, Super 8, and Travelodge. The room rates are economical, and they are often located off interstate highways. Unlike low-budget motels, they have more tourists, people on temporary work contracts for nearby companies, as well as some truckers. They tend to have more amenities and equipment that is more up-to-date. They have a small staff, such as a few housekeepers, desk clerks, and an occasional maintenance person. Like low-budget motels, however, the owner must be available and often lives on-site with her/his family if it is allowed by the motel franchise. Depending on a particular franchise's condition and location, it can be low budget rather than lower middle. For simplification, the term *lower budget* as used in this study refers to both low-budget and lower-middle-budget motels unless otherwise specified.

The middle-budget level, which consists of middle-budget motels (Best Western, Comfort Inn and Suites, Ramada Inn) and higher-middle-budget motels (Country Inn and Suites, Hampton Inn, Holiday Inn / Holiday Inn Express) are franchised. Middle-budget motels cater to business guests, not simply leisure travelers, and offer higher-end amenities and services (such as hot breakfasts, in-room coffeemakers, and Internet connections). Such motels may have meeting rooms as well. Depending on their size and revenue, they employ ten to fifteen people.

High-budget motels are very well maintained, have ample amenities, and mimic hotels. These consist of Courtyard by Marriott, Hilton Garden Inn, and the like. Although relatively few Indian Americans own such motels at this time, the numbers are slowly increasing. Owners of such motels employ numerous staff and often hire management companies to run them. Owners do not live in these motels. A few Indian Americans have been able to purchase full-scale hotels as well, such as Hyatt, Hilton, and boutique hotels.<sup>24</sup> To date, they represent a fraction of the Indian American motel owners.