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Ethno-Racial Boundary Making and Iranian-Identifying Americans

Tania Nasrollahi



Abstract: Iranian-identifying Americans have been described as an ethnic group that exists between racial boundaries. Some believe Iranian-identifying people should be classified as White but others disagree. To examine individual Iranian-American perspectives on their ethno-racial identity, I utilize semi-structured qualitative interviews conducted over the duration of 3-4 months from the greater Los Angeles area. I organized participants' analyses of their identity categories recounted in these interviews into boundary-making strategies. Results entail boundary-making strategies that were classified in the following four categories: dis-identification with White, identification with Aryan, an emphasis on mixing, and reclassification. Responses suggest there may be identifiable patterns emerging in ethno-racial classification based on demographic information.

Keywords: Identity, Race, Ethnicity, Boundary-Making, Iranian-Americans

1. Introduction

For Iranian-Americans, self-identification and external classification are topics of debate. The US census classifies Iranian-Americans as belonging to the “White” category. However, both scholarly and anecdotal evidence shows that the experience of Iranian-Americans is often inconsistent with their census classification (Khoshnevis, 2017). Sociologist Neda Maghbouleh describes Iranian-Americans as living “in the limits of whiteness,” or in other words, living with racialized experiences despite being legally classified as “White” (2017). Iranian-Americans navigate the everyday realities of US governmental policy, such as economic sanctions on Iran and the “Muslim Travel Ban” (Executive Order 13769) administered by the Trump administration. According to a survey conducted by the Public Affairs Alliance of Iranian Americans (PAAIA), close to half of Iranians have personally experienced or know another Iranian-American who has experienced discrimination based on their status as Iranian (2019). This thesis paper raises the question of how Iranian-Americans think of themselves given that their experiences and identifications may differ than externally-assigned ones. What is the analytical process of Iranian-identifying Americans when arriving at an ethnic identity?

Recognition is a social process where individuals can have their identities legitimized or challenged. To deliberately misrecognize someone has even been philosophically said to be a form of oppression (Taylor, 1992). Some believe ethno-racial categories hold the responsibility of representing a social experience—in this case, the social experience of being an Iranian-American in the US. Being legally classified is often the first step of the “othering” process, foreshadowing discrimination. For many externally-classified racial groups, being recognized as distinct catalyzed a chain of events leading to marginalization. Race has been defined as “a subjectively felt belonging to a group that is distinguished by a shared culture” (Wimmer, 2013).

2. Literature Review

Iranian diasporic identity is complicated when considering the conditions a group must meet in order to be considered a diaspora at all. One of the most widely agreed upon conditions is a sustained ethnic boundary maintenance between an ethno-racial group and their host country. However, there is a vulnerability with adopting labels such as diaspora, because ethno-racial categories are often changing (Brubaker, 2005; Wimmer, 2013). Ethnic ascriptions are not “fixed” or exclusive. Many Iranian-identifying Americans identify with multiple other ethno-racial ascriptions. After all, Iranians are not a homogenous group. These ascriptions are not necessarily parts of a greater whole (e.g., Iranian being a subset of identity within Middle-Eastern identity) but also can hold contextually different, or even contradictory, identities.

For instance, one may identify as White and Iranian in one context, but Iranian and a person of color in another. I find that the internal process of creating ethnic markers is influenced by external perceptions of Iranian-identifying Americans. With scholarly studies suggesting prevalence of Islamophobic and Iranophobic attitudes in the US, Iranian-identifying individuals could be responding to these external ascription changes (Maghbouleh, 2017). For this reason, as well as the proximity and prevalence of Iranian-identifying people in Los Angeles, this was the demographic selected for study.

Applications of intersectional frameworks of identity have proliferated in recent studies. Sociologists have showcased, for instance, the value in considering intersecting identities (e.g. gender, caste, sex, class, sexuality, religion, disability) to showcase different modes of discrimination and experience (Crenshaw, 2017). Ethno-racial identities are not a monolith, and are in a consistent state of change, thus I argue there are intersecting aspects of an individual’s identity influencing the analysis of their ethno-racial identity. Identity categories such as generational status, gender, class, and age may have implications for how Iranian-identifying people contextualize their life experiences. For example, as discussed la-

ter in this article, older, first-generation individuals educated in Iran during the 1970s appear to be more comfortable using the terminology of Aryan as a historical reference to describe Iranians, while Iranian-identifying individuals in the US are much more likely to associate the category with eugenics. Because the ethno-racial labels individuals ascribe to are changing and at times, even paradoxical or contradictory, it is valuable to observe the internal, analytical processes of identity instead. In other words, it is not as important which ethno-racial category an individual is identifying as, but rather their process for ascribing to that identity.

3. Theoretical Framework

One sociological approach to studying ethnicity is examining the use of different ethno-racial categories. The labels individuals use to describe their ethnicity and race are a subset of ethno-racial categories. The set of decisions behind adopting an ethnic or racial label as an identity is known as the process of ethnic ascription. When examining these ethnic ascription processes, it is necessary to separate internal and external ethnic ascription. Here I define internal ethnic ascription as a process by which individuals adopt ethno-racial labels to describe or understand their own identity. In contrast, when an individual is assigned a label by an outside group or structure, I have defined it as an external ethnic ascription process. Ethno-racial labels and categories can coexist, as well as seemingly contradict, one another. These labels are not mutually exclusive. What are the social contexts where this disagreement between internal and externally assigned identity arises, and how do these moments impact the individual understanding one has of their Iranian identity?

Individuals rely on an intersubjective legitimizing process, where an external group legitimizes or delegitimizes their identity through either upholding or challenging their self-assigned ethnic label (Wimmer, 2013). In interviews, I asked respondents to tell me about times where their identity markers either made sense or didn't make sense. Respondents were also asked to elaborate on moments where they felt

an ethno-racial label was externally ascribed to them, as well as times where they felt their own self-identification was not accepted by others. During these conversations, many respondents explained that their ethno-racial labels are time-sensitive and context-driven. As a result, participants' ethno-racial labels relied on their own subjective perceptions about their external environment—creating a high amount of variance in their ethnic markers. This is not inconsistent with Goffmanian sociological understandings of how individuals perform identity or use identity cues to navigate particular spaces. Below, I examine reasonings that Iranian-Americans give in interviews on why they engage in these strategies.

4. Sampling & Methods

To gather the ways in which Iranian-Americans ascribe themselves and identify these processes, I interviewed seven Iranian-identifying Americans. Respondents were selected through chain-referral sampling, where respondents refer outside individuals they think would be interested in participation. All participants were based in the US. Specific consideration was given to representing gender, a variety of ages, as well as first- and second-generation Iranian-Americans. For the purposes of this study, first-generation is defined as individuals who were born in another country and came to the US. Second-generation is the succeeding US-born generation.

I used the American Community Survey (ACS) to understand demographic information about Iranians living in the US (Tables 1-3 shown below). Data on Iranians within the US is difficult to obtain, but the ACS asks respondents to report country of origin and ancestry. We can use this to get a sense of the demographic variations of Iranians in the US. While a representative sample was impossible given the limited sample size, the following information was collected and showcased in Table 1 to give more context to the population. The estimates for second-generation Iranians in the US was created through adding together all who claimed Iranian ancestry on the ACS (first or second ancestry). Pe-

ople who claimed Iran as their birthplace were then used as the estimate for first-generation, with the sum acting as the estimated total number of Iranians in the US. In an effort to be more representative in my sample, I recruited three participants who identify as male, and four who identify as female. Further, three of seven of my participants were over age 45.

In addition to sex and age, educational attainment was considered as a factor when recruiting. Table 2 showcases the estimates from the ACS dataset regarding Iranian educational attainment in the US. In this sample, three of seven participants have gone to graduate school, two are college graduates, while the other two have attended some college. The perspectives of Iranians who have a high school diploma or less than high school are not represented. The struggle to represent this demographic is in part due to the study's location in Los Angeles, which has a high cost of living and is more likely to represent Iranian-identifying individuals with a higher socioeconomic status and educational attainment. While many Iranians live in California, the lack of regional diversity in the sample is a definitive limitation. Table 3 showcases the common states of residence of Iranians in the US from 2007-2018. After gathering this sample, I conducted qualitative interviews in order to identify common patterns with ethnic-boundary making strategies among respondents. Interviews were transcribed, coded for patterns, and organized accordingly.

I discuss four types of boundary making: dis-identification with White, identification with Aryan, an emphasis on mixing, and an example of reclassification. Most respondents described multiple instances of changing the boundary-making strategies they were engaging in, depending on where and who they were with. Most commonly, respondents would describe many ethno-racial boundary-crossings, or reclassifications, occurring at once in a single story or narrative. These recollections were described by respondents as "ah-ha moments," and are showcased below in key quotations. These quotations were selected as prime examples of the boundary-making strategies observed. Quotations with the most level of detail and insight into the process were selected. Many participants alluded to points brought up in these key quotes, even if they did not

explicitly engage with the same strategy as the participant being quoted.

A. Dis-identification from White Category

Ethnic fission is the act of dismantling or disassociating from an existing ethno-racial category (Wimmer, 2013). Of the seven Iranian-Americans I interviewed, five recounted moments they felt the need to reclassify as non-white. All of these participants identified as Iranian or Iranian-American. Once these respondents reclassified themselves as non-white, many described additional ethnic boundary-making moves in response to other questions or scenarios.

One respondent described feeling as if identifying as white would undervalue her experiences with discrimination. Jasmine (pseudonym) is 19, attending university, and second-generation. Her parents immigrated to the US during the 1979 Iranian Revolution. She describes her decision to reject white as an identity below.

Iranians are not treated as white by mainstream society. With the Iran ban, like, people always making fun of the way I looked at a kid. Something like the Iran ban does NOT happen to white people. White people wouldn't get teased for their body hair or, just like, the way they look is the standard. Saying we're white when we're not like, actually given anything white people get is wrong. It's bad. I was in this camp, and we had this long discussion about visibility. Saying we're white is violent because it's bad for the disability of the community. Like our experiences with discrimination are literally being erased, because it's like, no. Actually, check off this box. You're just white. It's erasure.

Jasmine told me she had initially embraced White as an apt description of Iranian identifying Americans. However, she changed her mind at the age of 14 after conversations she had at a summer camp focused on Iranian heritage. She stated that the reason behind her change of opinion regarding her self-identification was Iranians' experiences

being “not treated as White.” The presence of discrimination suggested to her that she should change the boundaries of her ethnicity.

She emphasized how White social experience includes an inclusive relationship to beauty standards. Jasmine showcased moments where she felt as though she was not included in that standard. “Something like that [experiences of discrimination] does NOT happen to White people.” Jasmine experienced moments where she felt discrimination from her classmates based on her physical features. After, she interpreted the comments as a delegitimization of Iranian-identifying Americans’ White identity. As a result, she decided to separate Iranian-identifying Americans from a mainstream White identity and reflected this in her internal ethnic ascription. When Jasmine decided to dis-identify as White, she chose to distance from White as a social identity. In her descriptions of White Americans’ social benefits, she alluded to an awareness of a racial hierarchy in American society. Jasmine showcases awareness of a hierarchy when she discusses issues surrounding visibility. In her perspective, to claim White identity while experiencing discrimination would be problematic, as it discounts the social benefits traditionally associated with being classified as White.

When she said Iranians identifying as White were “bad for the visibility of the [Iranian-American identifying] community,” she was emphasizing that Iranians had a different social experience than the other groups who identified as White. She was accounting for the exclusion of Iranian-identifying Americans from benefits of others who also adopt White as an identity. In order for her to justify this decision, she had to be aware of a racial hierarchy, as well as the benefits associated with different classifications within the hierarchy. Erasure became a problem because there were inadequate amounts of recognition for Jasmine’s struggles with discrimination. Five of my seven respondents recalled one or more instances of discrimination, either against themselves or their perceived community, when explaining why they identify with an ethno-racial category of Iranian.

B. Identification with Aryan-ness

In contrast, three out of seven participants explained that they felt White was an accurate ethnic label specifically because they identified as Aryan. This ethno-racial label has come to be associated with eugenics and other extremely problematic racial concepts. One participant explicitly noted this, and made sure to emphasize the historical nature of this ethno-racial category, explaining that Aryan-ness was an ancient Indo-Iranian term. These individuals believe Iranians are descended from a geographic region that self-described as Aryan, and thus, fell within Whiteness. One participant even explained that Aryan was the original White identity. The three respondents explained that rather than changing their classification (to non-white) in response to discrimination, they believed that the Iranian label should be higher up in a racial hierarchy.

Every respondent expressed an awareness of a US-based racial hierarchy they operate within. For instance, Jasmine, aforementioned, regularly expressed the position of White Americans as not having to “deal with” the same experiences she faced—delegitimizing her White identity. In this case, respondents who identified as White claim that the social benefits associated with Whiteness should apply to Iranian-identifying Americans. Benefits of a White identity participants cited were: being accepted by mainstream beauty standards, easier time finding work, fewer run-ins with discrimination, an easier time assimilating, and not being seen as an ethnic minority.

These participants also commonly cited examples of discrimination they had faced. An example that frequently came up was the 2017 Iran Travel Ban implemented by the Trump administration. This Executive Order impacted several participants, many of whom were suddenly restricted from seeing their families. These individuals believed this was one example where Iranians were subject to discrimination and prejudice from the US. One participant even expressed this belief outright in the following quote:

There was no reason for there to be a travel ban on Iranians, but because they were seen as scary by the US, for no actual real reason, the president saw it as a moment where he could get people on his side. So he did this ban.

However, respondents who acknowledged this discrimination did not necessarily respond with the need to reclassify or create a new ethno-racial boundary. This response to discrimination contrasts with the desire to reclassify away from Whiteness, which was shown in the above section. Both of these boundary-drawing practices begin as a response to being perceived as lower on a racial hierarchy. However, they evoke different attempts to cope or change in response to discrimination. This participant, age 61, is a first-generation immigrant. Ali (pseudonym) is an engineer and a father. He immigrated to the US just before the 1979 Iranian revolution. He explains his boundary-making process below.

Iranians were the original White or Aryan race. I'm a person who likes to talk history. It wouldn't make sense to me to say we were anything but white. I do understand that we're immigrants and have been treated sometimes bad in the US, like with the Iran ban, but that doesn't mean we're not white.

Ali evokes a historical argument for his identification with Aryanism. He explains that discrimination, while a concern of his, is not grounds for him to reclassify. All three participants who identified as Aryan and white were older than age 45. This is consistent with earlier data collection from the 2019 Public Affairs Alliance of Iranian Americans: National Public Opinion Survey, whose results suggested that older individuals are more likely to identify with White as an ethno-racial label. By using this historical argument, this boundary-drawing process repositions Iranians to an elevated racial category.

In ancient texts, Persians did refer to themselves as Aryans, and this is the historical claim this participant is alluding to. As a contemporary example, Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, once referred to him-

self as the “Light of Aryans,” in 1973. Further, textbooks from the era of Reza Pahlavi’s governance discussed Iranians specifically as a “group of people belonging to the Aryan race.” This education was ingrained in the first-generation of Iranians during this period (Zia-Ebrahimi, 2011). These teachings in schools may explain the factor of age being connected with the likelihood of identifying as White, and prioritizing these conceptions of Aryan identity over the modern perception of Aryan as a label explicitly tied to eugenics.

C. Emphasis on mixture as the unique combination of two discrete identities or types.

Ethnic mixing involves highlighting mixed identity as a separate, distinct status. This is referred to at times as hyphenated identity, because it emphasizes the role of the hyphen in for instance, Iranian - *dash* - American. Individuals who emphasize the mixing of ethno-racial categories and identities tend to make other boundary-making moves. In four out of my seven interviews, respondents highlighted a mixed identity as their primary ethno-racial label. Common reasons included language proficiency, connection to national politics, and citizenship. Membership in multiple ethno-racial groups is redefined with an emphasis on an identity shared across group boundaries. In the case of Iranian-identifying Americans, participants who identified with this category felt their identities were not fully legitimized by outside people or structures unless they validated the importance of both the American and the Iranian identity.

When asked what specifically drew them to the American parts of their identity, respondents brought up logistical and social aspects of their day-to-day lives. One respondent mentioned that her primary connection to her American identity was that her dominant language was English, and that she felt very limited when trying to speak in Persian (Farsi). Another respondent explained his American identity was generally represented by all the ways he was socialized in the US, such as attending a local university and having a US-based job.

Participants expressed their Iranian-ness through an attachment to a shared culture or heritage. For second-generation youth, this typically involved behaviors and traditions they associated with their parents and families. They also cited reasons why both labels were identities they adopted with a critical lens. For instance, a participant shared she felt as if she was not politically or culturally American. She further explained that this was because she had some negative associations with factors that constituted an American identity. Participants in this category did express feeling alienated and frustrated by American politics. Second-generation participants who emphasized mixing, especially those who had never visited Iran, described feeling as if they were not impacted directly by the country's policies. This prevented them from having strong opinions regarding Iranian politics. Some even expressed insecurity when they identified as Iranian, fearing they would be seen as illegitimate because they had not lived in Iran.

As shown by the quote below. Leila (pseudonym), age 23 and a recent college graduate, reflected on how she was influenced to emphasize her mixed identity by a student group. Leila could be categorized as 1.5 generation, as she immigrated to the US when she was very young.

In some ways I'm completely American. I don't speak Farsi. I would be so lost if I went to Iran right now. I want to visit, but I couldn't live there ever. I just don't know what it's like to live in Iran. Which is why sometimes, I'll be with my family and I'll just think like? Am I even really Iranian?... But I also didn't feel fully American. Thanksgiving never made sense to me. I always cheered on the Iranian soccer team. I always felt like I was different than my friends in terms of my culture. I wasn't allowed to have sleepovers because I wasn't really white or American. I wasn't totally this or that. I remember when I first got to university, I wanted to join Iranian groups with students and whenever I'd go to events, I felt like I met other people who were in my position. It was the first time things made sense to me. Like, I'm not fully Ira-

nian. I'm not fully American. I'm Iranian-dash-American.

Both first- and second-generation respondents wanted to be specifically seen as hyphenated. They emphasize a mixed Iranian-American identity. Second-generation youth were the group most likely to present an emphasis on hyphenated as a distinct identity. This type of ethno-racial reclassification also most commonly took place in a university setting. Additionally, this boundary-making strategy often served as a jump-off point. For instance, Leila, who was quoted above, later made another move that involved dis-identification with White identity. Leila's ethno-racial label can not be externally legitimized unless she accounts for both Iranian and American aspects of her identity. Additionally, her overarching understanding of her identity involves distancing herself from the social category of White.

D. Using New Categories

This ethnic-boundary making strategy was the only instance where respondents created a new category. Two of seven participants participated in claiming membership to a new category. Both participants identified with the ethno-racial label of SWANA, which is an acronym for Southwest Asian and North African. Below, Mehran, aged 26 and a second-generation Iranian identifying American explains why he believes in the importance of SWANA (Southwest Asian and North African) as an ethno-racial category.

Iranians have been described as Middle Eastern and I think that's right. I think I'm Middle Eastern. Like, that's what I would put down right now I guess. But I think we should have a better category. I read online that people have been pushing for a SWANA label, that includes more than just Middle Easterners...MENA [Middle Eastern and North African] also has ties to colonialism. It was created because of people coming to the SWANA reunion and labeling people as oriental and othering.

Mehran explains that while he believes the label of Middle Eastern is sufficient, he has a preference for SWANA. He states that SWANA is a better alternative than Middle Eastern or MENA because he sees Middle Eastern is a label externally assigned by outside individuals to people within the Southwest Asian and North African region. Origins of the term “Middle East” became widely known when the US Navy used it to refer to the region (Barnard, 1965). Mehran believes in upholding a new label created internally, rather than externally assigned. SWANA gained its popularity from the SWANA Alliance, a US-based advocacy organization that writes:

S.W.A.N.A. is a decolonial word for the South West Asian/ North African (S.W.A.N.A.) region in place of Middle Eastern, Near Eastern, Arab World or Islamic World that have colonial, Eurocentric, and Orientalist origins and are created to conflate, contain and dehumanize our people. We use SWANA to speak to the diversity of our communities and to forward the most vulnerable in our liberation.

By identifying as SWANA, Mehran is showcasing a preference for internal ascription—an act he sees as politically inclusive and decolonial. Agreeing with the external ascription of Middle-Eastern in this case, is seen by Mehran as a bad political decision, because it unintentionally upholds the “cultural baggage” associated with it. He alludes to news stories as an example of this:

Think of all the cultural baggage you see on the news about the Middle East. I also think SWANA was created because people don't want to associate with that.

Individuals who engage in the act of giving meaning to new ethnic categories can do so to represent social phenomena or experiences they believe another label is not capturing. In this case, the participant described SWANA identity as a better alternative to Middle Eastern, because the

new label distances from the political history of being “othered” through Orientalist ideas. Further, he believes identifying as SWANA distances individuals from the classification of Middle Eastern, which holds negative associations that have been externally placed on individuals. This is due to the fact that Middle Eastern has taken on a political meaning that extends beyond the accuracy of the classification. Mehran’s decision to use SWANA as an identity marker acts in part as a depoliticization of his identity.

5. Discussion & Conclusion

There remains much debate internally on how Iranian identity is best classified. Due to the fluid nature of ethnic identity, this will likely continue to be the case. These results showcase different micro-level analyses by participants engaging in various boundary drawing strategies. By showcasing examples and processes behind these practices, we can better understand the ways identity is created and maintained, as well as the way an individual’s ethnic ascription can take on political meanings of its own.

These boundary-making strategies—dis-identification with white, identification with Aryan, an emphasis on mixing, and reclassification (SWANA)—showcase a variety of different perspectives Iranian-identifying Americans have on which ethno-racial labels describe them. In my initial hypothesis, I expected to see discrimination to be solely present in those who dis-identified with Whiteness. The social experience of being White is typically portrayed as devoid of racial discrimination, and this has been a common talking point in prominent organizations, such as the National Iranian American Council (NIAC). However, the presence of discrimination was cited as a factor in most decisions made regarding ethno-racial identity—even in identification White or Aryan labels.

The differences in how individuals interpreted the presence of discrimination was the basis for how they chose to identify. For instance, Ali, who identified with a historical Aryan identity addressed the issue of

discrimination by explicitly adopting the label. Rather than alluded to the case that Iranians are not White because they experience discrimination. Ali addressed discrimination by instead alluding to the argument that Iranians are White, and it is for this reason they should not experience discrimination. Ali's approach to ethnic ascription points to an awareness of power and inequality within the US racial paradigm. Racial labels are not consistent as units of analysis. For this reason, it is valuable to examine the processes and decisions behind the act of adopting an ethnic label.

6. Limitations & Further Inquiry

The design of the current study is subject to limitations. An obvious limitation of this study is the constraints of a small sample size, all from the Los Angeles area (N=7). This research is not meant to draw generalizable conclusions regarding the prevalence of certain ethnic-boundary making strategies among the greater Iranian-American demographic. Further inquiry is still needed to determine patterns regarding which strategies are most common, and which demographic factors tend to favor certain ethno-racial classifications.

While no demographic information regarding myself, the researcher was disclosed, participants might have garnered my Iranian status based on name or appearance, and this may have influenced responses. Further, recruitment strategies explicitly asked for Iranian identifying individuals. This may have prompted more racialized answers— attracting individuals who were interested in discussing personal experiences with discrimination, or being labeled with a category they disagreed with. This is in comparison to individuals who may have not felt that had anything to say about their Iranian identity, or felt that the call for Iranian-identifying people did not appeal to them.

There still exists a gap in the literature regarding the boundary-making strategies of Iranian-Americans on a national level and international level. Much of the literature on Iranian-Americans takes identity categories for granted as fixed variables, rather than context-driven and

changing. Moving forward, considering the contextual nature of ethno-racial identity is a helpful way of finding potential nuances in sociological analyses. As social conditions, such as political climates, discriminatory patterns, or other aforementioned influences change, presumably ethno-racial boundary making strategies will as well. For this reason, studying and identifying patterns in identity categories can showcase changes in structures of power and inequality. Lastly, while this study focuses on the ethnic-boundary making patterns of Iranian-Americans in Los Angeles, there are other “White-adjacent” ethno-racial groups that would be illuminating to study within this framework. Much of the existing literature on race and ethnicity observes identity categories as fixed and unchanging, which limits our understanding of nuances across social space and time.

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Table 1: Select Demographic Characteristics of Iranians in the United States, (2007-2018)

Sex and Age	First Generation (%)	Second Generation (%)	All Iranians (%)
Sex			
Male	52%	50%	52%
Female	48%	50%	48%
Age			
Under 45	34%	96%	52%
Over 45	66%	5%	48%
N	13,348	5,868	19,216
Note: Percent may not add up to 100% due to rounding			

Source: US Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey (ACS) 2007-2018, 1% Public Use Microdata

Table 2: Educational Attainment of Iranian-Americans in the United States, (2007-2018)

Educational Attainment	First Generation (%)	Second Generation (%)**	All Iranians (%)
Educational Attainment			
Less than High school	7%	2%	5%

High school or some college	36%	27%	36%
Bachelor's degree	28%	35%	29%
Graduate or professional school	29%	36%	30%
N	12,545	1,641	14,186
Note: Table does not count individuals <25			
Note: Percent may not add up to 100% due to rounding			

Source: US Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey (ACS) 2007-2018, 1% Public Use Microdata

Table 3: States of Residence of Iranians in the United States, (2007-2018)

Characteristics	First Generation (%)	Second Generation (%)	All Iranians (%)
Major states of residence			
California	53%	40%	49%
Washington DC/ Maryland/Virginia	9%	9%	9%
New York/New Jersey/Connecticut	9%	11%	10%
Texas	7%	7%	7%

All other states	22%	33%	17%
N	13,348	5,868	19,216
Notes: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding			

Source: US Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey (ACS), 2007-2018, 1% Public Use Microdata

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