Theses and Dissertations

2024

The success strategies of the Iranian-American women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system in attaining higher education degrees in the United States

Niloufar Mirhashemi
niloumirh@gmail.com

Pepperdine University

Graduate School of Education and Psychology

THE SUCCESS STRATEGIES OF THE IRANIAN-AMERICAN WOMEN WHO INITIALLY

RECEIVED THEIR PRIMARY AND/OR SECONDARY EDUCATION IN THE POST-

REVOLUTION IRANIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM IN ATTAINING HIGHER EDUCATION

DEGREES IN THE UNITED STATES

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in Learning Technologies

by

Niloufar Mirhashemi

June, 2024

Gabriella Miramontes, Ed.D. – Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

Niloufar Mirhashemi

under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Doctoral Committee:

Gabriella Miramontes, Ed.D. – Chairperson

Farzin Madjidi, Ed.D., Co-Chair/Committee

Maria Brahme, Ed.D., Co-Chair/Committee

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my mother, Mrs. Farzaneh Arbabha, for her commitment to my education

since the first day of school in Iran. You inspired me to conduct this dissertation with its message

of empowering women through education.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

VITA

EDUCATION

Doctor of Education in Learning Technologies   Pepperdine University, Malibu, CA, USA

Master of Arts in Teaching   Pepperdine University, Malibu, CA, USA

Single Subject Chemistry/
AP Chemistry Teaching Credential   Pepperdine University, Malibu, CA, USA

Bachelor of Science in Applied Chemistry   Tehran North University – Iran

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Secondary Chemistry/
AP Chemistry Teacher   Santa Ana Unified School District, CA, USA

Curriculum Specialist/Designer   Santa Ana Unified School District, CA, USA

ABSTRACT

The driving theme for this research was cultural discontinuity as experienced in the American academic institutions. Cultural discontinuity is understood as a way in which the cultural practices and values of students' home culture affect the academic achievements of the students usually, resulting in low academic accomplishments. This phenomenon can be triggered by the existing disparities and gaps in the educational and cultural structures of a society. This research investigated the encounters, challenges, and perspectives of women born in Iran who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system and later obtained college degrees in America. The study examined the approaches that women, in the study, employed in completing university programs in the American college system. The research indicated measures for educational success in the eyes of the study's population and their advice for future students pursuing college education. Additionally, the investigator highlights the historical, cultural, environmental, and societal factors contributing to the academic achievements of Iranian American women. This aspect sheds light on the experiences various minority groups encounters in their academic journey adapting to the American mainstream culture. The study had a qualitative phenomenological approach, selecting 15 candidates by purposive sampling and interviewing them using partially structured interview style. The interview questions added up to 10 inquiring and exploring the purpose statement. The study's findings will be instrumental to the research on culture, equity, and inclusivity as they provide a discontinuity evaluation model for all educational institutions to use in order to conquer the challenges experienced during this process. The discontinuity evaluation model illustrates the various elements contributing to discontinuity including cultural and linguistic challenges. Additionally, the model presents a framework for training in managing

discontinuities to build cultural fluency within educational settings. Moreover, college institutions can use this model and training to assist educators, staff, and administration become culturally aware of their students' experiences and use this information to design appropriate instructional material that meets the needs of their diverse students.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The Historical Context of the 1979 Islamic Revolution of Iran

The 1979 Islamic Revolution and its repercussions are highly significant in Iranian history, impacting the country's cultural, political, and social environments (Nashat, 2021). In 1979, in less than seven months, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini and allied Shia clergy overthrew the Pahlavi dynasty and established the Islamic Republic (Amanat, 2017). Among many reasons, the roots of the revolution tie to the efforts by Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi to westernize the country and people's keenness towards Islam and objection towards the West and foreign involvement in the country (Axworthy, 2013). Time after time in Iranian history, ordinary and religious people have turned to the Shia clergy in opposition to the ruling governments, and the 1979 Islamic Revolution was no different. Axworthy (2013) notes another reason for the Islamic Revolution; the Iranian people long sought a free society, which Shah's government had suppressed for years. The interpretations of the events and causes leading to the Islamic Revolution are complicated as different parties with different political views have conflicting opinions. Researchers such as Axworthy (2013) and Amanat (2017) believe the Islamic Revolution happened because of the Shah's modernization and conflict with the religious class. Others such as Hasannia and Fazeli (2019) and Abrahamian (1982) claim that the Shah came up short in modernizing the political environment, thus creating a gap between a modern society and an underdeveloped political structure. Finally, the imbalance in the development of the two aspects of socioeconomics and politics led to the Islamic Revolution (Abrahamian, 1982). Overall, in Abrahamian's (1982) opinion, there are many ideas and theories around the roots of this Islamic Revolution but a common theme in available analysis demonstrates a gap between societal modernization led by the Shah and the traditional religious group belief systems.

1

Following Saudi Arabia and Canada, Iran has the largest oil reserves and other natural resources like gas (Shoamanesh, 2009). Conversely, oil has been central to events, turmoil, policy, and wars in Iranian history. Iran's friction with the US and the West stems from oil politics. The topic of oil has been a symbol of Iranian nationalism after the Iranian parliament led by Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh passed laws to nationalize the oil and abrogated the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC) belonging to the British government, challenging the British interests in Iran and inspiring the notion of anticolonialism in the region (Israeli, 2013). Mossadegh's efforts in nationalizing the Iranian oil industry grew from the public's frustration with the country's resource exploitation by foreign countries. However, in 1953, Mossadegh's government was overthrown with the assistance of the United States and British Intelligence Agencies, bringing back Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi to power from exile (Shoamanesh, 2009). Following his return to power, Shah pushed for reforms to modernize the country, which grew into conflict with the traditional sector and religious leaders. The societal discontent led the opposition groups to conjointly unite against the Shah's government leading up to the 1979 Islamic Revolution, collapsing the Pahlavi regime, and establishing the Islamic Republic of Iran with Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's guidance (Abrahamian, 1982). To summarize, the Iranian political landscape witnessed a shift in its view of Western countries and policies, resulting from the Mossadegh governance through the 1953 coup, the Shah's authoritative ruling, the 1979 Revolution, and the inception of the Islamic Republic (Minoo, 2017).

According to the Azadi et al. (2022), the Iranian population has currently reached 88.55 million, and Islam, mainly the Shia branch, is the dominant religion. Since the beginning of the 16th century, Islam became the state religion, and most of the Iranian population believes in the 12 Imami Shia school of thought (Shorish, 1988). The current Iranian Constitution applauds the

principles and uniqueness of the Islamic Revolution. It reinforces the religious and Islamic virtues as a vital societal, political, and economic factor in Iranian governance (Papan-Matin, 2014). As the leader in 1979, Ayatollah Khomeini imposed ideas and principles that an assembly of clerics and scholars used to draft the Constitution following the overthrow of the Pahlavi dynasty. The Assembly later revised the Constitution in 1989. Even though the Constitution aligns with Islamic references, the republic's structure resembles concepts such as separation of powers and division of the state into an executive, judiciary, and parliament Islamic Consultive Assembly (Osanloo, 2009). However, the Constitution departs from republic components by mandating the Guardianship of a supreme leader (Velayat Faqih), the highest command in an Islamic government in charge of protecting the religion and its virtues. The Constitution states that the Islamic laws govern the society along with the guardianship of Ayatollah Khomeini as the religious guardian (Velayat Faqih) of the nation (Papan-Matin, 2014). Thus, the governance is under the influence of the Holy Quran's teachings aiming to raise and produce Islamic scholars (Fegha-ye Adel= just men of religious law) whose purpose would be to follow and spread the teachings of the religion. In short, Osanloo (2009) characterizes the Islamic Revolution as populist with modern civil structures.

Pre- and Post-Revolution Education Systems in Iran

According to *Article Three* of the Iranian constitution, education should be offered as a free resource to everyone (Papan-Matin, 2014). Furthermore, *Article Thirty* states: "The government is responsible for providing the means for public education for everyone up to the end of high school. It must expand free higher education until the point when the nation reaches self-sufficiency" (Papan-Matin, 2014, p. 171). Moreover, the Constitution then states Islam Jafari (Shia) as the official religion and mentions that believers of other branches of Islam, such as

Hanafi, Shafi'i, Hanbali, and Zaydi, have the freedom to learn and practice their religious education. Historically, in the early 16th century, the Safavids dynasty declared Shia Islam as the official religion of Persia (Paivandi, 2012). The Iranian constitution only recognizes the following minorities; Zoroastrians, Jewish, and Christians and allows them the freedom to exercise their faith and conduct religious education. According to the 104th Article of the Constitution, all societal establishments, such as educational, administrative, industrial, and agricultural, should consist of councils ensuring Islamic justice and practices are intact and the decisions made forth by these councils cannot contradict Islamic laws (Papan-Matin, 2014).

Education in Iran is highly governed by the Ministry of Education, the supreme leader appoints the head of the ministry, and the government directly picks the educational programs (Azadi et al., 2022). Before the 19th century, the Iranian educational system included theological schools (*maktab and madrasa*) led by clergies (*mullah*) unable to match the world's fundamental scientific and social changes (Paivandi, 2012). By the mid-19th century, the Iranian education system aligned European educational principles to minimize underdevelopment and support a modernized culture. The origins of the first girl's modern school go back to the late 19th and early 20th century (Rostam-Kolayi, 2008). The Pahlvai era (1925-1979) established an advanced, secular, and modern education system. The first Pahlavi, Reza Shah implemented new schooling systems throughout the country different from the traditional village schools (maktaba) and theological schools (madrasa) establishing a centralized schooling system that followed regulations of the ministry of education (Khaki & Bhat, 2015). However, the revolutionaries of the 1979 revolution emphasized reestablishing institutions such as the education system to implement Islamic ideology and prepare the next generation of devout Muslim (Shorish, 1988). These reforms were mainly ideological and political, for instance, segregating schools by sex,

mandatory hijab for girls in schools, dismissing teachers with diverse ideologies in contrast with the Islamic Republic, and including religious practices in daily school activities. Universities were subjected to cycles of Islamic rejuvenation, Islamic cleansing, and cultural revolution targeting the curriculum, educators, and textbooks mostly in humanities and social sciences fields (Behdad, 1995). Other efforts of the revolutionaries were implementing a new authority sector in schools called the *Educational Affairs* to install Islamic values and culture into students' academic and social lives (Paivandi, 2019). The main attempt at desecularizing education was met during the 1980s with the *Cultural Revolution* aiming to implement Islamic values within higher education curricula. And finally, in 1987, legislation was passed, becoming a law that emphasized the teachings of theology (Shiaisim) with three objectives of encouraging the Islamic cultural values, limiting Western influences, and creating a generation of devout Muslims (Sahin, 2018). For instance, the textbooks disregard the Sunni branch of Islam's followers, 10–20% of the Iranian population (Shorish, 1988). The school curriculum focused on and continues highlighting the Shia version of Islam. In short, the post-revolutionary educational shift can be considered a religious indoctrination of education.

Historical Context of Iranian Women

Women in the Pre-Revolution Iranian Society

Historical and political events have played a crucial role in Iranian women's social existence by widening the gender gap and exacerbating their civil rights in the Iranian society (Salehi et al., 2020). Historically, gender roles of mothers, wives, and homemakers characterized Iranian women. A distinct social change in Iranian women's lives happened during Reza Shah Pahlavi, the prime architect of the Pahlavi regime (1925-1941), in 1963 when he declared and reinforced the unveiling of the women (Rafique & Butt, 2020). Reza Shah banned the hijab, both

the facial hijab, and the all-body hijab, and mandated a Westernized clothing style for women in public (Amanat, 2017). He then focused on implementing education policies that would lead to higher education quality nationwide, elevating women's education in schools. Hence, during his reign, women operated in higher education roles following the education reforms. Abrahamian (1982), in describing the Iranian education system, notes that Reza Shah believed in secular education's role in undermining the clerical power within the state. The Reza Shah policies for women's clothing requirements were in contrast with the hijab (chador) women used as cover since the Qajar dynasty, referred to as a symbol of honor, male dominance, and moral virtue (Amanat, 2017). Abrahamian (1982) further states that the unveiling brought tension, especially among society's conservative, traditional, and clerical classes. However, large pockets of society welcomed the liberating component of unveiling that after 1941, following the abolishment of mandatory unveiling, only a tiny fraction of women went back to wearing the chador (bodily hijab) again, and the facial veil did not return at all, even among the clergy families.

Reza Shah's policies aimed toward a modernized secular society built upon scientific developments, infrastructure, and a strong army (Abrahamian, 1982). His policies supported women's education and participation in the community, contributing to higher female literacy rates and developing female professionals in different fields. However, the clergy, religious, traditional, and lower classes criticized Reza Shah's disregard for conventional religion.

Another significant reform in the women's rights area was introducing and implementing of the Family Protection Law (FPL) of 1967, aiming to magnify women's liberty. The Law disregarding the Sharia Laws, allowed women to petition for divorce, apply for their children's custody, and work outside the home without spousal consent. The Law also prohibited men from polygamy and stipulated that men could not divorce their wives without presenting valid

6

evidence (Axworthy, 2013). Following the enactment of the FPL, the marriage policies extended the girls' age restrictions from fifteen to eighteen, further disobeying the Sharia laws (the age of nine for girl's marriage) and giving judicial power to secular courts to oversee family and marriage disputes (Abrahamian, 1982). Overall, the social women's rights improvements in the Pahlavi era paved more opportunities for women in society, even though some classes of the public resisted and did not accept the principles.

Women in the Post-Revolution Iranian Society

The 1979 Revolution affected Iranian women immensely (Nashat, 2021). One of the significant shifts was the re-veiling of women to demonstrate to the world the revolution's power in society and Iranian public's eagerness to return to Islamic culture denied by the previous government, followed by prominent clerics of the time calling upon women to return to the chador to cover the head and body. Ayatollah Taleghani, a famous clergy of the time, for instance, pushed women to return to the chadors so that the world could witness the profound change that the revolution had created (Osanloo, 2009). Furthermore, Osanloo (2009) states that the revolutionaries and politicians were quick to revoke women's roles and status as part of their agenda of establishing a new Islamic government. For them, women's bodies and appearance were the core of the Iranian society that the Western ideas of the previous government had hijacked. Thus, women's roles had to be reestablished through motherhood, marriage, and family. Surprisingly, the supporters of these belief systems were Islamists and secular leftists believing in the gender roles that pinned women to domestic duties such as childbearing and homemaking (Moghissi, 1993; Osanloo, 2009).

The abolishment of the FPL resulted in societal shifts that instilled discrimination against women. Some of these shifts included, denying women's right to work as judges, lowering the

marital age, gender separation in schools and public areas, reversing women's travel rights outside of the country without spousal consent, and denouncing women's right to file for divorce. These were among the setbacks for the Iranian women after the establishment of the Islamic Republic (Rafique & Butt, 2020). The most significant backlash to women's equality was the termination of the FPL because it was a practice of gender equality regarding divorce and child custody rights. The opposition to the FPL came from the clerical establishment, especially Ayatollah Khomeini, which in 1980 denounced any divorce under the FPL (Mir-Hosseini, 2012). In return, the theocratic government led by Ayatollah Khomeini replaced the FPL with Islamic Sharia laws, limiting women's roles in marital, societal, educational, and professional capacities.

Even though the Iranian government policies after the 1979 revolution were not in favor of women's empowerment, women's roles in society did not deteriorate as much through the measures of a theocratic government. According to 2006 census data conducted by the Statistical Center of Iran, more women, compared to men between the ages of twenty to thirty, attained bachelor's degrees or higher (Minnesota Population Center, 2020). Moreover, between 2006 and 2016, women comprised almost half of the higher education enrollment (Roudi et al., 2017). However, within the same years, the unemployment rate among women has been twice that of men. The constraints and limitations around working for women, such as spousal consent, mandatory hijab, gender segregation, and other factors, have contributed to the high unemployment rates among women (Azadi et al., 2022).

Iranian Women and Islam

The women in the pre–Islamic Arabia era were subjected to harsh living circumstances where their rights were abused and neglected on many levels of society (Rahman, 2021). One of the prevalent practices in the Arab world was burying girls alive for reasons of honor and

poverty (Momen, 1985). Rahman (2021) notes that the Quran in its message of improving

women's living conditions specifically prohibited this practice. Furthermore, the Quran carried

direct orders aiming to eliminate the abuses toward women. Another topic of great attention in

the Muslim societies the topic of veiling in which different scholars have different opinions and

interpretations. It is clearly stated in the Quran: "And say to believing women that they should

observe modesty of the eyes and guard their sexual parts and let them not display their attractions

except those naturally exposed--and let them cast down their head-scarves onto their bosoms"

(Quran 24:31). Nashat (2021) interprets modesty of the eyes as having respect which does not

imply gender segregation nor veiling (hijab). In short, there are various interpretations from the

Quranic verses, like the narrative that Islamic Republic government uses, but the main text from

Quran explicitly stresses the equality between the sexes and supports women as individual being

in the society (Quran 49:13). According to Nashat (2021), the Quran states the equality of

women and men but the hadiths, which are the reported words of the prophet Muhammad and

the twelve continuing Imams, indicate that the prophet spoke of women being inferior to men in

areas of intelligence and religious practices due to their menstrual cycle. The Hadith further uses

the menstrual cycle as a reason to explain the Quranic law (2:282) that to prove a case in a court

of law, two women witnesses or one male witness are required. The mentioned law is among the

Sharia laws practiced in the Iranian judiciary system. Article 199 in the Iran's Islamic Penal

Code states that in order to prove a case one male or two female witnesses should be present

(Nevisi, 2018). Overall Nashat (2021) notes that Iranian women's social and legal status has

been dominated by the Shia Ulama perceptions and interpretations of the Quran and hadiths. The

Islamic Republic's rules and regulations concerning major topics such as women's right are

derived from the book Hilyat Ul-muttaqin which contains the relevant hadiths that are second to

the Quran and Prophet Muhammad's direct quotes (Majlisī, 1884). Furthermore, Ayatollah Khomeini regarded the rulings and statements of the Hilyat Ul-muttaqin as the irreversible words of god that can't be changed as they are directly traced back to the Prophet and twelve Imams (Khomeini, 1981).

Iranian Immigration to the United States

The Islamic Republic establishment has significantly changed the Iranian educational realm. The fundamental ideological shifts in the state's narrative have altered the education system's structure, framework, policies, and content. These transformations, among other factors, have impacted the Iranian demographics leading to a high rate of emigration and brain drain from Iran (Mossayeb & Shirazi, 2006). A notable historical event in the Iranian education system was the Cultural Revolution (Enghelab Farhangi), ordered by Ayatollah Khomeini in 1980. The government shut down all educational and higher educational institutions for three years to purify and Islamicize the educational system (Sobhe, 1982). The policies and regulations implementing the Cultural Revolution's goals were discriminating while diminishing academic quality, triggering much emigration.

The United States has been among desired countries for the people of Iran, especially following the events of the 1979 Revolution and the Cultural Revolution. The political oppression in Iran and, thus, the freedom in the United States drives Iranian emigration (Mossayeb & Shirazi, 2006). In terms of education, the unjust policies, low quality, scarce resources, and obstacles entering higher education have increased the brain drain for students, academics, and professionals (Torbat, 2002). These issues of oppression, social injustices, and inequities, mainly in the education domain, have contributed to the migration of 1.5–3 million Iranians (Mossayeb & Shirazi, 2006).

According to the Census department of the United States (2002), there were 183,225 Iranian migrants living in the US who were born in Iran, out of those immigrants, 50,000 were enrolled in universities and 51% hold a bachelor's degree or higher (Mossayeb & Shirazi, 2006). On another note, an independent study from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) reported that 48% of Iranian Americans specified education as the most important determinant of migration to the US (Iranian Studies Group, 2005). It is appropriate to consider that education opportunities are one of the top motivations for people of Iran to migrate to America.

Statement of the Problem

There is an existing gap in the research around the higher educational achievements of women form Iran in America who went through the education system after 1979 Revolution. Iranian women's lives changed immensely after Mohammad Reza Shah's overthrow and the Islamic government's emergence (Subani, 2013). During the Pahlavi era and the modernization agenda, women were granted opportunities in terms of education, workforce, society, and family matters as part of the modernization agenda. However, these trends have changed throughout the years under the Islamic Republic government. Traditional values, morals, and Islamic virtues are among women's life roles (Osanloo, 2009). According to Azadi et al. (2022), Iranian's brain drain and migration rate have been high since the Islamic Revolution and will accelerate in the coming years. Some contributing factors to the increased migration rates are income inequalities, education gaps, human rights violations by the government, mandatory hijab, gender discrimination, homophobia, social mobilization, lack of religious freedom, absence of accountability and rule of law, and environmental obstacles like water shortage (Azadi et al., 2022).

Moreover, the Eight-Year Iran-Iraq War, Islamification of the schools, and crackdowns on civil protests are among some of the precipitating factors to the brain drain from Iran (Azadi et al., 2022). The underlying problem in this study are the hardships that Iranian-American women faced and how they overcame them to achieve degrees from the American college system amid Iran's educational shifts after the revolution.

To understand the hurdles that Iranian-American women with post-revolution Iran education history have faced in obtaining higher education degrees from American universities, one has to study the differences in the language, culture, education system, and many more factors. Iranian women, among other nationalities, have attended universities in the United States as international students. The control and limitations over women's opportunities, education, and societal roles by the Islamic Republic government have made it difficult for women to achieve the support they need to gain access to higher education positions and advanced leadership roles (Mohammadi, 2007). Learning about their experiences assists in understanding the effects of a theocratic government's influences on women's academic life. The Islamification of the curriculum in the Iranian post-revolution education system and its impacts on Iranian women were the driving topics for this study.

Purpose Statement

Despite the challenges, constraints, and limitations endured by the women of Iran due to the policies of the current government after the 1979 Revolution, they have managed to enter higher education fields and make achievements in different areas such as medicine, law, and politics (Metcalfe & Mutlaq, 2011). Stanford University's report by Roudi et al. (2017) for education attainment of the Iranian population indicated that in 2016 women comprised more than half of the students in higher education institutes in Iran, and there have been more women

than men attaining bachelor's degrees or higher. Therefore, the study aimed to determine (a) the success strategies used by women from Iran, who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system, in obtaining college degrees in America; (b) the challenges faced by women form Iran, who initially received primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system, in their educational journey; (c) how Iranian American women, who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system, measure success in education; and (d) what lessons Iranian American women, who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system, have for future Iranian American women entering higher education systems in United States.

Research Questions

- RQ1: For Iranian American women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system, what challenges did they face when studying in the American higher education system?

- RQ2: For Iranian American women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system, what success strategies did they employ when studying in the American higher education system?

- RQ3: How do Iranian American women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system measure their success in American higher education?

- RQ4: In accordance with their encounters, what recommendation would Iranian American women who received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-

revolution Iranian education system make to future Iranian American women

pursuing degrees in American higher education?

Theoretical Framework

Iranian women have faced various obstacles, setbacks, and limitations in achieving

educational success within the past 50 years due to turmoil and historical events in the country.

Noting the feminism theory is inevitable in discussions about Iranian women and their

educational achievements in the post-revolution education system (Moghaddam, 2020). The

Islamic Republic's oppressive policies towards women have been unjust from an equality

standpoint, and the women of Iran have been fighting for these rights for years (Osanloo, 2009).

In discussions around women's rights and looking at Iran, some questions arise from an

international viewpoint regarding women's rights in Islamic society (Osanloo, 2009).

Additionally, Osanloo (2009) argues that human rights are relative to cultural values, and

cultural relativism contrasts with a universal view of human rights. Therefore, the implications of

women's rights would look different when focusing on women from Iran who live in the current

government system.

A significant event in the Iranian women's fight for equality goes back to International

Women's Day in 1979, with crowds of women marching the capital, Tehran and other cities.

These women were protesting the newly imposed restrictions on dress code (mandatory hijab),

abolition of the 1967 FPL, and other oppressive policies imposed by the newly established

government's leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini and his followers (Osanloo, 2009). The most

controversial policy was lowering girls' maturity age to nine, meaning they could legally marry

at nine (Hoodfar, 1999). Additionally, with Khomeini's direct declaration, women were banned

from becoming judges based on Islamic laws, and all sports became segregated. The banners that

women carried through the streets on their march held messages of "Freedom in the Choice of Clothes," "Equal Rights with Men," "Free Speech," and much more (Paidar, 1997). The Islamist groups of men and women armed with weapons and knives attacked women in counterprotest while the revolutionary guards backed them and did not protect the demonstrations. A significant objective of the Islamic Republic's social agenda was policing gender roles by reinforcing the male-favoring Sharia law interpretations affecting women's physical, social, legal, and familial rights (Amanat, 2017).

Feminism presumes that society does not treat women as equal to men, and parts of society oppress women (Povey, 2001). Generally, feminism is a way of life and a school of thought that views women's treatment as contingent on gender rather than the quality of work, talent, and education. A notion from the feminist theory that contradicts the Shia clergy's interpretation of Islam is that women are individuals and not an extension of the men in family and culture. The feminist ideas do not empower women; in contrast, they try to balance the society so that all men and women receive equal treatment regardless of gender (Mohammadi, 2007; Povey, 2001).

Religious-Oriented Feminism in Iran

The concept of feminism in the framework of religious-oriented feminism depicts a movement that challenges women's roles in society under the teachings of Islam. This ideology allows further interpretations of the Islamic texts to support gender equality. The ideas inspired by the feminist movement started circulating in Iranian society during the Pahlavi era, leading to the inception of the Islamist feminist movement in 1979 (Povey, 2001). During the presidency of Muhammad Khatami in the 90s, Islamic feminism became popular, opposing misinterpretations of Islamic teachings by male clergies (Axworthy, 2013). In their belief, Islam holds a high value

for women that contradicts the discriminative and oppressive policies imposed by the clergies in power. Religious-oriented feminists accept the notation of political Islam overseeing a society that supports Islamic values and virtues (Barlow & Akbarzadeh, 2008). In their belief, feminism principles align with the context of an Islamic state. These groups of feminists posed no threat to the establishment of the Islamic Republic because of their strong support for Islamic politics and government (Mahdi, 2004). In other words, Mahdi (2004) distinguishes that the Islamic Republic government did not feel threatened by the Islamic feminists as they were harmlessness to the core establishment of the Islamic Republic.

Significance of the Study

There needs to be more research on the success stories of young Iranian-American women achieving college degrees in America with educational backgrounds in post-revolution Iranian education system. The outcomes, implications, and interpretations from these types of studies enhance the existing knowledge on success strategies of underrepresented women in the United States. Moreover, other minority groups can benefit from such studies as it elaborates the cultural factors in accomplishing higher educational achievements. Hence, it was crucial to highlight and acknowledge Iranian American women's success, achievements, education strategies, and contributions for two reasons. First, to add to the limited literature and documentation of Iranian American women's success stories. Second, this study provided elements that other immigrants could incorporate in achieving college degrees in America. The notes along with the insights could provide frameworks accessible to other communities with similar struggles as Iranian American women.

The Islamic Republic government in Iran is one of the systems where women have had their liberties taken away from them. However, despite the difficulties, Iranian women have

managed to enter and stay active in various fields of society (Begum, 2017). Iranian women have been active participants in society during the historical events of the Revolution and even the eight-year Iran-Iraq war, and they continue to influence women globally with their resilience (Amanat, 2017). One of the keynotes from this study was to present the importance of the role of women in society, as Iranian women's movements have inspired women in other countries, such as Egypt and other neighboring countries (Hoodfar, 1999). However, women have to make substantial progress to achieve equality and justice in Iran. As studied in this research, education could be considered an underlying element detrimental to the Iranian women's movements.

This study was significant from the historical context of the shared trials and incidents the lives of many women who lived in Iran after the events of the revolution. Following the fall of the Pahlavi government, Iranian women faced drastic shifts and setbacks. However, they have made progress, given the limitations and discrimination. In that regard, this study provided insight into Iranian women's outlook, goals, and aspirations. Documenting the success strategies of the women from Iran that have migrated to America, entered the higher education system, and obtained university degrees could help other migrant women become aware of the obstacles and achieve higher education degrees. This study presented educational advantages to those women aspiring to achieve higher education so as to become future professionals. Thus, study's findings will produce educational frameworks that can assist in designing pedagogies, practices, and exercises that comply with the diversity of student populations in American colleges.

This study delivered an overview of Iranian culture and perspectives. As more Iranian American women become educated and succeed in their professional and academic lives, they provide unique perspectives on the new era of Iranian culture that has changed tremendously due to the events of the 1979 revolution. These diverse views and points can illustrate an

understanding of developing countries' social and cultural dynamics. Moreover, these women manifest the emotional aspect of experiences in overcoming the hurdles of grasping fleeting opportunities in a turbulent society (Hoodfar, 1999).

Finally, the experiences and viewpoints in this study highlighted an actual image of Iranian women's success factors and experiences through their lens, which would have been difficult to capture by an outsider. Therefore, their stories can promote other women and motivate them in their academic and professional decisions. In addition, the results and conclusions from this study can provide an educational framework for workshops helping immigrant women in their higher education journeys. From another viewpoint, such a study can bring information on education systems and how educators use strategies to cope with diverse student populations. In that regard, focusing on theocratic curriculums of the Iranian educational systems and documenting first-hand experiences of women sheds light on the impacts of such an educational system in terms of how individual policies affects students' educational journeys.

Assumptions of the Study

One of the assumptions of this study was that the participants have had exposure to the current Iranian educational system, which is different from the Pahlavi era due to the effects of the post-revolution education system. Then, that requirement narrowed participants' age group to students in primary and/or secondary education after 1979. Also, the participants have experience with cultural, societal, educational, and gender-based discrimination due to being primary and/or secondary students in the post-revolution Islamic Republic government. The researcher assumed that the women who participated in the study had demonstrated some success in their academic lives since they achieved higher education degrees in the United States. The researcher also assumed that the participating women encountered a vast, rigorous, extended

Islamic curriculum in their educational journey. Hence, the researcher presumed the role of Islam as a cultural factor in Iranian women's academic lives. In that regard, the researcher assumed that all participants wore the hijab during their educational journey in the Iranian education system.

Another assumption that influenced the interviews was the notion of success measures. The researcher assumed that attaining a higher education degree in the United States is a measure of success. However, within the Iranian culture, success might have taken different forms, such as marriage, having children, staying home, et cetera. The cultural expectations towards the meaning of success had different interpretations among other Iranian women.

Furthermore, the study did not assume the participants' religious affiliations, as the education system in post-revolution Iran had no modifications for religious minorities, and all students had to go through a centralized school curriculum. The Islamic Republic's Constitution recognizes Jewish, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism as other acceptable faiths. However, the government does not include implications of those religions in any school curriculum nor does it offer modifications for those religious minorities. In short, the assumption for the study was that all participants went through the Islamic curriculum conducted in the K-12 education system.

Limitations of the Study

There were various limitations to the current study. The researcher needed to be more extensive in interviewing participants who were willing to participate. Some hesitant Iranian women had doubts about the consequences of their views if they go back to Iran or have family members in Iran, and some women do not want to share their opinions on gender roles in Iran. In summary, some women needed more than the promise of anonymity, as truthfully sharing personal experiences or announcing their viewpoints made them feel uncomfortable.

The researcher interviewed a total of 15, a relatively small sample size compared to the Iranian population. Age, gender, immigration status, specific educational background, and English/Farsi language proficiencies were among the limitations of the selection process. To match the constraints of the study, the researcher selected only Iranian-American women who experienced primary and/or secondary education in Iran after the 1979 Revolution. Additionally, these women have obtained at least a bachelor's degree from a higher education organization in the United States. Participants were also limited to women who speak English and Farsi. This pre-selection eliminated many Iranian women who have educational experience in the pre-revolution Iranian educational system or women who have recently come to America and had not obtained a degree from the American higher education system. Since the revolution occurred in 1979, the participants needed to be in primary and/or secondary schools in 1979 and the following years. This criterion excluded women who were born before 1963 because they went through primary and/or secondary schools during the Pahlavi era. Finally, American immigration status was also a requirement. The participants, referred to as Iranian Americans, had to be US citizens or hold permanent legal residency in the United States, and excluded participants with US visas or illegal immigration status.

Definition of Terms

In this section, the researcher provided definitions for the terms used in this study's context.

Ayatollah. Driven from the Arabic word Ayah, meaning sign, and Allah meaning God, the combination means "sign of god." The name refers to high-ranking Shia clerics reflecting on their extensive knowledge of Islamic texts, studies, laws, philosophy, and politics (Abrahamian, 1982).

Brain Drain. The term does not have a unified definition and literature suggests various interpretations. Brain drain can be understood as the migration of academics, intellectuals, and educated individuals from developing countries to Western countries such as the United States and Canada (Chaichian, 2012).

Cultural Revolution (Enghelab Farhangi). The Cultural Revolution in Iran took place from 1980-1983 through a direct order of Ayatollah Khomeini to implement Islamic ideology in higher education to cleanse the education system from Western and secular powers. The policies implemented by the Cultural Revolution transformed education in Iran, from women's dress code and oppression of voices to promoting Islamic virtues (Sobhe, 1982).

Family Protection Law. The law was passed in the 1960s in Iran, enacting significant rights and freedoms for women in the realm of family, education, business, and other areas (Axworthy, 2013).

Farsi Language. Also referred to as Persian, it is the official language of the Iranians. Farsi is spoken in Iran, Tajikistan, and Afghanistan.

*Hijab***.** An Arabic word meaning cover or barrier, hijab refers to a head cover used by Muslim women. Hijab can have different interpretations, such as a headscarf, chador, abaya, and veil. Women in the Middle East and Iran mainly wear the hijab. After the 1979 Revolution, the law in Iran mandated women to wear the hijab covering their hair and body. However, the Iranian government does not require women to cover their faces.

Iranian. This term refers to the people from Iran living inside or outside Iran.

*Iranian American***.** The current study refers to the Iranians that emigrated to the United States after the 1979 Revolution as Iranian Americans. These immigrants are American citizens, green card holders, or in the process of becoming permanent residents. Throughout this study,

the researcher used this term interchangeably with Iranian immigrants. The term does not include Iranians on visas without legal status in the United States.

Primary/Secondary Education System. The K-12 education system in Iran divides primary and secondary education phases. Primary education is compulsory with students starting at six years old and lasting five years. Secondary education splits into lower (middle school) and upper cycles (high school), with middle school lasting for three years and secondary education, also known as high school lasting for four years (Paivandi, 2008).

Sharia Law. This term describes the legal system stemming from Islamic texts and principles. The laws within this system are conservative and based on the teachings of the Quran, the religious text of Islam, with strict rules for women and aiming Muslims towards Islamic ways of living. The word Sharia is driven from the Arabic word meaning the way, refers to presenting legal applications of the Islamic texts generated by Islamic clerics and scholars in their understandings of the holy texts, which can vary among different sects of Islam (Akgündüz, 2010).

Shia. The two branches of Islam include Sunni and Shia. Shia believers primarily live in Iran, Iraq, Bahrain, Lebanon, and Pakistan (Amanat, 2017).

Success. The current study refers to success as the achievements in the higher education system. Successful Iranian women have had educational and professional attainments and accomplishments. Nash and Stevenson (2004) noted that lasting success has four identifiers, and the components include; happiness (gratitude), achievement (accomplishment of desired goals), significance (having a positive impact on the community), and legacy (establishing your achievements to help others).

Supreme Leader (Velayat Faqih). The highest position of authority in Iran belongs to the Supreme Leader overseeing the government, military, and judiciary. The position is a product of the 1979 Iranian Revolution and a cleric selected by an assembly fills this position (Osanloo, 2009). The current Supreme Leader of Iran is Ali Khamenei.

The 1979 Revolution. The 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran is a significant event in Iranian history. With the leadership of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the revolution resulted in the overthrow of the Pahlavi monarchy, and the Islamic Republic was established (Amanat, 2017)**.**

The Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI). The term refers to the governance system in Iran founded after the Revolution in 1979. The government operates upon Islamic principles with the authority of a Supreme Leader, currently Ayatollah Khamenei. The Islamic Republic follows theocracy with republican elements such as a president and parliament (Osanloo, 2009).

Chapter Summary

In Chapter 1, the researcher briefly highlighted the historical context for the challenges that Iranian women living in Iran have faced. Even though the complexities of the oppression women face are beyond this chapter, the researcher aimed to present a picture of the journey women have undergone since the events of the 1979 Revolution. A straightforward narrative falls short in discussing Iranian women's challenges and hurdles in the last 50 years (Mahdi, 2004). The struggles are still ongoing for the Iranian women inside Iran as they are becoming more active in movements, pushing for policy reforms and having an open attitude toward Western secular ideas (Kinzer, 2008).

The problem statement addressed the inequities in the Iranian education system, especially for women, and its connection to the brain drain. The migration of Iranians to

countries such as the United States has escalated since the 1979 Revolution. These women emigrate from Iran, hoping for a better life that features freedom and equality in society, education, and economic status. The United States Census Bureau (2002), reported the number of Iranian-born migrants living in the United States around 283,225, of which 51% held a degree of bachelors or higher (Mossayeb & Shirazi, 2006). This study focused on education and the education-related success of Iranian American women.

The conceptual framework for the research is the Feminist theory and its implications on Iranian society, along with religion-oriented feminist theory. There have been minimal studies on the experiences, success, and challenges of Iranian women holding higher educational degrees in the United States who also have educational experiences in the post-revolution Iranian education system. Limited research also exists in the short and long-term impacts of the post-revolution Iranian education system, which has a different structure from the former education system of the Pahlavi era. This research aimed to provide a detailed study of the success strategies of these Iranian women in the United States higher education system and further examine their obstacles, challenges, and journeys. An extensive review of the literature is presented in Chapter 2 to provide a thorough outlook on Iranian culture and history.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

      The literature review encompasses multiple sections elucidating four research questions. First, the challenges in Iranian studies will address Iran's historical, geographical, and demographical facts. Then, for further analysis of the challenges, the literature review presents Iranian migration and brain drain following the contributing factors of the university entrance exam (konkur), cultural revolution, hostage crisis, Iran sanctions, internet connectivity, and access to social media. Brain drain is a term used to define the process in which knowledgeable and educated people migrate from their home country to another country (Abdollahi, 1979). The third section of the literature review will explore Iranian immigrants in the United States to build upon the framework of cultural discontinuity. Moreover, various areas of this conceptual framework on cultural discontinuity. These areas are as follows: cultural socialization, cultural discontinuity in practice, minorities in the U.S., language and cultural discontinuity, and language socialization. The fourth section of the review discusses the Iranian-American diaspora and their challenge of establishing a unified community.

      Furthermore, Iranian Americans' success strategies and measures of success will elaborate on the notion of success from the Iranian point of view, distinctly its alignment with emotional intelligence (EI) components. To better understand the meaning of success and success strategies in Iranian culture, the literature investigates a cross-cultural understanding of Iranian-American minority groups. Lastly, the framework of cultural discontinuity shapes the study and thus explores Iranian women and Iranian's challenges with inequality, discrimination, language barriers, and social communications in the United States academia. Included are the limitations and critiques of the topic to illustrate the existing gaps in the literature and propose

future research on the current topic. Throughout the literature review focuses on the Iranian education system to address gender discrimination and gender roles in the Iranian education system. The literature has a driving theme: the higher education success strategies of Iranian women in America, specifically those educated in post-revolution Iran.

Historical Context of the Iranian Women

The ancient Iran (known as Persia) refers to the time before the invasion of Arabs (seventh century) and implementation of Islam where Iranians practiced the Zoroastrian religion (Afshan, 2014). During this period, women were treated equal to men both at home and socially due to the teachings of Zoroaster (Litvak, 2017). The Zoroastrian sacred scripture (Avesta) addressed women as high priestesses giving them important roles and place in the society (Hintze, 2009). The women of that period were granted leadership positions with critical decision-making opportunities to run social events, ceremonies, and religious practices as they had the freedom and independence to conduct important roles (Choksy, 1988). The ancient Persian literature illustrates and introduces the female roles as queens and heads of states. For instance, one of the prominent characters is Homay (or sheherezadeh) known as the queen of Persia who was a rigorous, sharp, and capable woman (Jackson, 2009). *Shahnameh*, "the Persian book of the kings and the national epic of Persia" also embraces female characters and heroines as country leaders, army commanders, and queens (Ferdowsi, 2006). Furthermore, Ferdrowsi's Shahnameh include women like Sindokht, Roodabeh, and Gordafarid who played important roles in the political scene of the time and were not bound to wife duties (Valipour Hafshejani, 2020). A notable point in these women's characters is their nationalistic feelings toward the homeland and their efforts in keeping the country safe from foreign invasions and enemies (Szklarz, 2017).

During the 7th century A.D., the Sasanians' dynasty came to an end with their defeat against the Arab forces which led to the collapse of the Sasanians and the Islamic conquest of Persia (Pourshariati, 2017). The Arab ruling of Persia came with significant reconstructions such as changes in the Persian cultural practices and shifting the Farsi alphabet to Arabic (Kennedy, 2007). The 200 year Arab ruling in Iran resulted in Islam becoming the official religion and Islamic practices getting more prevalent (Zia-Ebrahimi, 2014). Women's roles in society, rights, and opportunities gradually declines as Islamic practices compared to the Persian culture implemented more restrictions and setbacks over women (Nashat, 2021). Even with the strong rulings of the Muslim Arabs, Iranian were able to carry on their cultural traditions and keep their Pasian heritage till the present day. An example of Persian traditions is *shab e chelle* or *shab e yalda* in which Iranians annually celebrate the 21st of December as the longest night of the year (Nemat Tavousi, 2020). The night is celebrations through a feast with family and friends eating pomegranate and reading Persian poetry such as Shahnameh and Hafez.

Moving forward to the early twentieth century, before the events of the 1979 Islamic revolution, the Iranian women lives were solely determined by the men in society setting the rules and parameters (Nashat, 2021). Unlike the general beliefs in the West that the women's seclusion was a direct order of Islam, this practice actually came about as a social requirement within the region and not from the Islamic teachings (Rahman, 2021). The Safavid dynasty of the 1500s set out new religious practices nationwide by converting the Iranian population from Sunni to Shia Islam (Matthee, 1993). As a result, new policies aligned with the Shia principles were enforced in the areas of family matters, education, government, taxes, military, and state affairs in an effort to erase the ancient Persian cultural practices (Amanat, 2017). However, women in Iran given their limited freedoms in education attainment and social rights, were still

ahead of the women in the neighboring countries (Mitchell, 2011). Some of the laws regarding women rights during the Safavid dynasty included women performing marital duties only, being second class citizens and inferior to the men, and obeying the regulations set forth by the men (Mohammadi, 2007). The Iranian women have not been bound to these setbacks, they have been actively fighting for their rights and equalities since the early 20th century till the present day (Mahdi, 2004; Moghadam, 2002, 2023).

Women's role in the society has been an important cause throughout the twentieth century Iranian history (Yeganeh, 1993). Even the Islamic Republic following the Pahlavi dynasty, paid attention to women rights and policies because of their important role in society. The Pahlavi dynasty on the other hand implemented some historical advances in terms of women's rights such as the Iranian Family Protection Law of 1967 (FPL) which is a notable social and cultural event in the modern history of Iran. The FPL presented a great progress in the Iranian legal system by allowing civil rights to women that has never been issued in Iran and resembled the regulations in European countries such as France (Girgis, 1996). Some key turning points in the law was mandating primary K-12 education for both man and women, giving women marital status to apply for divorce, and appointing female judges (Abrahamian, 2018).

Nashat (2021) expresses that the Iranian women in the years leading to the 1979 revolutions enjoyed the freedoms and rights in society and had respect for Islam as a religion. Furthermore, the women played a great role in the 1979 revolution in hopes for a more democratic society believing that by bringing back Islamic laws, they would have higher positions in the society. The 1979 revolution and the following events proved these women wrong as many rights including the elements of the Family Protection law were taken away and limitations were implemented on them such as the mandatory veiling (Subani, 2013). In terms of

educational attainment, women did not lose all their given rights and in the recent years women have surpassed men in attaining higher education degrees (Roudi et al., 2017). Women still have voting rights and can drive without a male escort, which is more freedom compared with countries such as Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan (Javadizadeh et al., 2023). The limitations put forth by the Islamic Republic has been discriminative towards women but they system is not looking to go back to the original practices of Islam, as Iran has been influenced by the Islamic laws for centuries and majority of the policies have already been aligned with the Sharia law before the inception of the Islamic Republic (Girgis, 1996).

Iran's Geography, Demographics, and Challenges

Iran's Geographical Location

Iran is situated in the southwest region of Asia, bordering Turkey in the North, Afghanistan from the east, and Iraq from the west (Amanat, 2017). As Figure 1 shows, Iran occupies around 1,648,195 sq. km in western Asia with two coastlines, the northern part borders Caspian Sea and the southern region faces the Persian Gulf (World Atlas, 2023). Iran is an ancient nation and considered among elder states in the world, and the earliest civilizations settled in Iran was approximately 3000 BC (Zayar, 2000). Iran and Iraq have a long border, around 1599 km, while the border with Armenia is shorter and around 44 km (Central Intelligence Agency, 2020).

Figure 1

Map of Iran

Note. From *Maps of Iran* by World Atlas, 2023, (https://www.worldatlas.com/maps/iran). In the
public domain.

According to the United States Energy Information Administration (USEIA, 2022), as of

2021 Iran's oil and natural gas reserves are the worlds' third and second largest respectively.

Furthermore, Iran is ranked third in gas and oil production making Iran an affluent country with

large amounts of natural resources (USEIA, 2022). Other natural resources in Iran include

chromium, copper, lead, zinc, manganese, and sulfur (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting

Countries, [OPEC] 2022).

Iran comprises diverse groups both ethnically and linguistically, with Kurds in the

west/northwest, Blauchis and the Turks in the north/northwest and eastern parts, and southern

Arabs (Aghajanian, 1983). Persian is the most commonly spoken language, and the Shia branch

of Islam is the country's official religion (Amanat, 2017). However, Aghajanian (1983) reports

that most Kurds, Arabs, and Baluchis practice the Sunni sect of Islam, while Turks belong to the

Shia branch. The Iranian ethnic communities speak various languages different from Farsi

(Persian); for instance, Kurds speak Kurdish, Turks speak Turkish, Baluchis use the Baluchi

language which is close to Pashtu (spoken in Afghanistan and Pakistan), and Arabs speak

Arabic. Table 1 illustrates Iran's ethnic groups, religion, and spoken language (Amanolahi,

2005). In further discussions, Amanolahi (2005) mentions that these ethnic groups' share of Iran

does not exceed 20% of Iran's area, indicating that the Persians are the majority ethnic group of

Iranians who speak Persian (Farsi). As a product of modernization processes uniting ethnic

groups, Farsi became the official language of Iran. In short, Iran's Shia population is around

89%, along with 9% Sunnis and 2% a combination of Zoroastrian, Bahai, Jewish, and Christians

(Jones, 2009; see Table 1).

Table 1

Ethnic Groups in Iran

ETHNIC GROUPS	LANGUAGE	RELIGION
'Persians' (Persian-speaking groups)	Persian (Iranian)	Islam (Shi'a)
Baluches	Baluchi (Iranian)	Islam (Sunni)
Lurs (Lors)	Luri (Iranian)	Islam (Shi'a)
Gilakis	Gilaki (Iranian)	Islam (Shi'a)
Mazandaranis	Mazandarani (Iranian)	Islam (Shi'a)
Kurds	Kurdish (Iranian)	Islam (Sunni/Shi'a)
Talishis	Talishi (Iranian)	Islam (Sunni/Shi'a)
Gabrs (Zoroastrians)	Gabri (Iranian)	Zoroastrianism
Laris	Lari (Iranian)	Islam (Shi'a/Sunni)
Laks	Laki (Iranian)	Islam (Shi'a)
Semnanis	Semnani (Iranian)	Islam (Shi'a)
Gurans (Avromanis)	Gurani (Avromani) (Iranian)	Islam (Extreme Shi'a)
The Iranian-speaking groups in Isfahan and Kashan provinces	Local Iranian dialects	Islam (Shi'a)
Koulis (Gypsys)	Gypsy (Indo-Aryan)/ Persian	Islam (Shi'a)
Tats	Tati (Iranian)	Islam (Shi'a)
Azaris	Azari Turkish (Turkic)	Islam (Shi'a)
Brahuis	Brahui (Dravidian)	Islam (Sunni)
Qashqais	Turkic dialect	Islam (Shi'a)
Turkmens	Turkmen (Turkic)	Islam (Sunni)
Other Turkic-speaking groups	Turkic dialects	Islam (Shi'a)
Arabs	Arabic (Semitic)/ Persian	Islam (Shi'a)
Armenians	Armenian (Indo-European)	Christianity
Kalimis (Jews)	Persian	Judaism
Asuris (Assyrians)	Assyrian (New Aramaic) (Semitic)	Christianity
Mandaeans	Aramaic dialect/ Arabic (Semitic)/ Persian	Mandaean religion
Hazaras	Persian	Islam (Shi'a)

Note. From "Ethnic Groups in Iran, Language, and Religion," by S. Amanolahi, 2005, *Iran & the Caucasus*, *9*(1), 37–41. (http://www.jstor.org/stable/4030904). In the public domain.

Iran's Demographics

Iran's population is estimated to be around 85 million, with a 1.2% annual growth rate (Roudi et al., 2017). The recent population growth is less than in the 1980s, when it was 4%. It is important to note that Iran's law requires official marriage for legal reproduction (Azadi et al., 2022). The family planning agenda that started in 1967 to push for the country's developments ended with the 1979 Revolution (Abbasi-Shavazi, 2001). Through the government's pronatalist policies, the population rose drastically after the 1979 Revolution, with an annual population growth of 9.3% being the highest in Iranian history and worldwide (Amanat, 2017). During the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988), the Islamic Republic stopped family planning programs to substitute the men killed (Subani, 2013). The prominent public supporters of the 1979 Revolution were young Iranians under 25, who comprised 50% of the population. The fertility rate rose until 1989 and sharply declined from 1989 to 2004 due to the government's family planning programs and increased contraceptive use (Malekafzali et al., 2004). Consequently, the decline in the number of children has resulted in smaller households, which are continuously pegged around 2.5-2.8 adults per household (Aghajanian & Thompson, 2013). Azadi et al. (2022) suggest that Iran is in a window of opportunity demographically until 2040 due to the reduced ratio of children to elderly from 0.95 to 0.45 (p. 75). Hence, in 2014, Khamenei, the supreme leader, announced an executive order to all governmental institutions to implement pro-natalist agendas and limit women's access to modern contraceptives and maternal screening services.

According to the 2016 *Iran Statistical Yearbooks and Census Data* (Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology, 2019), Tehran, Khorasan Razavi, Esfahan, Fars, and Khouzestan were the top five most populated cities in Iran, with South Khorasan having the highest population growth of 3%. The researchers further estimate the bigger cities such as Tehran,

Mashhad, and Isfahan inhibit majority the Iranians (Azadi et al., 2022). From the angle of birth

per woman, Azadi et al. (2022) indicate that in 2011, the highest birth rate belonged to the

women of Sistan and Baluchestan who also tend to have the lowest literacy among all other

regions of Iran (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Iran's Labor Force and Economically Inactive Population by Gender and Age
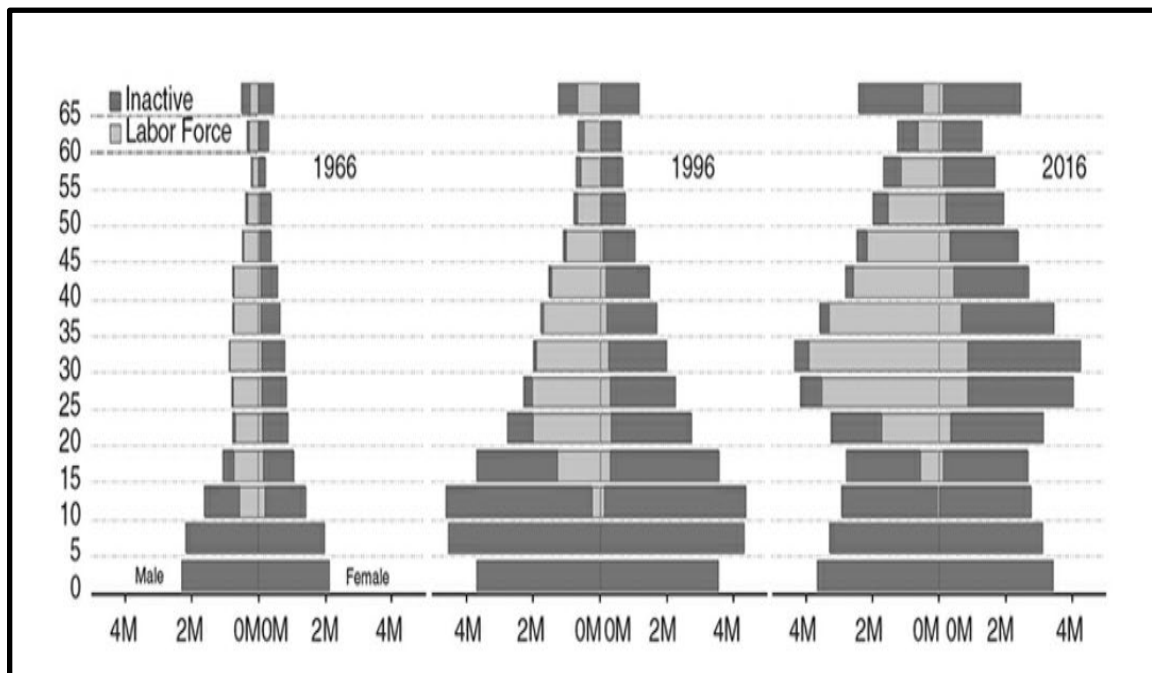
Note. From *Statistical Yearbooks (1966−2019), and Census Data (1956−2016)*, by Ministry of
Science, Research, and Technology, 2019, Institute for Research and Planning in Higher
Education (www.irphe.ac.ir). In the public domain.

The Labor Force in Iran has consistently experienced a gender gap, with men with an

average age of 31 dominating the workforce (Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology,

2019). Figure 2 reports that male labor participation remains at 72% while female labor

participation at 18% (see Figure 2). According to the presented data in Figure 2, women have

lower participation in the workplace, demonstrating that women's unemployment rate is twice

that of men. According to Azadi et al. (2022), Iran's unemployment relates to age, gender,

education, and geographic location. Iran's Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare reported a geographical distribution for employment in 2020, indicating cities such as Sistan Baluchestan have the lowest employment rates compared to other regions. Another aspect to consider is the Afghan immigrants working jobs such as construction, thus having a noticeable share in the Iranian labor force. The 2016 census reported Iran's immigrant population as around 1.8 million, with the majority being from Afghanistan (Azadi et al., 2022). In short, underlying issues of Iranians' low economic participation and high unemployment rates have exacerbated Iran's labor market, making it similar to countries with civil wars, such as Yemen and Syria.

In studying Iran's demographics, education is a crucial pillar in Iranian society as historically Iranians have been in pursuit of education (Shabani Varaki & Mohammadi Chaboki, 2023). The illiteracy rate was high (close to 70%) at the beginning of the Pahlavi era in 1925 (Abrahamian, 1982). However, Reza Shar Pahlavi initiated the centralized mass education system in the 1930s by establishing the Department of Public Education under the Ministry of Education (Khaki & Bhat, 2015). Later on, his son, Mohammad Reza Shah, developed the literacy corps to elevate the quality of education in rural areas, contributing to the literacy rate increase (Sabahi, 2002). The literacy rate has risen astonishingly since the Islamic Revolution 79, reaching 90% (Azadi et al., 2022).

In contrast, Central Bank of Iran's (CBI) economic database indicates that the country's output per capita is around $4,000 a year, a relatively low amount in a country with high educational attainment (Nakhli et al., 2020). Some contributors to Iran's low economic growth could be the education system's specific design and predicaments since the 1979 Revolution. To name a few, the heavy focus on the ideology in the education system, attention to standardized testing results, university entrance exam (*konkur*), Cultural Revolution, 1980 and its aftermaths

in firing prominent professors and teachers, and the regime's elites getting unique opportunities

in the higher education system that are unavailable for regular citizens. More specifically, the

cultural revolution of 1980 resulted in universities being closed for three years for Islamification

and purifying the higher education system through faculties with diverse ideologies (Marxist,

Western, et cetera.), leading to brain drains after the revolution (Mehran, 2009).

Figure 3

Iranian's Academic Achievements according to Age and Gender
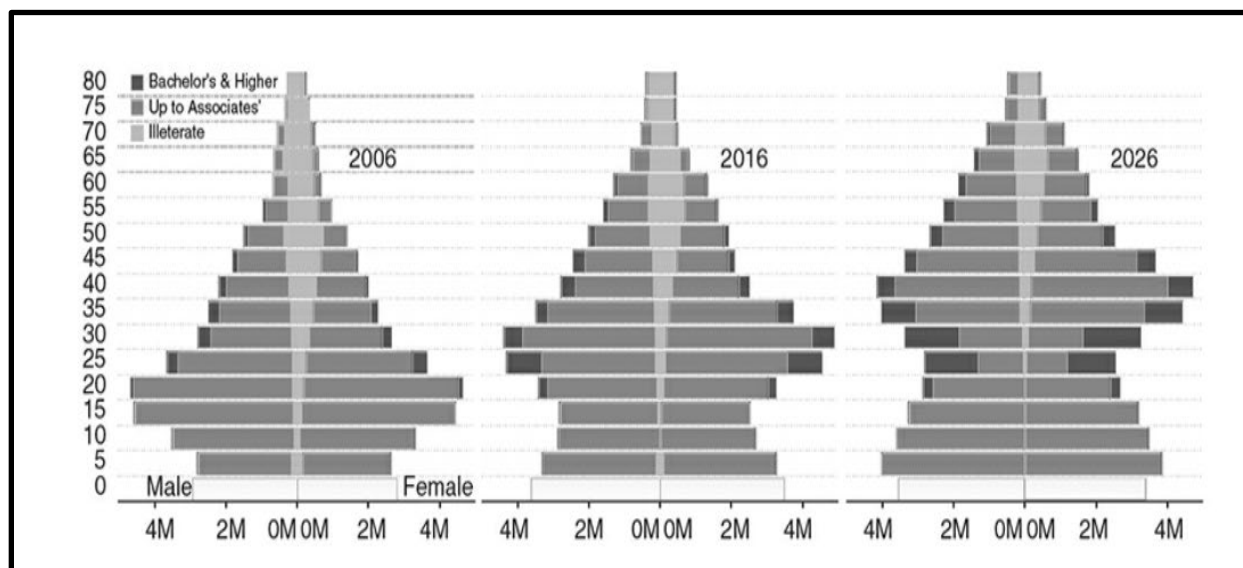
Note. From *Statistical Yearbooks (1966–2019), and Census Data (1956–2016)*, by Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology, 2019, Institute for Research and Planning in Higher Education (www.irphe.ac.ir). In the public domain.

Figure 3 shows the educational attainment versus age and gender in Iran in the years

2006 and 2016, along with projection for 2026, and one can conclude that in the year 2016,

around 6.4 million people 20 years old and older held higher education degrees, which is higher

than the same criteria in 2006 (see Figure 3). Furthermore, Iran ranks fifth in the world regarding

STEM graduates (World Economic Forum, 2016). The Ministry of Science, Research, and

Technology published that currently, women comprise 46% of the higher education system (see

Figure 3). All the mentioned data points toward the gender gap getting smaller in the Iranian

education system even though women have had a far lower share in the job market. In short, the presented information in this section created an understanding of the study's participants, who are Iranian women 50 years old and younger who have gone through an educational path influenced by the ideologies of the Islamic Revolution of 1979.

Iranians' Migration and Brain Drain

Research on forces driving migration indicates that four factors contribute to migration: predisposing, proximate, precipitating, and mediating factors (Roudi et al., 2017; Van Hear et al., 2012, 2018, 2020). Azadi et al. (2022) list the migration drivers under four categories, focusing on the reasons for Iranian migration. In their opinion, the most prevalent predisposing factors include low income compared to developed countries, low quality of education and discrimination in educational opportunities, religious and gender discriminations, human rights violations, and overall social oppression. Azadi et al. (2022) point out proximate factors such as the high unemployment rate, corruption in the system, the absence of the rule of law, and the environmental crisis of water shortage and air pollution. A few events that contributed to the Iranian migration are as follows: the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988), the cultural revolution (1980-1983), government oppression, and the abolition of any type of protests (1999, 2009, 2017, 2018, 2019), and high inflation. Finally, Azadi et al. (2022) categorize some incidents as the catalysts or mediating factors to Iranian migration, such as the filtering and censorship of the Internet as well as vast migrations in most families. These factors are not individual, and most people Iranians in particular face most of these factors contributing to their migration.

The available research on the Iranian brain drain and migration presents similar themes and information about the contributing factors and reasoning behind such phenomenon (Abdollahi, 1979; Azadi et al., 2022; Chaichian, 2012). Most of the research hints at the large

migration of Iranians in the years following the 1979 Revolution (Azadi et al., 2020; Bozorgmehr & Douglas, 2011; Chaichian, 2012). As this research will focus on Iranian women younger than 50 years, the post-revolution brain drains and migration rates and contributing factors are essential in adding value to the quality of the research. Azadi et al. (2022) believe that the Islamic Republic's government favors mass migration levels of the elite, religious and gender minorities, and individuals with diverse thinking as their migrations will leave the country with people of like-minded ideologies. As of 2019, there have been 700,000 Iranian students studying in foreign universities and 110,000 Iranian researchers working with universities and research institutes, which is distinctly the highest number compared to the previous decades (Sarfi et al., 2023).

Moreover, research indicates a shift in the characteristics of migrating Iranian students (Daha, 2011). In their belief, the Iranian students who attended international colleges in the 70s were more likely to return to the country than current students who migrated for educational purposes (Chaichian, 1997). Abdollahi (1979) estimated the tendency of Iranian students to return to Iran after graduating from foreign universities in 1979 was around 90%. Azadi et al. (2022) calculated this number to be 10% in 2019. Another shifting characteristic for Iranian students is the graduate-level share, which has increased since 1979. For instance, in the United States, the percentage of Iranian students at the graduate level among all Iranian students studying in America was 92% in 2019, far higher than 55% in 1979 (Abdollahi, 1979). Finally, the third characteristic change is found in the Iranian students who migrated before going to university with their families, as they acclimate more to the host country than Iran. In short, the number of Iranian students studying at foreign universities and Iranian-born researchers and scholars has increased remarkably since the early 2000s (Sadeh et al., 2019).

Even though Iran has witnessed booming records regarding the mean of school years and educational attainment, these achievements have not contributed to the system economically (Roudi et al., 2017). The literature on the topic mainly aims at the sociopolitical landscape of Iran as the main driver for brain drain and migration (Mossayeb & Shirazi, 2006). Typically, for Iranian students, the United States is the most desired destination as it contains the most significant number of Iranian students and scholars (Azadi et al., 2022).

University Entrance Exam (Konkur)

One predisposing factor that has driven many Iranian students to migrate is the pre-university exam or the entrance exam, *konkur*, and the policies in the universities' acceptance process (Sakurai, 2004). The discriminatory policies such as admission advantages for government supporters, highly ranked official family members, and religious class has left the rest of the participants with fewer opportunities for university acceptance (Sheyholislami, 2012) . Even though the government calls upon overhauling these policies as part of its social justice agenda, Sakurai (2004) believes these measures intend to absorb the group of firm supporters of the regime to help promote the Islamic Republic's ideologies and propaganda. Hence, these policies and the disregard for the rule of law have led to the depreciation of the quality of Iran's education system (Kamyab, 2015).

Cultural Revolution

The countries with the most Iranian migrants in 2019 were the United States and Canada, respectively (Azadi et al., 2022). In the eight years following the 1979 revolution, the number of Iranian immigrants in the U.S. tripled from 5,861 in 1978 to 15,505 in 1986, leaving out the visitor and student visa candidates (Bozorgmehr et al., 1988). According to the US Census 2000, most Iranian immigrants reside in California, forming the largest Iranian community in the

United States (Fata & Rafii, 2003). Moreover, Fata and Rafii's (2003) study designated the Iranian population of Los Angeles and Beverly Hills as approximately 160,000, more significant than the Iranian population in other American States combined. The student visa is also the most-issued visa for Iranians (Hakimzadeh & Dixon, 2006). In their evaluations of the foreign-born Iranian immigrants in the United States in the year 2000, Hakimzadeh and Dixon (2006) found that this subgroup held a bachelor's degree or higher, mainly hired in management and professional positions, with an average income of ($36,000-$52,000), and three out of five individuals became naturalized citizens.

Iran's Hostage Crisis

The number of Iranian students in the U.S. was at its highest after the revolution in 1979-1980. Following the hostage crisis in 1979-1981 and the subsequent closure of the American embassy in Iran, the number of students began to steadily decline (Bozorgmehr et al., 1988). The formal stoppage of the Iranian student visas to the United States stemmed from President Carter's order to cancel all student visas issued to Iranian students, thus prohibiting entry to this group of students (Bozorgmehr, 1989). In 1979, following the events that led to the revolution, some riotous students seized the American embassy in Tehran and took American diplomats working in the US embassy as hostages for 444 days (Dreyfuss, 2013). The students who participated in the hostage-taking chanted anti-imperialism slogans and sympathized with the world liberation agenda, were part of a group called "Imam's line" that pledged loyalty to Khomeini (Amanat, 2017). Consequently, President Carter ordered the expulsion of the Iranian students in the US in 1979, although the Iranian embassy continued working for another four months until the Iran-US relations were officially broken apart (Dreyfuss & LeMarc, 1980). The role of Ayatollah Khomeini in the hostage crisis is still unclear, as some scholars and researchers

indicate his involvement in the uprising (Subani, 2013). Khomeini's hesitation in complying with the international diplomatic immunity laws indicated his role in the hostage crisis (Falk, 1980). Both the hostage crisis and the Iran-Iraq war increased Khomeini's harsh anti-western rhetoric and support for Islamic order: Slogans such as "Death to America," "Spy den" referring to the American embassy, America "The great Satan," became the symbols for the Islamic Republic (Amanat, 2017). Overall, the hostage-takings created a nuance that rejuvenated the revolutionary feelings among the supporters of the revolution and led to the ideology that any endorsement for adverse liberal thinking proved an allegiance to the US (Axworthy, 2013).

In general, the early years of the 1979 Islamic Revolution the Iranian society shifted from modernism to Islamic traditions following the rhetoric of returning to Islamic values and disregarding social growth (Milani & Pakzad, 2019). As a result, these problematic events of the hostage crisis and eight-year Iran-Iraq war, though being a burden for a lot of Iranians, assisted the Islamic Republic government in creating a sense of revolutionary sentiment among their supporters that would later support the inhumane actions of the government in the oppression of different political, ethnic, and religious groups (Hausman, 2021).

These precipitating factors of the 1979 revolution, cultural revolution, hostage crisis, and Iran-Iraq war led to a stream of Iranian migration to Europe and North American countries (Azadi et al., 2022). The hostage crisis created a wave of mass migrations from Iran even though the hostility of Americans towards Iranians were rising (Mobasher, 2012). More recent events contributing to high migration rates are the regime's aggressive measures in cracking down on the protests of students in 1999, the Green Movement protests of 2009, the protests of economic crisis and gasoline prices after 2009, and the sanctions on Iran due to their nuclear program. There is a gap in the literature presenting information and analysis of the recent unrest in Iran

and its effects on migration. Protests and civil turmoil have become more frequent within the past few years since 2017, but the literature on the events is still unavailable. The protests of 2019, following the abrupt increase in the petroleum price, and he government brutal crackdowns on the protests contributed to waves of migration from Iran to the West (Shahi & Abdoh-Tabrizi, 2020). For instance, the events of the 2022 protests in Iran are too recent to study their influences on the rate of migration and brain drain.

Iran Sanctions

The United States government has been using economic sanctions on countries to pressure foreign governments to shift specific policies and actions in those governments (Ronaghi, 2021). Sen (2018) notes that the U.S. government has sanctioned the Iranian government since the 1979 revolution and the acts of hostage crisis that led to the closure of the U.S. embassy. Even during the eight-year Iran-Iraq war, the US continued imposing sanctions on Iran's imports and exports (Zarbi et al., 2019). Moreover, despite the government's claims of peacefulness, Iran's nuclear program has been subjected to the United Nation's sanctions (Shamgholi, 2012). Consequently, through a Joint Comprehensive Plan (JCPOA) in 2015 between Iran and the P5+1, including the United States, China, Russia, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the European Union, Iran agreed to uphold its nuclear program as collateral for sanction reliefs (Samore et al., 2015). However, the long-term sanctions have affected the Iranian people's lives and created a sense of hopelessness. The high inflation and deprivation of access to medicine for specific diseases have been precipitating factors in brain drain and migration.

Brain Drain

There is not a single definite meaning that pertains to brain drain. The term is generally used by researchers to indicate the emigration of highly educated skilled individuals from developing countries to the Western countries such as United States and Canada (Chaichian, 2012). Another definition is the emigration of educated individuals who have received education in their own societies and decide to migrate either permanently or long-term (Wickramasekara, 2003). Furthermore, researchers use terms such as "focused migration" meaning the migration of educated people through developed countries' need or advertisement (Murro, 2008). Brain drain from socioeconomic stance is a successful individual decision regardless of the country, economic status, or political aspect is a success since it occurs in pursuit for a better life (Collier et al., 2004). However, brain drain is counted as an economic loss for the country that the individual emigrates from because the country is losing a human capital that the government had spent resources on their education and trainings (Iravani, 2011).

Internet and Social Media Difficulties

Among the mediating factors contributing to the brain drain and migration in Iran, access to the Internet has been a crucial component since the 2010s. Access to the Internet has made communication easier among Iranians inside and outside Iran, elevating the likelihood of migration among the next generation (Roudi et al., 2017). The Internet has played a significant role in opening the flow of information to the Iranian population against the government's censorship and monopoly of the media (Azadi et al., 2022). The researchers Azadi et al. (2022) estimate that the rate of brain drain, especially among educated and skilled Iranians, will continue to increase in the future due to continuous political and economic crises, low quality of education, sanctions, social injustices, and government filtering of the Internet.

Iranian Immigrants in the United States

Iranian immigrants in the United States come from various educational, economic, political, and religious backgrounds (Haifizi & Steis, 2020). They may have had different roles in Iran, such as political, middle class, higher class, educated, et cetera. This group of immigrants is considered a heterogeneous community coming from an extreme yet specific historical background, especially after the 1979 Revolution (Amin, 2006). As mentioned earlier, the Iranian population comprises different ethnic groups and religions. Hence, the immigrants from Iran have different religious beliefs, such as Muslim, Jewish, Zoroastrian, Christian, and Bahai, or have different ethnic backgrounds, such as Turk, Baluch, Kurdish, et cetera (Amanolahi, 2005). Their entrance to the United States could be through various immigration forms such as student visas, tourist visas, permanent residents, et cetera.

Iranian-American Culture

A generic definition for culture could be a collection of characteristics expressed through shared practices in social settings (Mostofi, 2003). Researchers Guibernau and Rex (1997) view culture as both "a psychological and a sociological term" (Guibernau & Rex, 1997, p. 4). In their opinion, other social constructs, such as race and ethnicity, stem from the core concept of culture (Berdún et al., 2010). Similarly, Mostofi (2003) illustrates that the outside world influences identity so the Iranians in America embody a dual identity. Mostofi (2003) then coined the term "Iranian-American" for the Iranians living in the United States (p. 682). This researcher describes Iranian Americans through two factors: (a) appreciation for American freedom and (b) continuing to practice the traditions of the Iranian culture (Mostofi, 2003). Culture manifests through visible practices, primarily physical, like attire and body language, and invisible practices, such as mental beliefs and norms (Balali, 2023). Regarding educational performances,

behavior, and achievements, Balali (2023) believes that the invisible culture plays a role, as it is a product of beliefs and values that students from diverse backgrounds put forward in educational environments.

In simple terms, diaspora refers to some people living outside their homeland (Grossman, 2019). Furthermore, Safran (2011) describes the word diaspora through six factors that apply to the Iranian immigrant group: (a) being from another region; (b) having a collection of rituals, memories, and sentiments from the motherland; (c) feeling a sense of belonging to the host country is absent among this group; (d) valuing their home country as the desired location which they had to move away from due to different reasons; (e) feeling committed to the originality and prosperity of their homeland; and (f) keeping their connection with the motherland. However, the Iranian diaspora follows a "trans-national" characteristic which is far from religion, ethnicity, and Iranian nation (R. A. Cohen & Yefet, 2021, p. 686). The Iranian immigrants view Iran as a country of origin to keep their bases connected but are transnational enough to organically assimilate into the host country's culture. Hence, it is reasonable to put the label of Iranian diaspora on the Iranians residing in the US.

The more significant portion of the Iranian diaspora lives in Southern California and has views in opposition to the Iranian regime (Ghorashi, 2004). This group of immigrants holds values aligned with Westernized modern societies, contrasting with the Islamic Republic government's Islamic ideology (Mostofi, 2003). Notably, the West heavily influenced Iranian culture in the nineteenth century when Iranians leaned toward Western ideas of society and sent their children to European countries primarily for educational purposes (Kelley, 1993). For instance, the use of the French word "merci" in the Iranian language demonstrates the lasting

influences of the French language. Furthermore, Mostofi (2003) notes that the Iranian-American community has held on to the Iranian identity while supporting American civic values.

Iranian-Americans' Acculturation and Assimilation

It is crucial to explore the concept of acculturation in explaining assimilation phase in the process of immigration (Haji Molana, 2020). Acculturation occurs when cultures shift in terms of education, development, and adapting to a new culture that differs from home culture (Moyerman & Forman, 1992). Two key parts identify the acculturation process, being continuous and empirical meaning individuals from different cultural backgrounds steadily living together (Redfield et al., 1936). Another acculturation characteristic is that it manifests differently and occurs at different pace for each individual (Saidi, 2014). Culturally speaking, acculturation is a cycle between the cultural backgrounds of the immigrant individual and the host country's cultures (Kaplan & Chacko, 2015). Assimilation on the other hand, happens few years after acculturation when the individual completely adapts to cope with the customs and values of the host country (Berry, 1997). The coping mechanism of assimilation, which is one of the four stages of acculturation takes place through ignorance of the home culture and formation of a new persona that complies with the dominant culture. The other three strategies of acculturation in Berry's (1997) conceptual framework includes; separation, integration, and marginalization.

The Iranian-American immigrants typically go through acculturation especially the assimilation phase as it contributes to their mental wellness living in the United States (Kadkhoda, 2001). The reason was that the more Iranians adapted to the American culture, their stresses and anxieties related to immigration decreased. The research demonstrated that the more Iranians adopted the United States customs and practices, the less stress they felt in their

integration to the new society (Ghaffarian, 1998). A reason for such phenomena could be the shaky historical events between the two countries, following intense events and interactions such as the American hostage issues. Such events have influenced Iranians to easily assimilate into the American society and distance themselves from the Iranian identity (Saidi, 2014). In short, Ghaffarian (1998) describes acculturation as a journey of adaptation to the host culture through which the accultured individual assimilates into the dominant society. In the case of the Iranian-Americans, they incorporate assimilation strategies to distance themselves from the Iranian government's actions and the stresses of living in the American society as an Iranian.

Iranian-American Women in United States' Higher Education System

The encounters of minorities in the American college system highlights the importance of culture and language in determining their educational success. Culture and the concept of *self* are two interchangeable ideas embedded in the Western psychology (Ziabakhsh & Simon, 2002). In that regard, the literature identifies *self* as a construct that pertains to individuals but influenced from the society they inhibit (Paranjpe, 1998). Thus, in the Western societies culture affects the formation of self while self, forms and frames the culture (Erikson, 1968). The Iranian perspective of self on the other hand, consists of two internal and external representations where the internal self is preserved and pure while the external self is proper for social interactions (Hoffman, 1989). The two selves are not interconnected as the culture promotes the internal self to stay pure and not affected by the external self (Good et al., 1985). Throughout the Iranian history and various religious practices, the idea of self has been a dual concept interacting in different paths working simultaneously to maintain an honorable individual with customs such as expressing humility, respecting the elderly, and being thankful verbally (Chaichian, 1997).

The Iranian women are pressured more than men to practice the inconsistencies between the private self and the public self (Ziabakhsh & Simon, 2002). Historically, Iranian women have been subjected to social injustices because of the society's inferior look towards women (Abrahamian, 2018). For instance, during the Reza Shah the police would physically attacked and arrested the women for wearing the hijab and while in the present day the Islamic Republic's police arrests women for not wearing the hijab (Axworthy, 2013). It is expected from the Iranian women to act diligently and keeping to themselves in social settings while expressing their true voice in private (Bauer, 1985). Therefore, these women would have perceptions of self that varies from the Western ideas of self. The dichotomy of internal versus external self in the Iranian identity plays an important role in the cultural adaptation of Iranian women into the American culture (Hoffman, 1989). The literature by Hoffman (1989) brings about Iranian women impressions of the American culture, and one example of a religious Iranian woman stands out as she expresses the American culture lacking spiritual characteristics while filled with materialistic possessions. The Iranian woman in the example explicitly expressed that learning the new culture was standing in the way of self-identity. She mentioned the interaction between individuals lacking respect and compassion as one of the dominant cultural traits that was hurting her. The lack of family values and helping one another were among the elements that she expressed missing in the American culture. Furthermore, the studies indicate that Iranians used assimilation to succeed in educational attainment as a strategy to cope with the dominant American culture and alleviate the negative social stereotypes against them (Chaichian, 1997; Hoffman, 1989; Mostofi, 2003). One of the prevalent mechanism in the Iranian-Americans' acculturation and further assimilation process is learning and acquiring mastery of the English language as it paves the way for higher educational achievements (Daha, 2011).

The research on Iranian Americans indicate that they migrated to the United States in pursuit of a better life while bringing a rich culture, strong family values, and a sense of identity from Iran (Bozorgmehr, 1989; Mahdi, 2004). They have faced negative social interactions in the United States due to the events of hostage crisis and September 11, 2001, even though Iranians are not all Muslims and belong to different religions practices such as Zoroastrian, Christian, Jewish, and Bahai (Daha, 2011). Consequently, they used educational attainment as their strategy to move up socially and economically (Shavarini, 2004). In short, education has served as a tool towards success in the Iranian American community.

The study conducted by Daha (2011) in analyzing the ethnic identity in the Iranian Americans, presented that social and situational aspects influence the formation of an ethnic identity. The Iranian history and its events, physical appearances, and the politic are few contextual factors that have shaped the ethnic identity of the Iranian Americans (Daha, 2011). A crucial finding of the study was that Iranians affiliated with religious minorities such as Baha'i and Jewish religions practiced their religion with more rigor in the United States. Whereas the Muslim Iranians usually distance themselves from Islam religion due to the policies of the Islamic Republic and negative stereotypes of the religion in the American culture (Bozorgmehr et al., 1988). The continuous presence of ethnic identity in the Iranian Americans has enabled the second generation Iranian Americans to excel in higher education with the support of their parents and the community (Bozorgmehr & Douglas, 2011). The second generation's success and their attention and respect for the Iranian ethnic identity are in contrast with the ideas of assimilation, which supports letting go of all home cultural practices to succeed in the education and professional arenas of the host country (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006).

The study on Iranian American women and their conflict between the Iranian identity and American culture indicates that these women compared to Iranian men are under more pressure from parents to follow the traditions such as arranged marriage as their freedom for choosing a partner is disregarded (Hanassab, 1998). In terms of educational attainment, Iranian women are among highest educated immigrant compared to other female immigrant groups in the United States (Bozorgmehr & Douglas, 2011). Among the first generation Iranian Americans, men have had higher education attainment than women whereas in second generation Iranian Americans this trend is reversed and women have gained higher educational attainment compared to men (Rumbaut, 2008). In terms of socioeconomic status Iranian-American men compared to women in the first generation make more money due to their higher education attainment (Light et al., 1994). Finally, Bozorgmehr and Douglas (2011) conclude that first generation Iranian American men were ahead of the women in terms of educational attainment, work participation, and economic status but in the second generation the gaps closed with female Iranian Americans surpassing their male peers.

Despite the major educational achievements of Iranian women in American higher education system, there is an existing gap in the research studying the experiences of these women in the educational context (Sadeghi, 2008). Generally speaking, immigrant women's' educational aspirations are influenced by their role in home community situated in the context of the host country for instance, gaining independence in the family, accessing higher socioeconomic status, and approval in the host country (Mojab, 2006). The study by Sadeghi (2008) in this area indicated that migrant women literacy and learning process was influenced by social interactions and disrupted by the challenges of cultural and gender conflicts. Hence,

learning is a continuous progress situated within one's experiences, belief system, and the dominant culture (Edwards, 2017).

Cultural Discontinuity

In defining culture and its variations, another comprehensive description entails a set of rules, expectations, belief systems, values, and interactions within the outside world that embodies two forms: individualistic and collectivistic (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). First, a collectivistic culture takes on social norms that influence a sense of self, whereas in an individualistic form, each person is responsible for themselves and does not depend on society for assistance (Tyler et al., 2008). Second, from an educational perspective, collectivism relies on concepts of family and social norms, while the individualistic frame promotes self-centeredness, self-confidence, and expressiveness (Balali, 2023). Finally, other factors such as religion, geographical location, and demographics are among many elements influencing and differentiating various cultures (A. Cohen, 2009).

Distinct cultures value education differently regarding learning styles, communication skills, and general educational practices, which can lead to cultural discontinuity in learning environments with diverse students (Shure et al., 2019). Moreover Shure et al. (2019), in their observations from African American students, state that the cultural discontinuity between home lives and school environment plays part in this group of students' underachievement. Educational accomplishments are also relevant to value differences within cultures with subcultures that don't necessarily follow the cultural norms and practices resulting from the diversity of culture that is susceptible to the environment and societal influences (Balali, 2023).

Another cultural viewpoint is the postmodernist idea of culture, highlighting the role of social interactions (Harvey, 2020). The term "discursive practices" refers to this framework of

viewing culture beyond the geographical domains and through social interactions that lead to native and non-native speaking experiences and how they shift the paradigms of cultural diversity (Kramsch, 2013). This outlook draws quite a different view on culture, and concluding that cultural diversity spans as much as discursive practices and interactions vary; thus, establishing that cultural discontinuity is a diverse procedure acquainted with differentiation and recent practices (Balali, 2023). In short, culture and language operate interchangeably as linguistics transforms culture and influences culture's worldview (DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2016).

Focusing on cultural discontinuity leads to the notion of dominant culture in institutions such as educational facilities and public schools. This dominant culture is pretty visible in the United States education system, where the norm is to abide by the mainstream expectations and behaviors instead of incorporating different cultural practices by students from diverse backgrounds. The researchers Tyler et al. (2008) refers to this phenomenon as *ethnocentric monoculturism*, which is a primary driver in minority students' distance from home culture in school environments (Tyler et al., 2008). In the case of home culture, typically, the socializing practices that students bring on from their home cultures are discontinued when students start school and replaced by the mainstream dominant culture, which is the Western worldview in the American education system. Furthermore, Tyler et al. (2008) note that minority students tend to distance themselves from their cultural practices and follow the educational environment's norms in order to excel in the school system.

G. Gay (2000) describes cultural discontinuity in four stages: (a) minority students bring their cultural practices to the classroom setting; (b) they find their cultural values sanctioned and instead, Westernized mainstream culture dominates in the school's infrastructure; (c) the

51

prevailing system manages to terminate students' culturally based behaviors and practices, and (d) students decide to either continue the banned cultural values from home or abide by the mainstream dominant practices in the school environment (G. Gay, 2000). Finally, cultural discontinuity happens when students' cultural behaviors and practices are terminated at school or exhibited minimally on the educational premises (Tyler et al., 2008). Minority students realize that to flourish in the academic environment, they can no longer continue the same practices they have become acquainted with as their home culture. In contrast, when the values in the home culture assimilate and are similar to the dominant learning environment's culture, the students continue socializing in the same manner through both cultures (Balali, 2023). For instance, if the home culture promotes collaborative thinking styles and school environment supports this type of thinking, then the student socializes in the same manner in school and at home.

Cultural Socialization

Balali (2023) highlights the role of home-based cultural socialization in developing cultural discontinuity, which aligns with the research from Tyler et al. (2008), stating that children from an early age learn to socialize under the influence of distinct cultural values and behaviors and that cognition is in some degree transferred from parents and adults around them. The process of socialization into cultures, resulting in cultural activities and practices, occurs through relationships among members of specific societies such as family, groups, educational environments, professional settings, media, and especially social media in the current world (Balali, 2023). Drawing upon the scholarly work from Bronfenbrenner (1986) on the family ecological influences on children's socialization process, the researcher identifies three systems of mesosystem, exosystem, and chronosystem as systems that shape humans' socializing practices from young ages (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Mesosystems are places children aside from

family spend most of their time, yet they interact with family, like school, preschool, kindergarten, et cetera. Bronfenbrenner (1986) describes ecosystems as systems in which parents operate; for instance, their workplace affects parents' attitudes and behaviors, shifting children's socialization processes. Chronosystems are the systems resulting from changes in individuals' lives, such as migration affecting the socializing process. However, Bronfenbrenner (1986) tends to press that the level of socialization for different people is different, and there is no one script for all.

Subsequently, Ogbu's (1981) research focuses on developing a cultural ecological model of human competence while working closely with minority children in America. Simply put, cultural ecology refers to children's various socialization practices and underlying reasons (Balali, 2023). Ogbu (1981) believes that the nature of human competence within cultures lies in the adult practices of that cultural society, and the patterns of those competence skills influence how parents bring up children. Child-raising practices stem from the competence and survival skills built in parents' cultural practices. Children develop patterns similar to their parents regarding competencies and survival (Ogbu, 1981). Moreover, the native theory of success refers to people in certain cultures performing skills that lead to success or, in other words, achieving a higher status in society (Lee, 1994). The cultural tasks accompanied by the native theory of success identify those competencies that each population defines as a survival or success strategy. Hence, children from different cultures understand socializing patterns differently because competency and success relate to other patterns and outlooks within their community (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). However, one cannot conclude that people from the same culture follow similar socializing patterns. People from similar backgrounds often possess personal

interests and habits that shape their definition of competence and success (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998).

The previous theories and research discussed, highlighted the elements shaping cultural socialization, which is a compelling notion of cultural discontinuity (A. Cohen, 2009; G. Gay, 2000; Tyler et al., 2008). Bronfenbrenner (1986), on the one hand, defines the central social systems and their influence in shaping an individual's socio-cultural patterns. In their description, systems such as parents, peers, school, and parents' workplace, and components such as migration impact socialization culture, contributing to cultural discontinuity (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). On the other hand, Ogbu (1981) created a cultural ecology model for developing human competence and dignifies the role of culture and culturally centered practices in forming socialization patterns. Ogbu's (1981) cultural-ecological model constructs an analysis of the complexities and differences in minority students' experiences, with cultural discontinuity in education settings and its balance with the cultural competencies they employ for survival within their communities (Balali, 2023). Other factors, such as students' involvement in native communities' practices and individual differences, are essential in diverse students' social and academic experiences in the mainstream education system. Overall, all of the theories on culture, socialization, competence, and native theory of success highlight the role of innate culture in cultural discontinuity, which students from diverse backgrounds experience in the American education system.

The socialization procedures in diverse, multicultural groups are unique, and scholars use ethnic-racial socialization to describe the process (Ogbu, 1981). A formal description of family ethnic-racial socialization includes how families socialize their children about values, belief systems, customs, and styles concerning their ethnic-racial community, aiming to educate young

54

children about the existing biases and coping mechanisms (Umaña-Taylor & Hill, 2020). Hughes et al. (2006), as cited by Umaña-Taylor and Hill (2020), determine four features for family ethnic-racial socialization: cultural socialization relating to the transfer of values and belief systems, preparation for bias in terms of discrimination and possible racism in the society, mistrust and wariness of other cultures and intentions, and egalitarianism about equity and equality of various cultural societies (p. 245). Each factor has pros and cons that affect the socialization of ethnic youth and differentiate them from majority groups and other ethnic communities. However, as a whole, cultural socialization tends to have a positive concurrence with ethnic-racial socialization. For instance, minority youth learn to prepare and become aware of the existing racial discrimination in the host society, or the support for egalitarianism boosts ethnic youth's self-esteem in society (Balali, 2023). In contrast, ideas of promoting mistrust of other cultures or societies can hinder the socialization process for minority youth in the host community and create resistance in ethnic generations to associate with the dominant culture positively.

Furthermore, ethnic-racial socialization looks different among communities due to their unique experiences and interactions with discrimination and racially biased societies. As expected, prejudice and bias incite ethnic-racial socialization, particularly in preparation of bias (Umaña-Taylor & Hill, 2020). The researchers, Umaña-Taylor and Hill (2020) posit that very often, parents' discrimination experiences at the workplace determine their socializing objectives for their children. However, the study illustrates that the bias preparation techniques articulate differently for African Americans and Latinos from Chinese parents due to dissimilar discrimination experiences parents observe in American society. African-American and Latino parents prepare their offspring to have dignity for their racial and ethnic backgrounds. In

contrast, Asian parents encourage their children to comply with the dominant culture. The Asian students tend to excel academically in school to meet their parents' expectations.

The theories and frameworks above describe different social factors that play a role in developing cultural discontinuity among various ethnic communities, especially in the educational realm. Reviewing the scholarly work by Bronfenbrenner (1986) highlighted the impacts of familial structures and events, such as migration, on the process of cultural discontinuity and the notation of social systems that form the cultural evolution of human society (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Then, the cultural facet in the socialization process distinguished the role of culture in minority groups' outlook on the dominant culture in the education system. Drawing upon the research by Ogbu (1981), the cultural ecological model describes the cultural discontinuity from the diverse experiences that different ethnic students process to gain the competence and survival skills aligned with the home culture (Ogbu, 1981). Ultimately, the ethnic-racial socialization framework delineated the methods ethnic groups incorporate to prepare the younger generation for possible biases and discriminations in the host community and society. The following section of this literature review will attempt to provide concrete pieces of evidence of cultural discontinuity in educational settings.

Cultural Discontinuity in Practice

Cultural discontinuity in education develops through ethnically diverse students' experiences of the encounter between home and school culture. Yoon et al. (2017) studied thirteen East Asian immigrant students and their families in the United States from a cultural perspective. Asian American culture has collectivist indicators that support family, community, and interdependence (Balali, 2023). Asian American parents typically stress the values of education and high academic performance as their survival and competence strategies. However,

the study demonstrated a disconnect between the two cultures where family provided strong cultural socialization strands, but that notion was absent in the school environment (Yoon et al., 2017). The students expressed that racism in school helped them develop coping mechanisms such as dismissal, minimization, and defensive skills. On the other hand, the home culture stressed the idea of the model minority, engraving the identities these Asian students process and develop. Overall, Yoon et al. (2017) found that these students developed discontinuity in experiencing the vast disconnect between the collectivistic culture at home and the individualistic culture in the American school system. Their survival skill was to cope with the cultural discontinuity and create a model minority identity that carried identities from both cultures, hence contributing to aspects of cultural discontinuity that negatively influenced Asian American students' prosperity (Yoon et al., 2017).

Markose and Hellstén (2009) conducted a study on students of two families (Lebanese and Chinese) in an Australian school's literacy program to analyze the cultural discontinuity and its implications for literacy development. The researchers Markose and Hellsten (2009), mention that the Chinese parents, supportive of Confucian philosophy, strongly stress the value of educational accomplishments as an indication of success, thus having a supportive outlook for mainstream education culture and interpreting school culture as a way towards social excellence. On the other side, the Lebanese parents valued home culture above the mainstream school culture, focusing on teaching children the Arabic language for reading the Quran and learning the Islamic virtues with less regard for incorporating societal practices into their daily lives. A key point in these observations is that these students go through dissimilar cultural discontinuity processes, with the Chinese student succeeding in the school's literacy program parting from native language and culture, and the Lebanese student not prevailing in the program while

keeping close ties with home language and culture. Markose and Hellstén (2009) concluded that the discontinuities between school and home literacies influence the performance of immigrant students. They suggested that school literacy programs must embed programs recognizing students' home language and culture (Markose & Hellstén, 2009).

Additionally, Taggart (2017), in studying Latino high school students' academic performances from two high schools in South Texas, came across another aspect of teacher bias contributing to cultural discontinuity among these students. The researcher Taggart (2017), found that cultural discontinuity negatively correlates with students' academic achievements; the more cultural discontinuity between school culture and home culture a student experiences, the lower the student's GPA will be. Furthermore, Taggart (2017) expanded the investigation by studying these student populations' performance on standardized tests, specifically math scores, and found that these students performed better on standardized tests. Hence, it demonstrates teachers' roles in students' GPAs and probably their biases against this group of students. It is notable to point out the teachers' perceptions and bigotry toward students from diverse backgrounds and how they can negatively influence students' academic performance.

Similarly, Shure et al. (2019) investigated American school counselors recommending African-American students for special education courses, indicating their attitudes toward students' backgrounds and culture. The focus group was white counselors embracing the importance of adhering to mainstream Western values and cultures, typically individualism. The researchers Shure et al. (2019), discovered a trend in these counselors recommending most African American students with behavior issues for remedial or special education classes compared to other students demonstrating similar behaviors (Shure et al., 2019). The study further posited that these counselors and their decision-making were not culturally neutral,

supporting their personal biases toward certain students from specific backgrounds. Finally, the study recommended further counselors' training and practices in culturally relevant educational practices.

Overall, the mainstream education environment in America supports individualistic cultural traditions (Pradana et al., 2020). Consequently, students demonstrating other cultural forms that align with collectivist cultural behaviors tend to experience cultural discontinuity during their educational journeys. Therefore, to help students in multicultural educational settings, researchers have developed and facilitated a cultural-ecological framework in public school settings to promote cultural diversity in the academic scopes and assist the individuals employed in the education field to rise above personal biases and attitudes toward ethnically diverse cultures (Balali, 2023).

School Performance by Minorities in the United States

Ogbu and Simons (1998) have studied and investigated different aspects of minority student performances in schools and proposed a descriptive model named cultural-ecology theory that explains why and how some minority students, considering the societal, school, and community dynamics, perform better than other minorities. In this cultural-ecology framework, two parts are of importance: the system, which refers to minority treatments in education settings, including policies, curriculum, et cetera, and the second part referring to the community forces that pertain to minority responses to the system stemming from the origins of why and how specific populations became minorities (Ogbu & Simons, 1998, p. 158). This framework also demonstrates the influences of minority group's status and societal interactions on the community's academic achievements (Luciak, 2004).

Furthermore, Ogbu and Simons (1998) offer a distinct description of the minority, which is a population that inhabits a lower status compared to another dominant population in the same society, categorizing minorities into three subgroups: autonomous, voluntary (immigrant), and involuntary (nonimmigrant) minorities. In short, the theory of cultural-ecological framework introduces and explains the patterns and practices in minority communities. However, differences and dissimilar practices exist within minority groups, and not all members of a minority community share the same characteristics, behaviors, and beliefs.

Voluntary Minorities and Their Educational Experiences

This subgroup of minorities has migrated to the US in hopes of a better life, education, financial stability, and freedom (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). Therefore, this population does not feel they are in the United States by force against their will and tend to succeed in the American education system (He et al., 2017). Additionally, people who migrate to the United States under refugee categories feeling civil unrest and war in their home countries are not considered part of the voluntary immigrant group but they share similar attitudes and behaviors with this subgroup (Lohrmann, 2000). Ogbu and Simons (1998) refer to this attitude as tourist attitude meaning that the voluntary minorities face cultural and language barriers although they are eager to learn the language and accommodate the new society's norms without fearing losing their cultural identity. The current study considers the Iranian American population as a voluntary minority or minorities with a tourist attitude in the United States.

Ogbu and Simons (1998) further state that voluntary minorities compare the American schooling system with the educational experiences in their home countries and believe that they have more opportunities in the United States to access higher social status by doing well in school, getting good grades, following the rules, and eventually becoming a professional earning

a comfortable income. Higher education has an esteemed place in this immigrant mentality as it is the way to a better career (Roucek, 1958). This group of minorities have a similar belief system as the white Americans about hard work, education, and better career opportunities (Ogbu & Simons, 1998).

Furthermore, there is less persistence and hesitation from voluntary minorities to assimilate into the white culture, and they usually consider professionals who have succeeded through white power structures to be role models (Drouhot & Nee, 2019). Thus, this group does not question authority or school settings, school agendas, policies, and patterns because they believe that the system works, and if they comply with the rules, they can succeed in society. The group believes that learning a new language and culture will add to their expertise and not threaten to obscure their home culture and identity (Delpit & Dowdy, 2008). For those reasons, this group of immigrant parents has high academic expectations from their children and holds them accountable for their educational achievements (Antony-Newman, 2019). In conclusion, voluntary minorities do well in the American education system in exceeding the requirements and achieving high academic standards to advance to the higher education system, so as to gain a well-paying job in a technical field.

Iranian American immigrants demonstrate characteristics similar to Ogbu and Simons' (1998) description of the tourist attitude. However, a study on this minority group and their lifestyle in the United States indicated difficulties adjusting to America's language, cultural practices, and social activities in America (Budman & Lipson, 1992). The prevalent mentality among the Iranian-American immigrants was to possess strength and work to overcome obstacles (Ghaffarian, 1998). The mentality of making it is evident in voluntary immigrants, which indicates complying with white values and viewpoints of hard work and following the

rules, especially in education, to earn a comfortable living and thus achieve economic success in American society (Ogbu & Simons, 1998).

A dissertation by Askari (2003) focuses on the cultural aspect of Iranian immigrants in therapy. It notes Iranian attitudes, mentality, and beliefs about life in the United States. In their study, Askari (2003) used the term well-adapted Iranian Americans for those who had a double identity of being both an Iranian and an American, resulting in a successful assimilation in American society (Askari, 2003). The study further analyzes the methods these subgroups of Iranian-American immigrants have taken in adapting to the mainstream society. For instance, participants expressed their admiration for the American students working entry-level jobs given their status as university students, which rarely happens in Iran. They concluded that as much as Iran has a class system, America is a classless society (Amin, 2006). Askari (2003) used acculturation to describe the Iranian-American immigrant experience. They defined the term using a description from Glass and Bieber (1997): a one-way process in which individuals let go of their previously held viewpoints, beliefs, and cultures to comply with the dominant culture. Others argue that acculturation can be a two-way process in which the individual incorporates characteristics of both cultures so as to comply with the dominant culture but keep their cultural identity (Berry, 1997). Iranian immigrants undergo acculturation by assimilating into America's dominant Western white culture, specifically in the educational system (Kadkhoda, 2001).

Moreover, Askari (2003) states the same categorization as Ogbu and Simon (1998) as voluntary and involuntary immigrants. Askari's definition of voluntary immigrants is that this group migrates in hopes of securing a better future, with a migration plan, and usually visits their home country. However, involuntary immigrants are forced to migrate to a new country, which is complex and challenging as they lose their support and social identity. In Askari's (2003)

opinion, different factors affect this process, such as age, gender, education, language capabilities, et cetera.

Drawing on Ogbu's (1981) cultural-ecological theory, Luciak (2004) studied the academic performances of minority students in the European school system. Through observations, Luciak (2004) observed the minority groups' academic achievements and noted that home culture, language barriers, and social components are not the only factors contributing to minority students underperforming in the European school system (Luciak, 2004). Other facets, such as the community's beliefs and viewpoints regarding the value of education, influence the community's performance in schools (Houtveen et al., 2007). Luciak (2004) then categorized these factors as community factors manifesting in interactions between minority and majority groups of society, social discriminations imposed upon minority groups, and dominant culture's expectations. Finally, Luciak (2004) stated that minority groups subjected to ongoing racism and discrimination from the dominant group objected to the job market, had more vigorous objections towards the school structure in the European education systems, and tended to reject the benefits of education. Therefore, this minority group did not do well in the education system.

This section of the literature review focused on voluntary minorities in the United States as described by Ogbu and Simons (1998), made connections between Iranian American immigrants as voluntary immigrants and elaborated on their characteristics, introduced the concept of cultural discontinuity in the educational system and how it manifests itself in different minority groups and finally, defined acculturation concept and its implications on the Iranian American immigrants. A key point was the diversity in the cultural discontinuity spectrum, as it

63

can be a unique and diverse experience (Balali, 2023). The next section of the literature review will elaborate on the factors affecting cultural discontinuity.

Language and Cultural Discontinuity

Getting acquainted with the host country's language is essential in complying with the majority culture. Research suggests that using the host language accelerates assimilation and helps immigrants adjust to the majority culture (Askari, 2003). Furthermore, Askari (2003) notes that using the home language supports conserving the cultural identity of the minority group. From a linguistic point of view, socialization follows two strands: socialization through language and socialization to use language (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011). The researchers Ochs and Schieffelin (2011) explain their theory of socialization via language, implying how language operates as an instrument in creating a social process. Moreover, socialization to use language covers the language acquisition process in which an individual's proper use of language enables social mobility and ability. The research furthermore indicates that through language communications and interactions, novices and competent language speakers develop an understanding of the social construct of the language (Balali, 2023). In Ochs and Schieffelin's (2011) opinion, the language socialization theory introduces new aspects of language learning from a social standpoint in which social activities such as verbal and vocal practices help children learn language and construct social understanding. The theory of language socialization has an emphasis on the interactions among other language acquisition activities due to its two-way nature that creates an environment that not only promotes learning for novices, but also creates a collaborative communication environment that both the novice and competent speaker can benefit socially (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011).

According to Balali (2023), language socialization theory and its implications apply to second language acquisition. Second-language socialization occurs more frequently in settings where the language is spoken and utilized as the dominant language and in closed environments (Duff, 2011). Thus, Duff (2011) labels first language (L1) and second language (L2), stating that L2, similar to L1, transpires from more competent speakers to novices. In recent years, with the availability of virtual spaces and vast communication methods, socializing in second language acquisition has risen immensely (Balali, 2023). Furthermore, Duff (2011) draws upon other linguistic researchers' work on language socialization, noting that language learners are agents who transform what others, including caregivers, parents, and teachers, are inducing upon them. A difference between L1 and L2 learners could be in the acceptance and access they receive from the community. L2 learners might face difficulties in the new community, which hinder their language socialization process, resulting in their resistance to becoming active members of the new social community. In short, Duff (2011) summarizes that interactions among newcomers and proficient speakers are essential to second language socialization, helping the novices get acquainted with the new community's practices, belief systems, norms, and ideologies. This process is also helpful to the proficient speakers as they become familiar with newcomers' needs, communicative patterns, and perspectives. One can conclude that the L2 socialization process is a multidirectional system that helps sustain and promote the L2 community's culture. Thus, language acquisition and socialization are long-term processes that constantly incorporate new methods and mediums.

Language Socialization in Academic Settings

The multicultural nature of the current education system calls for more inclusive, culturally aware teaching and pedagogy. G. Gay (2000), as one of the critical points in inclusive

teaching methods, calls for educators to be more competent in understanding their students'

cultural practices and communication skills. After all, students from various cultural

backgrounds practice socialization and communicative skills that might be foreign to the

dominant mainstream culture at school, for instance, in their problem-solving methods, self-

expression, collaborations, and other instructional practices (G. Gay, 2000). Overall, for

immigrants, mainly voluntary immigrants, education is a way to learn about the host country's

language, culture, values, and practices (Askari, 2003). Furthermore, Askari (2003), citing

another research by Alkhazraji et al. (1997), notes the positive correlation between education and

assimilation into the dominant culture and concludes that an increase in the level of education

positively affects compliance with the American culture (p. 16). Thus, diverse students in

multicultural education settings acquire academic capabilities that can assist them in handling the

obstacles of assimilation to the new culture (Balali, 2023). Students utilize language capabilities

to answer questions, write essays and papers, problem-solve, et cetera. It is reasonable to assume

that language knowledge is important to culturally diverse students' academic performance in the

new country.

    Understanding the best practices in L2 socialization is essential to understanding the

Iranian-American student experiences and the techniques that help them acquire higher

education degrees in American universities. Kobayashi (2016) conducted an extensive

longitudinal study on L2 academic discourse socialization through the experiences of a Japanese

student studying in Canada. Conducting an in-depth analysis of L2 socialization, the researcher

employed various learning theories, such as Lave and Wenger's (1991) situated learning theory,

which views learning as a social phenomenon taking place in realistic situations through active

participation of the learner in communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In Lave and

Wenger's (1991) learning definition, learning progresses through participation and involves levels such as active members, participants who just received it, and experts. Learning in the situated learning framework is continuous progress that does not end when class finishes. Another prevailing research in Kobayashi's (2016) study was the notion of children's socialization through language and vice versa (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011). Moreover, the research indicated that language and culture are the driving forces of socialization (Kobayashi, 2016). The study findings promoted several pedagogical implications to alleviate L2 socialization and acquisition. Collaborative instructional design with activities encouraging socialization, conversation, and group work promotes L2 students' task participation, relieving the anticipated stress from using the second language. Another component in Kobayashi's (2016) findings indicated the benefits of using peer reflections in creating collaborative spaces where second-language students felt comfortable sharing and receiving feedback from peers. The general conclusion from the findings demonstrated that L2 discourse socialization is a multi-faceted journey that requires constant action upon the past learning experiences through interactions with the communities of practice (peers and teachers) and heavily depends on the learners' cognitive processes of the instructional tasks (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Iranian-American Diaspora in the United States

As stated earlier, Iranian-Americans are voluntary immigrants migrating to the United States for better opportunities in education, freedom, and the job market even when they migrate through refugee, student visa, and political status (Lee & Hong, 2020). Both groups share the same attitude regarding education, language acquisition, social mobility, and professionalism (Bhandari, 2022). Immigrants tend to bring their home culture to the host country and, depending on their status in the new society, will continue their cultural practices or disengage from those

beliefs (Horenczyk, 1997). Generally, the Iranian identity falls along the lines of a collectivistic community promoting values of family and hospitality and holding a high value for education and hard work (Ghorbani et al., 2003). The Iranian immigrant's determination to maintain their home culture and identity goes back to their resistance to the Arab's seventh-century invasion and the Iranians' quest to hang on to the Persian identity they have possessed for years (M. Kia, 1998). Furthermore, Amin (2006) elucidates that Persians tend to have wealthy families with higher socioeconomics and usually possess advanced educational attainments. Therefore, the participants in the current study, the Iranian-American women, belong to a subgroup of the Iranian population with certain privileges compared to the women living in Iran (Minoo, 2017). This type of advantage that the Iranian American community holds allows them to assimilate into mainstream American culture more willingly (Maghbouleh, 2017). In short, it is reasonable to assume that immigrants with reputable education and occupation status tend to assimilate into the host country's culture better (Elahi, 2006).

Lack of an Iranian Community in the United States

The explanation for a community in Mostofi's (2003) regard draws from Bickford's (1999) description in which a group constructs an identity and political institutions present that characteristic to the society (p. 690). Some argue that there has been no community established among Iranian Americans due to many factors, such as Iranian immigrants not being a homogenous group, different migration experiences among Iranians, and political affiliations of the Iranians significantly after the 1979 Revolution (Mostofi, 2003). Concurrently, Mostofi (2003) adds that even though the Iranian community is nonexistent, collectivist cultural values still exist, and Iranians have been able to mix those cultural practices with the American culture. Iranians have formed affinity groups instead of uniform communities by keeping their historical

68

and ethnic practices and identities. It is notable that the essence of a group practice does not necessarily lead to community creation (Turner, 1992). Some Iranian traits that have contributed to the absence of a uniform Iranian community in the United States include but are not limited to, a sense of distrust and social responsibility among Iranians (Bozorgmehr, 1989).

Iranian Immigrants' Success Strategies and Measure of Success

The current study explains success through the educational achievements of Iranian American women. In other words, a successful Iranian woman is one who has experienced accomplishments in the academic realm as well as the professional arena, along with community recognition (Minoo, 2017). Further definition of success includes people achieving success when they learn to utilize the previously known fundamental principles of life in their characters (Covey, 2020). Success can be viewed in many ways, but research has shown that successful people realize the journey they have come to achieve their victory, understand what success pertains to in their field, and are flexible (Nash & Stevenson, 2004). Subsequently, Nash and Stevenson (2004) stress the importance of lasting success, describing it as emotionally rejuvenating. In their description, ongoing success has five attributes: high attainment, numerous objectives, a pleasant journey, healthy interactions, and rewards for durable achievements (Nash & Stevenson, 2004). The current study will focus on the elements contributing to lasting success from an education perspective among Iranian American women as it can highlight the strategies and best practices they employed in their academic journey.

According to Mostofi (2003), Iranians tend to use their association with the white race to comply with the mainstream culture and align with the majority society to disregard possible discrimination other ethnic minorities might face in America. However, due to the events of the hostage crisis of the American citizens in Iran, Iranians cannot entirely avoid prejudice and

discrimination. The data gathered by Mostofi (2003) indicated that second-generation Iranian immigrants face more discrimination than first-generation Iranians in America (Mostofi, 2003). Another factor to the Iranian higher socioeconomic status in the United States goes back to the fact that a large number of the Iranians in the United States before the revolution were students at universities who ended up staying in America, counting on the skill set that this group of immigrant held (Bozorgmehr et al., 1988).

A study by Waldinger and Bozorgmehr (1996) focused on Middle Eastern immigrants in the United States. It indicated that Iranian male and female participants had higher education levels compared to other ethnicities of Arabs, Israelis, and Armenians (Waldinger & Bozorgmehr, 1996). Mostofi (2003) further discusses that Iranian immigrants in Southern California tend to settle in white neighborhoods and wealthier parts of the cities. Another perspective from Portes and Rumbaut (2006), is using the term *act White* for Iranians' way of rising socioeconomically in the United States. One of the assimilation techniques that Iranian immigrants have used is presenting a physical image that resembles a white individual. Their goal has been to look as white as possible to escape the discrimination they might face. In their idea, more assimilation to the physical looks of a white person translates to higher beauty standards, leading to better assimilation and success in society (Amin, 2006). Moreover, when questioned about their race, most Iranian Americans consider themselves as white or Caucasian, which is the outer image that they have assimilated to (Mostofi, 2003). Hence, Mostofi (2003) presents a framework that Iranian Americans typically follow, and it entails physical appearance resembling a white person in society and serving the U.S. cultural individualistic practices while preserving the Iranian identity in their private lives.

The value and dedication to education is high among the Iranian immigrant minorities, which in part counts as their success strategy in the United States. Amin (2006) conducted a study on the success strategies of the Iranian American leaders, investigating specific techniques and obstacles faced by this group. Some prevailing characteristics among this group of immigrants were having a vision, self-confident, being family-oriented, being committed to the task, persisting in efforts, and exhibiting creativity (Minoo, 2017). Furthermore, this group expressed that the most obstacles they faced were acquiring the proper education, social skills, and language capabilities.

To study two minority groups' business performance, Min and Bozorgmehr (2000) compared Koreans and Iranians business structures in Los Angeles indicating the differentiation between ethnicity and race leading to the possible correlation between ethnic business and ethnic solidarity (Min & Bozorgmehr, 2000). The researchers Min and Bozorgmehr (2000) found that Korean immigrants depend on ethnic resources while Iranian immigrants count on economic or social class resources. Hence, the dependence on economic or social class resources allows Iranian businesses to grow and develop further than Korean businesses, which tend to stay smaller. Another study finding was that Korean businesses aim for ethnic and minority customers. In contrast, Iranian-led businesses serve white customers, resulting in Korean companies facing challenges and conflicts with other minority groups. Iranian businesses have not encountered obstacles with other internal groups due to the absence of ethnic ties regarding economic gains (Amin, 2006).

Emotional Intelligence

In Goleman's (2011) terms, EI has four distinct characteristics: self-awareness, empathy, emotion management, and social skills (Minoo, 2017). EI components are essential in

developing successful leaders, allowing them to utilize practical skills in their leadership roles. In Goleman's (1998) opinion, influential leaders display elements such as self-awareness, self-confidence, empathy, and social skills that are core factors of the EI competencies (Goleman, 1998). As mentioned earlier, some characteristics that successful immigrants mentioned in their journey as impactful aligned with EI practices in the West. Moreover, other research shows that EI skills and knowledge lead to academic success and excellence in the educational setting (Alward & Phelps, 2019). Hence, the current study will explore how EI skills have enabled Iranian American women to flourish in the American college system. The characteristics that competent Iranian American leaders in corporations practicing empathy, possessing reliable communication skills, building healthy relationships, being decisive, utilizing appropriate social skills, constructing effective teams, and knowing their strengths (Amin, 2006). However, disparities exist in the literature revolving around successful Iranian-American individuals in academia and educational settings and exploring their success strategies and characteristics, contributing to the lack of a measurable success framework for this group of immigrants.

In this section, some Iranian Americans' success indicators are discussed and the immigrant group's success strategies to achieve a sense of accomplishment in American society are elaborated on. The insights from those studies on Iranian American leaders highlighted the high regard for education, maintaining ties to the home culture and Iranian identity, and assimilating to the majority mainstream culture. A comprehensive understanding of the Iranian American immigrant group requires knowledge about Iran's sociocultural aspect and its comparison with American culture. The current study explores the experiences and success strategies of Iranian American women who went through schooling after the 1979 Revolution and subsequently immigrated to America to continue in academia and achieve advanced

educational success. Therefore, following section will explore the available literature on Iran's cultural practices and social events post-1979 Revolution, the mainstream culture in the United States, and Iranians' perspectives.

A Cross-Cultural Understanding of Iranian Americans

The individualistic culture is prevalent in Western countries including characteristics of self-centeredness, self-expression, and independence (Tyler et al., 2008). According to Mobasher's (2012) scholarly research on Iranian-American immigrants, it is vital to understand the conceptual framework of the native country that immigrants come from and the societal practices of the host country to gain a thorough insight into the experiences of these immigrants (P. Kia, 2013). Furthermore, Tyler et al. (2008), as cited in Balali (2023), list the individualistic characteristics of the mainstream American schools' culture as competition, individual self-expression, and solitude (Balali, 2023). In contrast, Iranian culture promotes collectivistic characteristics such as family values and interdependence as their socio-cultural values (Solhi & Mahmoudi, 2015). Other examples of Iranian culture include formal greetings with strangers, especially the elderly, repeating gratitude, showing humility, and overall representing that they are humble (Balali, 2023). These cultural practices manifest through Iranians' communication skills in other languages and thus create confusion for native speakers or different ethnicities (Solhi & Mahmoudi, 2015). However, from the early stages, the Islamic Republic's government has sought to Islamicize the Iranian society through various mediums of education, media, and advertisement. The Iranian education system underwent de-secularization and de-modernization reforms during the early years of the revolution that is still ongoing and active on the regime's agenda (Paivandi, 2019). Since the early days after the 1979 Revolution, the government has been using education to implement the top-down structure along with religious beliefs, thus

completely transforming the ideological framework of education (Borjian, 2013). Overall, the Iranian cultural values and practices going back to the historical context of Iran before the 1979 Revolution do not carry Islamic characteristics.

The events of the 1979 hostage crisis in Iran created a sense of negativity among Americans towards the Iranians (Tabaar, 2017). The Iranians living in the U.S. faced intense discrimination from the American government and citizens (Balali, 2023). However, the environment and the hostility of the Islamic Republic forced most Iranians studying in the U.S. at the time of the revolution to stay in the U.S. and not return to Iran (Bozorgmehr et al., 1988). The obstacles of facing discrimination in U.S. society while not being able to return to Iran somehow put Iranians in a challenging position, forcing them to let go of their Persian/Iranian identity while discouraging Iranians from mixing into American society.

English language competency is critical in the Iranian-American migration journey and their educational and occupational experiences (Iravani, 2011). This aspect becomes more evident in the Iranians who migrated from their native country in the years after the revolution. Since its inception, the Islamic Republic has had a negative attitude towards English language instruction as it viewed this language, the language of the West, as representing Westernized culture (Borjian, 2013). Hence, the post-revolution government internalized the English language education and completely transformed the curriculum, textbooks, and overall English language instruction system. The newly established English education system contained basic English language grammar practices without any real-life implications that would convey the culture that comes with the specific language (Balali, 2023). Borjian (2013) uses the term *indigenize* to describe the transformation the English education system went through and explains through government efforts in *indigenization* the English language instruction resulted in two pathways

of English instruction: a public and a private route. The government oversees the publicly run English education institutes and curricula that carry anti-western ideologies. On the other hand, the private sector is more modernized and aligned with international frameworks and is more prevalently preferred among Iranians. The private English language institutes use legitimate world-renowned resources, textbooks, and pedagogies and tend to stay updated with second language instructional methods (Aghagolzadeh & Davari, 2017). Iranians with experience learning English from private institutes tend to understand the language better, are more capable of using the English language in application, and are more familiar with Western culture (Borjian, 2013).

English language competencies have been challenging for the Iranian student population in America affecting their abilities in various fields of business, education, and daily life. In a dissertation study by Shafieyan (1983) exploring the cultural discontinuity of post-revolution Iranian students in the United States, the researchers came across cultural and linguistic challenges of the Iranian students due to their lack of experience with the English language. Other factors, such as the events of the hostage crisis, added to these students' struggles because they got backlash from the academic community, leaving them disconnected from the host country and their home country (Shafieyan, 1983). Thus, Iranian students often felt a double defeat and loss when confronted with their cultural discontinuity in the American college system. Ultimately, Iranians pursued English language proficiency and higher education achievements. Still, as a minority group, they kept their home culture intact while assimilating to the American culture in society (Bozorgmehr et al., 1988).

Iranian women have been affected tremendously by the policies of the Islamic Republic government since the 1979 Revolution. For this subgroup of Iranians, struggles have been in

various forms of family laws, gender discrimination, education laws, et cetera. Hence, in studying Iranian American women, it is crucial to construct a perspective of the sociocultural reality of post-revolution Iran about women. Balali (2023) asserts that Iranian women are more prone to comply and adapt to American cultural practices than Iranian men. Hence, this subgroup of Iranian immigrants has been able to achieve higher education status and give back to American society (Ghorashi, 2004). Therefore, the next section of the literature review will provide information about the challenges and realities that Iranian women have encountered after the 1979 Revolution.

Feminism Theory from the Iranian Women's Perspective

Iranian Women's Challenges

Women in Iran have faced hardship throughout history regarding their political and legal status (Parsian, 2021). According to Axworthy (2013), Iranian women have always been agents of change toward a positive, progressive society, even though they have endured many challenges. The societal and legal difficulties increased with the establishment of the Islamic Republic as women's roles became less social and more familial. However, women played vital roles in the events of the revolution in presenting their support for change in the social and political oppression of the Pahlavi regime. However, as Ayatollah Khomeini shaped the revolution, the Islamic party's role became more significant, and they pursued an agenda that opposed women's active roles in society and promoted conservative Islamic viewpoints that restricted women's clothing, behavior, and function at home and community (Moghadam, 2002). In the first stages after the revolution, the clergy and state officials briefly suggested the implementation of the hijab for women. Finally, in 1983, a law stated that wearing a hijab was compulsory for all women. Many women opposed the law and attended demonstrations, but due

76

to a lack of support from political parties, intellectuals, Islamists, and the government, their efforts did not prevail. Moreover, the Islamic Republic instilled Sharia laws while abolishing the Family Protection Law 1967, which implemented limitations on polygamy by men, increased the legal marriage age for women from nine to 15, and provided women with divorce rights. Furthermore, Moghadam (2002) notes that the Islamic Republic lowered the marriage age to nine, banned family planning policies, and objected to women's participation in certain professions.

Following the death of Ayatollah Khomeini in 1989, the social and political environment started observing some shifts and slight freedoms that affected women's roles as well (Moghadam, 2002). During the eight-year presidency of Hashemi Rafsanjani, the agenda for economic prosperity allowed room for women to become active in some social parts of the community. During Mohammad Khatami's eight-year tenure as president, Iran's society continuously experienced social changes that provided opportunities for cultural improvements.

Iranian Islamist Feminism

The political environment in Iran has shifted since the early years of the revolution and early 80s (Abrahamian, 1982). There has been some progression in allowing women to enter political and societal positions. For instance, in 1997, Mohammad Khatami, the president at the time, appointed Massoumeh Ebtekar as the vice president for environmental affairs (Moghadam, 2002). There are other examples of women being appointed positions within the government. However, all these women share the same ideology and agenda as the government and have roots in the 1979 revolution. Hence, middle-class, educated women and the hardcore clergy were skeptical of these social reforms (Begum, 2017).

Islamic feminism has two distinct opposing groups (Moghadam, 2002). The first group believes that feminism can develop within the parameters explained by Islam. In contrast, the opposing group asserts that the core of feminism cannot comply with the teachings and regulations of Islam, especially in the area of women's rights. The Islamist feminists in Iran oppose the clerical interpretations of the Quran and interpret an understanding of equality between men and women from the sacred text (Ahmadi, 2006). Therefore, they defy the gender discrimination instilled in Iranian society by actively engaging in societal roles and expressing their opinions on equality in Islam.

A women-led movement has been occurring in the post-revolution Iranian society that promotes a distinctly different view of Islamic laws and scripts related to gender (Ahmadi, 2006). The underlying reasons for the progression of the Iranian Islamist feminists in Ahmadi's (2006) view are varied. First, the West has never colonized Iran, so there is no need for the Iranian people to defend their identity against the West. In contrast, Iranian people feel they need to assert their Persian identity by being attacked by Islamic identity. Throughout Iranian history, some events demonstrate Iranian nationalism strengthening by the people who have weakened the Islamic identity (Najmabadi, 1991). Moreover, the quest for Western ideals has influenced the efforts of Iranian feminists to defy the traditional interpretations of holy scripts and Islamic laws (Yeganeh, 1993). Hence, the Iranian Islamist feminist movement is dissimilar to the feminist movements in other Middle Eastern countries, especially Arab countries such as Egypt, where Islamic discourse shapes the feminist progression and the empowerment of an Islamic identity (Kapteijns, 1998). The second factor in the Iranian feminist movement being able to carry out, as Ahmadi (2006) notes, is Islam being the state power, meaning that religion has the determining role in every aspect of society. Consequently, this factor has come to benefit the

feminist movement because rethinking gender and Islamic rules do not have to be in resistance to the West. Finally, globalization is the third reason for the thriving Iranian Islamist feminism movement, which is the communication among different parts of the world becoming more accessible, while intensified migration, and international trade have become more advanced (Eschle, 2018).

One can conclude that feminism is an ideology, does not have a constructed definition, and instead follows a perspective in which women are the focus (Moghadam, 2002). Feminism, in practice, defies existing gender inequalities and empowers women in their struggle for social justice. Hence, trying to define feminism in the body of Islam becomes difficult, as it is not comparable with American feminist viewpoints. However, women worldwide utilize various techniques and methods in their journey for equality.

Critiques of Topic

The current literature review introduced cultural discontinuity among ethnically diverse students in the American education system as one of the frameworks for studying Iranian American women's success strategies in the American higher education system. The research on the available literature and scholarly works indicated some gaps and discrepancies. One of those gaps includes a lack of evidence-based quantifiable methods of measuring cultural discontinuity in the academic environment and its effects on students' academic performances (Balali, 2023). Furthermore, Tyler et al. (2008) have integrated a quantifiable data method to determine the discontinuity level in educational settings. The researchers Tyler et al. and Balali note the importance of understanding the native cultures that students practice at home to detect the presence or absence of those practices in academic settings. Then, by using various questioning methods, diverse students can measure the presence or absence of that cultural practice in their

learning environments. Thus, comparing cultural traditions at home and the academic setting can assist in understanding data on cultural discontinuity (Tyler et al., 2008). Overall, the cultural discontinuity framework does not have a set of rules to employ and determine its levels, but the researcher can use similar methods to Tyler et al. (2008) to detect cultural discontinuity in diverse learning environments.

Another limitation of cultural discontinuity-related literature is that the available literature has mainly focused on specific ethnic groups, such as Latinos, African Americans, and Asian Americans (Balali, 2023). No research or literature has focused on the cultural discontinuity that Iranian Americans go through in academic settings. It is beneficial to future research to explore cultural discontinuity from different angles and demographic features, such as gender and other ethnicities, helping the education environment better accommodate the student's diverse needs and learning styles (Conner, 2013). Therefore, this study will further focus on Iranian-American women and the framework of cultural discontinuity in determining academic achievements to provide information on other minorities in America.

Another barrier or critique of the topic is the inaccessibility of research and scholarly work of Iranian scholars in Iran. Due to the Iranian government's strict rules regarding individuals contacting the West, it is difficult to access the work that social scientists and sociologists have presented in recent years. Additionally, many societal studies and data have been restricted or banned due to governments' policies, so there is not a lot of reliable literature and data on the current state of Iranian society. The only literature this study could rely on was the extensive literature by Azadi et al. (2022), in which the researchers demonstrated merit-based data on the current status of Iran from gender, population, economic, environmental, and developmental aspects. Hence, the present study will shed light on the women from Iran and

their educational attainment in Iranian post-revolution education and further illustrate the gender inequalities instilled in the education system to show a comprehensive view of the past experiences of these women before relocation to the America. Furthermore, the challenges and obstacles of this subgroup in American higher education institutions can provide a reliable structure on various conceptual frameworks, such as the cultural discontinuity of this group of immigrants in the mainstream education system and the interpretations of feminism theory with the Islamist feminism lens. Finally, the research on feminism and feminist theory is extensive, with many variations. However, there is a gap in literature in the realm of Islamic feminism and, more specifically, Iranian Islamic feminism. The available literature is not recent; most date back over ten years, making it challenging to work within the frameworks of Islamic feminism in defining Iranian American women's success strategies in the current American education system.

A shortcoming in studying Iranian Americans is the need for more recent research and scholarly work on this group (Saidi, 2014). Most of the literature dates back to the years following the 1979 revolution. Hence, the subjects in those studies were usually Iranians who grew up during the Pahlavi era, and the 1979 revolution happened in their adolescent or teenage years. The generation born into the Islamic Republic system that went through the ideological educational system encompass perspectives and lived experiences that are valuable to the research involving concepts of culture and language. Therefore, the current study will focus on a population that falls within those parameters in terms of age to draw a view on the Islamic Republic's effects and the strategies that enabled women to flourish in the American college system.

Conclusion

This chapter investigated Iran's history, geography, and demographics to present a comprehensive picture of the challenges the Iranian population faces (Graham, 1979). Iran's geopolitical location in the Middle East and its abundance of natural resources have made Iran historically an essential player on international grounds (Ehteshami, 2014). The literature explored the geographic and ethnic make-up of Iran and attempted to present a picture of all the racial and religious groups that reside in that country, making Iranians a heterogeneous group in terms of ethnicity and religion (Amanolahi, 2005). The literature then presented demographic information about the Iranian population and the influences of historical events on the population changes since the 1979 revolution. The literature gave concrete data from the population growth in the early years after the revolution and the fluctuations ever since (Roudi et al., 2017). Another demographic fact was the high levels of unemployment among young Iranians, especially women, which illustrated the government's incapacity to create a buoyant job market for the younger generation (Mohseni & Jouzaryan, 2016).

Education in Iran has been an important aspect of the history and society and is the driving topic of the research. Therefore, the literature provided a historical background with respect to education. The country's educational system has undergone changes and shifts throughout history (Shabani Varaki & Mohammadi Chaboki, 2023). The literature demonstrates the modernization and secularization of the education system during Reza Shah Pahlavi and his son Mohammad Reza Shah (Khaki & Bhat, 2015). However, by the success of the 1979 Islamic Revolution and the creation of the Islamic Republic, the education system took an opposite turn, rejecting all modernization, going back to Islamic ideologies, and promoting Sharia teachings (Boroumand, 2020). The cultural revolution further assisted the Islamification of education and

higher education in Iran, resulting in massive migrations and subsequent brain drain of Iranians (Hamdhaidari et al., 2008). The literature illustrates Iranian studies' challenges in presenting information and data on the high migration and brain drain rates following the contributing factors.

Drawing upon the literature, contributing factors to high migration rates from Iran include the university entrance exam (konkur), the cultural revolution, the hostage crisis, sanctions on Iran employed by the international community, and access to the Internet and social media (Azadi et al., 2020). Through this section, women's role in society played an essential part because harsh discriminatory policies influenced women in terms of societal and educational aspects, leading them to the desire to leave Iran for a better life with fewer challenges (Kazemi, 2000). There have been some successes in the Iranian education system regarding education attainment and mean school years (Lutz et al., 2010). However, the country's discriminative attitude and policies against women have affected their societal role.

In the following sections, the literature covered Iranian immigrants' lives, education, and community in the United States to present their lifestyle after migration from Iran. The available scholarly work by researchers such as Mobasher (2012), Sadeghi (2008), and Askari (2003), and Bozorgmehr et al. (1988) discussed the characteristics of Iranian culture in America and postulated how Iranians have created an identity in the United States that they use in society while containing their Iranian identity at home by practicing the cultural values and beliefs. The inquiry in this area led to the conclusion that the Iranian immigrants in the United States carry the characteristics of a diaspora (Safran, 2011). An intriguing theme shared among multiple literature resources was that Iranians quickly assimilate into the Western culture and adapt to the mainstream majority society (Berry, 1997; Ghaffarian, 1998; Kadkhoda, 2001). One of the

reasons is their affiliation with the West before the 1979 revolution and their resistance against imposed Islamic constraints.

The literature covered cultural discontinuity as a conceptual framework for studying immigrant student achievements in the United States (Balali, 2023). Because this study focuses on women from Irans' educational successes in America, it was relevant to cover the subject of cultural discontinuity. From this angle there are different types of minorities and determined Iranians to be voluntary immigrants with a tourist attitude, meaning they don't object to establishments such as educational policies and regulations (Bozorgmehr et al., 1988; Ogbu & Simons, 1998). This group of minorities tends to cope with the host country's culture and try to make it which translates to achieving high levels of education and acquiring a well-established profession. The mentality among this group is to work hard, stay determined, and not give up on surviving in the new country (Lee & Hong, 2020). Furthermore, the literature explored cultural discontinuity in educational settings among different ethnic groups. There is room for further research since there is a literature gap in studying Iranian immigrants. Language was another critical factor that the research demonstrated its importance and relation to cultural discontinuity among immigrant students (A. Cohen, 2009; G. Gay, 2000; Harvey, 2020; Shure et al., 2019; Tyler et al., 2008). The studies on Iranian students in the United States also showed language competencies as one of the factors affecting their performance in educational settings (R. A. Cohen & Yefet, 2021).

The literature projected success in terms of educational attainment among Iranian-American women (Bozorgmehr et al., 1988; Min & Bozorgmehr, 2000). The study will then explore the elements these women used to achieve academic success and analyze their success strategies. The current literature review presented multiple descriptors of success from various

researchers that combine when exploring measures of success. For instance, lasting success in Nash and Stevenson's (2004) findings had unique characteristics of being pleasant and having diverse interactions. It would benefit the research to study these elements in recognizing the success of minorities in America.

The literature suggested that Iranian American success in society is related to Iranians' compliance with the majority culture, their assimilation into "white" society, and the high value they place on education (Budman & Lipson, 1992; Ogbu & Simons, 1998). The research on the success strategies of Iranian Americans demonstrated their incorporation of EI components, such as self-confidence, vision, and creativity (Amin, 2006). Among influential leaders, one of the key contributors to academic leadership has been the practice of EI components (Alward & Phelps, 2019). EI also depends on social skills, as influential leaders have demonstrated appropriate social skills as contributing factors to their success (Goleman, 1998). The success of the Iranian American community demonstrated the accommodation of this minority group to the mainstream culture in the United States, and some researchers have concluded that one of the social skills that Iranians use is adherence to American cultural values in society while sustaining the Iranian identity at home (Bozorgmehr et al., 1988).

The critiques of the topic indicated a lack of recent literature on Iranians' success in America and the available literature's emphasis on groups of Iranians who lived through the Pahlavi era and did not have experience with the ideology-led schooling system of the Islamic Republic. Therefore, the current study will solely investigate women with experiences attending Islamic Republic's educational system and have been able to accomplish academic success in the American higher education system.

The literature provided an outlook on the societal status of women in the post-revolution Iranian society dealing with the laws and discrimination. Following the historical events, the framework of feminist theory worked well in explaining the achievements of Iranian women in the Islamic Republic. Iranian women have progressed through societal constraints and discrimination to form an Islamist feminist movement (Barlow & Akbarzadeh, 2008; Povey, 2001). The movement has critiques from hardliners and people who are skeptical of the nature of Islam's implementation into the feminist theory (Ahmadi, 2006; Mahdi, 2004; Moghadam, 2023). The literature on Islamist feminism in Iran is limited, and this study will make an effort to add to the existing literature. In short, studying the success strategies of women from Iran with experience in the post-revolution Iranian education system addresses various aspects of culture, immigrants, success, and education practices. The findings and explorations related to this topic will benefit the Iranian-American diaspora and other minority groups in their quest for educational success.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

This chapter starts by re-stating the study's four research questions and explaining the scope of the possible assumptions. Furthermore, the research aimed to investigate the strategies that Iranian American women with post-revolution Iranian educational backgrounds use in the universities that allow them to succeed and achieve bachelor's or higher degrees in America. Within this chapter, the researcher will describe the methodology that will allow for further exploration of the success strategies and the struggles these women encountered using interviews and a qualitative approach.

Qualitative research was appropriate for the current study as it aimed to decode individual or group responses to a social issue (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study incorporated a population along with appropriate instruments to decode variables. The chapter will further describe data collection methods and analyses along with principles for reliability and validity. The researcher will discuss in detail the data analysis and coding methods. Moreover, the researcher utilized steps that comply with best practices of Iranian-American women succeeding in the American higher education system. Finally, the chapter will cover IRB approval processes to comply with the requirements of sampling, participant selections, protection of human subjects, and avoidance of biases.

Creswell (2013), in their description of the phenomenological design, states that the focus is the participants' unifying experiences and personal stories. Utilizing the research questions developed in previous chapters, the researcher developed a set of interview questions that informed the study's population. This chapter will explain the rationale and reasoning for forming interview questions and the related processes. The investigator will comprehensively

cover the details of interviews, transcripts, recording, and coding data. Furthermore, the researcher will demonstrate the steps in assuring validity throughout this process.

Re-Statement of Research Questions

Conducting the study through research questions will have more defined structure and parameters (Gray, 2014). Chapter 3 further explains the actions and procedures that allowed the researcher to get closer to the study's purpose statement. The goal was to gather data in response to the initial four research questions:

- RQ1: For Iranian American women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system, what challenges did they face when studying in the American higher education system?

- RQ2: For Iranian American women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system, what success strategies did they employ when studying in the American higher education system?

- RQ3: How do Iranian American women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system measure their success in American higher education?

- RQ4: In accordance with their encounters, what recommendation would Iranian American women who received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system make to future Iranian American women pursuing degrees in American higher education?

Nature of the Study

The qualitative approach is the most appropriate method to inquire and interpret a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative research has a naturalistic and interpretive

characteristic in which the researcher becomes an active participant, giving meaning to the observations and experiences expressed by the participants. To choose the appropriate research design, the researchers must observe the research problem, population, and personal knowledge (Creswell, 2013). Thus, a decision among various qualitative research methods depends on the problem statement, research focus, and subsequent research questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For instance, as stated by Creswell and Poth (2018), phenomenological studies describe the lived experiences of a population through a phenomenon. Another description for phenomenological studies explains this type of research design as the interactions between the physical and emotional experiences of the participants (Conklin, 2007). Therefore, phenomenological studies follow a process rather than focusing on the research's topic and objective (Letiche, 2006). There are challenges with phenomenological analysis, such as the interferences of researchers' biases and beliefs. To avoid such biases, phenomenological researchers must incorporate a retrospective manner in how they proceed with their study (Conklin, 2007). In Letiche's (2006) view, phenomenologists are more successful in their research if they stick to their values and practice transparency.

A distinct qualitative research component is using interviews, surveys, questionnaires, observations, and analysis (Gray, 2014). An introduction that states the study's problem, purpose, and research questions are the first portions of the qualitative research design (Creswell & Poth, 2018). There is a social or human issue that all research initiates by drawing the need for the study and highlighting the importance of the research (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Other elements of qualitative research include interview data, themes, and coding (Creswell, 2013). Critiques of qualitative research claim the inefficiencies and less reliability of qualitative compared to quantitative research. However, Gray (2014) states that qualitative research tends to

be a solid analytical reference due to its encounters with real-life situations. Hence, in answering the research questions, the current study utilized the components of qualitative research. The researcher questioned the participants using open-ended questions derived from the research questions and the responses to the interview questions provided data that the researcher further analyzed. In the phenomenological data analysis process, the researcher studies the gathered data, locating important notes and statements (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Creswell (2013) listed some standard practices in qualitative research, and a few of them include: (a) a natural structure, meaning that researchers conduct data gathering at field sites or the subject's natural environment; (b) the researcher is the central conductor of the research acquiring information through observations, documentation, and interviews, (c) inductive and deductive reasoning styles can be used, (d) the focus of the study is on participants' views and behaviors, and (e) the researcher aims to create an interconnected perspective of the issue or problem.

When there is less information about an issue or problem, qualitative research can shed light on new perspectives, highlighting the need to explore the phenomenon (Gray, 2014). Therefore, a qualitative research approach is appropriate for studying oppressed groups as interviewing the participants grasps their experiences (Creswell, 2013). The current study also examined the oppression felt by Iranian women who went through the Iranian education system after the 1979 Islamic revolution, and the best way to illustrate their lived experiences is through qualitative research tools such as interviews. Through participants' experiences, the researcher understood the similar patterns and themes in successes and challenges that women from Iran have endured in studying in the post-revolution Iranian education and American higher education

systems. The categories emerging from the data in this type of research provide a well-developed description of people's experiences and decisions (Gray, 2014).

Strengths of Qualitative Research

The strength of qualitative research is that it gathers participants' opinions and experiences, introduces personal insights into the research, validates the authenticity of the findings, proposes new ways and reforms on the issue, and asks for cooperation from participants (Creswell, 2013). Moreover, in qualitative research, the researcher tackles the study's variables in their natural setting and inquiries into an apprehension of the situation. These strengths benefit the current study as it followed the constructivist perspective. The constructivist perspective outlines various interpretations from particular incidents to create further and achieve a system (Creswell, 2013). However, despite the benefits, qualitative research has shortcomings, such as deriving different interpretations from the data and personal biases interrupting the data analysis process (Gray, 2014). Therefore, sustaining the validity and reliability of the findings and conclusions is challenging in qualitative research. Alternatively, the broad, open-ended nature of the qualitative research findings can provide valuable insight, open exploration, and inquiry into the phenomenon. In short, these difficulties with establishing and preventing researcher biases in the data collection and analysis processes limit qualitative research from reaching extensive research with larger audiences (Creswell, 2013).

Weaknesses of Qualitative Research

Another key point in establishing relevant themes that illustrate the phenomenon is using inductive and deductive reasoning methods. Inductive reasoning, used in both hard and social sciences, begins with observations free from biases and expectations. The inductive reasoning cycle develops understandable groups and patterns from researchers' observations while working

with participants (Creswell, 2013). Deductive reasoning works opposite of inductive reasoning, starting from established theories and principles to developing an explanation for findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Qualitative research uses both reasoning styles, but inductive reasoning is more applicable due to its reliance on observations (Babbie, 2020). Moreover, Babbie (2020) elucidates that deductive reasoning in qualitative research can be utilized when working with established social constructs in findings. The current research employed inductive reasoning extensively to understand Iranian-American women's motifs and success strategies in the American higher education system. This field of study on Iranian-American women after the 1979 revolution is somewhat recent, and there are existing disparities in the literature. Therefore, this field does not have ample prevailing conceptual frameworks to conduct deductive reasoning.

Drawing upon the constructivist perspective, the current research constructed specific themes through participants' shared details on common behaviors and patterns. Creswell (2013) asserts that the constructivist perspective in qualitative research is the foundation for scientific inquiry because its findings are far from personal beliefs through the inductive reasoning method documenting shared themes expressed by participants (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017).

Researchers usually use interpretive and critical theories in elucidating qualitative research. The behaviors and their social effects are the essential objective of theory, whereas interpretive research studies participants' views of issues through observations (Locke et al., 2009). The main emphasis of this study is to introduce a group, their behavioral patterns, and explain a phenomenon. Therefore, the researcher will use an interpretive style instead of a critical approach, which criticizes and attempts to correct a societal practice (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017). The significance of the interpretive research approach is avoiding the presumption of data and personal biases and stressing the objectivity of the findings (Sherman &

Reid, 1994). Finally, the researcher is the main driver in the interpretive research style through their role in extensive data collection involving participants and their views.

Methodology

This study used a descriptive phenomenological method following a qualitative research design structure. Creswell (2013) refers to phenomenology as a study of the deeper meaning of a phenomenon or construct and highlights the importance of such a concept. The researcher's role in phenomenological research is to decipher and shed light on the participants' lived experiences (Creswell, 2013). Thus, the steps in conducting a phenomenological study, in Creswell's (2013) opinion, are as follows:

- The first component to consider is to ensure that the study involves inquiry into the shared experiences of a group through a specific issue or phenomenon to guarantee that the phenomenological approach is the most applicable research style (Creswell, 2013).

- The next step is to ascertain the researcher's objectivity over the topic in question to identify how participants have experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013).

- Collecting and sorting the inquiry evolving around a shared consensus that covers the participants' experiences, for instance, social incidents or emotional expressions, to better detect the commonalities among participants' experiences rather than an announcement of the personal encounters (Creswell, 2013).

- Interactively designing the interview questions allows participants to feel comfortable sharing their experiences and providing thorough responses (Creswell, 2013).

- Creating open-ended questions focused on the phenomena of concentrating on the participants' experiences around the issue and understanding the elements shifting their experiences (Creswell, 2013).

- Using an interpretive analysis style, the researcher gathers the data to focus on a broader picture that connects the subjects' stories rather than an individualistic, disconnected narrative approach that views experiences as singular individual scenarios (Creswell, 2013).

- Adding inductive and deductive reasoning to strengthen the commonalities among subjects' experiences, in other words, the themes (Creswell, 2013).

- Congregating the research findings and conclusion in a manner that creates a singular picture with a story around the topic of inquiry (Creswell, 2013).

As mentioned above, phenomenological studies are focused on lived experiences and do not elaborate on perceptions (Morse & Richards, 2002). Therefore, since experiences are the focus of the phenomenological approach, the interpretation of those experiences is also essential as it provides the themes that corroborate the phenomena (Kriegel & Williford, 2006). Thus, phenomenology strives to eradicate the logical approach to the perception of truth (Creswell, 2013). Returning to the roots of phenomenological study and its construct, Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, pioneers of such inquiry style, asserted the apprehension of people's perceptions of the world and its truth (Moran, 2005). Subsequently, phenomenological research is extensively eager to work on social and societal issues that have affected individuals in shaping their experiences and stories, which may raise some commonalities through shared experiences (Moran, 2005). In the present study, the participants have studied in the post-revolution Iranian K-12 education system, meaning all participants have been affected by the

education policies, constraints, and discriminations existing in the current Iranian education system. The participants' experiences had commonalities as they have encountered a singular phenomenon: the post-revolution Iranian education system. Finally, it is reasonable to state that phenomenological studies are regularly utilized in social sciences research as they bring to light massive amounts of data and information on social constructs, phenomena, and human intuition (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975).

To investigate the success methods used by women from Iran who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system and then attained higher education degrees in America, the researcher followed a phenomenological technique to grasp their experiences and decode common themes that arose as a result. The researcher anticipated that the framework would work well with the phenomenon and the experiences from the phenomenon due to the historical background of the 1979 revolution and the specific topic of Iranian-American women's education narratives. Therefore, the interview questions revolved around the experiences of these women in the post-revolution Iranian and American college systems, along with the challenges in both education systems. Moreover, the questions focused on the strategies that allowed these women to obtain higher education degrees from American universities to illustrate the common themes among these women's journeys in the American higher education system.

Structured Process of Phenomenology

The phenomenological design is one of the qualitative research methods that include the researcher elucidating the lived experiences of the individuals as they relate to a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). The prevailing practice in data gathering for qualitative research includes conducting interviews investigating the common patterns in participants' experiences (Giorgi,

2009). Consequently, Creswell (2013) explained the steps to conducting phenomenological studies as follows: (a) establishing the main focus of the research; (b) congregating the applicable data; (c) conducting data analysis and introducing the data to the audience in an easy-to-understand manner; (d) documenting the research in a well-organized form and finally, (e) pursuing the research.

Appropriateness of Phenomenology Methodology

The researcher in the current study was an Iranian-American female researcher who experienced Iran's post-1979 revolution education system and obtained a higher education degree from an American university. Therefore, the researcher reflected on her experience and explores those of other women with similar backgrounds to document their success strategies in the American higher education system. The researcher provided helpful information for other aspiring Iranian women and other minority groups who want to acquire higher education degrees. Therefore, phenomenological design was appropriate for studying this topic to explore the unifying success strategies these women incorporated to achieve their goals.

Moreover, the researcher explored the strategies these women employed, their obstacles along the way, and how they managed to face the challenges. Thus, the researcher inquired about the experiences and knowledge rather than the phenomenon emerging from the interviews with Iranian-American women, highlighting the commonalities in their perceptions. Therefore, the researcher used open-ended interviews as they were crucial in inquiring how Iranian American women gained achievements and what factors determined their success.

Strengths of Phenomenology

In comparing the structure, the phenomenological approach is more rigorous and structured compared to other qualitative methods, such as narrative studies (Spiegelberg, 2012).

However, phenomenological studies follow the flexible nature of working with participants in echoing their voices and experiences to inquire about unifying themes. Other methods in qualitative research follow the participants' expressions in a reporting style, not looking for a common theme or shared experiences. Moreover, the data component of phenomenological studies follows a structured framework. The phenomenology data analysis process is extensive and scripted, and includes recognizing participants' expressions, designing meaning units, grouping common themes, and creating descriptions for the themes (Creswell, 2013).

Weaknesses of Phenomenology

Like any other research method, phenomenology has limitations and shortcomings that the researcher was aware of in picking the suitable research methodology (Creswell, 2013). Choosing the appropriate subject and phenomenon can be challenging for the researcher, and inappropriate selection can cause challenges in handling the research. An example of such details that are important for the researcher to pay attention to is the process of selecting participants for a phenomenological study, as the target population has to be specifically narrowed to the study's parameters (Creswell, 2013). Another aspect of the phenomenological approach, in contrast with other qualitative methods, is its nature of being open-ended for extensive explorations and, simultaneously, being specific in inquiring about shared themes (Spiegelberg, 2012). Thus, phenomenological approach generates a clash with the organic flow and open-enedness of other qualitative research methods, such as narrative research (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975). Therefore, choosing a phenomenological research approach requires the researcher to be particular about their research topic and how it can work with phenomenology requirements.

Research Design

Participants and Sampling

   Unit of Analysis. The current research involved an analysis unit, which is an Iranian-American woman who initially received her primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system and attained college degrees in the United States. This unit of analysis employed some requirements in these women's ages, educational backgrounds, degree levels, location, and immigration status. The women had to be primary or secondary education students in 1979 and the following years, meaning the women had to be born after 1963 to have exposure to the post-revolution K-12 education system. In simple terms, the women had to have some exposure to Iran's K-12 education system. They also had to have at least an undergraduate degree or higher from an American university in the United States. Likewise, these women lived in America at the time of the interview, so it was essential to be an American immigrant. Therefore, the American immigration status was also a requirement. The participants, referred to as Iranian-Americans, had to be US citizens or hold permanent legal residency from the United States, and excluded participants with US visas or who were illegal immigrants. Finally, these women had to have a director level or higher position as professional level.

   Population. The population for this study consisted of all Iranian-American women who have attained at least an undergraduate degree from American universities. These women had completed a four-year bachelor's program or higher in any field or area of study from the American higher education system. These Iranian-American women also had gone through primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system. Therefore, the women had to be born after 1963 to have exposure to the post-revolution K-12 education system. The population parameters required the women to have permanent resident status or

citizenship and live in any region of the United States. Additionally, their current professional role had to director level or higher.

Sample Size. It is crucial for qualitative research to work with audiences that provide ample and thorough degrees of experience (Thompson, 1999). Therefore, the researcher selected a sample size of 15 to ensure the number was wide to include various types of Iranian-American women but also narrow enough to conduct detailed interviews. Consequently, the sample size provided valuable data for a thorough qualitative study. Furthermore, Creswell (2013) mentioned a population of three to 10, while Gray (2014) suggests that sample sizes of 10 or 20 are appropriate for phenomenological studies. However, a smaller sample size was suitable for the current research, as it was reasonable enough to generate the themes from participants' experiences. The sample size was acknowledged by peers and accepted by the dissertation committee.

Purposive Sampling. Purposive sampling description in Creswell's (2013) terms is the decision to pick specific participants or sites for the research, sampling strategy, and the sample size (Creswell, 2013). Purposive sampling captures the study setting's characteristics, individuals, and performances to designate a small sample demonstrating the population's personalities and reducing the random variation (Maxwell, 2012). The purposive sampling for the current study was conducted through LinkedIn post and LinkedIn search. This approach incorporates variation among participants to the fullest extent possible, going above and beyond the traditional inclusion methods (Maxwell, 2012). Moreover, the researcher searched for possible candidates using word search on LinkedIn. The researcher typed key words such as Iranian American women in LinkedIn's search bar and further narrowed the criteria by using key words such as higher education. This method provided a list of approximately 50 Iranian

American women in higher education that could meet the research criteria. Consequently, the researcher sent the recruitment letter to individuals from LinkedIn's search results (see Appendix A). Personal communications and knowledge help the investigator gather participants during the purposive sampling process (L. R. Gay & Airasian, 2000). Moreover, the LinkedIn post included population requirements to participate in the study. The researcher through purposive sampling aimed to gather 15 participants with varying degrees from different regions in the United States.

Participant Selection

The participating groups must possess the foundation and expertise applicable to the study's phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher started the selection process by exploring LinkedIn, browsing through Iranian-American women's foundations, committees, and organizations within the United States. The criteria were to find and select women who met the requirements and parameters of the unit of analysis to comply with the study's topic. Therefore, the researcher employed sampling frame and developed a master list.

Sampling Frame to Create the Master List

The approach entailed reaching out to Iranian-American women from different regions within the United States. The method included using the search bar on LinkedIn and conducting word search using terms such as Iranian American women, higher education, and Iranian schools. Some of the renowned Iranian primary schools that were available on LinkedIn included Alborz, Hadaf, Niyayesh, and Abooreyhan. The researcher used those schools' LinkedIn pages to find other prospective candidates. Another method was using Iranian higher education institutes' LinkedIn pages such as University of Tehran or Azad University to find women who had attended those schools. The requirements for contacting prospective participants were meeting all of the criteria for inclusion. For instance, from the pool of the Iranian-American

women on LinkedIn, the researcher only contacted the women who had higher education degrees from United States universities listed on their LinkedIn profile. By narrowing the LinkedIn search results, the researcher gained access to potential participants who would meet all the terms of the study's participant criteria. Then, the researcher e-mailed the recruitment letter to prospective candidates and invited them to partake in the research (see Appendix A).

Criteria for Inclusion

Researcher specified the inclusion criteria of the subjects as following: (a) self-identify as Iranian, meaning individuals with ethnic backgrounds tied to Iran; (b) having primary and/or secondary education exposure and experience in the Iranian K-12 education system after 1979 Islamic Revolution; (c) having attended and completed an undergraduate or graduate program at universities within the U.S.; (d) having American immigration status of citizenship or permanent resident; (e) having a physical residence in America; (f) having a directorial role or above position professionally.

Criteria for Exclusion

The following components were the exclusion criteria the researcher set for the study: (a) knowing the researcher personally; (b) having a primary education background in the pre-revolution Iranian education system; (c) attending American universities on student or other types of visas (the professional level requirement will indicate immigration status of the participants as people on student or other types of visas do not possess work authorization) (d) individuals who attained higher education degrees from community colleges, nonaccredited universities and institutes of higher education (use the education history information on participants' LinkedIn profile and ask them directly when they respond to the LinkedIn post).

Criteria for Maximum Variation

Qualitative research typically benefits from maximum variation as it widens the differences and explores various perspectives and views (Creswell, 2013). To narrow down the participant pool comprising a sample indicative of the eligible population and comply with the selection criteria, the researcher assessed further elements to widen the diversity of the contacted individuals. The researcher narrowed the list gathered from LinkedIn posts and LinkedIn word search to 15 participants. The process ensured maximum coverage in variation of the final 15 participants. The maximum variation for the current study's population included: (a) any discipline and academic field at the graduate level; (b) higher education level (bachelor's or higher); (c) residents from various regions within the United States.

Protection of Human Subjects

According to Creswell (2013), obtaining approval from the human subject review board is an important step in the research process. In other terms, according to each higher education institutions' guidelines, the Institutional Review Boards (IRB) determines the guidelines for research approval. Pepperdine University, in particular, states its Institutional Review Board's objective to "protect the rights and welfare of the human subjects participating in research activities conducted under the auspices of Pepperdine University. Applications submitted to the GPS IRB generally encompass social, behavioral, and educational research and are usually considered medically non-invasive" (Pepperdine University, n.d., p. 8). Therefore, Pepperdine's IRB's mission is to safeguard the well-being of human subjects throughout the research to conduct studies that incorporate ethical practices and follow the specified principles. Research will not be conducted until Pepperdine IRB's approval is received (see Appendix B).

The study protected the participants' confidentiality through the interview process. At first, the study candidates were informed of the important aspects of the study by receiving the recruitment letter through e-mail (see Appendix A). The participants who accepted to participate in the study received the informed consent letter through e-mail explaining their participation in the research (see Appendix C). Further, the form specifically mentioned the participants' right to withdraw from the study at any given time, the topic at focus, data collection procedures, and confidentiality protection (Creswell, 2013). The researcher set the interviews date and time upon participants signing the consent form. The participants' identities were secured by conducting the interviews through Audacity and Otter AI platforms and only recording the interviews' audio. At the beginning of the interview, the researcher introduced the study, informed the attendees about the audio recording and transcribing features of the interview, and went over the consent from. Audacity and Otter AI platforms were used for recording the audio and generating interview transcripts. The researcher stored the audio, transcripts, and data on a university-assigned Google account's cloud drive that was inaccessible to others. For further protection of the participants' identities, the researcher assigned numbers for reference for instance, Participant One, Participant Two, and so forth. In short, the researcher followed ethical practices throughout the study to avoid components that would endanger the research's integrity. Lastly, the researcher guarded the participants' anonymity and confidentiality by deleting the interview audio recordings, transcripts, and gathered data within three years.

Data Collection

The potential inventory of eligible attendees consisted of over 30 people. To meet the maximum variation criteria, the researcher contacted these individuals through e-mail and LinkedIn messages to find possible participants with various higher education backgrounds

and/or residing in various U.S. cities. The process continued until 15 individuals were available to participate in the research.

The participant list was organized using a university-assigned Google account spreadsheet to substantiate their alliance with the population criteria. The list included participants' e-mail addresses, names, degrees, and educational backgrounds. The original roster of participants was created and saved on a university-assigned Google Document for participants' confidentiality purposes. The researcher's contact system included online messages to potential participants through university e-mails and LinkedIn messages (see Appendix A). During business hours, the researcher sent an e-mail requesting a time for interviewing the participants about the success strategies the women from Iran who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system used to receive college level degrees from U.S. universities. A week after the e-mail, participants received another e-mail regarding the interview. If a prospective participant did not reply, the researcher would send another follow-up e-mail and eliminate them from the roster if they did not answer, moving on to another participant on the master list. As mentioned above, the recruitment e-mail was the method for recruiting possible participants (see Appendix A).

Upon receiving the participants' answers to the recruitment e-mail and them accepting to attend the interviews, the researcher sent an informed consent form explaining the participants' roles and involvement in the study (see Appendix B). Furthermore, the participants signed and consented to participate in the study. The researcher then set the interview date and time with those participants through e-mail correspondences. The interviews took place over audio conferencing using platforms such as Audacity and Otter AI. The interview protocols included one-hour one-on-one interviews recorded and transcribed using Audacity and Otter AI. The

researcher secured the interview recordings by saving it on a confidential university-assigned Google Drive inaccessible to others, and de-identifying participants by assigning numbers to participants.

Interview Techniques

Phenomenological interviews are conducted with limited emotional expressions while asking relevant questions patiently to assess the participants' views and experiences (Creswell, 2013). The researcher facilitated semi-structured interviews, which helped clear the vagueness of the interview process. Furthermore, Creswell (2013) outlined four measures in the interview process:

- Using a header, the researcher must mention the study's topic and state the purpose.

- The protocol form should include space between questions.

- The researcher should memorize the interview questions to maximize eye contact with the attending participants.

- The researcher thanks the participant for attending the interview (have it in writing) and mentions a follow-up request, if needed (Creswell, 2013).

The interviews consisted of semi-structured interview protocols aligned with the frameworks of the study, serving the purpose of being flexible so as to probe the unique aspects of the topic. Semi-structured interviews create an interactive communication that supports bringing about in-depth data from participants' inputs (Maree, 2016). This type of interview includes follow-up questions such as, "Would you like to add more?" or "How do you feel about a certain issue?" indicating the flexibility element of this interview method. Additionally, this interview type promotes a relationship between participant and researcher but has to be objective to prevent the researcher from including their own biases.

Interview Protocol

This qualitative study included an interview protocol that a review panel evaluated and a dissertation committee further confirmed.

Interview Questions

- IQ1. Think of the single most difficult challenge you have faced in pursuing your degrees in the US? What was that challenge and how did you experience it?

- IQ2. What strategies did you employ or what resources did you seek to overcome this particular challenge?

- IQ3. What were other similar challenges you experienced when pursuing your degrees?

- IQ4. What strategies did you employ to conquer these particular challenges?

- IQ5. What practices, in your opinion, were challenging in your American higher education process? How did you identify and overcome those challenges?

- IQ6. Are you personally aware of strategies employed or resources sought by these women?

- IQ7. As an Iranian-American woman with an American higher education degree, how do you define success?

- IQ8. How did you measure your progress and success as you transitioned from the Iranian education system to the American higher education system?

- IQ9. How can higher education institutions better support Iranian-American female students with educational backgrounds from Iran?

- IQ10. What advice or recommendation would you give to future Iranian-American female students with academic backgrounds from Iran pursuing a higher education degree in the American higher education system?

- IQ11: Was it all worth it? Why? Elaborate please.

Relationship Between Research and Interview Questions

The researcher of the study designed the interview questions according to the four main questions driving the topic. Questions, for instance, evolved around the challenges Iranian women faced going through the education system in Iran's post-1979 revolution education system, success strategies, success measures for Iranian American women, and their challenges in the American higher education system. Moreover, more direct questions elucidated participants' points of view and experiences that could help establish themes on the study's topic. Thus, contributing to the other research, the information from the current study has added value to the existing literature. Consequently, both direct and indirect interview questions are beneficial to providing a deeper understanding and inquiry into the research topic and phenomena.

More specifically, the first three interview questions were designed to help answer first research question. The second research question covered interview questions four and five. Interview questions six, seven, and eight corresponded to the third research question. Finally, interview questions nine and 10 coincided with research question four. Interview questions are listed in Table 2.

Table 2

Research Questions and Corresponding Interview Questions

Research Questions	Corresponding Interview Questions
RQ1. For Iranian-American women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system, what challenges did they face when studying in the American higher education system?	IQ1. What practices (strategies) allowed you to obtain an undergraduate or graduate degrees form the United States' universities? IQ2. What are the factors in your educational background contributed to your success in obtaining an undergraduate or graduate degrees form the United States' universities? IQ3. What personal and/or cultural elements supported you in obtaining an undergraduate or graduate degrees form the United States' universities?
RQ2. For Iranian American women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system, what success strategies did they employ when studying in the American higher education system?	IQ4. What challenges did you face in the American higher education system and how/if they relate to your educational background in Iran? IQ5. How did you recognize these challenges and overcome them?
RQ3. How do Iranian-American women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system measure their success in American higher education?	IQ6. As an Iranian-American woman with a higher education degree, how do you define success in the American higher education system? IQ7. What techniques/strategies did you use to measure your educational success? IQ8. What methods have allowed you to obtain an undergraduate or graduate degrees form the United States' universities?
RQ4. In accordance with their encounters, what recommendation would Iranian American women who received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system make to future Iranian American women pursuing degrees in American higher education?	IQ9. How can American higher education organizations support Iranian-American female students? IQ10. What advice or recommendation would you give upcoming Iranian-American female students?

Note. Table 2 includes four research questions and related interview questions as constructed by the researcher.

Reliability and Validity of the Study

Creating clear, concise questions that are easily understood, providing responses that resonate with participants' experiences, insights, and belief systems, and avoiding vague questions that elicit a mixture of interpretations contribute to the reliability of qualitative research (Creswell, 2013). Since qualitative research and its interview questions create varying answers, the reliability of the study lies in the coherence of the questions so that the answers can provide useful information for the researcher rather than confusion and misunderstanding (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, the researcher must identify the possible ambiguities in the interview questions and eliminate them from the process. Relevant to the current study, the semi-constructed interview questions were reviewed by three peers, which were doctoral students and an expert committee to ensure reliability. Moreover, the study's validity lies in the levels in which the data corresponds to the reality of the issue, and how accurate the collected data is. In other terms, the research's validity is the collected data's precision and decency in presenting various experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The current study included three processes of prima facie, peer review, and expert-level validities to ensure the study's validity.

Prima-Facie and Content Validity

The study's interview questions addressed components that would correspond to the central topic and purpose statement aligning the interview questions with the research questions. The researcher achieved prima facie validity through examining the relationship and correspondence between research and interview questions. Furthermore, Table 2 indicates the correspondence among these questions drawing back to the main problem statement.

Peer-Review Validity

Evaluating the validity of qualitative research entails examining both research and interview questions, highlighting the role of peer review validity and its importance in establishing its efficacy (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In their opinion, Creswell and Poth (2018) distinguish the role of a capable peer reviewer who is familiar with the research, strengthens the integrity of the research, and provides useful feedback.

A group of peers gathered to evaluate the accordance and relativity of research and interview questions. The peer review group was comprised of three students in Pepperdine's Education Doctorate Learning Technologies (EDLT) program who evaluated the questions. Scholars in the EDLT program were also involved with the research, as they were conducting their dissertation research; therefore, they had an extensive understanding of the study's structure. The questions were included in a table with room for reviewers to assess, make suggestions, and write reflections on the corresponding interview questions. The categories that reviewers used for their assessment included (a) keep as stated, (b) modify, and (c) delete with room to propose revisions. After that, the researcher reviewed the revisions and made changes accordingly (see Table 3; Appendix D).

Table 3

Research Questions and Corresponding Interview Questions (Revised)

Research Questions	Corresponding Interview Questions
RQ1. For Iranian-American women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system, what challenges did they face when studying in the American higher education system?	IQ1. What educational background, experiences, training, and traits do you possess that were instrumental to your success in obtaining an undergraduate or graduate degrees form the United States' universities? IQ2. What practices from the Iranian education system were instrumental to you obtaining an undergraduate or graduate degrees form the United States' universities? IQ3. What do you believe to be factors from the Iranian education system that have contributed to your success in the American higher education system?
RQ2. For Iranian American women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system, what success strategies did they employ when studying in the American higher education system?	IQ4. What is unique about the education in Iran for the Iranian women studying in the American higher education system? IQ5. What practices, in your opinion, were challenging in your American higher education process? How were you able to identify and conquer those challenges?
RQ3. How do Iranian-American women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system measure their success in American higher education?	IQ6. As an Iranian-American woman with an American higher education degree, how do you define success, and what does it pertain to? IQ7. What metric do you use to compute your progress and achievements as you transitioned from Iranian education system to the American higher education system? IQ8. What methods were effective in transitioning from the Iranian education to the American higher education system?

Research Questions	Corresponding Interview Questions
RQ4. In accordance with their encounters, what recommendation would Iranian American women who received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system make to future Iranian American women pursuing degrees in American higher education?	IQ9. How can higher education institutions better support Iranian-American female students with educational backgrounds from Iran? IQ10. What advice or recommendation would you give to future women from Iran with academic backgrounds from Iran in obtaining an undergraduate or graduate degrees form the United States' universities?

Note. Table 3 identifies four research questions and corresponding interview questions with revisions based on feedback from peer-reviewers. Subsequent changes were made to the order and phrasing of questions within the interview protocol.

Expert Review Validity

The researcher, upon receiving peer reviews, turned in the questions to a committee of experts, including the dissertation advisors, for a full review of the questions. The dissertation committee was comprised of three Pepperdine faculty advisors approving and recommending revisions to questions. Table 4 illustrates the question adjustments and revisions following the feedback generated by the dissertation committee.

Table 4

Research Questions and Corresponding Interview Questions (Revision 2)

Research Questions	Corresponding Interview Questions
RQ1. For Iranian-American women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system, what challenges did they face when studying in the American higher education system?	IQ1: Think of the single most difficult challenge you have faced in pursuing your degrees in the US? What was that challenge and how did you experience it? IQ3: What were other similar challenges you experienced when pursuing your degrees?

Research Questions	Corresponding Interview Questions
	IQ5 What practices, in your opinion, were challenging in your American higher education process? How did you identify and overcome those challenges?
RQ2. For Iranian American women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system, what success strategies did they employ when studying in the American higher education system?	IQ2: What strategies did you employ or what resources did you seek to overcome this particular challenge? IQ4: What techniques were employed to conquer these particular obstacles? IQ6: Are you personally aware of strategies employed or resources sought by these women?
RQ3. How do Iranian-American women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system measure their success in American higher education?	IQ7: As an Iranian-American woman with an American higher education degree, what is success to you? IQ8: How did you measure your progress and success as you transitioned from the Iranian education system to the American higher education system?
RQ4. In accordance with their encounters, what recommendation would Iranian American women who received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system make to future Iranian American women pursuing degrees in American higher education?	IQ9: How can higher education institutions better support Iranian-American female students with educational backgrounds from Iran? IQ10: What recommendation do you have for incoming Iranian-American female students with academic backgrounds from Iran in obtaining an undergraduate or graduate degrees form the United States' universities? IQ11: Was it all worth it? Why? Elaborate please

Note. Table 4 identifies four research questions and corresponding interview questions with revisions based on feedback from the expert reviewers (committee). Subsequent changes were made to the order and phrasing of questions within the interview protocol.

Reliability and Pilot Testing

Pilot testing was conducted through two experimental interviews with eligible candidates that aligned with the study's parameters. Furthermore, pilot testing included the researcher asking the final interview questions, gather the participants' responses, and finally asking for their suggestions for the questions.

Statement of Personal Bias

The study intended to highlight the useful information about the challenges of cultural discontinuity in studying in the American universities and the strategies to conquer these challenges for Iranian-American women and other migrant groups. The researcher herself had a similar background to the study's participants' criteria. She is a woman from Iran that went through the primary and secondary Iranian education post-revolution and attained college degrees in America. Therefore, her personal experiences could bring biases to the study, and there had to be caution and systems to avoid any possible bias. She was conscious and careful about this limitation in conducting the study and further handling the interviews. Therefore, she managed to refrain from expressing personal experiences and stories, especially during the interviews. Another limitation of the study was that the Iranian community in Southern California is tight, and the researcher might know potential participants personally. The researcher eliminated any personal acquaintances from participating in the study. One way of removing the researcher's personal biases, experiences, and assumptions is called bracketing or epoche (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Bracketing and Epoche

First, the researcher had to become aware of their biases through conversations with peers and memo-taking practices. In bracketing, the researcher becomes aware of their biases and sets

them aside to be more open to receiving participants' input (Creswell, 2013). In doing so, the researcher becomes conscious of their biases and decides how they would affect the study to better eliminate them from affecting the results. However, Creswell (2013) mentions that bracketing personal experiences might be challenging for the researcher, especially in analyzing the data, because this process always involves the researcher's presumptions. Consequently, the researcher incorporated memo notes and note-taking of their personal biases, discussed possible beliefs with peers, and wrote reminders in a notebook to be aware of potential biases.

Data Analysis

The researcher conducted 15 interviews, transcribing and collecting data from those interviews. Then, the researcher completed data analysis, explored recurring themes and patterns, and finally, categorized data into codes in order to appropriately arrange the data. The researcher, moreover, created a data table with shared patterns and themes.

Data Analysis and Coding

The researcher analyzed data after the interviews using the recorded audio transcript. Then, the researcher coded the data gathered from the transcripts. Coding is important in producing a coherent understanding of the data and demonstrating prevailing themes (Creswell, 2013). The coding process starts with carefully examining the transcribed interviews that provide information about the common themes among participant responses. In other terms, coding involves separating the acquired text into smaller categories while searching for the reasoning behind the code and finally labeling the code (Creswell, 2013). Coding requires organizing the data into headings reasonable to the researcher because a disorganized data set can affect the study negatively. The researcher in the present study coded the interview transcriptions using appropriate headings, university assigned Google Sheets, color coded, and highlighting key

words from the interviews. In short, the coding process entails producing three types of information to the researcher: expected, surprising, and unexpected (Creswell, 2013).

Interrater Reliability and Validity

According to Creswell (2013), raters examine the themes' frequency and commonality to achieve interrater reliability. This process differs from examining the raters' review validity and focusing on the accuracy and coherence. The researcher sorted the data into codes by ordering the shared themes under the same classification and documenting them on a university-assigned Google account spreadsheet. Afterward, the researcher and three doctoral peers examined and reviewed the results. Finally, the committee panel reviewed the results if they did not indicate any consensus.

Four Step Process

- Baseline Themes: 3 Interviews. After conducting three initial interviews, the researcher used Otter AI platform to transcribe the interviews, Google Sheets to code the transcripts, and further highlighting prevailing themes for each research question.
- Interrater Review: Consensus. Upon establishing a series of codes, the shared themes and codes were reviewed with three competent raters knowledgeable in qualitative research. The co-raters examined the data by checking the initial three interview transcripts, the coding process, and thematic analysis. Then, the reviewers assessed the coherence and quality of the codes, themes, and categories, proposing their suggestions and revisions.
- Baseline Themes: Remaining 12 Interviews. The rest of the interviews were conducted using the modification, recommendations, and consensus the co-raters

provided for the initial three interviews. The remaining 12 interviews followed the

same themes and categories as the initial three interviews.

- Interrater Review: Consensus. A shared consensus was developed between the

  researcher and co-raters collaboratively to initiate developing final codes and themes.

- No Consensus: Expert Review. Upon revisions, if the researchers did not reach a

  consensus, an expert panel of committee members would review the coding and

  themes.

Data Presentation

The data presentation process included the researcher sorting the themes under

appropriate classifications and sharing the categories with peers and expert raters through a

presentation. The themes were grouped according to the revisions suggested by peers and the

expert panel reviewers. The researcher then compiled a bar graph representing the themes and

findings. Table 2 presents the coding, findings, and conclusions, which will be discussed further

in Chapter 4.

Chapter Summary

This study incorporated qualitative methods and phenomenological techniques employing

one-on-one interviews drawing upon transcripts, interpreting, and concluding on the techniques

that women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-

revolution Iranian education system incorporated to study in the American higher education

system and acquire higher education degrees. The study followed the frameworks and structures

of a phenomenological approach, allowing the researcher to dig into participants' experiences to

explore underlying commonalities contributing to this subgroup's success. This study will

provide guidance and a model for r students with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds

about the approaches, challenges, setbacks in obtaining higher education degrees in the United States. Furthermore, these students can use the recommendations from this study to overcome possible hardships in their higher education journey in America. Data was generated using the interview transcripts, coded according to the commonalities in participant responses, grouped, and finally categorized into codes. Furthermore, the researcher conducted peer review and expert panel reviews to achieve the required levels of reliability and validity. Additionally, the reviewers determined the levels at which the interview questions conveyed the study's research questions. Lastly, the researcher presented the data to peers, expert panels, and general audiences to represent the participants' lived experiences.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

This study incorporated phenomenology qualitative techniques to study the strategies that women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system used in attaining higher education degrees in the United States. This chapter will demonstrate the study's results and briefly describe the study participants. Lastly, this chapter will uncover the gathered data and findings through qualitative interviews.

Iranian women, in the years post-revolution, have demonstrated their capabilities in society by actively engaging in educational environments as well as professional scenes amid ongoing gender discrimination (Azadi et al., 2022). According to 2016 consensus data reported by the Institute for Research and Planning in Higher Education, Iranian women account for 50% of higher education enrollments; still, their share in the job force is half of the men's share (Roudi et al., 2017). Among many other reasons, higher education and employment have been driving forces for Iranian women to migrate to Western countries such as the US and Canada (Sadeghi, 2008). Therefore, the researcher composed four research questions to study the perspectives, success strategies, and practices of Iranian women obtaining degrees from United States higher education institutions:

- RQ1: For Iranian American women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system, what challenges did they face when studying in the American higher education system?
- RQ2: For Iranian American women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system, what success strategies did they employ when studying in the American higher education system?

- RQ3: How do Iranian American women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system measure their success in American higher education?

- RQ4: In accordance with their encounters, what recommendation would Iranian American women who received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system make to future Iranian American women pursuing degrees in American higher education?

The study utilized 11 semi-constructed questions for the interviews, which aligned with the four research questions. Moreover, the researcher introduced the questions to a committee including three inter-raters and three experts. This panel then reviewed and validated the interview questions as follows:

- IQ1. Think of the single most difficult challenge you have faced in pursuing your degrees in the US? What was that challenge, and how did you experience it?

- IQ2. What strategies did you employ, or what resources did you seek to overcome this particular challenge?

- IQ3. What were other similar challenges you experienced when pursuing your degrees?

- IQ4. What strategies did you employ to conquer these particular challenges?

- IQ5. What practices, in your opinion, were challenging in your American higher education process? How did you identify and overcome those challenges?

- IQ6. Are you personally aware of strategies employed or resources sought by these women?

- IQ7. As an Iranian-American woman with an American higher education degree, how do you define success?

- IQ8. How did you measure your progress and success as you transitioned from the Iranian education system to the American higher education system?

- IQ9. How can higher education institutions better support Iranian-American female students with educational backgrounds from Iran?

- IQ10. What advice or recommendation would you give to future Iranian-American female students with academic backgrounds from Iran pursuing a higher education degree in the American higher education system?

- IQ11: Was it all worth it? Why? Elaborate please.

The participants shared their lived experiences along with best practices that allowed them success in the American higher education system even though their educational backgrounds consisted of going to primary and/or secondary schools in the post-revolution Iranian education system. Their insights provided information, tips, narratives, and recommendations that could assist any minority group studying in the American higher education system. This chapter further includes the results, data gathering procedures, and participant descriptions. The data examination consisted of the researcher assessing the responses to the interview questions.

Participants

Upon receiving clearance from IRB, the researcher initiated the participant selection process. The researcher used LinkedIn search bar to look for possible participants using keywords such as, Iranian American women, Tehran university, Niyayesh and Hadaf high schools (all girls high schools in Tehran), higher education, et cetera. The search results

presented numerous candidates that could fit the participant criteria. The researcher carefully viewed each individual's profile focusing on their educational backgrounds and careers. 50 women from the search results who met the criteria were contacted by sending the IRB approved recruitment e-mail through LinkedIn. A master list was created from the women who responded to the LinkedIn message. The researcher picked a sample size of 15 participants utilizing 13 participants through purposive sampling and recruiting 2 participants based on recommendations from individuals in the interviews. The participant criteria were Iranian American women with primary and/or secondary education experience in the post-revolution Iranian education system who were able to attain a bachelor's degree or higher from American higher education institutions. Moreover, the participants had to hold a director or higher-level position at their jobs. The participants participated in the study voluntarily, and their confidentiality was assured.

Participant Descriptions

The study's participants had different backgrounds and profiles relating to their chosen subject field and profession. The diversity in their profiles allowed the researcher to explore their perspectives more in-depth, thus gathering extensive perspectives to assist the study. Furthermore, the investigator employed purposive sampling in assessing participants' educational, professional, and demographic backgrounds. Participants' academic and professional profiles are listed:

1. P1 is an Iranian-American writer/philanthropist and a senior advisor to the United Nations, holding a Doctorate of Philosophy in social psychology from an accredited university in California. She is in her early 40s, was born in Iran, and had completed high school before moving to the United States.

2. P2 is a young Iranian-American woman (early 30s) who has completed primary, secondary, and undergraduate schools in Iran. She then attained a master's degree in business administration (MBA) at an accredited higher education institute in the East Coast. Professionally, she works with health organizations as a change management officer. Moreover, she is currently in the third year of a doctoral program at Northeastern University.

3. P3 is an Iranian-American businesswoman in her late 40s with experience running various businesses: pet supply, car wash, accounting firm, and real estate. She finished high school in Iran and then moved to California. Her higher education background included graduate and post graduate degrees in industrial engineering from California State University.

4. P4 is an Iranian-American woman (late 20s) with an undergraduate degree in accounting, who went to college in California. She was born in Iran and went to school there until 10th grade. She is currently employed as a senior recruiter at a recruiting firm that works with executive-level corporate individuals.

5. P5 is a woman from Iran in her early 50s with secondary school backgrounds in the Iranian post-revolution education system. She migrated to the United States after finishing high school, entered Tulsa University, and attained an undergraduate degree majoring in business administration. She is a business owner, running multiple yoga studios across Southern California.

6. P6 is a woman from Iran, late 30s, and has finished high school in Iran. She then moved to Northern California with her family and attended an accredited higher education institution in California. She has attained an undergraduate degree in

communications. Later, she started her own interior decorating business and currently owns and manages multiple furniture shops across Northern and Southern California.

7. P7 is a woman from Iran, late 30s, that has gone through primary, secondary, and undergraduate schools in Iran. She then moved to the United States and continued to attain a graduate degree in Applied Chemistry. At the time of the interview, she was attending a Doctorate in Chemistry program at the University of Colorado. Professionally, she works as an adjunct professor and runs a research team addressing the impacts of global warming.

8. P8 is an Iranian-American woman in her early 40s who finished high school after the 1979 revolution and then moved to America. Due to her religious affiliation as a Bahai, she did not have the opportunity to attend university in Iran. The Iranian government denies Baha'is from going to university and accessing higher education (Yazdani, 2015). She migrated to the United States as a religious refugee, moved to Southern California, and attended California State University. She then attained a Bachelor's degree in psychology and established her marriage and family practice. She is currently running the therapy practice and has approximately ten licensed psychologists working for her.

9. P9 is a woman from Iran, mid-40s, that has a background similar to Participant Eight: she is a Bahai and was therefore denied a college education in Iran. She has an undergraduate degree in business administration from California University with experiences of being a financial advisor at financial institutions such as Citibank. She is currently operating a pet supply business. Under her leadership, the company has expanded outside of California and now serves various locations across the country.

10. P10 is a woman from Iran and her age is around mid-30s. Her educational background in Iran is impressive, as she has attended the prestigious Sharif University (the number one university in Iran), attained a Bachelor of Science in computer engineering. She then moved to Florida on a student visa to attend a university in Florida, where she earned a graduate and postgraduate degrees in computer science. She was able to gain US citizenship and is currently the senior data scientist at AT&T.

11. P11 is an Iranian-American woman in her early 40s who completed high school in Iran and then along with her family migrated to America. While living with family in Southern California, she attended California State University and earned undergraduate and graduate degrees in the field of business administration. She is mainly working in business as a director of a financial consulting firm.

12. P12 is an Iranian-American woman in her early 40s. She has gone through Iran's primary, secondary, undergraduate, and graduate schools. She has a graduate degree in chemical engineering from an accredited University in Tehran, which is one of the top five universities in Iran. She then moved to the United States on a student visa, attending the University of California and obtaining a doctorate of philosophy in chemical engineering. After graduating, she received a job offer from the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP). Her accomplishments allowed her to permanently live in the United States and change her immigration status to permanent resident and later to citizenship. She is currently the lead civil engineer associate at LADWP.

13. P13 is an Iranian-American woman in her early 50s. She attended Tehran University Medical School and became a medical doctor. While working as a medical doctor, she continued her studies, specializing in infectious diseases. Additionally, as a director, she oversaw the contagious disease sector in Iran's Department of Health. She then moved to America to continue studying to become board-certified by the American Board of Internal Medicine in internal medicine and infectious diseases. She works at a renowned Los Angeles hospital as an infectious diseases' specialist and director of the department of internal medicine.

14. P14 is an Iranian-American woman in her early 40s. She completed high school in Iran and moved to Southern California with her family. She attended the University of California, majored in accounting, and graduated with a science degree in business and accounting. She then got her Certified Public Accountant (CPA) license and worked for a renowned public accounting firm (Deloitte). After a couple of years, she left that position and started a jewelry business with her husband. She is currently the CFO of the company and runs the jewelry business.

15. P15 is an Iranian-American woman in her late 40s. She completed the Iranian high school then relocated to America as a religious refugee. She is a Bahai and was denied entering university in Iran. She attended California State University and attained a bachelor's in business administration. She then moved to New Hampshire and obtained a graduate degree in business administration from an accredited college in the same area. She has had various roles in corporate America as a consultant, advisor, program manager, and director. She currently works at a telecommunications company as a project manager and director.

Data Collection

Upon receiving clearance from IRB, the researcher started the participant selection process. The researcher interviewed and gathered information from 15 Iranian-American women with primary and/or secondary educational backgrounds from the post-revolution Iranian education system who attained college degrees in the America. Upon IRB approval (see Appendix B), the process of looking for possible candidate started. The researcher used keywords such as Iranian American women and higher education on the LinkedIn search bar to find possible participants. The search results indicated various Iranian-American women from diverse backgrounds. The researcher viewed these women's educational backgrounds, locations, and professional positions to send the IRB-approved recruitment e-mail to candidates that fit the criteria. The researcher then sent the IRB-approved recruitment e-mail to the possible candidates introducing the study, the purpose, and the criteria for participants. From the individuals who responded, the researcher chose 15 participants who had diverse educational and professional backgrounds.

Two participants responded to the recruitment e-mail within a few days and the researcher was able to set the interview date with them on February 6 and 7, 2024. The next seven participants responded in about a week after receiving the recruitment e-mail and the researcher set the interview date for them on February 12, 2024. Participants 10 and 11 responded after ten days of receiving the recruitment invitation and the researcher set February 13, 2024, for interviewing them. The researcher interviewed the remaining participants from February 14, 2024, to February 18, 2024. As part of the method, the researcher took logs during the sessions while audio recording and transcribing with a smart AI meeting assistances called Otter AI and Audacity.

The investigator sent the informed consent letter and the interview questions to the

attendees before conducting the interviews. Then the sessions were scheduled as specified by the

participants' preferences in terms of time and day (see Table 5). The interview duration was

roughly around 45-60 minutes, although some interviews took less time. The Otter AI tool

recorded and transcribed the interview conversations live while the interviews were taking place.

Table 5

Dates of the Participant Interviews

Interview Date	Participant
February 6, 2024	P1
February 7, 2024	P2
February 12, 2024	P3
February 12, 2024	P4
February 12, 2024	P5
February 12, 2024	P6
February 12, 2024	P7
February 12, 2024	P8
February 12, 2024	P9
February 13, 2024	P10
February 13, 2024	P11
February 14, 2024	P12
February 16, 2024	P13
February 16, 2024	P14
February 18, 2024	P15

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis requires strategies and methods for data collection involving

exposition, elucidation, and explanation (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). Therefore, the process of data

analysis includes data gathering and recording, coding, and categories for data elucidation. The

researcher followed these steps in the data analysis process and developed themes related to the

initial four research questions.

In order to understand the data, the researcher has to follow a process of sorting, dissecting, summarizing, and modifying the interviews' transcripts and field notes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Therefore, the researcher in the current study listened to the audio recordings while reading the transcripts generated by Otter AI to be able to grasp all the details in the participants' responses. The researcher repeated this process three times while highlighting the key words on the transcripts and transferring them to a table on Google Sheets. Thus, the researcher repeated these steps for the 15 participants. After entering all the keywords from 15 participants who answered 11 interview questions into a table on Google Sheets, the document was ready for the coding process. The investigator grouped the data according to themes and frequency to create categories for each theme. Following the coding process, the investigator sent a coding sheet to three inter-raters, as discussed in Chapter 3, to review and provide insight and make suggestions on the themes and categories.

Inter-Rater Review Process

The investigator sent the coding document to three other students in the Doctor of Education program at Pepperdine University. All three doctoral candidates studied in the Learning Technologies program, and they were also in the process of completing dissertations. The researcher briefed the inter-raters about the coding process, presenting some examples and details. The inter-raters were provided with the transcripts, condensed data, and themes from the transcripts. Additionally, the researcher introduced the inter-raters to the emergent categories, their interpretations, resulting in the theme creation. The external inter-raters then reviewed the Google Sheets table and provided feedback.

Data Display

For the purpose of ensuring participants' confidentiality, the researcher used numbers to indicate each participant (e.g., P1, P2, et cetera.). Through reviewing the transcripts, the researcher recognized and designated common themes among participants' responses to each interview question. Consequently, the researcher sorted the data into charts and bar graphs according to four research questions, employing the themes that came from the interview transcripts.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 was, For Iranian-American women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system, what challenges did they face when studying in the American higher education system?

The researcher composed Interview Questions 1, 3, and 5 that related to the first research question:

- IQ1. Think of the single most difficult challenge you have faced in pursuing your degrees in the US? What was that challenge and how did you experience it?

- IQ3. What were other similar challenges you experienced when pursuing your degrees?

- IQ5. What practices, in your opinion, were challenging in your American higher education process? How did you identify and overcome those challenges?

Various themes emerged from the participants' answers to the first research question.

Interview Question 1. Think of the single most difficult challenge you have faced in pursuing your degrees in the US? What was that challenge and how did you experience it?

According to the data analysis for the responses to Interview Question 1, the researcher identified 24 characteristics, and the following four common themes emerged: (a) academic language barrier, (b) cultural differences, (c) entering and adapting to the American education system, and (d) visa/immigration challenges (see Figure 4).

Figure 4

Coding Results: Interview Question 1
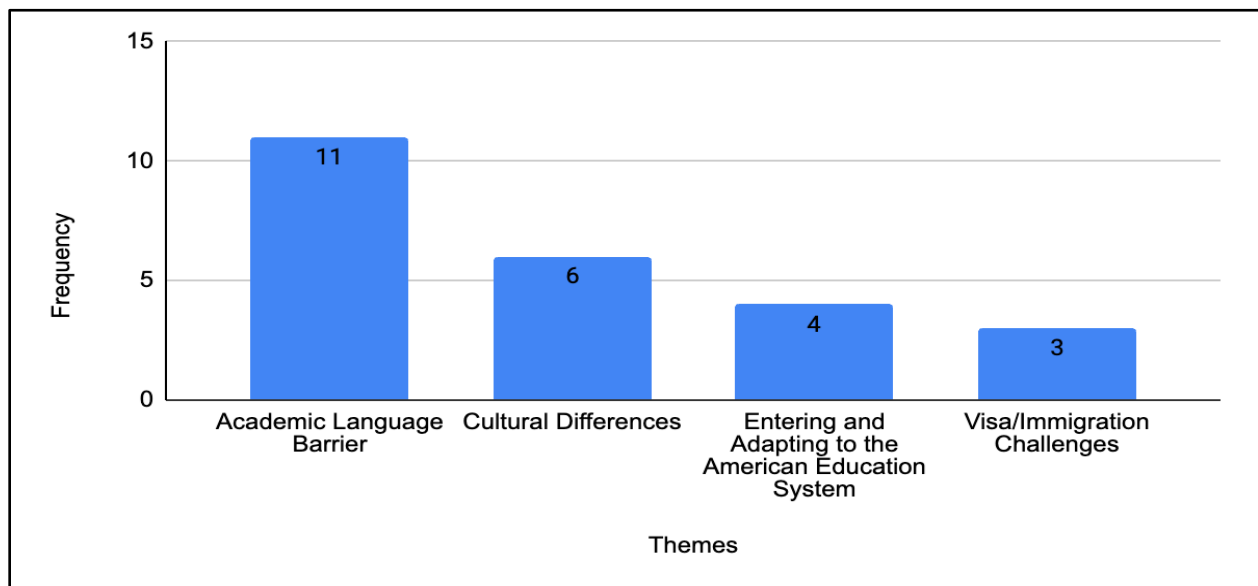
Note. n = 15. The most difficult challenges in pursuing a higher education degree in the United States. This figure presents the four themes that emerged from the responses. The numbers demonstrate the number of times the theme was mentioned.

Academic Language Barrier. Eleven out of 15 participants (73%), mentioned academic language barriers as their most difficult challenge in pursuing college degrees. English language competencies and academic language skills are highly important in the Iranian immigration and higher education attainments (Iravani, 2011). For instance, P5 noted, "I experienced the English language barrier even though my English was good, but the area I was getting my training in had a very content-specific language that was challenging for me." Another comment regarding the academic language barrier was made by P9, stating, "When you come to a different country,

even though you know English, it is very different from when you speak in conversations. The academic setting requires you to learn specific terms and knowledge about the language." P2 specifically mentioned the American Psychological Association (APA) requirements as the most challenging difficulty she was facing. She stated, "It is very difficult because APA is not used in the Iranian education system." However, some candidates mentioned that subjects such as math and science were easy for them because of the universal language for mathematics and sciences, whereas topics such as arts and history were more challenging.

Cultural Differences. The participants mentioned this code multiple times as a difficult challenge they had to face when studying within the American higher education system. Overall, six out of 15 participants (40%) stated key words that resonated with cultural differences code. The American educational culture follows the characteristics of individualistic framework while the Iranian educational culture promotes collectivist cultural values (Balali, 2023). P1, in particular, used the terms "rigidity, lack of flexibility" to express her challenge with cultural differences. Moreover, P4, in explaining the differences in culture, mentioned,

> The culture of the American education system is very different from the culture of the Iranian education system. By culture, I mean the resources they use, the professor and student relationships, student and student relationships, how the classes are handled, et cetera.

Some participants also talked about other aspects of cultural differences. For instance, P6 expressed her challenge with not knowing how to enroll in the classes and lack of assistance from other students or professors:

> It was so complicated that I wanted to give up and not continue going to college. The way the students dressed was so bad, and they treated me awfully. No one wanted to help me

and as soon as they heard I was Iranian, they assumed that I don't know English and they did not want to be my friend.

Another related note was made by P15 who expressed,

I was facing a lot of discrimination and a lot of stress to the point that I felt I didn't belong to the school system, so I had all the pressure of figuring out where do I go and how do I fit in? Where do I belong? On top of the fact that I had to learn the new material in classes.

Entering and Adapting to the American Education System. This theme emerged from four participants (26%). In fact, research suggests that Iranian-Americans have been adapting to the American educational policies as a method of assimilation into the American society (Askari, 2003). The education system in Iran had a different structure and regulations that did not match with the American education system and the participants found this to be challenging in their education journey. For instance, P1 noted that

The struggle for the professors and system is to recognize academic achievements from other countries, as they did not want to use my precious educational material and adapt it to the current American education system, I ended up taking a bunch of classes that I had already taken in Iran and were super easy for me.

Thus, getting acquainted with the American educational structure was a difficulty that multiple participants felt. For instance, P13, who was an infectious diseases specialist in Iran, stated:

I was a physician trained in Iran and then got my infectious disease specialty, but I had to come here, pass the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) test and go back to the internship. After five years of working as an infectious disease physician with a master's in public health, I secured an internship where all my other colleagues were at

133

least, if not more, 10 years, 15 years younger than me, and the attendees who were my

age didn't have my degree or my experience. So, basically, I was overqualified and older

than my peers.

Visa/Immigration Challenges. This theme was mentioned by 20%, three out of 15

participants. Study participants came to the United States through different routes- securing a

green card, claiming to be a religious refugee, and winning the lottery; not all of them came to

the US with a student visa. It is imperative to emphasize that visa and immigration processes

have been challenging for Iranians since the events of 1979 revolution (Hakimzadeh & Dixon,

2006). Overall, Iranians have been subjected to strict visa and immigration restrictions and

policies making the migration journey more difficult for them (Mobasher, 2012). However, the

participants who entered the United States with student visas mentioned the challenges they

faced when they entered the American higher education system. More specifically, P10

expressed,

> When pursuing my Ph.D. in Florida, my mother got diagnosed with cancer, and the
>
> university wasn't that helpful, and they did not make accommodations for me or allow me
>
> to go visit her. The advisor was also worried about her project, and I was having a very
>
> hard time back then. So, I had to switch advisors and find one who could be more
>
> understanding of my situation. At the end of the day, I couldn't even leave to go see my
>
> mother because of my visa issues.

Further, P12 expressed the immigration and visa limitations she faced as a student on an F-1 visa

by noting,

> So that first year was very emotionally difficult, especially because I was very
>
> emotionally attached to my family, and it was very hard for me to cope with all the

challenges related to graduate school. I could not leave the US to go visit them because of my visa limitations, and it was very difficult for them to get a tourist visa.

Interview Question 3. What were other similar challenges you experienced when pursuing your degrees?

The response analysis of Interview Question 3 indicated 17 distinct characteristics. From those 17 indicators, three themes emerged: (a) cultural differences, (b) American higher education logistics, and (c) technology (see Figure 5).

Figure 5

Coding Results: Interview Question 3
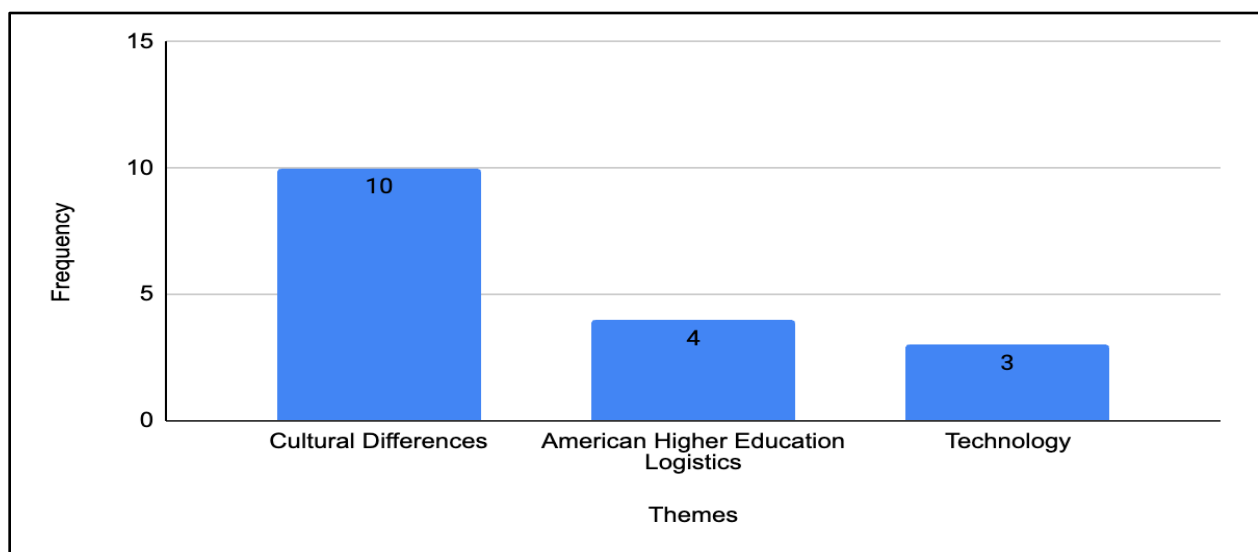
Note. $n = 15$. Other similar challenges in the American higher education system.

Cultural Differences. This theme emerged as the most significant characteristic for Interview Question 3, as it was mentioned by 10 out of 15 participants (66%). Participants used various terms to describe this theme, such as cultural differences, cultural challenges, cultural gaps, sense of belonging, feeling left out, understanding a different culture, et cetera. The participants shared examples of cultural differences similar to the information indicated by the research stressing on the importance of family values and intercedence in the Iranian cultural

135

values (Solhi & Mahmoudi, 2015). For example, P3 noted, "I had cultural differences with my classmates; I was not sharing the same culture with my surroundings." P8 also mentioned, "I could notice a big gap between me and the other students in the class, and that was because I came from a different culture." Another significant statement P11 expresses was how American culture is different from Iranian culture by stating, "Here in the US you have to make eye contact and are pushed to communicate. In contrast, in Iran the culture is totally different and women are kind of expected to stay to themselves and not make eye contact." Other participants, such as P6, expressed her frustration with finding friends and belonging to a community that was lacking in the environment where she went to school. Moreover, she indicated:

> I come from a family culture where I am encouraged to work and be active. Therefore, I tried to apply for different jobs at the university while I was in school. I wanted to experience working in the US to become familiar with the American culture, but it was not possible. Any position I tried applying for, even the simplest job of working at the library, was not available to me. In the four years that I studied in that university none of the jobs I applied for got back to me.

Interestingly, P13 also mentioned cultural challenges by revealing that there was a large age gap between herself and peers, which made it hard for her to fit into any crowd and that she assumed her peers were intimidated by her age. P12 also made remarks about the challenge of adapting to the new environment and the new culture. In summary, participants expressed feeling a bit uneasy regarding their fully integrating into American society due to the cultural differences they felt between themselves and the mainstream culture.

American Higher Education Logistics. The process of transferring academic credentials from Iran to the United States, adapting to the fast-paced quarter system at American

136

universities, and filling out the paperwork and applications were among some of the concerns that participants expressed. four out of 15 participants (26%) said that the processes in the system was foreign to them and created difficulties in their educational journey. The Iranian education system has undergone processes of de-secularization and Islamification after the 1979 revolution and 1980 cultural revolution, which created a gap between the Iranian and international school systems (Paivandi, 2019). P7 clearly stated her frustration with the new academic system when she remarked, "I had to learn the system of how everything works." Moreover, P10 shared her experience during the Ph.D. program when she received mixed messages. She was tasked with completing an internship, but due to visa restrictions, she was unable to work, complicating the progression of her degree. She shared her experience by declaring,

> It was very complicated to do an internship back then with the visa issues for international students; it was very complex because they should have passed a certain number of credits. After that, the advisor tells you that you need to do the internship in the like, latest years of your Ph.D. because it is the university's rule, at least in our university, the rule was that you need to have courses in order to do internships, so it was kind of like it didn't make sense. Your advisor was saying something, and then the school rule was something else, and I couldn't do an internship during my Ph.D. So, I ended up doing some sort of internship/project without getting paid or anything. Understanding the whole education system was complex because, in Iran the system is very different.

Similarly, P12 expressed her difficulties with the American education system logistics as follows:

> I think the first year is the most challenging time for any immigrant, any kind of immigrant, for people who come here with a green card lottery, a work visa, or a student

visa. I think the very first year, all experiences are new experiences. Everything is like the very first time that you're trying to learn everything, you're finding new friends, you're finding new ways to overcome your challenges. One of the difficulties is understanding the American logistics and the fact that there are different academic systems in Iran and the USA. Not only the administration stuff but also the way that we took courses, took exams, and did studies was utterly different from how they do it here in the US.

Technology. The term technology was also brought up in the previous Interview Question. Three out of 15 participants (20%) said that technology itself was a challenge for them. Research in the area of Iranian brain drain and migration indicated that the Iranian education quality has declined in the recent years due to the disconnect between the Iranian academic environment and the outside world, lack of technology infrastructures, and government's internet filtering (Azadi et al., 2022; Kamyab, 2015). Therefore, it is expected that Iranian students lack technology knowledge and have difficulties adapting to the technology use in the American education system. P2 expressed her lack of knowledge of technology because she had done her previous studies in Iran, where the education system is not technologically advanced. Furthermore, P2 had been in the higher education system in recent years and expressed the difficulties of working with online tools such as Zoom, Canvas, and other Learning Management Systems (LMS). P4 also mentioned technology as a challenge and compared it to the Iranian education system by stating,

> I think in Iran you really are just reading and learning the material from the books, but here you're just learning the technology of the field, whatever field you're in. You basically are learning the software and not learning the concepts. Iran's education system

teaches you the core concepts, and you learn the actual material. So, that is another

component that has been challenging for me.

In general, the participants who had attended university in more recent years raised the

technology component more than the participants who had completed higher education in the

1980s or 1990s.

Interview Question 5. What practices, in your opinion, were challenging in your

American higher education process? How did you identify and overcome those challenges?

This interview question's response analysis indicated 21 distinct characteristics. From the

21 characteristics, five themes emerged: (a) collaborative learning environment, (b) presenting

and self-expression, (c) lack of instructor support, (d) lower educational quality, and (e) diversity

(see Figure 6).

Figure 6

Coding Results: Interview Question 5
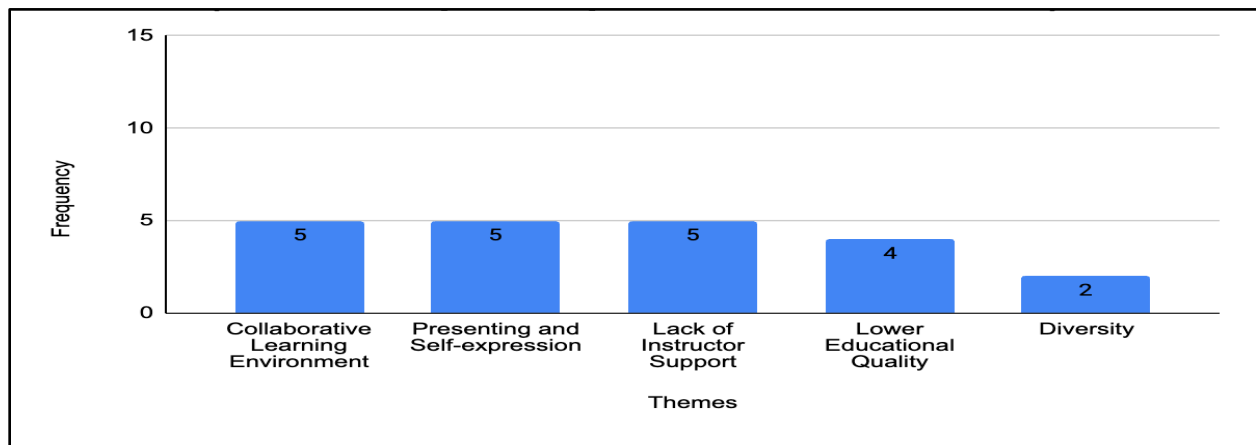
Note. n = 15. Practices that were challenging in American higher education.

Collaborative Learning Environment. The categories of collaborative learning

environments, presenting and self-expression, and lack of instructor support were among the top

themes that emerged for Interview Question 5. Five out of 15 participants (33%) expressed the

challenges with working collaboratively in the educational settings. The participants shared that learning how to work in collaborative learning settings was unfamiliar to them. Research suggests that students continue to socialize organically when practices in the home culture resembles the practices in the educational setting (Balali, 2023). However, when the home culture interferes with the practices in school, the students develop a sense of discontinuity. They mostly expressed that the Iranian education system is mostly teacher-centered: students work individually and are usually assessed through tests and quizzes. P4 also stated,

> Here in the US, the professors rely heavily on group projects. However, I'm very independent when it comes to doing the work, and I think in Iran, you're not really doing a lot of projects. You're just out on your own. I think learning how to deal with other people at a young age, let's say when you're getting your bachelor's, I think was one of the most challenging.

Other participants shared similar experiences about learning to work collaboratively. For instance, P7 shared that the group projects helped her become more social and also helped her build language skills such as speaking and writing. In other words, she mentioned that the group work helped her overcome her shyness. P10 noted that even though completing projects was challenging due to the language barrier, the collaborative structure of them made the problems accessible and easily understood because her group members could provide assistance and helped her bridge the communication barrier.

Presenting and Self-Expression. Five out of 15 participants (33%) expressed the challenges with presentations and self-expressions in the academic settings. Reflecting on the contrasts between the Iranian and American cultures and promotion of self in the American academia, research indicates that Western countries typically rely on characteristics of self-

expression and independence (Tyler et al., 2008). Some participants, such as P2, P6, and P11 directly used the terms presentation and presenting as their challenge. P2 and P6 raised the issue that giving presentations was hard because English was their second language. P11 and P14 more specifically pointed out the element of self-expression in American academia and how it is different than the Iranian culture, which promotes humility, being down-to-earth, and plainspoken. P11's remarks were as follows,

> Here, you talk about yourself more than you do in Iran. You have to be humbler, right? Here is more like advertising yourself and putting yourself out there. So that was always my challenge because I don't have that in me, I mean, I'm kind of humble. I have a belief system that I shouldn't be praising myself all the time. I shouldn't say I'm good at this thing. So, that was something that has been challenging throughout my studies and career.

> ***Lack of Instructor Support.*** Five participants out of 15 brought up the theme regarding instructor support (33%). This aspect can be inferred from the participants' Iranian education system which relies heavily on teacher directed instructional methods (Paivandi, 2008). P3 mentioned,

> Professors were not like back home who cared for us to understand the concepts. Here, the professors just write a concept on the board and leave it at that; they explain things briefly, their teaching method is less interactive, and they lack empathy towards international students.

Other participants shared similar experiences regarding the professors' teaching method and their lack of understanding towards minority students.

Lower Educational Quality. Four of the 15 participants (26%) mentioned lower education quality in the US compared to Iran. More specifically, these participants were referring to the K-12 education system in Iran, which can cover the early courses in the US colleges (Mossayeb & Shirazi, 2006). Therefore, in these participants' opinions, the Iranian education system is superior to that in the US for levels K-12, including a better quality since students come from stronger math and science backgrounds. P8 mentioned that the level of education in Iran is higher, as she went to college and the math classes were easy for her. Repeatedly, P9 shared the same experience regarding mathematics education,

> I just came from high school and I went to college here. The college classes were easier than going to school back home. So high school back home was more difficult, especially in math and science. I took the test for math and I was at a higher level than the actual people here. Honestly, the math classes in college were super easy for me. The only subject that was hard for me was writing in English.

Diversity. The diversity theme was expressed less frequently and 2 of 15 participants (13%) brought it up. In their opinion, the diversity in the US colleges and universities was different than Iran and presented a challenge to them. The participants' experiences with diversity in f the Iranian education system is limited due to educational restrictions that limits minorities from equal access to education (Yazdani, 2015). P1, for instance, noted that the diversity in students' age and expertise was new to her in the US educational system and further shared that the lower level of other students' expertise made it harder for her to communicate with them. Similarly, P2 mentioned that in her MBA and doctoral cohort she was the youngest in the group which made it difficult for her to adapt to the environment. She mentioned that because of the age gap, and the lack of career experiences that her peers had, she would not be

taken seriously because she was younger than other students. In general, by diversity, the participants referred to diversity in the student population's age and expertise.

Summary of Research Question 1

Research Question 1 inquired, "For Iranian-American women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system, what challenges did they face when studying in the American higher education system?" The interview questions included three questions relating to Research Question 1. A total of 11 recurring themes emerged from participants' responses to those three interview questions. Those themes included academic language barriers, cultural differences, entering and adapting to the American education system, visa/immigration challenges, cultural differences, technology, collaborative learning environment, presenting and self-expressions, lack of instructor support, and lower education quality.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 posed the question, For Iranian American women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system, what success strategies did they employ when studying in the American higher education system?

The researcher asked three interview questions to answer this research question. The interview questions were as follows:

- IQ2: What strategies did you employ or what resources did you seek to overcome this particular challenge?

- IQ4: What strategies did you employ to conquer these particular challenges?

- IQ6: Are you personally aware of strategies employed or resources sought by these women?

Interview Question 2: What strategies did you employ or what resources did you seek to overcome this particular challenge?

The data analysis of the participants' responses indicated 23 unique characteristics. From those 23 characteristics, four themes emerged: (a) strengthening academic language competencies, (b) networking, (c) perseverance, and (d) mentorship (see Figure 7).

Figure 7

Coding Results: Interview Question 2
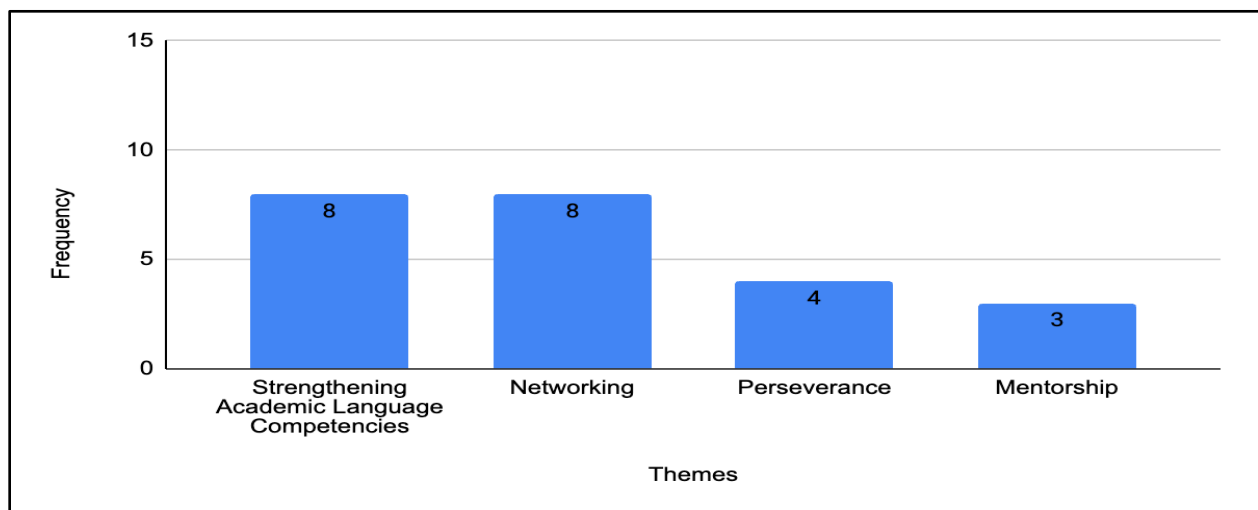
Note. n = 15. Strategies and resources to overcome the most difficult challenges of studying in the American higher education system.

Strengthening Academic Language Competencies. To overcome the academic language barriers, eight of 15 participants (53%) expressed strategies and resources they used in order to better their academic language competencies. Gaining mastery of the English language has been one the methods used by Iranians in the process of acquiring high levels of academic achievements (Daha, 2011). Multiple participants mentioned using the dictionary, thesaurus, and Google translator as their strategies to keep up with the courses. P2 clearly stated,

I took APA webinars and online writing classes. I had to buy the actual APA manual and

carry it with me to all classes. I still use the APA manual for all my courses. The Purdue

OWL website also helped me a lot.

P7 similarly mentioned using the APA manual as a method for better English writing.

Additionally, P14 explained that she took a class geared towards learning an American accent so

that she could blend more into the culture.

Networking. Socializing, community, gatherings, and relationship building were among

the keywords that participants used to express how networking has helped them overcome their

challenges. Eight of 15 participants (53%) mentioned networking theme as their technique to

conquer the existing challenges of the academic world. Socialization practices are among the

methods that minorities use to integrate into the host country's culture and further operate in the

mainstream society (Umaña-Taylor & Hill, 2020). Additionally, networking as a result of

building effective social skills is among the EI's skills that lead to academic achievements

(Alward & Phelps, 2019). Some participants, such as P1 and P2, referred to networking as

relationship-building with academia and professors. P4 expressed that networking included

reading the room, observing the interactions, seeing how people reacted, and understanding how

to build relationships in American society. Moreover, P6, P7, and P9 described how their

affiliations with the Persian community played a crucial role in overcoming their challenges. In

their statements, the Persian community was able to help them find a network of people who

could help them with their difficulties in life, school, and society. P6 noted,

Basically, I met the Persian community in college, and I just like going up to them. Some

of the Iranians were in college and ready to help and tell me how everything worked.

Some of them were super nice to walk me through and introduced me to financial aid and

that just made things a bit easier.

On the other hand, P9 said that the university she was studying at had no Persian community but

that she overcame her shyness and came out of her shell to make friends and build relationships.

P14 also mentioned remarks similar to those of P9. Her statement included,

Very early on, I decided to blend into this society, so I started working to overcome my

challenges and build relationships with the people around me. I worked simply like in a

coffee shop just to have conversations with customers. I did not just depend on the

Persian community for my communication. I ventured out and tried to socialize with the

society I was living in.

Perseverance. The theme, perseverance, emerged through various participants' sharing

their strategies of overcoming the challenges with keywords such as working harder, focusing

more, not giving up, et cetera. Research on the achievements of Iranian Americans indicate that

this group copes well with the American culture while acquiring high levels of education through

perseverance and not giving up (Bozorgmehr et al., 1988). Four of 15 participants in total (26%)

mentioned this theme as their strategy to overcome the difficulties they were facing in the

American higher education system. P4 explicitly stated her experience as follows,

For example, the simplest thing in a math class is a calculator, right? I remember in Iran,

we used a calculator just to get to the answer, but in the American system, you use the

calculator, and the calculator is part of your resource that you need to learn, basically

utilizing more technology. So, really observing how resources are used and how, you

know, people interact with each other and kind of learning from it and just going from

that. I had to work very hard to be able to go to the class prepared, and honestly, I was the

146

most prepared in all the classes. I did not let my lack of technology competencies hinder

my achievements in the classes. And probably that's why I ended up with a 4.0 GPA in

my bachelor's program.

On a similar note, P15 shared that "I had to study four times harder than everyone else." The
participant further explained,

I had a lot to prove, and I was paying a lot of tuition fees as a foreign student. I was

alone, and my family was looking for me to succeed. There was no room for failure, so I

had to study way harder than others. So, I felt I had to study four times five times harder

than everybody else in class to prove to not only my classmates but also to my family that

I was capable. I felt like I had to make a straight-A student. I was pretty much restricted,

but in the end, I got the straight As, which was worth it.

Mentorship. Three out of 15 participants (20%) raised the theme of mentorship in their
responses to overcoming the challenges of studying in the American higher education system.
The Iranian education system lacks practices such as mentorship and peer mentors because it
heavily relies on tests, exams, and standardized testing which are among the predisposing factors
contributing to brain drain (Sakurai, 2004). Moreover, second language acquisition methods
suggest that creating mentorship opportunities within collaborative settings supports senses of
comfort and belonging in second-language students (Kobayashi, 2016). P2 emphasized
mentorship, especially when it's students mentoring other students. She believes peer mentorship
has been the most effective resource in her graduate studies. P8 also mentioned that peer
mentoring has helped her write better academically.

Interview Question 4. What strategies did you employ to conquer these particular
challenges?

The data analysis of Interview Question 4's responses indicated 19 unique characteristics. Three themes in total manifested from those 19 characteristics: (a) community support, (b) being adaptive, and (c) resilience (see Figure 8). The theme of community was brought up in Interview Question 2 as well. The participants mentioned that community support has helped them with their most difficult challenges, and similarly, for others with less difficult challenges, the theme of community was reintroduced.

Figure 8

Coding Results: Interview Question 4
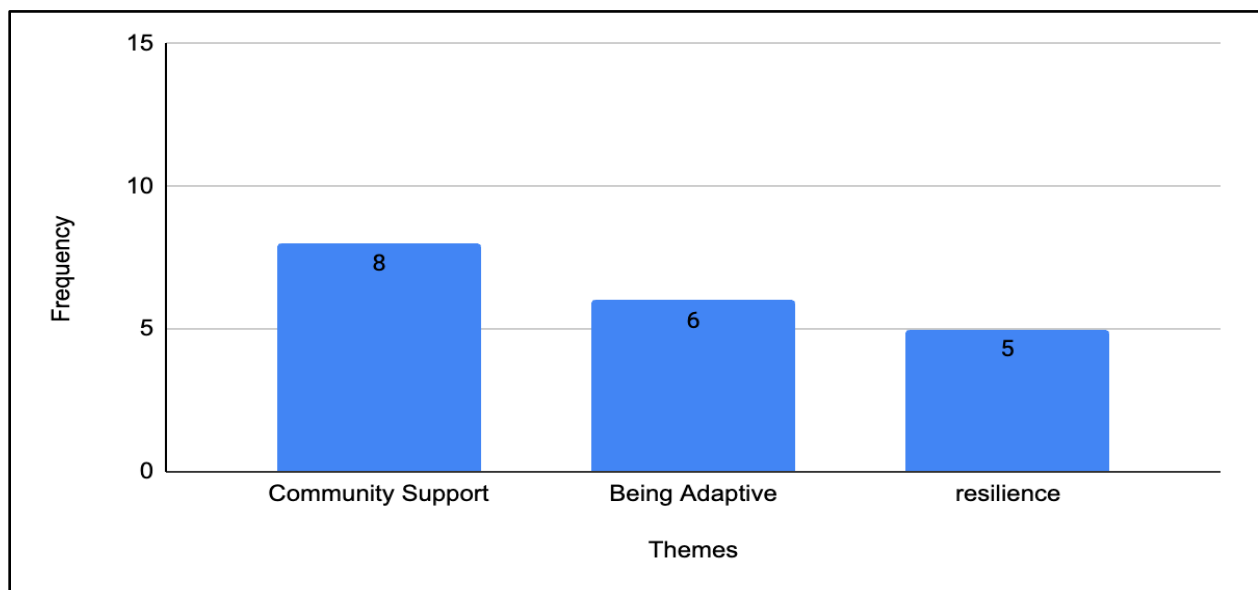
Note. n = 15. Strategies to conquer other challenges of studying in the American higher education system.

Community Support. Eight out of 15 participants (53%) emphasized the role of the community and their support in overcoming challenges in their higher education journey. Even though an established Iranian community does not exist, the collectivist nature of the Iranian culture drives them towards working as a group and supporting one another (Mostofi, 2003). P3, P12, and P15 stressed the role of the Persian community in overcoming the challenges of

American higher education. Some of the keywords they used include: "sticking with people from my own culture", "staying with my own people," "the big Persian community in Los Angeles making me feel at home," et cetera. For instance, P12 shared,

> I was able to find my Persian drum teacher from back home in Iran after 15 years. I reconnected with him and started taking classes again, and that helped me a lot. Also, one of the great resources at the University of California, Irvine was that the campus had programs for migrant students, and they would match students with other students and provide mentorship for them.

Other participants brought up similar remarks when talking about the community and getting support from the Persian community. P15 also shared her sense of belonging to the Persian community through strong ties and stated, "I never made a single friend in college. I tried to make friends, but the Americans were not friendly, and I actually felt a lot of hatred coming my way."

Being Adaptive. Six out of 15 participants (40%) mentioned the theme of adaptation and its importance. The research on Iranian American women revealed that Iranian American women compared to the men are more open to adapting to the American culture (Balali, 2023). P1, P2, and P13, used the term adaptive to describe their strategies to overcome other challenges in studying in the American higher education system. P1 further noted, "Being adaptive has helped me gather information from my surroundings and acclimate to the US educational context." The other participants who used adaptivity to overcome challenges shared their experiences in different scenarios. For example, P10 shared that her internship at the Ph.D. program was not accepted through the university because they didn't accept internships that were conducted in Iran. So, she undertook an unpaid, unofficial internship that enabled her to assist other data

scientists with their projects. In her remarks, P10 elucidated, "It was an unpaid internship, but I had no other choice than to accept it and do what I had to do in order to complete my Ph.D."

Resilience. The theme of resilience was manifested when five out of 15 participants (33%) shared their techniques for overcoming challenges that implied their resilience. Some of the keywords related to resilience were "doing whatever it takes" to attain the degree, "not giving up", "practicing nonstop," "working really hard," et cetera. Resilience has been one of the keywords in the literature describing Iranian women as they have continuously demonstrated resilience through their conduct and courage inside and outside of Iran (Amanat, 2017). P4 described her resilience with the following remarks,

> People who have gone to school here versus people who have gone to school in Iran, I think technology-wise are savvier, so I tried to keep an open eye, practice the technology, study hard, and obviously be the most prepared in the room. I think that was my key to success, knowing the concepts in and out before going to class so that I'm not so behind when it comes to technology, culture, et cetera.

On a different note, P6 shared that her experience in college was so difficult that she realized the only way to succeed was to somehow finish college earlier and get a degree to be able to find a job and move on. She also noted,

> It was so hard for me to continue in college that at some point I wanted to give up but then I decided I am not giving up. I will finish college and just get the degree. In my head that was the best way of getting out of college, to finish all the classes and get the degree.

Interview Question 6. Are you personally aware of strategies employed or resources sought by these women?

The data analysis of the answers to Interview Question 6 indicated 18 significant characteristics. Furthermore, three themes emerged from those 18 significant characteristics: (a) determination, (b) communication and collaboration, and (c) blending into American society. The themes for this question are similar to the two previous interview questions in bringing about concepts such as determination, which could also relate to the theme of resilience or perseverance. Similarly, the theme of communication and collaboration can also be related to the themes of networking and community support from the two previous interview questions. Finally, the term adaptive from Interview Question 4 also relates to the theme of blending into American society from the current interview question (see Figure 9).

Figure 9

Coding Results: Interview Question 6
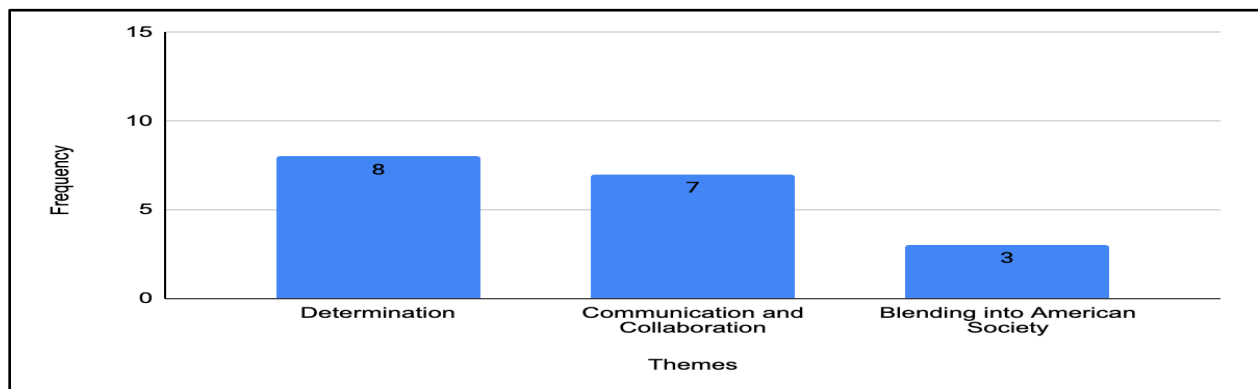
Note. n = 15. Strategies and resources used by Iranian-American women to overcome challenging practices in the American higher education system.

Determination. Eight out of 15 participants (53%) mentioned their strategies in keeping up with practices that were challenging to them and from their responses, the code determination manifested. Some of the examples of participant experiences include: taking writing classes and practicing hard to better English writing skills, going to the library and studying for hours, starting ahead of other students to work on projects, et cetera. All of these strategies indicated the

determination of these women to overcome their language barriers or other deficiencies they felt while they were studying in the higher education system. The research emphasizing the role of determination, ranks Iranian women among the highest educated female minorities in the United States (Bozorgmehr & Douglas, 2011). P10, for instance shared,

> I used to record the professors and listen to their lectures many times so I could understand the meaning of the material they were teaching. This practice was time-consuming but it helped a lot in terms of making my listening and speaking better and also, I was able to get better grades in those classes.

Moreover, other participants expressed how they were determined to finish college and get into the professional scene. For example, P15 mentioned,

> Even though all the practices in classes were difficult for me, especially coming from Iran. We were used to listening to teachers, taking notes, and passing exams. Here, it was totally different. We had actually to do projects with other people and present ourselves. All of those practices were so uncomfortable for me but I had no choice and had to keep going because of my family. Failure was not an option for my family.

Communication and Collaboration. Seven out of 15 participants' (46%) statements manifested the communication and collaboration theme. These participants' remarks implied the power of communication with other classmates, professors, and society in overcoming difficult practices in the American higher education system. A shared understanding with peers was something that these participants were hoping to gain in their communication efforts. The theme falls along the lines of second language acquisition through learner's active socialization and participation in the communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). P4 explained her strategy for working on group projects,

152

My strategy was to allow people to also bring in their ideas. I think in Iran in the

classroom you are not allowed to talk about your views. So, for me in the beginning was

challenging to hear other peoples' views. I practiced creating a space where everybody

felt welcome to talk about their opinion.

Additionally, other participants shared similar stories about their strategies to work with others.

One common note between responses was the comparison between the Iranian education system

which did not allow room for group work, collaboration, and expression of ideas. P11 shared her

difficulties with working in groups:

I had to force myself to participate in activities even though in the beginning it was very

difficult for me. I actually took presentation classes to overcome my fear of public

speaking. You know in Iran, especially women are not encouraged to do public speaking.

So, it was challenging for me to present in front of a crowd, especially in English. So in

the end I just overcame my fear and got out of my comfort zone communicating with my

classmates and speaking out more.

P13 furthermore touched upon the communication theme from another perspective. She had to

communicate with other peers in the medical field, and her remarks are as follows,

I had to find a way to communicate with my peers, even if they were less experienced

than me. So, I expressed to them that I might have more clinical experience but they have

more practice with the computers and technology and basically the Americanized way of

practicing medicine. I was more hands-on because I was trained in Iran, and over there,

we learn everything by doing it hand on. My peers here were more tech-savvy so I tried

to learn from them, and they were very kind and generous to sit down and teach me how

to use the system. So, in the end, using my communication skills helped build

relationships and rapport with my peers. The relationship actually helped me learn the technology part that I was lacking.

Blending into American Society. Three out of 15 participants (20%) expressed experiences that emerged from the them blending into American society. The turbulent Iranian history has influenced the ways in which the Iranian minorities settle in the United States and adaptation to the American society has been one of those methods that reduces the stress and anxieties of migration (Ghaffarian, 1998). Furthermore, Iranians have shown their eagerness to blend into the American society through active participation in the society as a way to avoid possible discriminations (Mostofi, 2003). P12 mentioned, "being proactive and hanging out not necessarily with the Iranian students, but also with non-Iranian students to understand the culture and basically blend in and learn from them." P14 stated that by joining the women in the business social groups, she was able to blend into the business scene and blend into the culture.

Summary of Research Question 2

Research Question 2 inquired, For Iranian American women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system, what success strategies did they employ when studying in the American higher education system?

The researcher asked three interview questions to gather relevant responses to Research Question 2. A total of 10 themes were manifested in the participants' responses. The 10 themes include: strengthening academic language competencies, networking, perseverance, mentorship, community support, being adaptive, resilience, determination, communication and collaboration, and blending into American society. Some of the themes correlate and can be included under the same umbrellas. For example, there were shared remarks between the responses and what emerged were the themes of resilience, perseverance and determination.

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 asked, How do Iranian-American women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system measure their success in American higher education?

Consequently, the researcher developed two consecutive interview questions to determine answers to the research question:

- IQ7. As an Iranian-American woman with an American higher education degree, how do you define success?

- IQ8. How did you measure your progress and success as you transitioned from the Iranian education system to the American higher education system?

Significant characteristics manifested from participants' responses which led to the formation of specific themes that would answer Research Question 3.

Interview Question 7. As an Iranian-American woman with an American higher education degree, how do you define success?

According to the data analysis of the participants' responses to this interview question, 22 distinct characteristics arose. Consequently, five themes developed: (a) personal fulfillment, (b) goal achievement, (c) financial and professional independence, (d) happiness, and (e) obtaining a degree (see Figure 10).

Figure 10

Coding Results: Interview Question 7
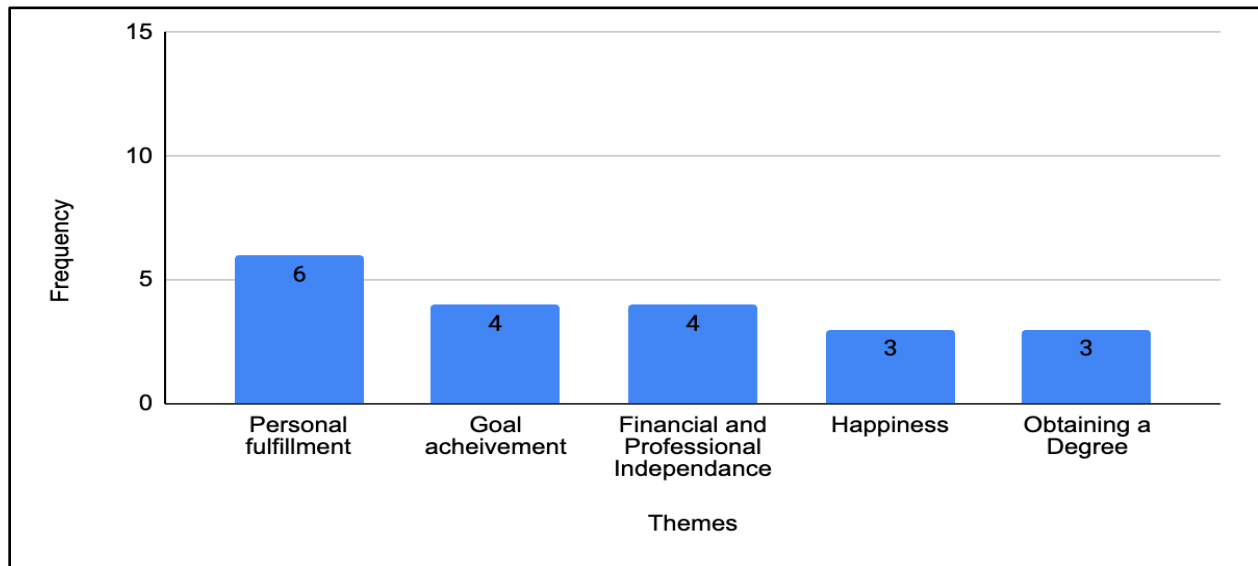
Note. *n* = 15. Definition for success.

     Personal Fulfillment. The personal life fulfillment category emerged from interview question seven as the top theme with six of 15 participants (40%) expressing personal satisfaction and similar keywords in their definition for success. Participants shared their views of success through various perspectives that implied fulfillment in personal life as the ultimate success. The participants' regard for personal fulfillment as success descriptor was aligned with the characteristics of lasting success highlighting the importance of emotional wellbeing (Nash & Stevenson, 2004). For example, P7 expressed, "Success in being able to create whatever idea of a normal life you have, being able to create that within American society would be a success for someone like me." More notably, P9 stated, "Actually having a fulfilling personal life, and positive impact on the world." Moreover, P12 shared similar remarks by saying, "Whenever you feel like you're satisfied with your life, with your expectations, and meeting your expectations to a decent degree that is success."

Goal Achievement. The goal achievement theme came about in four out of 15 participant responses (26%). Iranian immigrants demonstrate characteristics of voluntary minorities in their high drive for goal achievements and they believe by working hard and not giving up they will obtain their goals (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). Participants either directly used the term "achieving your goals" or their remarks implied the theme. P9 explained, "Everybody has goals. For me, success was achieving the goals that I have, and overcoming all the hardship and challenges through school and everything." Similarly, P8 expressed, "If I achieve my goals, and when I look back, I achieved at least some of them, that is success to me."

Financial and Professional Independence. This theme was straightforward because of 15 participants (26%) mentioned directly that entering the profession of their choice and being independent entailed success to them. Research suggests that one of the prevalent characteristics of voluntary minorities is that they leave their home countries with a migration plan of gaining a better future through education and high paying careers (Askari, 2003). P10 expressed her description of success as follows:

> To me, success is having a well-paid job in the industry. Because from the very beginning, my objective in going to graduate school was to get a well-paying job. I wanted to enjoy my life with the money I would make. I didn't want to do the Ph.D. program, but because for my desired job I needed to have the Ph.D., I ended up getting the Ph.D.

In these participants' opinions, success was basically the financial stability that came from entering the appropriate profession related to their degrees. Furthermore, P15 explicitly used these terms: "I am successful because I am independent, I have a career, I am financially independent, and the independence gives me a strong mind and confidence."

Happiness. Three out of 15 participants (20%) used the term happiness in their definition of success. Happiness and having gratitude are among the components of lasting success in Nash and Stevenson's description of success (Nash & Stevenson, 2004). P14 emphasized that being happy is the key to success by noting,

> Happiness is the ultimate success value. If you asked me this question when I was in college, I would answer differently because I wanted to prove myself to my family, make money, and be successful in my career. But my views have changed now that I have achieved all of those things. The most important thing is to be happy, and to me, happiness is success.

The participants who used the term happiness also explained that, in their beliefs, financial gains did not contribute to their success. P3 also mentioned being happy as a definition of success. She then added:

> You know I have achieved all the things that are successful for the Iranian community here. I got my graduate degrees from well-known universities, I was in the corporate world, then I started my own business, which did well and I grew the business. I got married and have kids. So, if you ask my parents, I am a complete definition of success. But to me, none of those are success if I'm not happy.

Obtaining a Degree. Similar to the happiness theme, getting a degree was mentioned by three of 15 participants (20%). One of the mentality traits in the voluntary minorities in having respect and admiration for higher education degrees because it leads to better income and career (Roucek, 1958). Those participants directly stated that getting the degree in their studies defined success for them. P13, who has medical degrees in infectious disease and internal medicine from Iran and the United States, further explained:

I am an overachiever, with an obsessive-compulsive personality. So, the goal that I put is too high, and therefore, success for me is a little bit higher on the ladder than the regular population, and that has been the case for my whole life. I wanted to score high in Iran's university entrance exam, I did it. I studied medicine and graduated top of my class. Then I specialized in infectious disease medicine and that was not enough. So, I got a master's in public health and started working very high up in the Iranian health cabinet, which is a rare position for women in Iran. After that, I came to the United States and had to study all over again. So, in the end, getting degrees one after another became success to me.

Interview Question 8. How did you measure your progress and success as you transitioned from the Iranian education system to the American higher education system?

A total of 22 unique characteristics emerged from the data analysis of responses to Interview Question 8. Of those 22 unique characteristics, four themes were developed: (a) contentment, (b) professional achievements, (c) academic achievements, and (d) financial achievements (see Figure 11).

Figure 11

Coding Results: Interview Question 8
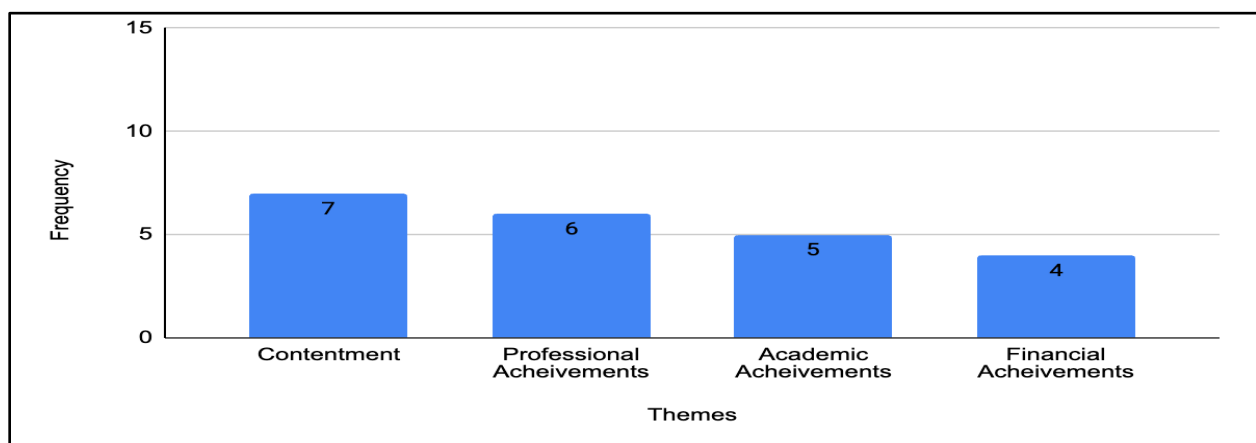
Note. *n* = 15

Contentment. The most recurring response to the question of how to measure success was the theme of contentment, which was mentioned by 7 out of 15 participants (46%). Keywords that fell under the umbrella of being content included confidence, feeling good about yourself, achieving your goals and being fulfilled, et cetera. The researcher grouped participants' remarks into contentment theme influenced by the elements of lasting success, such as happiness, accomplishments, having a legacy, and positively impacting others (Amin, 2006; Nash & Stevenson, 2004). P14 mentioned, "However you define success for yourself, if you achieve it that is how I measure my success." P11 shared a more concrete experience on how she measures her success by stating,

> I try to go daily for instance, instead of looking ahead and long term, or look into the
> future, I work day by day to achieve smaller goals and that is how I measure my success.
> For example, at my job, we have to do a lot of presentations, so I would set a goal for
> myself to overcome my presentation fears and do well on the presentations. When I
> would achieve that goal, then that was my measurement for success.

Moreover, P13 emphasized her attention to getting good grades as part of success but then added, "After achieving the best grades, I realized that self-satisfaction is more important than my grades. I noticed that no matter how high my grades were, I had to be personally satisfied to enjoy my achievements." Therefore, the theme of being content emerged from these seven participants' remarks.

Professional Achievements. A total of six out of 15 participants (40%) suggested obtaining professional achievements as a method for measuring success. Having high professional aspirations has been among the top goals for voluntary immigrants as they have mentality of making it in the host country (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). P6 mentioned that her

160

success came through the experiences she gained at her workplace rather than the college she attended. Similarly, P7 mentioned using the degree to get a job is her way of measuring success. Additionally, P10 shared a personal experience,

> Back in the day in Iran, my father always encouraged me to go abroad, study at a graduate level, and get a well-paying job. So, that has always been in the back of my mind. So, to me, achieving those criteria means success and also always learning. Even right now that I have my ideal job, I am trying to learn something new every day. I can say that progress is also very important when you measure your success.

Academic Achievements. The theme of academic achievement came up from five out of 15 participants (33%). Educational attainment has been among the metrics for success among Iranian American women (Bozorgmehr & Douglas, 2011; Min & Bozorgmehr, 2000). P5 stated, "When I finished my studies, I felt like I had achieved my goals." Therefore, this participant measures her success through the achievement of her desired degree. P7 also described the same criteria as P5 and added, "Being able to attain the degree that you worked so hard for." P9, who emphasized the importance of having a family in answering the previous interview question, also mentioned finishing school and getting the degree was part of her measurement for success.

Financial Achievements. Four out of 15 participants (26%) suggested financial gains as one of the main metrics for measuring success. The voluntary migrant mentality or as researchers put tourist mentality believes that by working hard and following the rules they can achieve the financial stability and independence (Askari, 2003; Ogbu & Simons, 1998). For instance, P3 mentioned,

> As long as I am higher than the average American financially, then I know I have succeeded. That is how I measure my success. But also, I compare myself to what we

161

used to be back home. So, I always have to think if I was back home, how successful I

would be and coming here how successful I have become.

In other terms, P4 expressed, "For me specifically, it has always been about my income."

Furthermore, P13 noted,

I don't measure my success with the community's success because of my achievements.

My whole life, everything I gained was higher than everyone around me. So, I have

higher values for myself, and I think financial independence is also one of my methods of

measuring my success.

Summary of Research Question 3

Research Question 3 inquired, How do Iranian-American women who initially received

their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system

measure their success in American higher education?

A total of nine themes manifested in the answers to the two interview questions. Those

nine themes include: personal fulfillment, goal achievement, financial and professional

independence, happiness, getting a degree, being content, professional achievements, academic

achievements, and financial achievements.

Research Question 4

Research Question 4 inquired, In accordance with their encounters, what

recommendation would Iranian-American women who received their primary and/or secondary

education in the post-revolution Iranian education system make to future Iranian-American

women pursuing degrees in American higher education?

The researcher developed three interview questions to gather data and respond to

Research Question 4.

- IQ9. How can higher education institutions better support Iranian-American female students with educational backgrounds from Iran?

- IQ10. What advice or recommendation would you give to future Iranian-American female students with academic backgrounds from Iran pursuing a higher education degree in the American higher education system?

- IQ11: Was it all worth it? Why? Elaborate please.

Interview Question 9. How can higher education institutions better support Iranian-American female students with educational backgrounds from Iran?

According to the data analysis of the responses to this interview question, a total of 21 unique characteristics arose. The researcher constructed three themes from the 21 unique characteristics: (a) raise cultural awareness, (b) provide more educational resources, and (c) implement social and community- based initiatives (see Figure 12).

Figure 12

Coding Results: Interview Question 9
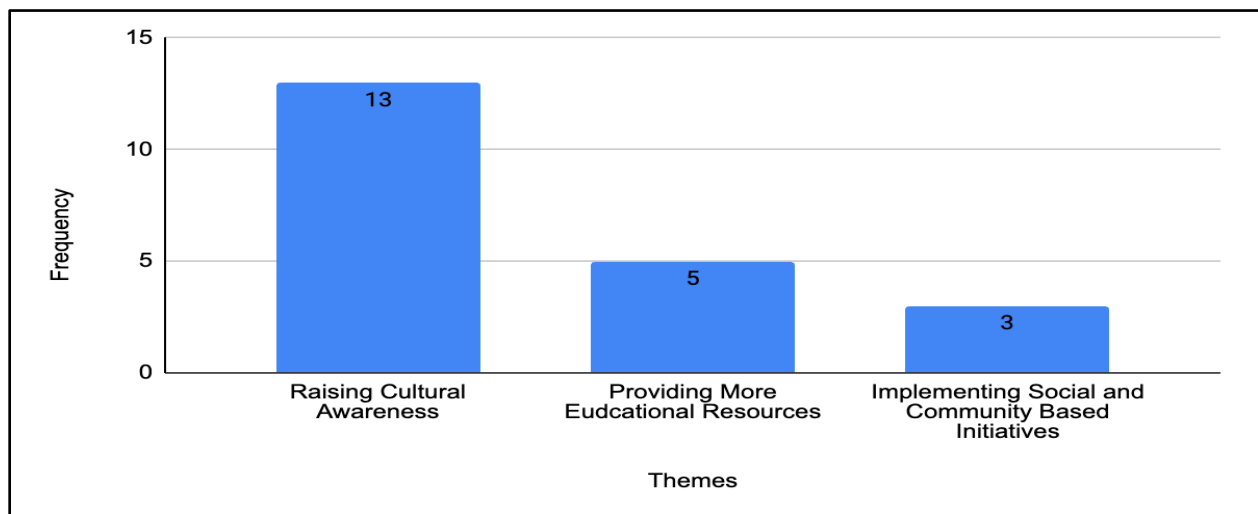
Note. n = 15. Ways in which universities can better support Iranian-American students.

Raise Cultural Awareness. The most recurring theme was raising cultural awareness, as mentioned by 13 of 15 participants (86%). The literature demonstrates that Americans had a negative sense towards Iranians due to the complex relationship between Iran and United States and events, such as the hostage crisis (Tabaar, 2017). Iranian students in the United States were faced with challenges of symbolic discriminations attacking their culture and identity. Therefore, the researcher designed raising cultural awareness as a theme that indicated building cultural fluency within an educational institution. The theme was presented in various ways from different participants. For instance, P1 explained,

> Higher education institutions must adopt an intersectional approach, recognizing the diverse identities within their student body. While acknowledging the specific needs of Iranian-American females is important, it's equally crucial not to pigeonhole them. Each individual's needs should be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

P6, in her remarks, included, "Just not smash it in their face that they are Iranian and they have to become American to succeed." Furthermore, P10 provided more explanation of the reasons for colleges to raise cultural awareness:

> Because the challenge for Iranian students might be the same challenge for any other foreign student, I think the universities should create programs, clubs, and groups that introduce the Iranian culture to other students so when students come here and for example face visa issues, the university wouldn't be so surprised or ignorant.

Some participants, such as P2 and P15 had stronger comments regarding the lack of cultural information in universities. P15 stated,

> I think it would help to educate the public a little more about our culture, who we are, what challenges we face, and what we have endured to get ourselves to this country. I

164

think people don't understand that whenever they can't pronounce my name and they comment about it, that is kind of hurtful. I had to change my name because I thought that my name was not helping me go further in society. I feel like in American society there is an assumption that Iranians are bad people, and there is a lot of negativities from the media. If the universities want to support Iranian students, then they have to teach about our culture to other students and professors.

Provide More Educational Resources. Five out of 15 participants (33%) stated universities need to provide more support for Iranian students, especially in the area of English language, such as writing skills, academic writing, and speaking. Language capabilities are essential to the assimilation and further socialization processes of the migrant students (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011). Therefore, educational institutions can accelerate building cultural fluency by offering various educational resources. P2 and P3 also referred to the increasing number of technology-related courses and resources that Iranian students can use in order to help remediate their lack of technological knowledge coming from Iran.

Implement Social and Community- Based Initiatives. Three out of 15 participants (20%) mentioned implementing social and community-based initiatives as a method for universities to better support Iranian students. Reflecting upon the social learning component of situated learning, it is imperative to include community-based and social interactions to create an ongoing learning experience for students (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Second language students' learning can be advanced through their active participation in social settings and communities of practice (Kobayashi, 2016; Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011). The participant responses included elements, such as mentorship, Farsi clubs, having more associations that work with foreign students, and having workshops for female students.

165

Interview Question 10. What advice or recommendation would you give to future Iranian-American female students with academic backgrounds from Iran pursuing a higher education degree in the American higher education system?

The analysis of the data provided by participant responses indicated 29 significant characteristics. The researcher then developed five themes from those significant characteristics: (a) have perseverance, (b) practice effective communications, (c) assimilate to American culture, (d) strengthen English proficiency, and (e) consider other countries (see Figure 13).

Figure 13

Coding Results: Interview Question 10
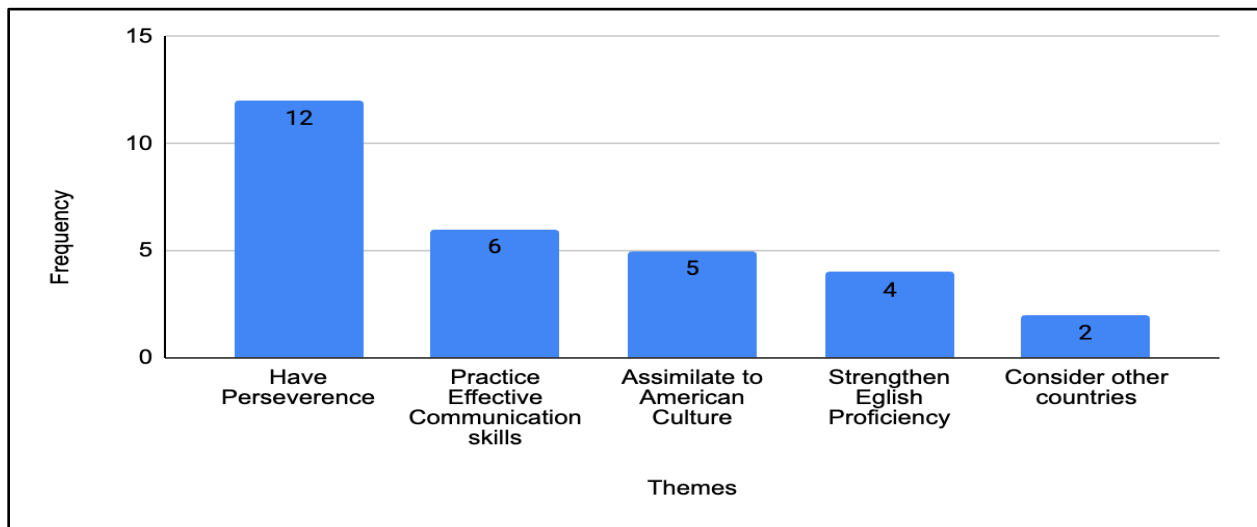
Note. n = 15. Recommendations for future Iranian students coming to the United States for higher education.

Have Perseverance. The perseverance theme had highest frequency as 12 out of 15 participants (80%) mentioned recommendations that aligned with having perseverance theme. The researcher chose perseverance as a theme because Iranian American leaders regard their success to being committed and persistent, not giving up, and working hard (Minoo, 2017). Participants recommended having perseverance for future Iranian students so they can overcome

166

the challenges of attending American higher. A total of six participants used the phrase "Don't

be afraid" as their recommendation for future Iranian female students. The researcher

categorized "Don't be afraid" as having perseverance. For example, P7 explained the following,

> Don't be afraid because I know in the Iranian education system, especially for women, is
>
> very closed, and women are not encouraged to participate in social settings and be
>
> outspoken. So, what I recommend is to be brave and outspoken.

Moreover, P5, P12, and P13 mentioned that the road ahead is difficult and they will face

obstacles but recommended not to give up and not be afraid of the problems. On another note,

P10 also shared,

> Iranian students say they have jobs back home, then they are afraid of losing their jobs
>
> and coming here and starting from zero and square one. I will say to them that it is worth
>
> it, and don't be afraid because all the problems and challenges will end someday and then
>
> you will look back and be happy that you moved here to advance your education and
>
> basically the quality of your life.

P10, after using the term perseverance, continued to state,

> They shouldn't give up because the road is a very challenging process, at least for me it
>
> was. At some point, I had to defer because of my visa issues. But they shouldn't give up,
>
> and know that by going through with all the challenges, they will eventually be
>
> successful.

Similarly, P10 noted,

> Don't think that it's going to be easy, it will be very difficult. If you think that you're
>
> going to come here and you will have a perfect life, that's not going to happen. From the
>
> very first day, you are going to lose a lot of things. You will lose your family, your

relationships, and your culture, but at the same time, you're going to gain a lot of experiences and a lot of good things. So, in retrospect, you are losing some but then gaining a lot more.

Practice Effective Communication Skills. Six out of 15 participants (40%) brought up this theme due to their opinions regarding the restrictions Iranian women endure in the Iranian education system in terms of being approachable, outspoken, and communicative. Therefore, according to these participants' viewpoints, building and practicing effective communication skills can help future Iranian female students coming to the United States for higher education. Moreover, constructing effective communications has also been regarded as a component of EI and successful Iranian Americans have continuously demonstrated such practices within their success strategies (Goleman, 1998; Minoo, 2017). Some of the keywords that emerged for this theme include: engaging with the staff and professors, being approachable, being social, trying to have effective communications, knowing that in academia people help each other, et cetera. P1 also shared similar comments by stating, "Try to be clear and specific about your needs while maintaining professional connections." For P2, the recommendation included elements, such as asking other peers for mentoring, practicing communication, having a support group with people in your program, and leveraging on weekly meetups.

Assimilate to American Culture. The assimilation theme emerged from five of 15 participants' (33%) responses. Iranian Americans have used assimilation as their acculturation process to help them cope with the host country's culture and fell less stressed and anxious through difficulties of migration (Kadkhoda, 2001). They used various ways to describe the road to assimilation. Some notable remarks from participants include P10 stating,

When you come from a different country, you have a different mentality about education

and what you want to do. You have a set goal in your mind that you think will work in

this country. See what is beneficial in this country, not what you want in your head,

which is influenced from Iran.

Another perspective was P11 mentioning,

When we come here, we always want to hang out with our own group. Sometimes it's

difficult to adopt the American culture but I think it would be great for Iranian students

who come here to make sure they learn the culture of here.

Similar to P10's remarks, P14 recommended,

I feel like if someone comes here and they want to make a future here, they should not

hold on to their previous practices. I mean, it's great to hold on to your culture and ethnic

values, but try to venture out and incorporate yourself in the community around you. For

me, I never had to pretend not to be Persian or I never changed my name to something

else. I think it's amazing to be proud of who you are and keep your culture, but also, it is

crucial to try to make new friends and get into the society and find some non-Persian

communities and friends.

Strengthen English Proficiency. As stated in the previous interview question responses,

English language and, more specifically, academic English proficiency was buried for a lot of the

participants. Therefore, strengthening English proficiency emerged from the four out of 15

participants' (26%) responses. Strengthening English language proficiencies has been among the

success strategies of the Iranian Americans and because they have a voluntary migrant mentality,

mastery of host country's language does not pose a threat to their identity (Daha, 2011; Delpit &

Dowdy, 2008). For example, P8 noted, "Make sure your language is good because that way you

are not spending more time on learning the language, and you can focus on the subject of your studies." Furthermore, P10 recommended taking the GRE exam in Iran before moving to the United States.

Consider Other Countries. Two out of 15 participants (13%) shared different views and recommended not coming to the United States, which resulted in emerging the theme of considering other countries. The troublesome relationships between Iran and United States throughout the years after the 1979 revolution have created a sense of negativity among Americans toward Iranian furthering the types of discriminations this group of immigrant encounters in America (Saidi, 2014). P3 stated,

> Take advantage of the system they have here but don't necessarily plan on staying here. There are far better countries that you can choose to go to or even go back to your own country. In America, you always end up staying regardless of the obstacles. My advice to you is to get the education here and then go back to your country and serve your own people. You don't have to necessarily live in America to be happy. There are other countries.

Similarly, P6 also stated, "If I go back in time, I would tell my father to not move to America and instead go to another country, but back then, I was a child and had no choice but to follow my parents."

Interview Question 11. Was it all worth it? Why? Elaborate please.

The researcher divided the responses into two sets. Data analysis of the responses to the question asking if it was worth it, indicated 15 recurring themes. The researcher then constructed three themes to represent those characteristics: (a) absolutely yes, (b) yes, and (c) no (see Figure 14).

Figure 14

Coding Results: Interview Question 11A
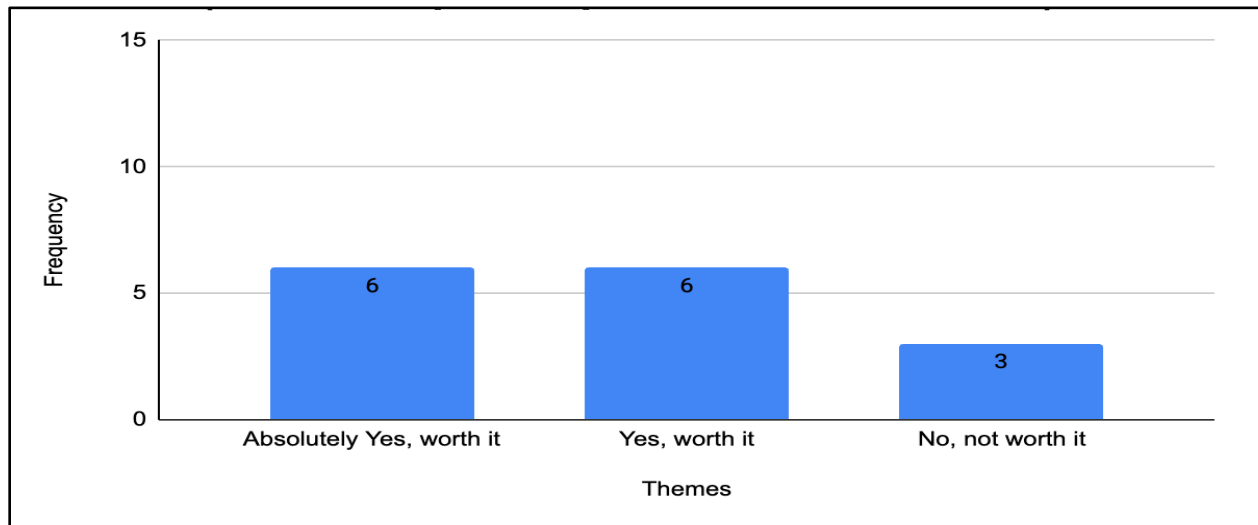
Note. n = 15. Was it worth it?

 Absolutely Yes, Worth It. Six out of 15 participants (40%) mentioned the theme "absolutely yes, worth it" when asked if moving to the United States was a worthwhile experience. These participants shared their responses using phrases such as, definitely yes, undoubtedly yes, absolutely, and of course. P10 added, "I definitely recommend coming to this country and it was absolutely worth it. I don't like to go back to Iran at all. I am really happy here." P14 also noted, "I feel like I had the chance to live the life I wanted, which would have been impossible in Iran."

 Yes, Worth It. Similar to the previous theme, six out of 15 participants (40%) indicated the theme "yes, worth it" when asked if it was all worth it. For example, P8 shared,

> Because of my religion, I could not further my education in Iran, so I had to leave. But I don't know how it would have been if I stayed. I know that for sure I wouldn't have the opportunities I have here in the US.

Furthermore, P15 explained the reason behind responding "yes" to this question,

> This country provided better opportunities in terms of education and jobs. I have been very successful as a career woman, I have been in management positions, department director, and have gained a lot of respect from people who reported to me. I would not have these opportunities if I stayed in Iran. Although I feel discriminations here as a foreign woman, it was still worth it and I am happy that I was here.

No, Not Worth It. Three out of 15 participants (20%) responded "No, not worth it" to the question asking whether the endeavor was worth the ensuing hardships. For instance, P3 explained, "I wish I never came to America. I wish I was born and raised and lived in the same country and stayed within my culture." Other participants with similar opinions like P7 also shared,

> I think ideally, no it was not worth it because if Iran had a better situation we would never be forced to move to the United States and to create our own life here. So, is it all worth it? No, but in the current system in Iran, where a woman graduates and there are no jobs for her, then I understand why everyone would want to come here.

Data analysis for Interview Question 11 asking for the reasons (why), indicated 16 significant characteristics. The researcher organized the characteristics into three themes: (a) professional opportunities, (b) educational opportunities, and (c) cultural loss (see Figure 15).

Figure 15

Coding Results: Interview Question 11B
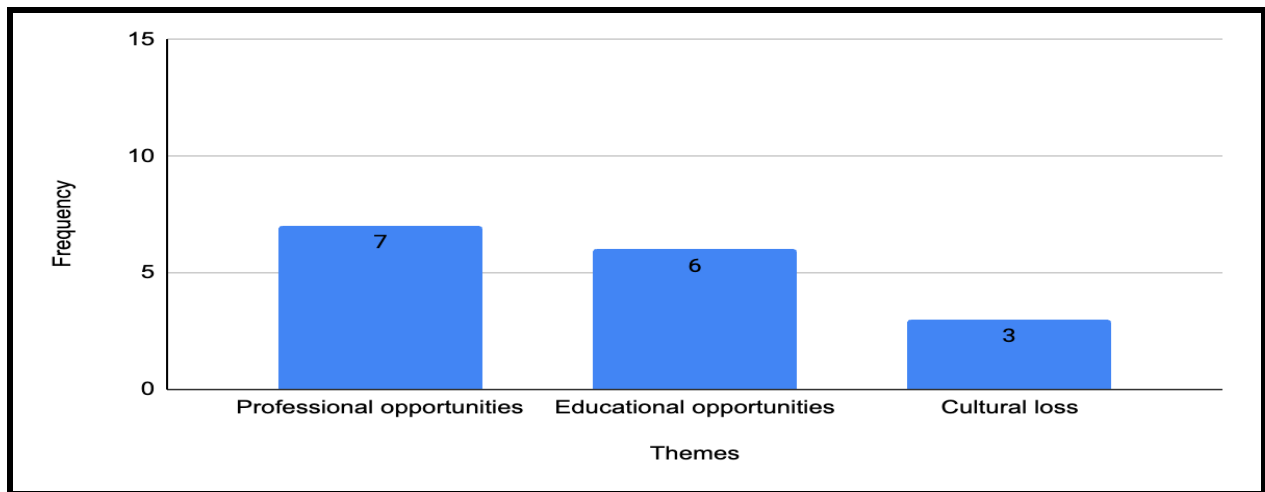
Note. *n* = 15. Why? Additional opinions participants added.

  Professional Opportunities. Seven out of 15 participants (46%) believed that United States offered more professional opportunities to them and those opportunities made the process of migration and studying worth it. The participants believed that they had more professional opportunities in the United States compared to Iran. Their remarks emphasized the lack of professional opportunities for women given their higher educational attainments resulting in high unemployment rate for the Iranian women and further contributing to large numbers of brain drain (Azadi et al., 2022). Participant 15 elaborated that given the discriminations she faced in the United States due to her ethnicity as an Iranian, she still believed the obstacles were worth it by stating,

   This country gave me a lot of opportunities for better jobs or you know, I was very

   successful as a career woman. I was in management as a director of the department, I

   gained a lot of respect from people who reported to me so maybe those opportunities I

   would not have had if I was in Iran growing at best would have been an entry-level office

   worker.

Educational Opportunities. Six out of 15 participants (40%) indicated educational opportunities that United States offer is vast enough to count for the obstacles along the way. Participants that belonged to religious minorities in Iran such as the Baha'i faith, mentioned that in Iran they would have not been able to attend higher education institutes because of the existing religious oppressions. These remarks point out the ongoing government restrictions on the followers of Bahai faith in terms of access to education contributing to their migration from Iran (Yazdani, 2015). Consequently, participant 8 noted,

> Because of the situation I had back home. I couldn't further my education in Iran, so I had to leave. But I don't know how would have been different for me if I could go to university in Iran. Yes, I'm happy that I did it and came here because I find pleasure in my education. I'm happy that I came here and I could do it.

Cultural Loss. In their explanation for why they thought their experience in the United States higher education was not worth it, 3 out of 15 participants (20%) shared cultural loss as the main reason. These participants highlighted elements such as, losing your connection with home country, leaving family and friends, letting go of traditions, and forgetting the Iranian culture to explain their interpretations of cultural loss. Similarly, Mostofi (2003) portrays Iranian Americans as a minority group that hangs to their cultural practices while appreciating the opportunities of the United States. Participant 3 for instance shared,

> I wish I never come to United. I wish I were born, raised and died in one place and just stayed within my culture. And I left at an age where, where, I was starting to become somebody in that society. And I was I was pulled out of my roots and brought to America. I wish I had just stayed in one place. When you come out here to get higher

174

education, it will just put your family and relationship in jeopardy and just destroy

families. I don't think it was worth it.

Summary of Research Question 4

Research Question 4 asked, "In accordance with their encounters, what recommendation would Iranian American women who received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system make to future Iranian American women pursuing degrees in American higher education?"

Twelve themes emerged totally including: raising cultural awareness, providing more educational resources, implementing social and community-based initiatives, not being afraid, practicing effective communication skills, having perseverance, assimilating to the American culture, strengthening English proficiency, considering other countries besides the United States, feeling that yes, it was absolutely worth it, or yes it was worth it, or no, moving to the United States wasn't worth it. The women who believed the journey was worthwhile believed that United States offers more educational and professional opportunities compared to Iran. These women noted that their gender, religion, political beliefs, and aspirations would have been suppressed if they had stayed in Iran. Finally, the women who did not believe in the worth of their journey, expressed losing ties with the Iranian culture as their main concerns.

Chapter Summary

The current phenomenological study intended to explore the success strategies utilized by Iranian-American women who initially completed their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system and later attained higher education degrees from American universities. A total of 43 themes emerged from 11 interview questions. More specifically, to address the success strategies of these women, 10 themes emerged and the top

four themes were strengthening academic language competencies, networking, community

support, and determination. Perseverance, mentorship, being adaptive, resilience, communication

and collaboration, and blending into American society were among the other themes that

appeared in regard to success strategies that these women used. Academic language barriers,

cultural differences, collaborative learning environments, presenting and self-expression, and

lack of instructor support were among the top themes regarding the challenges that these women

faced in their educational journey in the United States. Moreover, the top recurring theme for

institutions to better support Iranian-American female students was to raise cultural awareness.

Finally, the top recurring themes in the advice for future Iranian-American female students were

having perseverance, practicing effective communication skills, and assimilating to American

culture (see Table 6).

Table 6

Summary of Themes for Four Research Questions

RQ1. For Iranian-American women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system, what challenges did they face when studying in the American higher education system?	RQ2. For Iranian American women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system, what success strategies did they employ when studying in the American higher education system?	RQ3. How do Iranian-American women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system measure their success in American higher education	RQ4. In accordance with their encounters, what recommendation would Iranian-American women who received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system make to future Iranian-American women pursuing degrees in American higher education?
Academic language barrier	Strengthening academic language competencies	Personal Fulfillment	Raising cultural awareness
Cultural differences	Networking	Goal achievement	Providing more educational resources
Entering and adapting to the American education system	perseverance	Financial and professional independence	Implementing social and community-based initiatives
Visa/immigration challenges	Mentorship	happiness	Practice effective communication skills

RQ1. For Iranian-American women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system, what challenges did they face when studying in the American higher education system?	RQ2. For Iranian American women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system, what success strategies did they employ when studying in the American higher education system?	RQ3. How do Iranian-American women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system measure their success in American higher education	RQ4. In accordance with their encounters, what recommendation would Iranian-American women who received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system make to future Iranian-American women pursuing degrees in American higher education?
Cultural differences	Community support	Obtaining a degree	Have perseverance
American higher education logistics	Being adaptive	Contentment	Practice effective communication skills
Technology	Resilience	Professional achievements	Assimilate to the American culture
Collaborative learning environment	Determination	Academic achievements	Strengthen English proficiency
Presenting and self-expression	Communication and collaboration	Financial achievements	Consider other countries
Lack of instructor support	Blending into American society		Absolutely yes, worth it
Lower education quality			Yes, worth it
Diversity			No. not worth it
			Educational opportunities
			Professional opportunities
			Cultural loss

Note. Four research questions and their emerging themes.

Chapter 5: Summary, Discussion, Implications, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This study addressed the success strategies of Iranian-American women with educational backgrounds from the post-revolution Iranian education system in attaining higher education degrees in the United States. It examined the strategies these women used, the challenges they faced in American higher education, and how they overcame them, their recommendations for higher education institutes, future Iranian-American female students coming to the United States for higher education, and finally if the journey and obstacles were worth it or not. In exploring each of those criteria, the researcher came across various aspects of the literature related to concepts of migration, brain drain, minorities in the United States, and higher education. For instance, the data suggested that the academic language barrier was among the top challenges this population faces when studying in the American higher education system. However, those women utilized specific success strategies undertaken to overcome the challenges of strengthening their academic language competencies. The correlation between the challenge and the strategy to overcome resonates with the research on voluntary minorities conducted by Ogbu and Simons (1998). In their opinion, voluntary minorities face language barriers, but they are eager to learn the language without the fear of losing their home cultures and identity (Ogbu & Simons, 1998).

In terms of education, cultural discontinuity emerges in multicultural, diverse academic settings when student cultures vary from the surrounding environment (Shure et al., 2019). Furthermore, cultural discontinuity grows from the contrasts in cultural norms and beliefs, including communication practices (Erikson, 1968; G. Gay, 2000; Markose & Hellstén, 2009; Taggart, 2017; Tyler et al., 2008; Yoon et al., 2017). Most of the previous research in the cultural discontinuity domain has focused on minority groups in America who have the same language as

the mainstream academia. Still, their communication skills contradict mainstream culture. The difference in the minority groups' communicative discourse is rooted in the home cultural practices and cultural norms (Balali, 2023). A notable aspect of the current study was the exploration of cultural discontinuity from the lens of Iranian-American women and how these women used best practices to deal with linguistically driven cultural discontinuity. These women grew up in post-revolution Iran, speaking Farsi, therefore, their cultural discontinuity stemmed from linguistic differences on top of cultural differences as these women became non-native speakers in the American higher education system. This study shed light on the cultural discontinuity as the women expressed their strategies for overcoming their language barriers, cultural differences, and other challenges in the American higher education system.

Summary of the Study

The current study employed a qualitative phenomenological approach to demonstrate the success strategies of Iranian-American women who had successfully attained higher education degrees in the United States, given their educational backgrounds from Iran. The researcher utilized semi-constructed interviews, then coded and analyzed the data to explore the commonalities and differences and construct recurring themes. The participants' selection process was through purposive sampling using LinkedIn as a search engine for finding the candidates. Ultimately, the researcher gathered 15 participants, interviewed them, and asked 11 interview questions related to the four research questions. The interview question responses presented distinct characteristics that elaborate on the challenges, strategies to overcome the challenges, recommendations, and self-reflections that these women possessed in their educational journeys. The research questions were as follows:

- RQ1: For Iranian American women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system, what challenges did they face when studying in the American higher education system?

- RQ2: For Iranian American women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system, what success strategies did they employ when studying in the American higher education system?

- RQ3: How do Iranian American women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system measure their success in American higher education?

- RQ4: In accordance with their encounters, what recommendation would Iranian American women who received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system make to future Iranian American women pursuing degrees in American higher education?

The researcher will explore, identify, and discuss the study findings in the following section.

Discussion of Findings

A considerable number of themes arose through various interviews with participants from all paths of life in terms of education, study major, field of work, and age. Among those themes, some had higher frequency and came across different interview questions as demonstrated in Figures 4–14. Some of the challenges that participants expressed were cultural differences, academic language barriers, collaborative learning environments, presentations and self-expression, and lack of instructor support. The participants shared strategies to overcome the challenges, including strengthening academic language competencies, using the community's support, determination, and networking. The definition of success for the majority of the

participants entailed financial achievements, fulfillment in personal life, and academic achievements. Finally, the advice or recommendation for future Iranian-American female students was to persevere and not give up. The recommendation participants had for higher education institutions was the implementation of plans to raise cultural awareness among students and faculty. The majority of the participants agreed that given the challenges and obstacles, it was still worth it to leave Iran and come to the United States to further their education.

The participants in the current study were independent of one another, and their information was not disclosed to other participants. The diversity in the education majors, careers, and ages created a valuable flow in the data that the researcher gathered. The common themes among various interview questions and participant responses strengthened the data that the researcher was gaining and also created support for the data analysis process.

Results for Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asked about the challenges that Iranian-American women faced while studying in the American higher education system. The challenges shared by participants included cultural differences, academic language barriers, adapting to the American education system, visa/immigration challenges, the logistical part of the American higher education, technology, collaborative learning environments, and presentation and self-expression, and lack of instructor support. Comparing the themes with the available research indicated that the Iranian-American students felt a sense of discontinuity from the mainstream educational settings. The discontinuity the participants developed rooted in elements of culture differences, linguistic challenges, instructional practices, political environment, and technological capabilities.

Discussion of Research Question 1

The cultural differences experienced by Iranian-American women contributed to these women developing cultural discontinuity while attending American higher education institutions. As an example, Iranian culture depends heavily on being humble and promoting humility (Chaichian, 1997). In contrast, the American education system encourages students to use self-expression and the whole construct of self (Paranjpe, 1998). The expression of humility emerges from the cultural conceptualization rooted in Iranian cultural practices (Balali, 2023). The current study's participants, as part of the cultural differences, mentioned their struggles adapting to the practices of self-expression, self-promoting, and presentations in academia. Therefore, the dissimilarities in cultural practices contribute to the cultural discontinuities that are culturally motivated.

According to the study's participants, the Iranian culture embodies characteristics of a collectivist culture. Cultures with a collectivistic nature rely on the family construct as an important component of the culture, refraining from characteristics, such as individuality and self-expression (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). As the participants of the study shared, the Iranian education system implements restrictions on their female students in following those elements of collectivist culture such as: avoiding eye contact, keeping to themselves, confining thoughts and speech, and refraining from self-expression. Moreover, since the Revolution occurred in 1979 and societal and governmental restrictions were put in place, women in the Iranian education system have been limited in their exposure to freedom of speech, collaboration with peers, and expression (Paivandi, 2008). Subsequently, the women in the study had difficulty understanding American educational practices such as collaboration, self-expression, presentations, and group projects. Therefore, when it came to their success strategies, these women used elements of

determination, resilience, and perseverance to overcome the challenges of adapting to the culture of American academia.

The academic language barrier expressed in the shared experiences of the participants highlights another aspect of cultural discontinuity, which is linguistically motivated. Balali (2023) categorizes this type of cultural discontinuity into linguistic discontinuities and linguistically motivated communicative discontinuities (p. 181). The participants' verbal and academic language was mainly concentrated on academic language competencies such as APA requirements, essay writing, writing research manuscripts, et cetera. The discontinuity developed as the participants' level of language knowledge did not match the academic language required in American academic settings. This process of discontinuity also covered the communication competencies of the participants, as there was a gap between their competence levels in verbal and written communication and academic requirements involving communication skills. Therefore, these gaps that were linguistically motivated presented challenges such as adapting to collaborative learning environments, giving presentations, and struggling with participation in group projects. These obstacles create communication struggles for the Iranian-American students in the American higher education system that are more related to their academic language competencies than their cultural differences. It is imperative to conclude that language could play a vital role in the process of developing cultural discontinuity in the American higher education system.

According to the available literature on cultural discontinuity, factors such as discrimination, bias, and prejudice contribute to the development of cultural discontinuity (Eunju Ogbu & Simons, 1998; Shure et al., 2019; Taggart, 2017; Tyler et al., 2008; Yoon et al., 2017). Another angle of interpreting this finding is that the Iranian minority experience in the United

States has changed throughout the time since the 1979 Revolution. The current study did not explore discrimination as a prevailing challenge in the American higher education system. However, some of the participants who were older in age (mid or late 40s) did refer to discrimination, professor bias, and hatred they felt from others in American academia. In contrast, the participants, who were relatively younger and had migrated to the United States more recently, did not identify such elements in their experiences in American higher education. In fact, some shared experiences of receiving help from peers and professors in their adjustment to the American system. This finding implies that over time the American education system has become more inclusive and open to diversity. Reflecting upon Ogbu and Simons' (1998) classification of the types of discrimination minorities face, there are three distinct types of discrimination: instrumental (in professional and academic settings), relational (division of a minority group), and symbolic (diminishing minority group's cultural identities). The responses to these discriminations are instrumental, relational, and symbolic adaptations (Balali, 2023). The study participants demonstrated similar experiences depending on the timeline they arrived in the US. Some participants experienced discrimination in the form of lack of faculty support, rigidity, and peer ignorance. In contrast, other participants who migrated to America in the early years after the revolution and hostage crisis faced discrimination through direct hate, physical attacks from Americans, or stones being thrown at them. Therefore, those Iranians who came to the United States in the years after the hostage crisis demonstrated by using symbolic (staying away from American society and not assimilating) and relational (not trusting American society) adaptations to respond to the discrimination they faced. On the other hand, the participants who had migrated to the US more recently did not endure symbolic discrimination and, therefore, did not use symbolic adaptation in return. In response to the instrumental discrimination, these

women used strategies such as adaptation, communication, determination, resilience, and socialization, which fall along the lines of instrumental adaptation.

Results for Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asked, For Iranian American women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system, what success strategies did they employ when studying in the American higher education system?

The results for Research Question 2 indicated strengthening academic language competencies, determination, networking, having perseverance, mentorship, community support, being adaptive, having resilience and determination, communication and collaboration, and blending into American society have helped Iranian-American women overcome the challenges they faced while studying in the American higher education system. Literature on the Iranian-American leaders also demonstrated that they use similar strategies in their interactions and practice characteristics aligned with EI (Amin, 2006). Additionally, research has indicated that Iranians as voluntary migrants have high determination and regard for education attainment and they tend to acquire English language mastery as part of their assimilation process and path towards success (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). Mentorship, on the other hand has been an effective strategy for language acquisition and socialization, which Iranian American women of the study incorporated to overcome their challenges of communication. Adaptation to the American society emerged as a theme supporting the literature indicating that Iranians adopt to American customs and practices in their assimilation process as a technique of coping with the stresses of migration (Ghaffarian, 1998). Finally, the concept of communities of practice emerged from the participants' remarks as they used the support of the community and the engagements in social

settings as a success strategy to overcome the obstacles of cultural differences and language barriers.

Discussion of Research Question 2

As academic English language barriers came up as a challenge for Iranian-American women in this study, the literature suggests that Iranian-Americans are eager to learn and acquire mastery of the English language as part of their acculturation process (Daha, 2011). The results from Research Question 2 supported the literature as the participants expressed strengthening academic language competencies as one of the success strategies in the American higher education system. Using the writing support centers in universities, taking writing webinars and workshops, using the APA manual, and other resources have been the tools that Iranian-American women used to strengthen their linguistic skills as part of their journey of overcoming cultural and linguistic discontinuity.

Determination has been another success factor in the Iranian-American women's American higher education journey. The literature suggests that Iranian ethnic identity in the United States included education and professional achievements as a necessity, emphasizing the importance of education (Shavarini, 2004). Therefore, the Iranian women in their educational journey demonstrated characteristics that showed their determination towards a goal: to attain higher education degrees because education attainment is part of the Iranian identity. Researchers of the field name this phenomenon embedded achievement, referring to the ethnic identity of a minority group that considers achievements as an absolute reward (Oyserman et al., 2012). The determination of Iranian-American women has granted them a place among the highest educated female immigrants in the United States (Bozorgmehr & Douglas, 2011). The

women in the current study demonstrated strategies that helped them acquire degrees that allowed them to enter the professional scene.

Participants of this study used networking, socializing, and blending in America through networking and communicative practices. As part of their acculturation process, the Iranian-American women used networking and communication with the American society to overcome the challenges of academic language barriers and cultural differences. The women in the current study obtained cultural socialization in American society through their encounters with Americans or basically non-Persian individuals. As discussed earlier in the literature review, Iranian minorities, based on Ogbu and Simons' (1998) minority categorization, fall under the voluntary or tourist minority category who tend to stay in the United States and easily assimilate into mainstream society. The literature further suggests that voluntary minorities believe in the system of American society and do not question the authority or school settings and policies (Drouhot & Nee, 2019). Furthermore, Iranian-Americans have experienced acculturation through assimilation into America's dominant culture, especially in academic settings (Kadkhoda, 2001). Therefore, the women in the study were able to use networking to overcome their barriers and did not feel their native identity was threatened by adapting to the social norms of American culture.

The support of the community, especially the Persian community, was also detrimental to the women of this study in overcoming their challenges in American higher education. Ogbu and Simons (1998) cultural-ecology theory reflects upon the role of the community in the educational performances of minority students. The Iranian community, also referred to as the Persian community, has emphasized education as a means to success and utilized this in their ethnic identity. Therefore, the Iranian community, especially the older generation, tends to provide

support for the younger generation of Iranians, and their support contributes to Iranian-Americans excelling in American higher education (Bozorgmehr & Douglas, 2011).

Results for Research Question 3

Research Question 3 asked, How do Iranian American women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system measure their success in American higher education?

Participants of this study considered personal fulfillment, financial and professional achievements and independence, contentment, and academic achievements as crucial components of success, which they also used to measure their success. The themes emerging from Research Question 3 indicated characteristics of the Iranian American community as voluntary minorities who come to the United States with plans of achieving higher education degrees, attain high professional levels, and gain financial independency. The themes from Research Question 3 corroborated with the research in highlighting Iranian Americans as a group with a mental frame work of achieving lasting success through a fulfilled life, contentment, having financial and professional independence, and being happy (Askari, 2003; Nash & Stevenson, 2004; Ogbu & Simons, 1998).

Discussion of Research Question 3

The literature on Iranian-Americans suggests that this group values education highly, and academic achievements result in professional and financial success (Minoo, 2017). The participants of this study mostly viewed success from the lens of professional and financial achievements and independence. In compliance with the available literature, Iranians are among the minorities with higher academic achievements (Bozorgmehr et al., 1988).

The researcher further reflected upon Goleman's (2011) EI characteristics to understand the perspectives of the Iranian women in the study. Successful leaders demonstrate elements of self-awareness, empathy, emotion management, and social skills (Goleman, 2011). Moreover, related research suggests that having the characteristic of EI will lead to academic achievements (Alward & Phelps, 2019). The women in the current study exhibited at least one or more of the EI characteristics in their experiences that have led them to complete higher education degrees and later enter the profession of their choice.

The subsequent section of Research Question 3 asked participants about the metrics they use to measure their success. The majority of the participants suggested overlapping metrics of successful careers, financial stability, and educational excellence. However, all participants did conclude that the ultimate success measure was related to the levels of contentment and fulfillment in their personal lives. Their suggestions for a successful life included helping the community, having empathy, making the world a better place, and happiness. Generally, the participants regarded professional/financial success as personal success while ascribing to having qualities of EI such as self-awareness, empathy, community, and social skills. It is imperative to conclude that the research findings were consistent with Goleman's (2011) remarks on EI.

Another view of success, as discussed previously in Chapter 2, is lasting success, which pertains to ongoing success, including durable achievements and numerous objectives, among other attributes (Nash & Stevenson, 2004). The study findings indicated that for Iranian-American women, having financial stability from a well-paid profession counts as a metric for success. Therefore, the current study's findings also align with the literature by Nash and Stevenson (2004), as the participants' view on success did not include short-term items but

focused on achievements that require higher education achievements, hard work, setting goals, consistency, et cetera.

Results for Research Question 4

Research Question 4 asked, In accordance with their encounters, what recommendation would Iranian American women who received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system make to future Iranian American women pursuing degrees in American higher education?

The results of this research question included institutions raising cultural awareness among their faculty and students, provide more educational resources, implement social and community-based initiatives as recommendations for American universities. Additionally, the recommendations for future Iranian-American women pursuing higher education in the United States were to have perseverance, not give up, and practice effective communication. Participants noted the positive effects of keeping ties with the Persian community. Lastly, the majority of the participants believed that given the obstacles, it was still worth it to migrate from their home country in pursuit of higher education and move to the United States. Those participants indicated that they had no intentions of moving back to Iran because of the educational and professional opportunities they had in United States. Those who thought otherwise, considered cultural loss of migrating to America as the reason for their hesitations.

The results for Research Question 4 indicated the need for educational settings to build cultural fluency and creating more diverse educational programs within their settings to raise awareness in the areas of diversity, equity, and inclusion. The results from this question also emphasized the importance of communities of practice in supporting second language students in their socializing and language acquisition processes. Moreover, the participants highlighted the

effectiveness of practicing elements of EI as a strategy to overcome the challenges of studying in American colleges.

Discussion of Research Question 4

The participants recommended the Persian community as a supportive resource due to the high socioeconomic status of Iranians in the United States. Iranians in the United States typically come from higher socioeconomic families and tend to keep their high status within the American community (Bozorgmehr et al., 1988). Therefore, the findings of the study align with the available data and literature on the Iranian community and its resources.

The study findings from Research Question 4 indicated that Iranian-American women who have attained higher education in the United States are happy with their decision to migrate, tend to stay, and do not desire to move back to Iran. This finding aligns with the literature on Iranian brain drain, oppression, social injustices, and inequalities, especially in the education realm that have caused the migration rate to be around 1.5-3 million as of 2006 (Mossayeb & Shirazi, 2006). Relatively, educational opportunities have been the most popular reason for the Iranian brain drain (Iranian Studies Group, 2005). Additionally, literature suggests that Iranians who migrated to the United States for educational purposes are less likely to return after the completion of their higher education (Chaichian, 1997).

The findings of this study, additionally, assert the perseverance of Iranian-American women attaining higher education degrees in the United States. The study findings indicate that these women recommend having perseverance and being unafraid of obstacles they may face in their educational journey in the United States. The findings are consistent with the available literature as well. A study on foreign-born Iranian immigrants in the United States indicated that in the year 2000, this minority group held at least a bachelor's degree and entered highly

respectable career positions (Hakimzadeh & Dixon, 2006). There is no available data on what number of this population were women or if gender played a role in determining the success of Iranian-Americans. The available data focuses on gender higher education attainment comparing first and second-generation Iranians. According to the data by Rumbaut (2008), among the first-generation Iranian-Americans, men have higher education attainment compared to women. In contrast, according to the 2006 census data from Iran, women have surpassed men in higher education attainment (Minnesota Population Center, 2020). These women recommend being brave and having perseverance to future Iranian-American women who want to migrate to the United States for the purpose of higher education. In their opinion, in the end, it was all worth it.

Implications of the Study

This study had a qualitative structure with 15 participants, so the number of participants was limited, and the findings will not produce a general understanding. Still, the study intended to provide ample evidence for cultural discontinuity experienced by Iranian-American women. The research will add value to the knowledge and existing literature on diversity in terms of linguistic and cultural discontinuity. The findings of the current study increase the existing knowledge about cultural discontinuity from the perspective of a diverse subgroup.

The findings of this phenomenological qualitative study elucidated the experiences of Iranian-American women with educational backgrounds from Iran in attaining higher education degrees in the United States. The researcher in the study attempted to convey the experiences these women shared to highlight the factors that lead to linguistic and cultural discontinuity in American academia. One of the key findings of the study included the different types of discrimination that Iranian-Americans faced in academia, which has shifted through the years from symbolic and relational discrimination to instrumental discrimination. Therefore, the

192

adaptation responses in Iranian women have changed over time. This finding can be employed in other future research to study the assimilation of Iranians into the American mainstream culture.

The study indicated that Iranian women have been utilizing various strategies and resources to minimize linguistic and cultural discontinuity formed in American academia. Iranian women as part of their acculturation process, tend to gain mastery of English languages in order to overcome the academic language barrier in American academia. These women also tend to use socializing, networking, and effective communication skills to overcome the cultural differences they face in American academia. Overall, these findings can be further used to study other minorities in American academia to understand their processes of discontinuity.

The study findings also included that Iranian-American women exhibit elements of EI in their higher education achievements and tend to consider the financial and professional independence that comes from education attainment as a measure of success. Finally, the study provided evidence on the attitudes of Iranian-American women towards American academia. The study found that Iranian-American women think that despite the obstacles, still obtaining a higher education degree from an American university was worthwhile. Furthermore, this population of Iranian women do not tend to move back to Iran. The implications of these findings could be studied on a broader scale to include Iranian men and their perspectives. Finally, cultural and linguistic discontinuity can be studied in a quantitative manner to explore other criteria, such as managing the discontinuity by studying the role of gender, race, and age in the development of discontinuity.

One of the study goals was to explore the participants' perspectives from the Islamist Feminism framework. The research shows that mandatory hijab and limitations on women as determining factors in Iranian women's high unemployment rate in Iran (Azadi et al., 2022). The

brain drain also stems from issues related to mandatory hijab, gender discrimination, and the absence of religious freedom (Azadi et al., 2020). However, none of the participants of the study shared concepts related to the framework such as religion, hijab, and women in Islam even though they had gone to school after the 1979 revolution and had been subjected to the school's Islamification. One of the reasons could be that the research questions in the current study did not directly ask about the issue of mandatory hijab or the Islamification of schools in Iran. The researcher assumed that given the timeline, these participants attended primary and/or secondary schools, and would mention such concepts while reflecting on their educational journeys. Therefore, it can be concluded that Iranian women do not associate religion or more specifically, Islamic values with their achievements in the American higher education system. Furthermore, future research can be conducted to explore the role and effects of school Islamification in Iran on the educational journeys of Iranian women. Findings from such studies can add to the knowledge in topics, such as religion and education, Islam and women, and Islamist feminism.
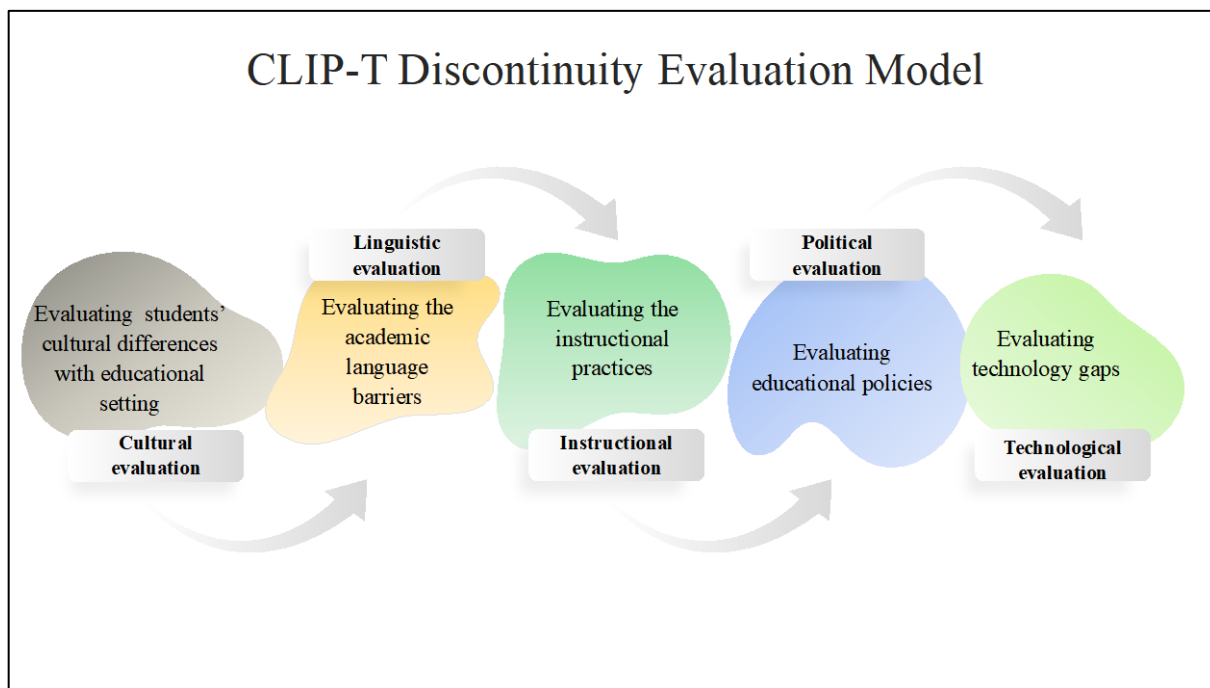
Application

Research has suggested that discontinuities occur in the academic environments when students' cultural behaviors and patterns are stopped or practiced very little at the educational setting (Tyler et al., 2008). This study, along with its framework of linguistic and cultural discontinuity in American academia, can be used to develop a model for identifying and evaluating elements that contribute to students developing discontinuity from the higher education institutions (see Figure 16). The CLIP-T discontinuity evaluation model, as shown in Figure 16, includes five elements of cultural, linguistic, instructional, political, and technological evaluations. Educational institutions by using this model can identify and evaluate the type of discontinuities that exist within their educational settings.

194

Figure 16

Mirhashemi's CLIP-T Discontinuity Evaluation Model

CLIP-T Discontinuity Evaluation Model

Linguistic evaluation — Evaluating the academic language barriers

Evaluating students' cultural differences with educational setting — Cultural evaluation

Evaluating the instructional practices — Instructional evaluation

Political evaluation — Evaluating educational policies

Evaluating technology gaps — Technological evaluation

Cultural Evaluation

The first step in the CLIP-T discontinuity evaluation model is to identify and evaluate the cultural differences between students and mainstream educational settings. The study findings indicated that students tend to develop a sense of cultural discontinuity when the main culture is in contrast or different than their home cultures. In this case, the Iranian culture followed the practices of collectivist cultures whereas the American higher education culture promotes individualistic practices. Some examples of such contrasts include the emphasis on self-centeredness and self-expressions in the American academia. On the other hand, the Iranian culture promotes humility and staying away from selfishness. Such instances raise the importance of identifying and evaluating the cultural practices in the educational institutions as the first step in the process of understanding the existing discontinuities in the system.

Linguistic Evaluation

The second step in the CLIP-T discontinuity evaluation model is to identify and evaluate the academic language barriers experienced by students. The findings in the current study indicated that majority of the Iranian-American women felt challenged by academic language barriers which contributed to developing linguistic discontinuity from the main educational environment. One of the examples of linguistic discontinuity was the use of APA and students' unfamiliarity with the structure and requirements. Therefore, it is imperative for the educational institutions to identify and evaluate the levels of linguistic discontinuities among their students in order to evaluate the existing discontinuities in their institutions. The findings of the current study indicated students challenges with APA requirements and universities not providing any information regarding the requirements, leading to students feeling overwhelmed with the academic writing skills. Therefore, introduction sessions focusing on the language prerequisites based on subject matter will assist students in becoming aware of the academic language requirements.

Instructional Evaluation

Instructional evaluation is the third step in the CLIP-T discontinuity evaluation model. Through this phase, the pedagogies and instructional practices of the educational institution is examined and evaluated. The evaluation includes carefully studying the practices that challenges students in ways that is in contrast with their experiences. For instance, the women in the study expressed the emphasis on presentations and group works posed challenges to them as they did not have experience of such practices in the Iranian education system. The challenges of such practices provided room for developing a sense of not belonging and discontinuity from the

educational setting. Therefore, examining the diversity of instructional practices is an important step in evaluating discontinuities in educational institutions.

Political Evaluation

Next step in the CLIP-T discontinuity evaluation process is evaluating the political policies of the educational institution as they affect the student experiences. Some of the educational policies in the United States tend to change or pose challenge to students who are international students. Some of these challenges shared by the women in the study included, the restrictions on student visas with the internship process, the credit evaluation system of the American education system, and overall immigration challenges. The participants expressed frustration with the lack of understanding from universities and professors in terms of accommodating to their immigration challenges. For instance, the events of the hostage crisis for instance created an extra burden on the Iranian students as they received backlashes from the academic community (Shafieyan, 1983).Thus, evaluating the political environment of the educational setting is crucial in the process of identifying elements that contribute to discontinuity in students.

Technological Evaluation

Finally, the CLIP-T discontinuity evaluation model detects the technology gaps in the educational setting that play a part in developing discontinuities in the educational institution. The technology gaps can exist inside and outside the institutions' classrooms. The participants of the study noted difficulties with lack of technology knowledge in completing online assignments, operating with learning management systems, and completing university logistical requirements such as enrolling in courses, contacting the faculty, applying for financial aid, et cetera. For instance, access to internet has been a struggle for the Iranian students in Iran as the government

filters and censors the Internet leaving students out of touch with the outside world and lacking

sufficient technology knowledge (Azadi et al., 2020; Kamyab, 2015) .Consequently, it is crucial

to recognize the educational institution's existing technology gaps at all levels to better evaluate

the technology related discontinuities. Additionally, the researcher developed a training

following the CLIP-T discontinuity evaluation model in order to accurately address the issues

with discontinuity and introduce practical strategies to promote cultural fluency within the

educational settings (see Figure 17).

Mirhashemi's CALDA Training

       The CALDA training, as shown in Figure 17, consists of five steps of CLIP-T evaluation

element, analysis, learning, development, and application.

Figure 17

Mirhashemi's CALDA Training
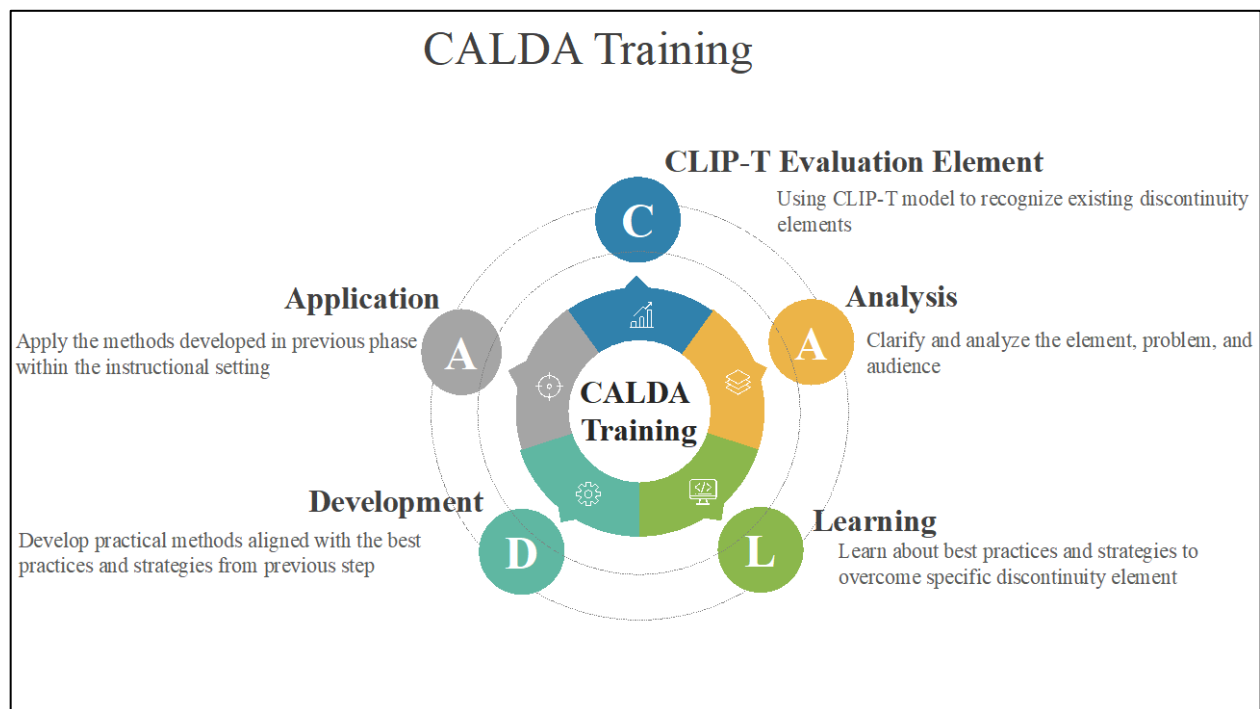
Step 1: CLIP-T Evaluation Element

The first step in the training is using the CLIP-T discontinuity evaluation model to detect the elements that are resulting in discontinuities within the educational setting. Those elements could be cultural, linguistic, instructional, political, and technological discontinuities. Once the element(s) are identified and evaluated, the second step starts. For instance, an educational institution, incorporating the CLIP-T discontinuity evaluation model, understands that their students demonstrate characteristics aligned with cultural discontinuities.

Step 2: Analysis

In the analysis step, the identified CLIP-T element is closely studied and analyzed to understand the levels in which it affects the audience and educational setting. Identifying the audience is an important piece as it pertains to understanding the entities that the specific discontinuity influences for instance, students, faculty, administration, et cetera. The example in the previous step detected cultural discontinuity and therefore the analysis stage for cultural discontinuity is to present the elements in the organization's mainstream culture that are in contrast with students' cultural backgrounds. This cultural discontinuity affects students and therefore the faculty and administration need to revisit their conduct. The participants in the current study expressed the emphasis on self-recognition and self-centeredness in contrast with their Iranian culture which of expressing humility.

Step 3: Learning

The third step of the CALDA training introduces best practices and success strategies that help reduce the discontinuity gaps students feel. The learning step of CALDA training, in the cultural discontinuity example, includes introducing strategies such as peer mentoring, forming student cultural groups, activities to raise cultural awareness, create room for networking, and

practicing EI skills. As literature had suggested, Iranian Americans practiced elements of EI such as building community ties and effective social skills as part of their success strategies in overcoming the obstacles of academic settings in United States (Alward & Phelps, 2019). Therefore, the learning stage of the CALDA training involves using research and concrete evidence to understand the effective strategies that help decrease the levels of certain discontinuities.

Step 4: Development

The development stage of CALDA training focuses on using the learnings from previous step to design and create practical instructional instruments such as, activities, courses, assignments, and pedagogical practices. This stage in the cultural discontinuity training will include educators design an assignment with the objective of raising cultural awareness and instruct students work with a peer mentor throughout the assignment to help student gain communication skills aligned with EI elements. Reflecting upon available research indicates that peer mentoring has been an effective strategy in supporting second language learners as it creates a sense of belonging (Kobayashi, 2016) Another development step in universities, could be designing cultural programs on university campuses to introduce different cultures to students and faculty.

Step 5: Application

The final step in the CALDA training process is the application of the previous four steps. During this step, educators and educational institutions implement and integrate the newly designed CLIP-T aligned instructional pieces into their courses or overall educational settings. This is the practical stage that sums the process of evaluation, analysis, learning, and development.

Universities can use the CLIP-T discontinuity evaluation model (see Figure 15) to recognize the type and levels of discontinuities in their environments. Following the CLIP-T model, the universities can conduct trainings for faculty and staff following the CALDA training model (see Figure 16). Teachers who are culturally responsive can identify strengths and weaknesses of the instruction and curriculum from a multicultural lens (G. Gay, 2000). Therefore, CALDA training introduces the elements leading to cultural discontinuity in students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Furthermore, CALDA training introduces educators to techniques, best practices, and pedagogical applications that assist them in becoming culturally responsive.

Additionally, universities can use CLIP-T discontinuity evaluation and CALDA training models to create practices and policies in the areas of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Educators, on the other hand, can also benefit from the findings of this research as the American education system has become more diverse and they may encounter multicultural student populations. It would be beneficial for educators to learn and incorporate strategies that better support the cultural and linguistic needs of the diverse multicultural classes. As a result, these students would also benefit from the appropriate resources provided by educators and institutions.

Study Conclusion

The current study focused on exploring the success strategies that Iranian-American women with educational backgrounds from Iran used to attain higher education degrees from American universities. The study followed a framework of cultural discontinuity to explore the experiences that these women perceived of the American academic system. The previous literature on this topic had only explored the framework of minorities in the United States who shared the same language as the mainstream American academia. The difference of this study

was that it elucidated the perceptions of cultural discontinuity in women who were foreign-born and spoke a language other than English. The observations and data emerging from the participants indicated that they experienced another form of discontinuity aside from cultural discontinuity, which was in nature linguistic. The challenges of the academic language barrier and the experiences of these women introduced this new concept of linguistic discontinuity in the diversity of cultural discontinuity. The study had implications that could benefit higher education institutions to better support their diverse student populations. The findings also provide a set of strategies for educators to employ in their classrooms to keep up with diverse student needs. Students can benefit from the implications of this study as well because it provides a roadmap to best practices and management of cultural discontinuity, which is something they will encounter as multicultural students in the American mainstream education system. Therefore, higher education institutions can use this study's findings and implications as a guide in their pathway to inclusivity and diversity. In short, this study has elaborated on the ways in which diverse multicultural American higher education can handle cultural discontinuity, especially from the aspect of linguistic discontinuity.

Recommendations for Future Research

The purpose of this study was to explore the success strategies of Iranian-American women with educational backgrounds in the post-revolution Iranian education system in attaining higher education degrees from American universities. The study aimed to explore the purpose through the lens of cultural discontinuity of multicultural students in American academia and then find the best practices that this population has used to better manage the discontinuity. Discontinuity has been studied on different populations, but there is limited research on Iranian Americans and specifically, Iranian-American women in the United States. Therefore, the topic

for this study to explore the success strategies of Iranian-American women has not been studied, leaving space for future studies. Due to the gap in the literature, this study only focused on Iranian women so there is opportunity for future studies to explore the cultural discontinuity in American academia from the lens of the Iranian population, including men and women. A wider population of other minorities would benefit from a study conducted within this topic and framework. The limited research on discontinuity has focused on minority groups with similar language to the American academia; for instance, African-Americans are native English speakers but their home culture is different from the culture of mainstream education. On the other hand, this study used a foreign-born population that are non-native speakers. Therefore, the study's findings uncovered a new phenomenon of linguistically driven cultural discontinuity. The study permits other researchers to explore other minority groups in the United States who come from diverse linguistic backgrounds and study their processes of linguistic discontinuity in American academia. The current study was able to provide insight into the best practices and success strategies that Iranian-American women used in dealing with linguistic and cultural discontinuity. This provides the opportunity for future research to explore the success strategies incorporated by other minority groups.

One of the other significant findings of this study was the shift in discrimination that Iranian-American women have experienced in American academia since the 1979 Revolution. This allows further opportunities for research into the reasons that have caused this shift and also the adaptation methods. These findings also provide opportunities for future research to study different types of discrimination in mainstream American academia toward different minority groups, as well as how these populations deal with educational discrimination against them from the educational point of view. Moreover, implementing quantitative research to explore these

topics would provide insight that is beneficial to academic institutions, educators, and student populations.

This study focused on a population that would be considered first-generation Iranian American women. The findings and implications were based on the perspectives, experiences, and achievements of first-generation Iranian women. A recommendation for future research would be to explore the frameworks among second generation Iranian American students who were born in the United States and study their achievement levels in terms of education attainment. This type of research will be useful to foresee the obstacles and challenges of the future generation. A few more recommendations include:

- A study of Iranian-American women with similar backgrounds and achievements in other industries, such as corporate America and politics

- A study on Iranian-American women in leadership positions and exploring the cultural discontinuity in other areas

- A study on Iranian-American women working in American academia and their encounters with cultural discontinuity

- As mentioned above, expanding the study to include Iranian-American men and their experiences in American academia

- A study on the gradual increase in discrimination against Iranian-Americans

- A study examining the role that religion plays in the Iranian-Americans' success strategies in the United States

- A comparative study between the Iranian education system and American education system

Final Thoughts

The Iranian-American women in the current study are successful immigrants in terms of higher education attainment, professional and financial achievements. Their backgrounds and educational roots are in Iran, where they have attended primary and/or secondary schools in the post-revolution Iranian education system. The journey they have endured is long, difficult, and somewhat impossible. These circumstances make these women resilient and capable of overcoming the obstacles against them from systemic gender discrimination in the Iranian education system, experiencing the difficulties of migration, leaving their home countries and families, starting in a new country, and facing challenges in American academia. Despite all of the aforementioned challenges, these women were able to complete their higher education studies in America and continue living in this country as highly educated professionals, creating a high socioeconomic status for themselves and their families.

The researcher was inspired by the experiences these women shared as they shed light on their determination and perseverance. Through the process of data analysis, common themes emerged from their experiences, success strategies, and recommendations these women expressed. Their remarks regarding success and metrics for measuring success illustrated a sense of acculturation that leads to assimilation into American society. The researcher was surprised and intrigued by the methods these women shared in the process of their acculturation, such as networking, building communications, adapting to society, and gaining mastery of the academic language. The researcher used cultural discontinuity as a driving framework to study the success strategies of these women. Along the way, another aspect of discontinuity surfaced that was related to language capabilities and linguistically motivated. This angle contributed to the findings of the study in which valuable knowledge was presented that could be further used by

minority students, academic institutions, and educators. It has been a rewarding experience for the researcher to be able to connect and interview with these women. The shared experiences of the women inspired the researcher and will inspire the readers of this study. The researcher was able to use the tremendous information from the study to construct a new model of discontinuity in the academic world. This model will help fill the literature in the areas of culture, equity, and inclusion within the educational settings. The training that follows the model will help educational institutions revisit their practices and policies.

On a more personal level, considering her own experiences, the researcher was surprised by the women of the study's high levels of determination and perseverance in achieving their educational goals. In fact, the shared experiences allowed the researcher to construct a model and training that would help any educator or educational institution excel in building culturally aware instructional environments. The important note in the course of the study was that the researcher was able to identify an existing deficiency in the higher education system while capturing and documenting the success strategies of overcoming the gaps. In short, the author was content with this study's journey, findings, and conclusions.

Additionally, the researcher would like to include the important concept of "co-intentional education" from Freire (2000), which emphasizes on the role of both teachers and students in creating opportunities of inquiry, equality, and equity (p. 43). In the researcher's opinion, this concept is relatable to the discriminations Iranian women felt because of their Iranian identity. The researcher was inspired by these women's resilience in facing such obstacles and challenges. The interesting finding that the researcher could connect to was the gradual shift in the type of discrimination women faced in the American education system. The researcher was able to comprehend reasons behind the different characteristics of Persian

individuals and the lack of communication and trust among younger and older generations. In her belief, the different adaptation methods to discrimination created a distance between how different age groups within the Persian community operated in the American society.

In conclusion, Iranian women both in Iran and the United States have been subjected to circumstances that are challenging, discriminative, and unjust. The women in Iran regularly encounter injustice on a daily basis, leading to large numbers of them migrating, thus resulting in a brain drain in their home country. This study shed light on Iran's history of Iran, both before and after the 1979 revolution, hoping to give voice to the experiences of these Iranian women while highlighting their resilience in the face of all the severe transgressions and oppression around them. The researcher hopes that this study will help future Iranian students in their journey from Iran to the United States, in hopes of pursuing educational opportunities, professional achievements, and financial independence which were the success measures shared in this study. The researcher also intends to add that if Iran had better opportunities for access to education, employment, and basic human freedoms, then the men and women of the country would not leave their homeland and migrate to Western countries in hopes of achieving success.

REFERENCES

Abbasi-Shavazi, M. J. (2001, November). *The fertility revolution in Iran*. Population et Sociétés. https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/

Abdollahi, M. (1979). *Capitalism and brain-drain: A dialectical analysis of the migration of highly qualified manpower from less developed to more developed capitalist countries Iran and the U.S.* (Publication No. 2689) [Doctoral dissertations, University of Michigan]. https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/dissertations/2689

Abrahamian, E. (1982). *Iran between two revolutions*. Princeton University Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1fkgcnz

Abrahamian, E. (2018). *A history of modern Iran*. Cambridge University Press. https://books.google.com/books?id=BDNlDwAAQBAJ

Afshan, N. M. (2014). Role of women in ancient Persia. *Advances in Environmental Biology*, *8*(12), 1291–1300. https://www.aensiweb.net/AENSIWEB/aeb/aeb/July%202014/1291-1300.pdf

Aghagolzadeh, F., & Davari, H. (2017). English education in Iran: From Ambivalent policies to paradoxical practices. In R. Kirkpatrick (Ed.), *English language education policy in the Middle East and North Africa* (pp. 47–62). Springer International. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-46778-8_4

Aghajanian, A. (1983). Ethnic inequality in Iran: An overview. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, *15*(2), 211–224. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743800052284

Aghajanian, A., & Thompson, V. (2013). Household size and structure in Iran: 1976-2006. *The Open Family Studies Journal*, *5*(1). http://dx.doi.org/10.2174/1874922401305010001

Ahmadi, F. (2006). Islamic feminism in Iran: Feminism in a new Islamic context. *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, *22*(2), 33–53. http://www.jstor.org.lib.pepperdine.edu/stable/20487863

Akgündüz, A. (2010). *Introduction to Islamic law: Islamic law in theory and practice*. IUR Press.

Alkhazraji, K. M., Gardner, W. L., Martin, J. S., & Paolillo, J. G. P. (1997). The acculturation of immigrants to U.S. organizations: The case of Muslim employees. *Management Communication Quarterly*, *11*(2), 217–265. https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318997112003

Alward, E., & Phelps, Y. (2019). Impactful leadership traits of virtual leaders in higher education. *Online Learning*, *23*(3), 72–93. ERIC. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1228828

Amanat, A. (2017). *Iran: A modern history*. Yale University Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv19prrqm

Amanolahi, S. (2005). A note on ethnicity and ethnic groups in Iran. *Iran & the Caucasus*, *9*(1), 37–41. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4030904

Amin, F. (2006). *Success strategies of Iranian American leaders* (Publication No. 304908351) [Doctoral dissertation, Pepperdine University]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.

Antony-Newman, M. (2019). Parental involvement of immigrant parents: A meta-synthesis. *Educational Review*, *71*(3), 362–381. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2017.1423278

Askari, G. (2003). *A cultural relativistic approach toward Iranian immigrants in therapy* (Publication No. 305214301) [Doctoral dissertation, Alliant International University, San Diego]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.

Axworthy, M. (2013). *Revolutionary Iran: A history of the Islamic Republic*. Penguin Books.

Azadi, P., Mesgaran, M., & Mirramezani, M. (2022). *The struggle for development in Iran*: *The evolution of governance, economy, and society*. Stanford University Press.

Azadi, P., Mirramezani, M., & Mesgaran, M. (2020). *Migration and brain drain from Iran*. www.iranian-studies.stanford.edu/iran2040

Babbie, E. R. (2020). *The practice of social research*. Cengage Learning.

Balali, S. (2023). *A narrative inquiry into cultural discontinuity: The case of Iranian students in the United States* (Publication No. 2851791619) [Doctoral dissertation, Texas A&M University - Commerce]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.

Barlow, R., & Akbarzadeh, S. (2008). Prospects for feminism in the Islamic Republic of Iran. *Human Rights Quarterly*, *30*(1), 21–40. Academic Search Complete. https://www.jstor.org/stable/20486695

Bauer, J. L. (1985). Sexuality and the moral "construction" of women in an Islamic society. *Anthropological Quarterly*, *58*(3), 120–129. JSTOR. https://doi.org/10.2307/3317918

Begum, S. (2017). The Nexus between Iran's feminism and Islamic revolution in Persepolis: A feminist critique. *Philosophy and Progress*, *57*(1–2), 67–94. https://doi.org/10.3329/pp.v57i1-2.31205

Behdad, S. (1995). Islamization of economics in Iranian universities. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, *27*(2), 193–217. JSTOR. http://www.jstor.org/stable/176092

Berdún, M. M. G., Guibernau, M., & Rex, J. (2010). *The ethnicity reader: Nationalism, multiculturalism and migration*. Wiley.

Bernard, H. R., & Ryan, G. W. (2010). *Analyzing qualitative data: Systematic approaches.* (pp. xxi, 451). Sage.

Berry, J. W. (1997). Immigration, acculturation, and adaptation. *Applied Psychology*, *46*(1), 5–34. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1464-0597.1997.tb01087.x

Bhandari, N. B. (2022). Homi K. Bhabha's third space theory and cultural identity today: A critical review. *Prithvi Academic Journal*, 171–181. https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:248758750}

Bickford, S. (1999). Reconfiguring pluralism: Identity and institutions in the inegalitarian polity. *American Journal of Political Science*, *43*(1), 86–108. https://doi.org/10.2307/2991786

Bogdan, R., & Taylor, S. J. (1975). *Introduction to qualitative research methods: A phenomenological approach to the social sciences*. Wiley. https://books.google.com/books?id=1fS1AAAAIAAJ

Borjian, M. (2013). The revolutionary period (1979–1988). In M. Borjian (Ed.), *English in post-revolutionary Iran* (Vol. 29, pp. 65–88). Multilingual Matters/Channel View Publications. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt21kk1tj.9

Boroumand, L. (2020). Iranians turn away from the Islamic Republic. *Journal of Democracy*, *31*(1), 169–181. https://heinonline.org/HOL/P?h=hein.journals/jnlodmcy31&i=167

Bozorgmehr, M. (1989). From Iranian studies to studies of Iranians in the United States. *Iranian Studies*, *22*(1), 77–79. https://doi.org/10.1080/00210869808701893

Bozorgmehr, M., & Douglas, D. (2011). Success(ion): Second-Generation Iranian Americans. Iranian Studies, 44(1), 3–24. Cambridge Core. https://doi.org/10.1080/00210862.2011.524047

Bozorgmehr, M., Sabagh, G., & Sabbagh, G. (1988). High status immigrants: A statistical profile of Iranians in the United States. *Iranian Studies*, *21*(3/4), 5–36. https://doi.org/10.1080/00210868808701715

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1986). Ecology of the family as a context for human development: Research

    perspectives. *Developmental Psychology*, *22*(6), 723–742.

    https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0012-1649.22.6.723

Budman, C. L., & Lipson, J. G. (1992). The cultural consultant in mental health care: The case of

    an Arab adolescent. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, *62*(3), 359. Academic Search

    Complete. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0079347

Central Intelligence Agency. (2020). *Information*. https://www.cia.gov/

Chaichian, M. A. (1997). First generation Iranian immigrants and the question of cultural

    identity: The case of Iowa. *International Migration Review*, *31*(3), 612–627.

    https://doi.org/10.1177/019791839703100304

Chaichian, M. A. (2012). The new phase of globalization and brain drain. *International Journal*

    of Social Economics, *39*(1/2), 18–38. https://doi.org/10.1108/03068291211188857

Choksy, J. K. (1988). Women in the Zoroastrian book of primal creation: Images and functions

    within a religious tradition. *Mankind Quarterly*, *29*(1), 73.

    https://www.proquest.com/openview/

Cohen, A. (2009). Many forms of culture. *The American Psychologist*, *64*, 194–204.

    https://doi.org/10.1037/a0015308

Cohen, R. A., & Yefet, B. (2021). The Iranian diaspora and the homeland: Redefining the role of

    a centre. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 47(3), 686–702.

    http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2019.1605893

Collier, P., Hoeffler, A., & Pattillo, C. (2004). Africa's exodus: Capital flight and the brain drain

    as portfolio decisions. *Journal of African Economies*, *13*(suppl_2), ii15–ii54.

    https://doi.org/10.1093/jae/ejh042

Conklin, T. A. (2007). Method or madness: Phenomenology as knowledge creator. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, *16*(3), 275–287. https://doi.org/10.1177/1056492607306023

Conner, T. W. (2013). *The cultural discontinuity hypothesis: A critical review of literature* (ED572899). ERIC. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED572899

Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran. (1979, December). Mizan Press. https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b56710.html

Covey, S. R. (2020). *The 7 habits of highly effective people*. Simon & Schuster.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage.

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Sage.

Daha, M. (2011). Contextual factors contributing to ethnic identity development of second-generation Iranian American adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, *26*(5), 543–569. https://doi.org/10.1177/0743558411402335

DeCapua, A., & Wintergerst, A. (2016). *Crossing cultures in the language classroom* (2nd ed.) Google Books. https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.7367950

Delpit, L., & Dowdy, J. K. (2008). *The skin that we speak: Thoughts on language and culture in the classroom.* The New Press.

Dreyfuss, R. (2013). *Devil's game: How the United States helped unleash fundamentalist Islam*. Henry Holt and Company. https://books.google.com/books?id=mjrcrndx7lic

Dreyfuss, R., & LeMarc, T. (1980). *Hostage to Khomeini*. New Benjamin Franklin House.

    https://books.google.com/books?id=szujnqaacaaj

Drouhot, L. G., & Nee, V. (2019). Assimilation and the second generation in Europe and

    America: Blending and segregating social dynamics between immigrants and natives.

    Annual Review of Sociology, *45*, 177–199.

    https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-073117-041335

Duff, P. (2011). Second language socialization. In A. Duranti, E. Ochs, & B. B. Schieffelin

    (Eds.), *The handbook of language socialization* (pp. 564–586). Google Books.

    https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444342901

Edmonds, W. A., & Kennedy, T. D. (2017). *An applied guide to research designs: Quantitative,*

    qualitative, and mixed methods (2nd ed.). Sage.

Edwards, R. (2017). *Mature women students: Separating of connecting family and education*.

    Taylor & Francis.

Ehteshami, A. (2014). Middle East middle powers: Regional role, international impact.

    Uluslararası İlişkiler Dergisi, *11*(42), 29–49. http://www.jstor.org/stable/43925850

Elahi, B. (2006). Translating the self: Language and identity in Iranian-American women's

    memoirs. *Iranian Studies*, *39*(4), 461–480. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4311853

Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity youth and crisis (Issue 7)*. WW Norton & Company.

Eschle, C. (2018). Global democracy, social movements, and feminism. In C. Eschle (Ed.),

    Global democracy, social movements, and feminism (p. 279).

    https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429500206

Falk, R. (1980). The Iran hostage crisis: Easy answers and hard questions. *American Journal of*

    International Law, *74*(2), 411–417. https://doi.org/10.2307/2201508

Fata, S., & Rafii, R. (2003). *Strength in numbers: The relative concentration of Iranian Americans across the United States. Iran census report 2003*. National Iranian-American Council.

Ferdowsi, A. (2006). *Shahnameh: The Persian book of kings*. Penguin.

Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed. Thirtieth anniversary edition*. Continuum. https://search.library.wisc.edu/catalog/999895194802121

Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching : Theory, research, and practice*. Teachers College Press.

Gay, L. R., & Airasian, P. W. (2000). *Educational research: Competencies for analysis and application*. Merrill. https://books.google.com/books?id=qljhqgaacaaj

Ghaffarian, S. (1998). The acculturation of Iranian immigrants in the United States and the implications for mental health. *The Journal of Social Psychology, 138*(5), 645–654. https://doi.org/10.1080/00224549809600419

Ghorashi, H. (2004). How dual is transnational identity? A debate on duality of transnational immigrant organizations. *Culture & Organization*, *10*(4), 329–40. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1475955042000313768

Ghorbani, N., Bing, M. N., Watson, P. J., Davison, H. K., & LeBreton, D. L. (2003). Individualist and collectivist values: Evidence of compatibility in Iran and the United States. Personality and Individual Differences, 35(2), 431–447.

Giorgi, A. (2009). *The descriptive phenomenological method in psychology: A modified Husserlian approach*. Duquesne University Press. https://books.google.com/books?id=tk0kaqaamaaj

Girgis, M. (1996). *Women in pre-revolutionary, revolutionary and post-revolutionary Iran*. Iran

    Chamber Society, 1. https://www.iranchamber.com/society/articles/

    women_prepost_revolutionary_iran1.php

Glass, M. H., & Bieber, S. L. (1997). The effects of acculturative stress on incarcerated Alaska

    native and non-native men. *Cultural Diversity and Mental Health*, *4*, 187198.

    https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/1099-9809.3.3.175

Goleman, D. (1998). *What makes a leader?* Harvard Business Review Press.

Goleman, D. (2011). *Primal leadership: Realizing the power of emotional intelligence*. Harvard

    Business School Press. https://search.library.wisc.edu/catalog/999922038802121

Good, B., Good, M.-J., & Moradi, R. (1985). *The interpretation of Iranian depressive illness and*

    dysphoric affect (pp. 369–428). https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520340923-017

Graham, R. (1979). *Iran: The illusion of power*. Croom Helm.

    https://books.google.com/books?id=oqUOAAAAQAAJ

Gray, D. E. (2014). *Doing research in the real world* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Grossman, J. (2019). Toward a definition of diaspora. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *42*(8), 1263–

    1282. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2018.1550261

Guibernau, M., & Rex, J. (1997). *The ethnicity reader: Nationalism, multiculturalism, and*

    migration. Blackwell Publishers.

Haifizi, H., & Steis, M. (2020). People of Iranian heritage. In L. D. Purnell & E. A. Fenkl (Eds.),

    Textbook for transcultural health care: A population approach: Cultural competence

    concepts in nursing care (pp. 529–540). Springer.

Haji Molana, H. (2020). *Voices of acculturation: Everyday narratives of Iranian women on belonging in the United States* (Publication No. 2440878903) [Doctoral dissertation, Kent State University]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.

Hakimzadeh, S., & Dixon, D. (2006). *U.S. in focus: Spotlight on the Iranian foreign born*. Migration Policy Institute.

Hamdhaidari, S., Agahi, H., & Papzan, A. (2008). Higher education during the Islamic government of Iran (1979–2004). *International Journal of Educational Development*, *28*(3), 231–245. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2006.11.001

Hanassab, S. (1998). Sexuality, dating, and double standards: Young Iranian immigrants in Los Angeles. *Iranian Studies*, *31*(1), 65–75. JSTOR. http://www.jstor.org.lib.pepperdine.edu/stable/4311119

Harvey, D. (2020). The condition of postmodernity. In S. Seidman & J. C. Alexander (Eds), *The new social theory reader* (pp. 235–242). Routledge.

Hasannia, A., & Fazeli, Z. (2019). Socio-political rights of Iranian women before and after the Islamic Revolution: A comparative study. *Journal of Contemporary Research on the Islamic Revolution*, *1*(1), 73–92. https://jcrir.ut.ac.ir/article_72787.html

Hausman, C. C. (2021). *The Iran hostage crisis: A media narrative*. https://egrove.olemiss.edu/hon_thesis/1713

He, Y., Bettez, S. C., & Levin, B. B. (2017). Imagined community of education: Voices from refugees and immigrants. *Urban Education, 52*(8), 957–985. https://books.google.com/books?id=KN-1AAAAIAAJ

Hintze, A. (2009). *Avestan literature*. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Avesta

Hoffman, D. M. (1989). Self and culture revisited: Culture acquisition among Iranians in the

    United States. *Ethos*, *17*(1), 32–49. http://www.jstor.org/stable/640303

Hoodfar, H. (1999). *The women's movement in Iran: Women at the crossroads of secularization*

    and Islamization. Google Books.

Horenczyk, G. (1997). Immigrants' perceptions of host attitudes and their reconstruction of

    cultural groups. *Applied Psychology*, *46*(1), 34–38.

    https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1464-0597.1997.tb01088.x

Houtveen, T., van de Grift, W., Kuijpers, J., Boot, M., Groot, F., & Kooijman, H. (2007).

    Improving underperforming schools. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*

    (JESPAR), 12(4), 361–381. https://doi.org/10.1080/10824660701758884

Iranian Studies Group. (2005). *The Iranian-American community survey 2005*.

    http://www.web.mit.edu/isg/survey.htm

Iravani, M. R. (2011). Brain drain problem: A review. *International Journal of Business and*

    Social Science, *2*(15). https://ijbssnet.com/journals/Vol_2_No_15_August_2011/32.pdf

Israeli, O. (2013). Twilight of colonialism: Mossadegh and the Suez crisis. *Middle East Policy*,

    20(1), 147–156. https://doi.org/10.1111/mepo.12011

Jackson, G. M. (2009). *Women leaders of Africa, Asia, Middle East, and Pacific: A biographical*

    reference. Xlibris Corporation.

Javadizadeh, B., Flinchbaugh, C., & Salamzadeh, Y. (2023). Compulsive religious practices in

    the workplace: Through the looking glass and back in search of authenticity among

    Iranian women. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, *163*(5), 735–754.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/00224545.2023.2196387

Jones, S. (2009). *Generations online in 2009*. https://faithformationlearningexchange.net/
uploads/5/2/4/6/5246709/generations_online_in_2009_-_pew.pdf

Kadkhoda, B. (2001). *Acculturation and acculturative stress as related to level of depression and anxiety in Iranian immigrants* (Publication No. 3003904) [Doctoral dissertation, California School of Professional Psychology - Los Angeles]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global..

Kamyab, S. (2015). *The university entrance exam crisis in Iran*. International Higher Education. https://doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2008.51.8010

Kaplan, D., & Chacko, E. (2015). Placing immigrant identities. *Journal of Cultural Geography*, 32, 129–138. https://doi.org/10.1080/08873631.2015.1004852

Kapteijns, L. (1998). New studies of women, gender and Islam: Contextualizing and historicizing Muslim women's lives. *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne Des Études Africaines*, *32*(3), 586–593. JSTOR. https://doi.org/10.2307/486329

Kazemi, F. (2000). Gender, Islam, and politics. *Social Research*, *67*(2), 453–474. JSTOR. http://www.jstor.org.lib.pepperdine.edu/stable/40971480

Kelley, R. (1993). Wealth and illusions of wealth in the Los Angeles Iranian community. In R. Kelley (Ed.), *Irangeles: Iranians in Los Angeles* (pp. 247–273). Google Books.

Kennedy, H. (2007). *The great Arab conquests: How the spread of Islam changed the world we live in*. Da Capo Press.

Khaki, G. N., & Bhat, M. A. (2015). Pahlavi's the pioneers of education in Iran: A study of Reza Shah. *International Journal of Education*, *3*(3). http://dx.doi.org/10.5121/ije.2015.3305

Khomeini, R. (1981). *Kashf al-Asrār*. https://books.google.com/books?id=8y5WwgEACAAJ

Kia, M. (1998). Persian nationalism and the campaign for language purification. *Middle Eastern Studies*, *34*(2), 9–36. https://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/54844

Kia, P. (2013). Iranians in Texas: Migration, politics, and ethnic identity. *Journal of American Ethnic History*, *33* (1), 119–121. Academic Search Complete. University of Texas Press. https://doi.org/10.7560/728592

Kinzer, S. (2008). *All the Shah's men: An American coup and the roots of Middle East terror* . John Wiley & Sons.

Kobayashi, M. (2016). L2 academic discourse socialization through oral presentations: An undergraduate student's learning trajectory in study abroad. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, *72*(1), 95–121. Academic Search Complete. https://doi.org/10.3138/cmlr.2494

Kramsch, C. (2013). Culture in foreign language teaching. *Iranian Journal of Language Teaching Research*, *1*, 57–78. https://doi.org/10.1590/2176-457333606

Kriegel, U., & Williford, K. (2006). *Self-representational approaches to consciousness*. MIT Press.

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511815355

Lee, S. J. (1994). Behind the model-minority stereotype: Voices of high- and low-achieving Asian American students. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 25*(4), 413–429. https://doi.org/10.1525/aeq.1994.25.4.04x0530j

Lee, S. J., & Hong, J. J. (2020). Model minorities and perpetual foreigners: Stereotypes of Asian Americans. In J. T. Nadler & E. C. Voyles (Eds.), *Stereotypes: The incidence and impacts of bias* (pp. 165–174). Praeger.

Letiche, H. (2006). Relationality and phenomenological organizational studies. *Tamara: Journal for Critical Organization Inquiry*, *5*(3), 7–18. https://repozytorium.kozminski.edu.pl/ system/files/261-940-1-PB.pdf

Light, I., Sabagh, G., Bozorgmehr, M., & Der-Martirosian, C. (1994). Beyond the ethnic enclave economy. *Social Problems*, *41*(1), 65–80. https://doi.org/10.2307/3096842

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage.

Litvak, M. (2017). The construction of Iranian national identity: An overview. In Litvak, M. (Ed.), *Constructing Nationalism in Iran: From the Qajars to the Islamic Republic* (pp.10–31). Taylor & Francis.

Locke, L. F., Silverman, S. J., & Spirduso, W. W. (2009). *Reading and understanding research*. Sage.

Lohrmann, R. (2000). Migrants, refugees and insecurity. Current threats to peace? *International Migration, 38*(4), 3–22. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2435.00118

Luciak, M. (2004). Minority status and schooling—John U. Ogbu's theory and the schooling of ethnic minorities in Europe. *Intercultural Education*, *15*(4), 359–368. Academic Search Complete. https://doi.org/10.1080/1467598042000313395

Lutz, W., Cuaresma, J. C., & Abbasi-Shavazi, M. J. (2010). Demography, education, and democracy: Global trends and the case of Iran. *Population and Development Review*, *36*(2), 253–281. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1728-4457.2010.00329.x

Maghbouleh, N. (2017). *The limits of Whiteness: Iranian Americans and the everyday politics of race*. Stanford University Press.

Mahdi, A. A. (2004). The Iranian women's movement: A century long struggle. *The Muslim World*, *94*(4), 427–448. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-1913.2004.00067.x

Majlisī, M. B. (1884). *Ḥilyat al-muttaqīn*. WorldCat.

Malekafzali, H., Simani, S., Amirkhani, A., Farahtaj, F., Hooshmand, B., Nadim, A., Sharifian, J., Howaizi, N., Eslami, N., & Gholami, A. (2004). Population control and reproductive health in the Islamic Republic of Iran. *Archives of Iranian Medicine*, *7*(4), 247–250. http://www.aimjournal.ir/

Maree, K. (2016). *First steps in research* (2nd ed.). Van Schaik Press.

Markose, S., & Hellstén, M. (2009). Explaining success and failure in mainstream schooling through the lens of cultural continuities and discontinuities: Two case studies. *Language and Education*, *23*(1), 59–77. https://doi.org/10.1080/09500780802152911

Masten, A. S., & Coatsworth, J. D. (1998). The development of competence in favorable and unfavorable environments: Lessons from research on successful children. *American Psychologist*, *53*(2), 205–220. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.53.2.205

Matthee, R. (1993). Transforming dangerous nomads into useful artisans, technicians, agriculturists: Education in the Reza Shah period. *Iranian Studies*, *26*(3/4), 313–336. JSTOR. http://www.jstor.org.lib.pepperdine.edu/stable/4310859

Maxwell, J. (2012). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. J.A. Maxwell.

Mehran, G. (2009). Doing and undoing gender: Female higher education in the Islamic Republic of Iran. *International Review of Education* , *55*(5/6), 541–559. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-009-9145-0

Metcalfe, B. D., & Mutlaq, L. (2011). Women, leadership and development: Reappraising the value of the feminine in leadership theorizing in the Middle East. In B. D. Metcalfe & F. Mimouni (Eds.), *Leadership development in the Middle East* (pp. 328–370). Edward Elgar Publishing.

Milani, A., & Pakzad, R. (2019). Islamic Republic of Iran in an age of global transitions: Challenges for a theocratic Iran, governance in emerging. *New World, Governance in an Emerging New World. 519*. Hoover Institute.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook* 2nd ed. (pp. xiv, 338). Sage.

Min, P. G., & Bozorgmehr, M. (2000). Immigrant entrepreneurship and business patterns: A comparison of Koreans and Iranians in Los Angeles. *The International Migration Review*, *34*(3), 707–738. https://doi.org/10.2307/2675942

Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology. (2019). *Statistical Yearbooks (1966−2019), and Census Data (1956−2016)*. Institute for Research and Planning in Higher Education. www.irphe.ac.ir

Minnesota Population Center. (2020). *Integrated public use microdata series, international: Version 7.3* [dataset]. IPUMS. https://doi.org/10.18128/D020.V7.3

Minoo, S. (2017). *Success strategies in emerging Iranian American women leaders* (Publication No. 1953255771) [Doctoral dissertation, Pepperdine University]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.

Mir-Hosseini, Z. (2012). Sharia incorporated. In J. M. Otto (Ed.), *A comparative overview of the legal systems of twelve Muslim countries in past and present* (pp. 319–372). Amsterdam University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9789400600171-011

Mitchell, C. P. (2011). *New Perspectives on Safavid Iran: Empire and society*. Taylor & Francis. https://books.google.com/books?id=1uCaELAsv3MC

Mobasher, M. M. (2012). *Iranians in Texas*. University of Texas Press. https://doi.org/10.7560/728592

Moghadam, V. M. (2002). Islamic feminism and its discontents: Toward a resolution of the debate. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, *27*(4), 1135–1171. https://doi.org/10.1086/339639

Moghadam, V. M. (2023). Gender regimes, polities, and the world-system: Comparing Iran and Tunisia. *Women's Studies International Forum*, *98*, N.PAG-N.PAG. Academic Search Complete. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/

Moghaddam, R. (2020). *Struggle for equality*: *From the constitutional revolution to cyber feminism with a focus on the role of new media in the women's movement in Iran* [Doctoral dissertation, Freie Universität Berlin Repository]. http://dx.doi.org/10.17169/refubium-26108

Moghissi, H. (1993). Women in the resistance movement in Iran. In H. Afshar (Ed.), *Women in the Middle East: Perceptions, realities and struggles for liberation* (pp. 158–171). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-22588-0_9

Mohammadi, M. (2007). Iranian women and the civil rights movement in Iran. *Feminism Interacted*. *9*(1), 1–21. https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol9/iss1/1/

Mohseni, M., & Jouzaryan, F. (2016). Examining the effects of inflation and unemployment on economic growth in Iran (1996-2012). *Procedia Economics and Finance*, *36*, 381–389. https://doi.org/10.1016/S2212-5671(16)30050-8

Mojab, S. (2006). War and diaspora as lifelong learning contexts for immigrant women. In C. Leathwood & B. Francis (Eds.), Gender and lifelong learning: Critical feminist engagements (pp. 164–175). Google Books.

Momen, M. (1985). *An Introduction to Shiʻi Islam: The history and doctrines of Twelver Shiʻism*. Yale University Press. https://books.google.com/books?id=B0OL5Z8S-V0C

Moran, D. (2005). *Edmund Husserl: Founder of phenomenology*. Polity Press.

Morse, J. M., & Richards, L. (2002). *Readme first for a user's guide to qualitative methods*. Sage. https://books.google.com/books?id=G39Aff1cC7cC

Mossayeb, S., & Shirazi, R. (2006). Education and emigration: The case of the Iranian-American community. *Current Issues in Comparative Education*, *9*(1), 30–45. https://doi.org/10.52214/cice.v9i1.11412

Mostofi, N. (2003). Who we are: *The Sociological Quarterly*, *44*(4), 681–703. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1533-8525.2003.tb00531.x

Moyerman, D. R., & Forman, B. D. (1992). Acculturation and Adjustment: A Meta-Analytic Study. Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 14(2), 163–200. https://doi.org/10.1177/07399863920142001

Murro, M. (2008). Globalization, migration and brain drain: A reality check. Health policy and development. *Health Policy and Development*, *6*(3), 153–163. https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/38434/1/hp08018.pdf

Najmabadi, A. (1991). *Hazards of modernity and morality: Women, state and ideology in contemporary Iran*. https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:148055250

Nakhli, S. R., Rafat, M., Bakhshi Dastjerdi, R., & Rafei, M. (2020). A DSGE analysis of the effects of economic sanctions: Evidence from the central bank of Iran. *Iranian Journal of Economic Studies*, *9*(1), 35–70. https://journals.shirazu.ac.ir/article_5685.html

Nash, L., & Stevenson, H. (2004). Success that lasts. *Harvard Business Review*, *82*, 102–124. https://hbr.org/2004/02/success-that-lasts

Nashat, G. (2021). *Women and revolution in Iran*. Routledge.

Nemat Tavousi, M. (2020). Forgotten narrative of Shab-e Chell-e. *Anthropological Studies*, *3*(2), 154–165. http://pc.richt.ir/article-4-468-en.html

Nevisi, H. M. (2018). *Islamic Penal Code of Iran (Book One and Two)*. Lulu Press. https://books.google.com/books?id=9GVyDwAAQBAJ

Ochs, E., & Schieffelin, B. (2011). The theory of language socialization. In A. Duranti, E. Ochs, & B. B. Schieffelin (Eds.), *The handbook of language socialization* (pp. 1–21). Wiley and Sons. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444342901.ch1

Ogbu, J. U. (1981). Origins of human competence: A cultural-ecological perspective. *Child Development*, *52*(2), 413–429. https://doi.org/10.2307/1129158

Ogbu, J. U., & Simons, H. D. (1998). Voluntary and involuntary minorities: A cultural-ecological theory of school performance with some implications for education. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, *29*(2), 155–188. http://www.jstor.org.lib.pepperdine.edu/stable/3196181

Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries. (2022). *Iran facts and figures*. https://www.opec.org/opec_web/en/about_us/163.htm

Osanloo, A. (2009). *The politics of women's rights in Iran*. Princeton University Press. http://www.jstor.org.lib.pepperdine.edu/stable/j.ctt7sqth

Oyserman, D., Brickman, D., & Rhodes, M. (2012). Racial-ethnic identity: Content and consequences for African American, Latino, and Latina youths. In A. J. Fuligni (Ed.), *Contesting stereotypes and creating identities: Social categories, social identities, and educational participation* (pp. 91–114). Sage.

Paidar, P. (1997). *Women and the political process in twentieth-century Iran*. Cambridge University Press.

Paivandi, S. (2008). *Discrimination and intolerance in Iran's textbooks*. RefWorld.

    https://www.refworld.org/docid/484901281a.html

Paivandi, S. (2012). *The future of Iran: Education in the Islamic Republic of Iran and*

    perspectives on democratic reforms. https://www.semanticscholar.org/

Paivandi, S. (2019). École islamisée en Iran: Dieu est présent partout. *Social Cohesion and*

    Development, *13*, 75. https://doi.org/10.12681/scad.19890

Papan-Matin, F. (2014). The constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran. *Iranian Studies*, *47*(1),

    159–200. https://doi.org/10.1080/00210862.2013.825505

Paranjpe, A. C. (1998). *Theory and history of psychology and the denial and affirmation of the*

    self. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/10276-006

Parsian, N. (2021). *Lived experiences of Iranian professional women considering the*

    government, policy changes, and the Islamic Revolution of 1979 (Publication No.

    2562862883) [Doctoral dissertation, Pepperdine University]. ProQuest Dissertations and

    Theses Global.

Pepperdine University. (n.d.). *Institutional Review Board's objectives*.

    https://gsep.pepperdine.edu/student-life/services/content/student-resources-guide-

    1617.pdf

Portes, A., & Rumbaut, R. G. (2006). *Immigrant America: A portrait*. University of California

    Press.

Pourshariati, P. (2017). *Decline and fall of the Sasanian empire: The Sasanian-Parthian*

    confederacy and the Arab conquest of Iran. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Povey, E. R. (2001). Feminist contestations of institutional domains in Iran. *Feminist Review*,

    69(1), 44–72. https://doi.org/10.1080/014177800110070111

Pradana, D. A., Mahfud, M., Hermawan, C., & Susanti, H. D. (2020). Nationalism: Character education orientation in learning development. *Budapest International Research and Critics Institute-Journal*, *3*, 4026–4034. https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:233385407

Rafique, S., & Butt, P. D. K. M. (2020). Position of women in Iran: An analysis of pre and post Islamic revolution 1979. *South Asian Studies*, *32*(2), 431–439. https://www.proquest.com/openview/

Rahman, F. (2021). Status of women in the Qur'an. In G. Nashat (Ed.), *Women and revolution in Iran* (pp. 37–54). Routledge.

Redfield, R., Linton, R., & Herskovits, M. J. (1936). Memorandum for the study of acculturation. *American Anthropologist*, *38*(1), 149–152. https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.1936.38.1.02a00330

Ronaghi, M. H. (2021). Open-source software migration under sanctions conditions. *International Journal of System Assurance Engineering and Management*, *12*(6), 1132–1145. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13198-021-01329-y

Rostam-Kolayi, J. (2008). Origins of Iran's modern girls' schools: From private/national to public/state. *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies (Indiana University Press)*, *4*(3), 58–88. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/mew.2008.4.3.58

Roucek, J. S. (1958). Education of the refugee in the United States. *International Review of Education*, *4*, 374–380. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01423732

Roudi, F., Azadi, P., & Mesgaran, M. (2017). *Iran's population dynamics and demographic window of opportunity. Working Paper 4*. Stanford University. https://books.google.com/books?id=RvBGAAAAMAAJ

Rumbaut, R. G. (2008). The coming of the second generation: Immigration and ethnic mobility in Southern California. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *620*(1), 196–236. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40375817

Sabahi, F. (2002). *The literacy corps in Pahlavi Iran (1963–1979): Political, social and literary implications*. Sapiens.

Sadeghi, S. (2008). Gender, culture and learning: Iranian immigrant women in Canadian higher education. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, *27*(2), 217–234. https://doi.org/10.1080/02601370801936382

Sadeh, S., Mirramezani, M., Mesgaran, M., Feizpour, A., & Azadi, P. (2019). *The scientific output of Iran: Quantity, quality, and corruption*. https://iranian-studies.stanford.edu/iran-2040-project/publications/scientific-output-iran-quantity-quality-and-corruption

Safran, W. (2011). Diaspora in modern societies: Myths of homeland and return. *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, *1*, 83–99. https://doi.org/10.1353/dsp.1991.0004

Sahin, A. (2018). Critical issues in Islamic education studies: Rethinking Islamic and Western liberal secular values of education. *Religions*, *9*(11), 335. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel9110335

Saidi, C. (2014). *Counseling with Iranian-Americans: A critical review of the literature*. https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:223888510

Sakurai, K. (2004). University entrance examination and the making of an Islamic Society in Iran: A study of the post-revolutionary Iranian approach to "Konkur." *Iranian Studies*, *37*(3), 385–406. https://doi.org/10.1080/0021086042000287505

Salehi, A., Sebar, B., Whitehead, D., Hatam, N., Coyne, E., & Harris, N. (2020). Young Iranian
women as agents of social change: A qualitative study. *Women's Studies International
Forum*, *79*, 102341. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2020.102341

Samore, G. S., Bunn, M. G., Allison, G. T., Arnold, A., Burns, R. N., Feldman, S., Freilich, C.,
Heinonen, O., Malin, M. B., & Miller, S. E. (2015). *The Iran nuclear deal: A definitive
guide*. http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:27029094

Sarfi, M., Sarfi, T., Aris, S., Zohouri, M., & Aeini, B. (2023). Religion and migration: An Iranian
survey. *Migration Letters*, *20*(S4), 470–480. https://doi.org/10.59670/ml.v20iS4.3871

Sen, A. K. (2018). *A brief history of sanctions on Iran*. Atlantic Council.
www.atlanticcouncil.org

Shabani Varaki, B., & Mohammadi Chaboki, R. (2023). Iranian philosophy of education.
Educational Philosophy and Theory, *55*(1), 15–20.
https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2020.1837619

Shafieyan, M. (1983). Psychosocial, educational, and economic problems of Iranian students in
the United States and the effect of the Iran-America crisis on selected problems
(Publication No. 303167166) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Pennsylvania].
ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.

Shahi, A., & Abdoh-Tabrizi, E. (2020). Iran's 2019–2020 demonstrations: The changing
dynamics of political protests in Iran. *Asian Affairs*, *51*(1), 1–41.
https://doi.org/10.1080/03068374.2020.1712889

Shamgholi, F. (2012). *Sanctions against Iran and their effects on the global shipping industry*.
Lund University. http://lup.lub.lu.se/ student-papers/record/2520391

Shavarini, M. K. (2004). *Educating immigrants: Experiences of second-generation Iranians*. LFB Scholarly Publication. https://books.google.com/books?id=AP91AAAAMAAJ

Sherman, E. A., & Reid, W. J. (1994). *Qualitative research in social work*. Columbia University Press. https://books.google.com/books?id=w0DMwAEACAAJ

Sheyholislami, J. (2012). Kurdish in Iran: A case of restricted and controlled tolerance. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, *2012*(217), 19–47. https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl-2012-0048

Shoamanesh, S. S. (2009). *Iran's George Washington: Remembering and preserving the legacy of 1953*. MIT International Review. https://web.mit.edu/mitir/2009/online/mossadegh.htm

Shorish, M. M. (1988). The Islamic revolution and education in Iran. *Comparative Education Review*, *32*(1), 58–75. http://www.jstor.org/stable/1188473

Shure, L., West-Olatunji, C., & Cholewa, B. (2019). Investigating the relationship between school counselor recommendations and student cultural behavioral styles. *The Journal of Negro Education*, *88*(4), 454–466. https://doi.org/10.7709/jnegroeducation.88.4.0454

Sobhe, K. (1982). Education in revolution: Is Iran duplicating the Chinese cultural revolution? *Comparative Education*, *18*(3), 271–280. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3098794

Solhi, M., & Mahmoudi, A. (2015). Cultural conceptualization and cross-cultural misunderstanding in Iranian English. *International Journal of Language and Linguistics*, *3*, 353–359. https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ijll.20150306.16

Spiegelberg, E. (2012). *Doing phenomenology: Essays on and in phenomenology* (Vol. 63). Springer Science & Business Media.

Suárez-Orozco, C., Suárez-Orozco, M. M., & Todorova, I. (2008). *Learning a new land.* Harvard

    University Press. https://books.google.com/books?id=_80qEAAAQBAJ

Subani, H. (2013). *The secret history of Iran*. LULU. Google Books.

    https://books.google.com/books?id=zKKNBQAAQBAJ

Szklarz, J. (2017). *Significance of the helmet in fight between Sohrāb and Gordāfarid*. Crowns,

    Hats, Turbans and Helmets, 9. https://www.biblioiranica.info/crowns-hats-turbans-and-

    helmets/

Tabaar, M. A. (2017). Causes of the US hostage crisis in Iran: The untold account of the

    communist threat. *Security Studies*, *26*(4), 665–697.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/09636412.2017.1336390

Taggart, A. (2017). The role of cultural discontinuity in the academic outcomes of Latina/o high

    school students. *Education & Urban Society*, *49*(8), 731–761. Academic Search

    Complete. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124516658522

Thompson, C. (1999). Qualitative research into nurse decision making: Factors for consideration

    in theoretical sampling. *Qualitative Health Research*, *9*(6), 815–828.

    https://doi.org/10.1177/104973239900900609

Torbat, A. (2002). The brain drain from Iran to the United States. *The Middle East Journal*, *56*,

    272–295. https://www.jstor.org/stable/4329755

Turner, B. S. (1992). *Max Weber: From history to modernity*. Routledge.

    https://books.google.com/books?id=KN-1AAAAIAAJ

Tyler, K. M., Uqdah, A. L., Dillihunt, M. L., Beatty-Hazelbaker, R., Conner, T., Gadson, N., Henchy, A., Hughes, T., Mulder, S., Owens, E., Roan-Belle, C., Smith, L. T., & Stevens, R. (2008). Cultural discontinuity: Toward a quantitative investigation of a major hypothesis in education. *Educational Researcher*, *37*(5), 280–297. http://www.jstor.org.lib.pepperdine.edu/stable/25208997

Umaña-Taylor, A. J., & Hill, N. E. (2020). Ethnic–racial socialization in the family: A decade's advance on precursors and outcomes. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *82*(1), 244–271. https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12622

United Kingdom: Parliament, House of Commons Library. (2009, December 11). *The Islamic Republic of Iran: An introduction* [Research Paper 09/92]. https://www.refworld.org/docid/4b41bca92.html

United States Census Bureau. (2002). *Census 2002*. http://www.census.gov/

United States Energy Information Administration. (2022). *Country analysis executive summary: Iran.* https://www.eia.gov/international/content/analysis/countries_long/Iran/pdf/iran_exe.pdf

Valipour Hafshejani, S. (2020). Studying the social station Sindokht, Roodabeh, Gordafarid and Tahmineh in Ferdowsi's Shahnameh. *Critique, Analysis and Aesthetics of Texts*, 6(1), 44. https://www.qparsi.ir/issue_22232_22240.html?lang=en

Van Hear, N., Bakewell, O., & Long, K. (2012). *Drivers of migration*. Migrating out of Poverty RPC Working Paper, 1. http://www.migratingoutofpoverty.org/files/file.php?name=wp1-drivers-of-migration.pdf&site=354

Van Hear, N., Bakewell, O., & Long, K. (2018). Push-pull plus: Reconsidering the drivers of

    migration. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *44*(6), 927–944.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1384135

Van Hear, N., Bakewell, O., & Long, K. (2020). Push-pull plus: Reconsidering the drivers of

    migration. In F. L. Collins & J. Carling (Eds.), *Aspiration, desire and the drivers of*

    migration (pp. 19–36). Routledge.

Waldinger, R., & Bozorgmehr, M. (Eds.). (1996). *Ethnic Los Angeles*. Russell Sage Foundation.

Wickramasekara, P. (2003). *Policy responses to skilled migration: Retention, return and*

    circulation. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---

    migrant/documents/publication/wcms_232366.pdf

World Atlas. (2023). *Maps of Iran*. https://www.worldatlas.com/maps/iran

World Economic Forum. (2016). *The human capital report*. https://weforum.org/

Yazdani, M. (2015). Higher education under the Islamic Republic: The case of the Bah'ais.

    Journal of Educational Controversy, *10*(1), 7. https://cedar.wwu.edu/

    cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1253&context=jec

Yeganeh, N. (1993). Women, nationalism and Islam in contemporary political discourse in Iran.

    Feminist Review, *44*, 3–18. JSTOR. https://doi.org/10.2307/1395192

Yoon, E., Adams, K., Clawson, A., Chang, H., Surya, S., & Jérémie-Brink, G. (2017). East

    Asian adolescents' ethnic identity development and cultural integration: A qualitative

    investigation. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *64*(1), 65–79. Academic Search

    Complete. https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000181

Zarbi, S., Shin, S.-H., & Shin, Y.-J. (2019). An analysis by window DEA on the influence of international sanction to the efficiency of Iranian container ports. *The Asian Journal of Shipping and Logistics*, *35*(4), 163–171. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajsl.2019.12.003

Zayar, D. (2000). *Iran—Revolution in resilience*. Struggle Publications. https://books.google.com/books?id=lPBtAAAAMAAJ

Ziabakhsh, S., & Simon, F. (2002). *The relationship between the Iranian self and the acculturative patterns of Iranian immigrant women*. Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B: The Sciences and Engineering, 62(9-B). https://www.researchgate.net/publication/275641532_The_Relationship_Between_the_Iranian_Self'_and_the_Acculturative_Patterns_of_Iranian_Immigrant_Women

Zia-Ebrahimi, R. (2014). 'Arab invasion' and decline, or the import of European racial thought by Iranian nationalists. Ethnic and Racial Studies, 37(6), 1043–1061. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2012.734389

APPENDIX A

Recruitment E-Mail

Dear [name],

As a doctoral student in the Graduate School of Education and Psychology at Pepperdine University, I am conducting a research study seeking to identify the success strategies used by the Iranian-American women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system in attaining higher education degrees in the United States.

If you received your primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system, hold a bachelor's degree or higher from an American university, and are willing to participate in an interview about your success strategies and the experiences from Iranian education system in assisting or hindering your success, please e-mail Niloufar.mirhashemi@pepperdine.edu to provide your contact information.

Your participation in the study would consist of an audio-recorder interview and is anticipated to take no more than 30-60 minutes. Participation in this study is voluntary, and your identity as a participant will be protected before, during, and after the time the study data is collected. Strict confidentiality procedures will be in place. Confidentiality will be maintained using a password-protected laptop and secure Google Drive to store all data collected, including informed consent, the recorded interview, and the transcribed data. All data will be deidentified using a numerical pseudonym which will be assigned to each individual recording. The researcher will collect, store, and destroy the data, specifically delete the audio recordings right after transcription, and destroy all the data after three years.

APPENDIX B

Pepperdine University IRB Approval Letter

NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

Date: January 31, 2024

Protocol Investigator Name: Niloufar Mirhashemi

Protocol #: 23-09-2247

Project Title: THE SUCCESS STRATEGIES OF THE IRANIAN-AMERICAN WOMEN WHO INITIALLY RECEIVED THEIR PRIMARY AND/OR SECONDARY EDUCATION IN THE POST-REVOLUTION IRANIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM IN ATTAINING HIGHER EDUCATION DEGREES IN THE UNITED STATES

School: Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Dear Niloufar Mirhashemi:

Thank you for submitting your application for exempt review to Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). We appreciate the work you have done on your proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101 that govern the protections of human subjects.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an amendment to the IRB. Since your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite the best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete written explanation of the event and your written response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the IRB and documenting the adverse event can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* at community.pepperdine.edu/irb.

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or correspondence related to your application and this approval. Should you have additional questions or require clarification of the contents of this letter, please contact the IRB Office. On behalf of the IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

Judy Ho, Ph.D., IRB Chair

cc: Mrs. Katy Carr, Assistant Provost for Research

APPENDIX C

Pepperdine University Informed Consent Form

IRB TEMPLATE SOCIAL- BEHAVIORAL ADULT PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT

IRB #:

Formal Study Title:

THE SUCCESS STRATEGIES OF THE IRANIAN-AMERICAN WOMEN WHO INITIALLY
RECEIVED THEIR PRIMARY AND/OR SECONDARY EDUCATION IN THE POST-REVOLUTION
IRANIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM IN ATTAINING HIGHER EDUCATION DEGREES IN THE
UNITED STATES

Authorized Study Personnel:

Principal Investigator: Niloufar Mirhashemi,
100491760,
niloufar.mirhashemi@pepperdine.edu

Key Information:

If you agree to participate in this study, the project will involve:

- ☑ (Females) between the ages of (18-80)
- ☑ Procedures will include (Contacting participants using the recruitment script, informed consent, data collection via structured interview, transcription of data, analysis of data, documentation of findings)
- ☑ One virtual visit is required
- ☑ This visit will take 60 minutes total
- ☑ There is minimal risk associated with this study
- ☑ You will not be paid any amount of money for your participation
- ☑ You will be provided a copy of this consent form

Invitation

You are invited to take part in this research study. The information in this form is meant to help you decide whether or not to participate. If you have any questions, please ask.

Why are you being asked to be in this research study?

You are being asked to be in this study because you have higher education degree and possess a director level or higher position in your industry. You must be between 18 to 61 years of age to participate.

What is the reason for doing this research study?
The reason for this study is to determine the success strategies used by Iranian-American women, who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system, in attaining higher education degree in the United States, the challenges these women faced in their educational journey, how these women measure success in education, and the lessons that these women have for future Iranian American women entering higher education systems in United States.

What will be done during this research study?
You will be asked to complete a 60 minute semistructured audio only virtual interview. The PI will ask you a series of questions aimed at figuring out what strategies are used by leaders in your field. While the research will take approximately 26 to 52 weeks, your interview will only take 60 minutes.

How will my data be used?
Your audio interview responses will be transcribed, analyzed, and aggregated in order to determine the findings to the established research. The researcher will collect, store, and destroy the data, specifically delete the audio recordings right after transcription, and destroy all the data after three years.

What are the possible risks of being in this research study?
This research presents minimal risk of loss of confidentiality, emotional and/or psychological distress because the interview involves questions about your leadership practices. You may also experience fatigue, boredom, or anxiety as a result.

What are the possible benefits to you?
You are not expected to get any benefit from being in this study.

What are the possible benefits to other people?
The benefits to society may include better understanding of leadership strategies used within your industry. Other emerging leaders might also benefit from any additional recommendations that are shared through this process.

What are the alternatives to being in this research study?
Participation in this study is voluntary. There are no alternatives to participating, other than deciding to not participate.

What will participating in this research study cost you?
There is no cost to you to be in this research study.

Will you be compensated for being in this research study?
There will be no compensation for participating in this study.

What should you do if you have a problem during this research study?
Your welfare is the major concern of every member of the research team. If you have a problem as a direct result of being in this study, you should immediately contact one of the people listed at the beginning of this consent form.

How will information about you be protected?

Reasonable steps will be taken to protect your privacy and the confidentiality of your study data. The data will be deidentified and stored electronically through a secure server and will only be seen by the research team during the study and until the study is complete.

The only persons who will have access to your research records are the study personnel, the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and any other person, agency, or sponsor as required by law. The information from this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings but the data will be reported as group or summarized data and your identity will be kept strictly confidential.

What are your rights as a research subject?

You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study.

For study related questions, please contact the investigator(s) listed at the beginning of this form.

For questions concerning your rights or complaints about the research contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB):

Phone: 1(310)568-2305

E-mail: gpsirb@pepperdine.edu

What will happen if you decide not to be in this research study or decide to stop participating once you start?

You can decide not to be in this research study, or you can stop being in this research study ("withdraw') at any time before, during, or after the research begins for any reason. Deciding not to be in this research study or deciding to withdraw will not affect your relationship with the investigator or with Pepperdine University.

You will not lose any benefits to which you are entitled.

Documentation of informed consent

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to be in this research study. Signing this form means that (1) you have read and understood this consent form, (2) you have had the consent form explained to you, (3) you have had your questions answered and (4) you have decided to be in the research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Participant Name:	_____
	(First, Last: Please Print)
Participant Signature:	_____
	Signature Date

Interview Protocol

- IQ1. Think of the single most difficult challenge you have faced in pursuing your degrees in the US? What was that challenge and how did you experience it?
- IQ2. What strategies did you employ or what resources did you seek to overcome this particular challenge?
- IQ3. What were other similar challenges you experienced when pursuing your degrees?
- IQ4. What strategies did you employ to conquer these particular challenges?
- IQ5. What practices, in your opinion, were challenging in your American higher education process? How did you identify and overcome those challenges?
- IQ6. Are you personally aware of strategies employed or resources sought by these women?
- IQ7. As an Iranian-American woman with an American higher education degree, how do you define success?
- IQ8. How did you measure your progress and success as you transitioned from the Iranian education system to the American higher education system?
- IQ9. How can higher education institutions better support Iranian-American female students with educational backgrounds from Iran?
- IQ10. What advice or recommendation would you give to future Iranian-American female students with academic backgrounds from Iran pursuing a higher education degree in the American higher education system?
- IQ11: Was it all worth it? Why? Elaborate please

APPENDIX D

Peer Review Form

Instructions for Reviewer

Thank you for reviewing my interview questions for my research study. If you haven't been prompted to do so, please make a copy of this document and share with me.

Please review each question and corresponding interview questions. There is a drop-down column in the middle of each section that will have you choose, "**keep as is**" "**modify**" or "**delete it**". If you are choosing to **modify**, please provide feedback and modifications. Thank you so much. Please return this via e-mail to: niloufar.mirhashemi@pepperdine.edu.

RQ1. For Iranian American women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system, what success strategies did they employ when studying in the American higher education system?

Interview Question	Please choose:	Your feedback/notes
What educational background, experiences, training, and characteristics do you possess that have contributed to your success in attaining a bachelor's or higher degree from the American education system?	Keep as is	
What practices from the Iranian education system contributed to your success in American higher education?	Keep as is	
What do you believe to be factors from the Iranian education system that have contributed to your success in the American higher education system?	Modify with notes	What background, experience, and/or character traits do you possess that have contributed to your success in the American higher education?

RQ2. For Iranian-American women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system, what challenges did they face when studying in the American higher education system?

Interview Question	Please choose:	Your feedback/notes
What is unique about the Iranian education system for the Iranian women studying in the American higher education system?	Keep as is	

What practices, in your opinion, were challenging in your American higher education process? How did you identify and overcome those challenges?	Keep as is	

RQ3. How do Iranian-American women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system measure their success in American higher education?

Interview Question	Please choose:	Your feedback/notes
As an Iranian-American woman with an American higher education degree, how do you define success, and what does it pertain to?	Keep as is	
How did you measure your progress and success as you transitioned from the Iranian to the American higher education system?	Keep as is	
What methods and strategies have you found effective in transitioning from the Iranian education to the American higher education system?	Keep as is	

RQ4. In accordance with their encounters, what recommendation would Iranian American women who received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system make to future Iranian American women pursuing degrees in American higher education?

Interview Question	Please choose:	Your feedback/notes
How can higher education institutions better support Iranian-American female students with educational backgrounds from Iran?	Modify with notes	What strategies and tactics have you found effective for advancing toward higher education in America?
What advice or recommendation would you give to future Iranian-American female students with academic backgrounds from Iran pursuing a higher education degree in the American higher education system?	Keep as is	

Instructions for Reviewer

Thank you for reviewing my interview questions for my research study. If you haven't been prompted to do so, please make a copy of this document and share with me.

Please review each question and corresponding interview questions. There is a drop-down column in the middle of each section that will have you choose, "**keep as is**", "**modify**" or "**delete it**". If you are choosing to **modify**, please provide feedback and modifications. Thank you so much. Please return this via e-mail to: niloufar.mirhashemi@pepperdine.edu.

RQ1. For Iranian American women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system, what success strategies did they employ when studying in the American higher education system?

Interview Question	Please choose:	Your feedback/notes
What educational background, experiences, training, and characteristics do you possess that have contributed to your success in attaining a bachelor's or higher degree from the American education system?	Keep as is	
What practices from the Iranian education system contributed to your success in American higher education?	Keep as is	
What do you believe to be factors from the Iranian education system that have contributed to your success in the American higher education system?	Keep as is	

RQ2. For Iranian-American women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system, what challenges did they face when studying in the American higher education system?

Interview Question	Please choose:	Your feedback/notes
What is unique about the Iranian education system for the Iranian women studying in the American higher education system?	Modify with notes	I believe there are two questions in this question. What is unique about the culture of Iranian education system? What practices do you believe were major challenges and/or obstacles in your journey toward higher education in the United States?
What practices, in your opinion, were challenging in your American higher education process? How did you identify and overcome those challenges?	Keep as is	

RQ3. How do Iranian-American women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system measure their success in American higher education?

Interview Question	Please choose:	Your feedback/notes
As an Iranian-American woman with an American higher education degree, how do you define success, and what does it pertain to?	Keep as is	

244

How did you measure your progress and success as you transitioned from the Iranian to the American higher education system?	Keep as is	

RQ4. In accordance with their encounters, what recommendation would Iranian American women who received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system make to future Iranian American women pursuing degrees in American higher education?

Interview Question	Please choose:	Your feedback/notes
How can higher education institutions better support Iranian-American female students with educational backgrounds from Iran?	Modify with notes	What techniques and methods have worked for you to move towards achieving degrees in the American higher education system?
What advice or recommendation would you give to future Iranian-American female students with academic backgrounds from Iran pursuing a higher education degree in the American higher education system?	Keep as is	
How can higher education institutions better support Iranian-American female students with educational backgrounds from Iran?	Keep as is	

Instructions for Reviewer
Thank you for reviewing my interview questions for my research study. If you haven't been prompted to do so, please make a copy of this document and share with me.
Please review each question and corresponding interview questions. There is a drop-down column in the middle of each section that will have you choose, "**keep as is**", "**modify**" or "**delete it**". If you are choosing to **modify**, please provide feedback and modifications. Thank you so much. Please return this via e-mail to: niloufar.mirhashemi@pepperdine.edu.

RQ1. For Iranian American women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system, what success strategies did they employ when studying in the American higher education system?

Interview Question	Please choose:	Your feedback/notes
What educational background, experiences, training, and characteristics do you possess that have contributed to your success in attaining a bachelor's or higher degree from the American education system?	Keep as is	Interesting question, I like to see how the answers would be
What practices from the Iranian education system contributed to your success in American higher education?	Keep as is	

What do you believe to be factors from the Iranian education system that have contributed to your success in the American higher education system?	Keep as is	Maybe change the order of the questions

RQ2. For Iranian-American women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system, what challenges did they face when studying in the American higher education system?

Interview Question	Please choose:	Your feedback/notes
What is unique about the Iranian education system for the Iranian women studying in the American higher education system?	Modify	What is unique about the culture of Iranian education system that can contribute to higher education and achievements in the United States?
What practices, in your opinion, were challenging in your American higher education process? How did you identify and overcome those challenges?	Modify	Great question but might consider putting for another research question

RQ3. How do Iranian-American women who initially received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system measure their success in American higher education?

Interview Question	Please choose:	Your feedback/notes
As an Iranian-American woman with an American higher education degree, how do you define success, and what does it pertain to?	Keep as is	Good question
How did you measure your progress and success as you transitioned from the Iranian to the American higher education system?	Keep as is	I like this one

RQ4. In accordance with their encounters, what recommendation would Iranian American women who received their primary and/or secondary education in the post-revolution Iranian education system make to future Iranian American women pursuing degrees in American higher education?

Interview Question	Please choose:	Your feedback/notes
How can higher education institutions better support Iranian-American female students with educational backgrounds from Iran?	Keep as is	Well-developed question good job

What advice or recommendation would you give to future Iranian-American female students with academic backgrounds from Iran pursuing a higher education degree in the American higher education system?	Keep as is	Excellent
How can higher education institutions better support Iranian-American female students with educational backgrounds from Iran?	Keep as is	Also, can add where do you see Iranian women in their future educational achievements