

The life experience of Middle Eastern immigrant women to the United States: The case of Iranian women in Minnesota

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Abstract

This research has focused on the process of community formation, dynamics of adaptation and assimilation to the new culture of the United States, and the life experiences of women on a daily basis. The methods of research have been a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods. This study has an important significance: 1) they are involuntarily or forced migrants, for the most part, 2) their migration was caused by national and international political factors, 3) their identities in the United States and the world have changed as a result of the event of 9/11, 4) they are non-Arab Muslims, 5) they have been entering the mainstream of American culture very rapidly due to their high educational background, 6) they have not established any significant ethnic community as a support system like other immigrants and 7) their adjustment issues have been either neglected or underestimated. My research paper is about the life experiences of Iranian women dealing with all these issues.

Introduction: Migration of Iranians

Since Iranian Revolution of 1979, large group of Iranians migrated to the United States. It estimated that two million Iranians left Iran during the years of 1978-79 (Mohammadi & Mohammadi). According to Bozorgmehr and Sabagh, this number was outrageous (1988:16).

Bozorgmehr and Sabagh estimated the Iranian population in the United States was about 1,800,000, one-third of which lived in Southern California (Bozorgmehr, 1991:11). And the second largest communities of Iranians were in Washington DC and New York (1991:3). In 2003, according to *Iran Census Report: National Iranian American Council*, the states with the highest population of Iranians were, California with the population of 33,871,648, Maryland, 5,296,486, Virginia, 7,078,515, Washington DC, 572,059, Texas, 20,851,820. As far as cities, the largest populations of Iranians were in Los Angeles with population of 536,000, Washington DC 160,000, New York, 115,000, San Diego, 40,000, Houston, 32,000, and Dallas 28,000. In 2004, an independent academic organization, at Massachusetts Institute of Technology indicated that Iranian Americans are far more numerous in the United States than census data indicated. This group estimated that the number of Iranian Americans may have topped 691,000 in 2004.

In 2009, U.S. *Census Bureau; American Community Survey, 2009, detailed table*, there are about 437,799 Iranians in the United States and in the state of Minnesota it was 3,313 Iranians. And in 2010, according to other independent surveys done by Iranian-Americans themselves, there are 1–1.5 million Iranian-Americans living in the U.S. with the largest concentration—about 720,000 people—living around Los Angeles. Other large communities include New York; New Jersey; Washington, D.C.; Seattle, Washington; and Houston, Texas. (Wikipedia, 2011)

Regardless of conflicting data as far as how many Iranians migrated to the United States, one can see clearly that there have been large numbers of Iranians who migrated to the United States since 1979. Koehn in his book, *Refugees from Revolution*, (1991), stated that political and economic conflict between nations is the responsible “push factor” for people of many nations move out of their own lands, and “pull factor” to places where they can seek jobs. In case of Iranians, Halliday stated this flow of migration may be as a result of the Iranian Revolution as “one of the epic events of postwar history, involving levels of political mobilization, and international crisis...” (1982:187). As far as gender and migration, as Val Moghadam stated “according to Bauer, women in Middle Eastern Muslim societies are rarely described as a lone migrant but, many Iranian women do go into exile alone”(1993, 28).

The main research question here is in threefold: 1) what have been the experiences of Iranians in the United States where large groups of them migrated such as California? 2) How about their experiences in the states with less number of them like Minnesota? And 3) how has been the life experiences of Iranian women in Minnesota?

Sociologically it is significant to address these questions, for: 1) Iranians are not immigrant by nature. They have been from a very established society for centuries. And tradition has been important element of their culture, 2) they have strong ties with family members and friends, and 3) women have played an important role in carrying tradition from one generation to the next. Also setting up social gathering, cooking, entertaining and socialization were always in the hand of women. In other words, women have been major players in establishing the community. As they say, “if women are not happy, no one else is”

In what follows the theory of Ethnic community formation of Max Weber and later Don Martindale and its application of Iranian community formation in the United States and Minnesota and later the life experiences of Iranian immigrant women will be examined.

The Formation of Ethnic Community

Don Martindale (1981), in his book *The Nature and Types of Sociological Theory* stated that one of the major concepts Max Weber employed was social relation, which was “the fundamental concept for making the transition from individual acts to patterns of behavior. It is the critical concept by which one moves eventually from social action either to the social person or to social groups, institutions, and communities. (1981; 375-385)

Acts and social relations were to Weber the empirical events of concern to sociology as a science and all other “entities” studied by the science—such as groups, associations, institutions, organizations, communities and civilizations—were special configurations of acts and relations. From time to time in his work Weber used the concept “community.” One could ask under what circumstances Max Weber considers a special combination of acts and relations to be a community.

As Gerth, Hans and Mills, C. Wright (1946) in their book *From Max Weber*, mentioned Max Weber’s famous discussion of class, status, and party as a clue to Weber’s concept of community which appears in his discussion of class honor.

In contrast to classes, status groups are normally communities. They are, however, often of an amorphous kind. In contrast to the Purely economically determined 'class situation' we designate as 'status situation' every typical component of the life fate of men that is Determined by a specific, positive or negative, social estimation of honor. (1946: 186-187)

In this passage and in what follows it is clear that Weber was evidently thinking of community in terms of Toennies' *Gemeinschaft*—a shared way of life centering on neighborliness, friendship, and kinship. (Weber was a personal acquaintance of Toennies and familiar with his work.)

Max Weber used the concept of community in numerous contexts in his work on *the City* (1962). In one passage he observes:

An urban "community" in the full meaning of the word appears only in the Occident....To institute a full urban community a settlement must display a relative predominance of trade—commercial relations with the settlement as a whole displaying the following features: (1) a fortification, (2) a market, (3) a court of its own and at least partially autonomous law,(4) A related form of association; and (5) at least partial autonomy and Autocephaly, thus also an administration by authorities in the election of whom the burghers participated. (1962: 88)

Toennies would describe the city as a *Gesellschaft*. Hence Weber's concept of community embraces both *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* which then represents two major types of community. One could sum up Weber's notion of community as a complete system of social actions and social relations which embody and express a style; however, he was not prepared to confine community to a *Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft* continuum. The essential theory in community was the development of a way of life. Any drift in this direction is a drift toward community.

It is hardly surprising that when Weber examined the activities of people of one culture who for any of a variety reasons found themselves in the territory of a people with a different culture, he would explore their potential for a becoming a distinctive community—in his term a "guest" or "pariah" community, in our own term an "ethnic" community. Weber's theories of the ethnic community are to be found most fully developed in his sociology of the world religions.

In his classic studies of *Ancient Judaism*, *Religion of India*, *Religion of China*, Weber observed the appearance of "Guest People", which he also on occasion called "Pariah Peoples."

Weber's terms "Guest Peoples" and "Pariah" refers to a series of groups in diverse constellations. In his book, *Religion of India* (1958), Max Weber explains that the groups seem to be marked by the following typological extremes:

(1) People who as a result of invasion and conquest are expropriated from Their lands by immigrant caste groups and reduced to economic dependence on the conqueror. From the standpoint of the conquerors, Such people are "guests" even though they are older settlers than the conquerors. As soon as the caste system is established the newcomers may begin to assimilate "barbarians" (the original settlers) by assigning them to the lowest of the castes; (2) People: who have lost

their homelands completely and turned into itinerant artisan and, like the gypsies, live a dispersed migratory dependent existence. (1958; 11)

In his study of *Ancient Judaism* (1952), Weber examined three stages in the rise of Judaism: the Confederation, the Jewish Kingdom, and finally the exile Diaspora. In the last of three stages, the Jews were a “guest people” who had a community which Weber said was characterized by a “purely religious community organization.”(1952:360)

They maintained their own rituals, customs, and habits while, making a living by trading with the host people. In the case of the Babylonian exile, the number of Jews who engaged in trade increased.

The number of Jewish names in Babylon increased especially in Persian times and one finds, at that time, Jews as landowners, rent collectors, employees of Babylonian and Persian notables. (1952:347) In their special community, they resisted sharing non-Kosher meals with impure individuals. Of religion writings at the time, Weber observed: In the priestly revision this struggle against mixed marriage has found Expression in a whole series of theological constructions, as the Objection to the use of mixed seeds in the field, mixed threads in weaving, and bastard animals. (1952; 351)

Connubialism (intra-marriage) was practiced. Commensalism (shared table food) was also encouraged among Jews. And Jews who did not follow the rituals within the community were held as outsiders, while outsiders who shared the rituals were accepted.

Next to connubium we have to consider the role of commensalism for the caste—like closure against outsiders. We saw that commensalism Was readily practiced also with ritualistic strangers, but as is natural Elsewhere only within the circle of either permanent berith affiliates? Or temporary affiliates by guest rights. (1952:351)

In *Religion of India*, (1958), Weber observed different castes, such as Brahman, Vaisha, Kshatrya, etc. each have their own rituals and customs. In the Hindu castes, customs are significant as for example: abstention from meat, particularly beef; the absolute refusal to butcher cows and total abstinence from intoxicating drinks. (1952:9) Besides these customs there are certain dietary rules which Hindus would follow, such as:

(1) What may be eaten, and (2) who may eat together at the same table. These two points are covered by strict rules, which are chiefly restricted to members of the same caste. The dietary rules concern, above all, the further questions: (3) Out of whose hand May one takes food of a certain kind? For gentile houses this means above all: Who may one use for a cook? And, a further question is, (4) whose mere glance upon the food is to be excluded. (1952:9)

Besides eating habits, there are smoking habits, such as, with whom one may smoke, or with whom one may pass around one’s smoke in a particular way. In addition to connubialism, commensalism was also important.

Among the Hindu castes at the present time, not only inter-marriage between castes and even inter-marriage between sub-castes is usually absolutely shunned (1952:40)

When Hindu's followed their rituals, it was difficult to communicate outside of the caste and virtually impossible for outsiders to get into the caste.

Weber observed that as a social phenomenon "guest peoples" existed everywhere within the Hindu community. (1952:11) In earlier times the phenomena existed "on a far larger scale in India."(p.11) Moreover, everywhere, India and elsewhere, "guest peoples" were usually excluded from intermarriage and commensalism, and therefore are held to be ritually impure. (1952:12)

The purest form of this type is found when the people in question have totally lost their residential anchorage and hence are completely occupied economically in meeting demands of other settled people—the gypsies, for instance, or, in another manner, the Jews of the middle Ages. (1952:11)

In *Religion of China*, Weber observed that the Buddhists who migrated from India to China were "guest peoples". They formed their own community and kept their festivities and rituals alive. In a manner unusual for China:

...the Buddhist festivities formed occasional communities; only the heterodox sects, often pursuing political ends and hence politically persecuted, formed enduring communities.(1952:225)

In his studies of world religions, Weber made frequent use of the hypothesis that "guest peoples" who migrated from one cultural area to another retained special habits of marriage, eating, dancing, religious observance, and politics in the framework of the host culture. These "guest peoples" had to survive despite prejudice against them and had to make a living in whatever ways open to them, adapting to a host culture that remained somewhat alien. Weber was developing an original approach to ethnic relations.

Beginning in the 1950's and continuing into 1983, Don Martindale and his students conducted numerous studies of ethnic communities, using a social behaviorist perspective in the tradition of Max Weber. This is the major contemporary heir to the approach to ethnic community formation, beginning with Weber and Simmel and extending through the Chicago school. To Martindale, *American Social Structure*, the concept of community "...is not a term for an area where people live but for a kind of integrated system of social life in which geographic areas are secondary or even irrelevant" (1960:133). Martindale maintains that there are three principles that form community: stabilization, consistency, and completeness. In his article, "Theory of Ethnic and Status", Martindale employs the term "community"

...to refer to the total system of interactive life which permits any plurality to survive and perpetuate themselves through time. It is evident that animals, fishes, birds, and even insects compose true communities as well as men. Communities consist of arrangements which solve the basic problems of interactive life and survival in nature. However, one vast difference separates human from non-human communities which are instinctively based; those which compose human communities (institutions) must be invented and learned. Only the communities of men are composed on institutions. (1965:29)

Furthermore, Don Martindale states that “Ethnic community arises when the tendency of a community to close to outsiders operates together with an innovation across group boundaries to form a plurality of persons of alien origin into a special sub-community. (Martindale: 1965:32) Ethnic community is for survival in nature. It can have positive functions at many levels: 1) to provide support system at the time of trials, 2) to celebrate festive and cultural heritage, 3) to provide opportunity to meet and find marriage partner, and 4) to share dinner table, religious or political activities. The above case is applicable to the formation of Iranian community in California and other states with large numbers of Iranians living there. As it is stated in Wikipedia (2011), the Los Angeles area with its Iranian American residents is sometimes referred to as “Tehrangeless” or “Irangeles” among Iranian-Americans. There are Iranian market places, numerous restaurants, Mosque, political organization, centers for activities and festive, local newspaper, and variety of TV and radio stations. In what follows the case of Iranians living in the states with less number of them such as Minnesota, the life experiences of women, and their process of adaptation will be examined.

Iranians in the Twin Cities (Minneapolis-St. Paul) 1979-1982

During 1981-82, I conducted research using both qualitative and quantitative method to investigate the potential for formation of community among Iranians in the Twin cities. The population of Iranians was 1500 at that time. The theoretical framework of Don Martindale and ethnic community of Max Weber as it was stated earlier was used. Eighty-five women and men of all age groups were surveyed. The questions were asked were: How many Iranian or American friends do they have? Approximately how close or how far away do they live from each other? Do they intend to stay in the United States or return home? How are they adapting to American culture and what factors have helped them to adapt to American culture? What forces make them interact with each other? Do they feel prejudice and discrimination? In what way they interact with the host? How is the pattern of their interaction on a daily basis? And whether the process of their interaction leads to formation of their community? The result showed that there were potential for formation of community. They had already established restaurant, supermarket, and different cultural centers for activities. However, as how all these interaction lead to community formation remained to be seen. For the most part, majority of Iranians were students, less families and single women available for potential marriage partner in the future. And as it was said earlier the core of community, for the most part is in the hand of families and women.

In the late 1980s and 1990s, a large group of Iranians migrated to the Twin Cities for joining the family members who were resided there earlier and some for job opportunities. The population of Iranians increased, especially number of women and families with children. Gradually the community formation took place. However, with more women entering to the main stream of American culture, there were more discussion about difficulties of adapting to American culture, understanding school system, being homesick for their homeland, difficulty of finding jobs with not having education from the American universities, losing status, raising

children in a culture which is different than their own and dealing with long and harsh winter of Minnesota. The main concern became the daily life experience of Iranian women not the formation of ethnic community anymore. It became apparent that those who came at younger age and before Iranian Revolution of 1979 had an easier time to adjust to American culture. However, those who came at older age and after Revolution with families and small children had a much more difficulty to adapt to the new culture. There was also real difference for women who were educated in the United States in comparison to those who were educated in Iran. Furthermore, as adapting to the new culture, single never married women had different concerns in comparison to married women. In short, as community became more diverse the need for research to examine the process of adaptation and life experiences of Iranian women in Twin Cities became inevitable. In what follows the literature review illustrate the life experience of women in the United States since 1979-1994. (Please note, this study deals with population of Iranian women from 1979-1994. Therefore, the literature is related to that period)

Literature Research on Iranian Immigrant Women in the United States from 1979-1994

The earliest research on Iranian women abroad appears after the Revolution of 1979, in Bauer's study (1980). She interviewed exiled Iranian women in Turkey, and Germany. Her findings showed that as a result of exile some women became more feminist, and searched for emancipation. The Iranian women who lived in Germany, however, were better educated and were from middle and upper class families of Iran, compared to Iranian women in Turkey. As Moghadam said "[according to Bauer, women in Middle Eastern Muslim Societies are rarely described as a lone migrant but] many Iranian women do go into exile alone"(1993:28). Bauer's study was followed by Sherwood who studied, in 1981, the life adjustment of Iranian Jewish women in Los Angeles. She found that their social class in American society played an important part in their adjustment to life in the United States. Abyaneh (1986) did a study on the economic role of females who came to California in the post-Revolution period. She found that Iranian women who worked for other employers were less exploited than the ones who worked in a self-employed business for family members. In 1991, Nassehy-Behnam interviewed immigrants including women in France. She found that when the political ideology of Iran changed in 1979, many left the country because they were uncertain about the future of their children, and some were political refugees. As a result of migration they experienced a new pattern of a patriarchal model which they never experienced before. The study of marital satisfaction among Iranians showed that females adopt the non-traditional roles in their marriage more than males, and they ask for more freedom and egalitarian roles (Vatankhahi: 1991).

In 1992, Spedieh Zarrinnejad did a study of depression and stress among Iranian women in the United States. She compared Iranians who migrated before the Revolution of 1979, and those who migrated after the Revolution. She found that the amount of stress among old migrants at the time of migration was more than among young migrants, due to the fact that older migrants carry barrier language, experience cultural shock, and have more resistance to assimilation. Also according to the findings, there were more elders who left the country after the Revolution who

were angry, bitter, and frustrated. As a result, they felt more stress than those who did not experience all of these and left Iran before the Revolution. However, overall she did not find any report of depression directly among either pre-or post-Revolution, immigrants. However, there was a report of health problems related to stress and depression such as lack of sleep, feeling pain in the soul or as Iranians say "narahat", somatic pain, headache, apathy, and lack of interest in social activity. She concluded that this might be a result of Iranian culture being private, so that they were not comfortable in sharing their inner feelings with outsiders.

A study in California showed that Iranian women had less of a problem of acculturation, as a result of the bio-cultural model (Mashyekhi: 1992). Also women found themselves happier to have a blend of the cultures of both, rather than just one or another (Telser-Gadow, 1992). Afary did a cross-cultural study of five Iranian women in search of their identities into the new world as part of the discovery of the past, and adjustment to the present condition. The commonalities among them were: traumatic childhood, fighting against it through their adolescence and upbringing in a culture that did not permit discussing it, political trauma of the old country in adult age which caused them to have nervous breakdowns in the new world while they were exposed to the cultural shock as a result of forced migration. The only way they could survive was to find a new circle and bonds of friendship and therapy to open up the past and search for new identities. As the author suggests this trend will occur more and more as the number of Iranian females increases, and there will be a need for Iranian feminist counselors to deal with their process of adjustment, since they have been neglected in their culture (1992). Hanassb studied the life experience of young Iranians who were caught between the two cultures and have already created some problems (1993). Tohidi's study of Iranian women showed that Iranians gained freedom, education, and employment opportunities. However, they have the grief of losing their home, kinship, and friends.

The literature review of Iranians clearly showed that the Iranian women had many obstacles. In what follows the life experiences of Iranian women in the Twin Cities are explored.

Iranian Women in the Twin Cities 1990-1992

In order to understand the process of adaptation of Iranian women the classic theory of Taft was used. Taft (1973) defined adaptation neither a "complete assimilation to the customs of the new country nor total rejection of the mother culture." The key element here is the capacity for individuals to adjust when faced with the pressing demands of the host society." (Nassehy-Behnam, 1991:114) However, in order to make this adjustment possible, it requires that people have to have certain characteristics. According to Richmond and Kalbach (1980), personal characteristics are important, and according to Sell and De jong (1983), legal status, and knowledge of the host country are crucial elements. In the study of Iranian exiles in France, Nassehy-Behnam found many variables such as: legal status, reasons for migration, the choice of France as a place to live, type of residence, education and occupational background, occupation and economic status in France, marital status, sex, and age background of individuals which play important roles in adaptation. Her findings showed that the range of successful adaptation is a

continuum from complete adaptation to non-adaptation. And among all variables, the reason for migration seems to play an especially important role. Needless to say, other variables such as the duration of stay in the country and age are important as well.

The main hypothesis derived from the above theories is that pre-Revolutionary migrants, as a result of their young age at the time of migration, having legal status, knowledge of the host culture-due to duration of residence in the United States- adapt better than those who migrate post-Revolution, involuntarily, at an older age, and with less knowledge of the host culture.

Variables taken for the study are: age, time of migration, marital status, number of Iranian friends, number of American friends, the amount of time they spend with Iranians, the amount of time they spend with Americans, occupation and education both in Iran and the Twin Cities, reasons for migration, legal status, desire to stay in the United States, knowledge of host culture or exposure to western culture prior coming to the Twin Cities, and home ownership. Also whether or not they have families in the Twin Cities is important, since in Iranian culture having family nearby is crucial.

Only a combination of qualitative and quantitative procedures was adequate for studying the life experiences of Iranian women and their adaptation to the host country. As far as possible, it was desirable to examine their process of adaptation from the standpoint of its bearers. For this reason, it was attempted to participate in as many gatherings and celebrations as possible during the period of research in 1992. Among them were dinner and birthdays gatherings, Iranian festivals, shows, special Iranian movies, and gatherings at the Iranian restaurant.

In addition, a broad interview schedule was prepared and an attempt was made to carry out a series of open-ended interviews and a set of questions to collect data about their life experiences. It was deemed desirable to obtain interviews with strategically located individuals who were potentially in a position to throw light upon special problems faced by Iranians in the area over a period of time.

As a researcher with limited funds and facilities, every possible method was used in order to obtain a sample of Iranian women for quantitative analysis and in-depth interviews. They were: friendship networks, identification of Iranian women's names from the University of Minnesota directory, the directory of Iranian Association in the Twin Cities, and the list of the members of the three mosques. However, this was not without obstacles: Iranian women's names were unlisted, sometime they used initials instead of using full names, and some names were similar to the names of other nationalities from Middle East.

Seventy-six women were identified and interviewed at convenient places for them, such as grocery stores, doctor's waiting room, hospital, university campus, beauty salons, restaurants, shopping malls, their homes, parks, and dining areas between the hours of 8:00 am and 11:00 pm. First, the questionnaire was distributed among them to fill out for the purpose of quantitative. Later, the in-depth interviews were conducted. Subjects were cooperative and supportive of the research projects which made the research possible. The stories were in-depth, and dealt with women's life experiences more than anything else. The interviews were completed during three months, October-December of 1992.

Methodological Consideration

A. Quantitative data. For the gathering quantitative data, a questionnaire was designed to collect information on such variables as age, home ownership, occupation, marital status, religion, family size, the year of migration, the legal status, having family and friend nearby, visiting patterns, and place of residence. To obtain information on life experiences, the questionnaire also included questions on: visiting patterns (both with Iranians and Americans), obtaining American citizenship, years of migration, reason for migration, reason for choosing Minnesota, plans to stay or return to Iran, education and occupation in Iran and the host culture, and their prior knowledge of culture of the United States or other western societies.

The purpose of the analytical survey was to test the hypotheses that adaptation is easier for pre-Revolution migrants, than post-Revolution migrant Iranians. Since the former migrated at young age, had legal status, were voluntarily migrant and well established in the Twin Cities, while the latter migrated at older age, involuntary migrants, and less established as far as making friends in the Twin Cities. In view of the fact that the data to test these hypotheses was drawn mostly through friendship network sampling, only non-parametric tests of significance, such as chi-Square, were relevant in the analysis of the data.

Demographic Characteristics

The sample of seventy-six women includes seventeen percent between the ages of 23-28, twenty-four percent between the ages of 29-34, twenty-six percent between the ages of 35-40, thirteen percent between the ages of 41-46, eleven percent between the ages of 47-52, and nine percent above age 53 at the time of the interviews.

In regard to place of birth, fifty-seven percent were born in Tehran, twenty percent were born in the northern part of Iran, twenty-two percent were born in the southern part of Iran and only one percent was born outside of Iran.

As to their educational backgrounds prior to coming to the United States, thirty-eight percent had a high school degree, thirty-eight percent had a Master's degree, thirteen percent earned a Bachelor degree, and eight percent had education below the level of high school.

In regard to occupation in Iran, sixteen percent were homemakers, thirty-three percent were students, three percent were in business, thirty-two percent were professionals, and seventeen percent had other jobs.

As a result of migration to the United States, sixty percent obtained Bachelor degrees and seventeen percent obtained Master's and Ph.D. degrees. However, the number of homemakers increased to twenty-one percent, students decreased to twenty-two percent, business people increased to twelve percent, professionals decreased to thirty percent, and the other fourteen percent remained the same. In short, women obtained more education but did not necessarily become more professional.

Fifty-seven percent of women owned their home. Thirty-six percent came from families with fathers who had business backgrounds, and twenty-nine percent had fathers who were

government employees. Eleven percent was from military families, eight percent had fathers who were physicians, ten percent were from agricultural backgrounds, four percent had fathers in education, and only one percent with a father who was a university professor. Comparing father's and mother's educational background: twenty-eight percent of the fathers had high school degrees compared to thirty-three percent of the mothers with high school degrees; twenty-five percent of the fathers had bachelor degrees, and twenty-five percent had post-bachelor degrees, compared to fourteen percent bachelor degrees and five percent post-bachelor degrees for the mothers; seventeen percent of the fathers had less than a high school degree, compared to forty-seven percent of the mothers with less than a high school degree.

Eighty-three percent of the women were married. The rest were singles who consisted of: eight percent divorced, one percent widowed, and fifteen percent single never-married. Seventy-four percent were married to Iranians, seven percent to Americans, and the rest to non-Americans and Iranians. Eighty-four percent were married only once while the rest were remarried.

Among the married, fifty-seven percent had two to four children, three percent more than four children, the rest had one child. And among singles, five percent had only one child, three percent had two to four children, the rest had no children. Eighty-four percent were Muslims, four percent each were Christians and Bahais, and eight percent were atheists.

The main reason for migration to Minnesota for thirty-two percent was their spouses' education or occupation, for twenty-eight percent it was to join family members, eighteen percent came for their own education, seven percent for their children's education, five percent for their own job, four percent to join friends, and only one percent came for the quality life in Minnesota.

As far as cultural contact with western societies prior to coming to Minnesota, fifty-seven percent lived in other places before coming to Minnesota. Of that group, fifty-eight percent lived in more than one place, eighty-five percent knew at least one foreign language, fifty-seven percent spoke English very fluently, fifty-two percent had neither the desire to return to Iran or to become an American citizen. Sixty percent desired to remain in Minnesota as long as they could.

As for relatives and family, sixty-four percent had family in Minnesota, and thirty percent had Iranian friends. Thirty-six percent visited their friends once a week, forty-eight percent visited more than once a week, and seventeen percent visited every day. Fifty-two percent had Iranian neighbors. Sixty-two percent had Iranian meals in Iranian restaurants at least once a month, eight percent preferred Iranian food to others. Seventy-seven percent ate Iranian food every day.

Summary of findings of Quantitative Analysis

To summarize the characteristics of Iranian women in the sample, the majority were between 35-40 years old, born in Tehran, obtained more education as a result of migration, but they did not necessarily become professionals; half owned their own homes, more than half married once and to Iranians. Large numbers of them were from business, military and government backgrounds.

Their fathers had more education than their mothers. More than half came to Minnesota after the Revolution. The reasons were for their spouse occupation or education, and for joining relatives who were already resided in Minnesota. They all had prior knowledge of western culture, visited or lived in more than one country, knew foreign languages well, had legal status, and no desire to return to Iran, they wished to remain in Minnesota as long as they could. At the same time, in Minnesota, more than half had Iranian neighbors and friends, and they ate Iranian food every day. Married women socialized to get information about raising their children, to cope with homesickness and marginality, to learn more about possible availability of single males and females for the possible future dates of their children. They played a main role to improve the quality of life for their family members in the host country. In general, their gatherings were formed based on political beliefs, religion, marital status, and educational backgrounds. However, single professional females who were few in number, found no place to go; they socialized with their family members and non-Iranians. The student females were in two groups: 1) older married students who graduated from Iranian high schools, and had their own sub-groups based on: religion, political beliefs, educational and intellectual interest, 2) younger students who finished high school in the United States and were relatively Americanized, they also had their own groups based on social events such as dancing, or parties. The Iranian Association of Minnesota was the only organization that arranged several festive occasions for the community as a whole for getting together.

Taking the demographic characteristics of this sample being majority post-Revolutionary migrants and applying it to theory of adaptation, one may predict that adaptation either did not occur or if it did it was with difficulty.

Findings

A series of null hypotheses could be formulated with respect to the independent and dependent variables. And these hypotheses could be tested by Chi-Square (X), for the differences between observed frequencies and expected frequencies. Tables for non-significant relationships were not included.

Hypothesis 1: Time of Migration and Home Ownership

As discussed before, home ownership was one of the variables which explain adaptation. Since ownership was an indicator of stability and well-being, this variable was used to indicate the status of their wealth. The pre-Revolutionary migrants were more stable and owned more property than post-Revolutionary migrants. Use of Cross-tabs showed that there was a relationship between owning property and the time of migration. The pre-Revolutionary migrants owned homes more than post-Revolutionary migrants.

Table: A-1 indicates that there was a significant association between property ownership and the time of migration. 73.3% of pre-Revolution migrants own property as compared to 41.3% of post-Revolution migrants. (See Appendix)

Hypothesis 2: Time of Migration and Marital Status

Use of chi-Square technique showed that there was a significant relationship between the time of migration and marital status.

The post-Revolutionary migrants came basically in large numbers and with families. The pre-Revolutionary migrant came single, and remained single or divorced with smaller families. Table A-2 shows that 30.0% pre-Revolution migrants were single compared to 4.3% post-Revolution migrants. And 3.3% were divorced among pre-Revolution migrants compared to 10.9% post-Revolution migrants. 66.7% pre-Revolution migrants were married compared to 82.6% post-Revolution migrants. Finally the tables showed that there was only 2.2% widow who was post-Revolution migrants. One can conclude that the post-Revolution migrants were experiencing family life, and divorce more than pre-Revolution migrants since they were older migrants and they migrated as a group rather than single individuals. (See Appendix)

Hypothesis 3: Time of Migration and Familiarity with other Cultures

The following cross-tabs showed that post-Revolution migrants lived in other countries, and visited other countries prior to coming to Minnesota more than pre-Revolution migrants.

Table: A-3 indicates that the 71.7% of post-Revolution migrants lived in other places than Minnesota, compared to 33.3% of pre-Revolution migrants. It proved our hypothesis that post-Revolution migrants basically did not migrate to obtain education in the United State as their pre-Revolution migrants' counterpart. (See Appendix)

Hypothesis 4: Time of Migration and Legal Status

The chi-Square technique showed that the there was a relationship between time of migration and legal status.

As table A-4 indicates 70.0% of pre-Revolution migrants Have legal status compared to 23.9% of post-Revolution migrants. As one of the indicators for adaptation was to have legal status and this data proves that the pre-Revolution migrants had the security of legal status. (See Appendix)

Hypothesis 5: Time of Migration and Family Living in the Twin Cities

The cross-tabs showed that pre-Revolutionary migrants had relatives in the Twin Cities more than post-Revolution migrants.

As table A-5 shows 83.3% of pre-Revolution migrants had relatives in the Twin Cites as compared with 50.0% of post-Revolution migrants. This clearly explained the fact that pre-Revolution migrants stayed longer and could have attracted more relatives to the area or they chose the Twin Cities because of relatives residing there. However, post-revolution migrants had more Iranian neighbors. As table A-6 showed, there was a significant relationship between post-Revolution migrants and their Iranian neighbors living in the area. The post-Revolution migrated have 60.9% Iranian neighbors compared to 36.7% pre-Revolution Iranian migrants. (See Appendix)

Hypothesis 6: Time of Migration and the Visiting Pattern with Americans

The chi-Square techniques showed that the Iranian pre-Revolution migrants had already established the bio-cultural models as there was a relationship between visiting Americans and the time of Migration.

As the table A-7 showed 30.0% pre-Revolution migrants visit Americans every day as compared 10.9% post-Revolution migrants this clearly shows that pre-Revolution migrants had more interaction with American culture. (See Appendix)

In short, by taking theory of Taft, literature research, and findings of analysis of quantitative data, one can conclude that pre-Revolution migrants adapt better to American culture than post-Revolution migrants. For the former has had legal status, education from the United States, own property and established with friends and family for longer period than post-Revolution Iranians. In addition the result of qualitative intertwining should confirm it. For the purpose of interviewing, the main questions were asked whether the subjects believe that she is adapted. And what the adaptation means to them? Referring to Taft's theory adaptation is neither a "complete assimilation to the customs of the new country nor total rejection of the mother culture." The findings are as follows:

B. Analysis of Qualitative data

Only by using interviewing, one can get contextual, personal life stories, and experiences of people. The content analyses were used to identify how similar the word "adapted" was used? And what the adaptation mean to Iranian pre and post-Revolution migrants?

1. Pre-Revolution Iranian migrant women

Thirty pre-Revolution Iranian immigrant women were asked about their living experience in the United States and their process of adaptation. Twenty-eight responded that they were adapted to the American culture by way of living in two worlds, Iran and the United States. In order words, they did not reject the American culture. Also, they did not fully accept it. (See Table A-8, Appendix)

2. Post-Revolution Iranian migrant women

According to the content analysis, out of forty-six post-Revolutionary migrant women, thirty-two responded that they are definitely adapted and Minnesota is their "home". (See Appendix A-9) In summary, both pre-Revolution migrants and post- Revolution migrants reported that they are adapted to American culture.

The model of adaptation to American culture for Pre-Revolutionary migrants is bio-cultural model. That is living in two worlds, Iran and the United States, and has balance between both cultures. This goes along with Taft's theory, not submitting totally to American culture and fully accepts it, nor rejecting it. .

However, post-revolutionary migrants have decided that Minnesota is their “home” and that is it. This could be interpreted as post-revolution migrants due to be forced or involuntary migration decided they have to adapt and accept the reality that the new place is their “home”. However, pre-revolution migrants were voluntarily migrants. And they had the luxury of selecting and choosing the better of the two world and cultures.

Summary, comments, and further suggestion

Taft defined adaptation as the way migrants meet their needs in the dominant culture. He did not deal with psychological well-being. The suggested important variables were; legal and marital status, knowledge of cultures rather than their own, and knowing the language of the country that they migrate to. However, according to Taft’s discussion and relevant literature, the time of migration and the length of residence is a crucial factor to make adaptation possible.

Findings from both qualitative and quantitative research analysis proved that the theory of adaptation to seventy-six Iranian women in the Twin Cities was applicable. That is the time of migration had a significant impact on legal status, home ownership, having more family from Iran in the Twin Cities, and friends from both cultures of Iranians and Americans.

Pre-Revolutionary migrant women came for education, married Americans, experienced divorce, or remained single. They had between five and ten family members or friends in the area. The process of adaptation was easier for them not because of home ownership or knowledge of the western culture, it had to do with the fact that they were voluntary migrants, lived longer in the U.S. and had an opportunity to develop bio-cultural patterns of interaction which played as an important role to adapt better.

Post-Revolutionary migrants were mostly married, relatively well-off, educated, traveled or lived in European countries prior coming to Minnesota. Having wealth, legal status, home ownership, education, and Iranian friends were helpful factors for post-revolutionary migrants but not enough to adapt. Those who were adapted reported that they made rational decision to adapt. The bio-cultural pattern of interaction and the balance of both cultures were not there for them.

The meaning of adaptation for post-Revolution migrants was Minnesota is “home”. However for pre-revolution migrants, adaptation means to “live in both cultures”. In short, the result of qualitative research proved that pre-migrants have had a more established friendships with the culture of the east and west. They considered themselves as adapted to the culture and live in both cultures. In other words, the length of stay and the time of migration seem to be important variables but not for its financial stability, but for having a secure and balance friendships with people of both cultures. However, the post migrants contact heavily with own ethnic group. At the same time, they tried to be part of mainstream of American culture very quickly.

In order fully to understand under what condition and how the adaptation has taken place, further analysis of qualitative data is in needed. The stories of Iranian women in Minnesota can be generalized to Iranian women in other places and women of similar cultural background who

happened to migrant under difficult circumstances. For the stories cover all shades of life from sorrow to happiness, darkness to the light, disappointment to hope, and failure to success. (Please see Appendix, the life stories of four interviews from post-Revolution migrants and three pre-Revolution migrants out seventy –six interviews are cited on P p.42)

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Appendix

Table: A-1
**Percent Distribution of Iranian Women in the Twin Cities,
 Own Property and the Time of Migration, 1992**

<u>Own Property</u>	<u>Before Revolution</u>	<u>After Revolution</u>	<u>Totals</u>
Yes	73.3	41.3	53.9
No	<u>26.7</u>	<u>58.7</u>	<u>46.1</u>
Totals	100.0	100.0	100.0
Basis	30	46	76
Percent Distribution	39.5	60.5	100.00

Note: All associations statistically significant at the .001 level.

Table: A-2
**Percent Distribution of Iranian Women in the Twin Cities,
 Marital Status and Time of Migration, 1992**

<u>Marital Status</u>	<u>Before Revolution</u>	<u>After Revolution</u>	<u>Totals</u>
Single	30.0	4.3	14.5
Divorced	3.3	10.9	7.9
Married	66.7	82.6	76.3
Widowed	-----	<u>2.2</u>	<u>1.3</u>
Totals	100.0	100.0	100.0
Basis	30	46	76
Percent Distribution	39.5	60.5	100.0

Note: All Associations statistically significant at the .05 level.

Table: A-3
Percent Distribution of Iranian Women in the Twin Cities,
Lived in Other Places and Time of Migration, 1992

<u>Lived Other Places</u>	<u>Before Revolution</u>	<u>After Revolution</u>	<u>Totals</u>
Yes	33.3	71.7	56.6
<u>No</u>	<u>66.7</u>	<u>28.3</u>	<u>43.4</u>
Totals	100.0	100.0	100.0
Basis	30	46	76
Percent Distribution	39.5	60.5	100.0

Note: All Association statistically significant at the .0001 level.

Table A-4
Percent Distribution of Iranian Women in the Twin Cities,
Legal Status and Time of Migration, 1992

<u>Legal Status</u>	<u>Before Revolution</u>	<u>After Revolution</u>	<u>Totals</u>
Yes	70.0	23.9	42.1
<u>No</u>	<u>30.0</u>	<u>76.1</u>	<u>57.9</u>
Totals	100.0	100.0	100.0
Basis	30	46	76
Percent Distribution	39.5	60.5	100.0

Note: All associations statistically significant at the .0001 level.

Table: A-5

**Percent Distribution of Iranian Women in the Twin Cities,
Relatives Living in Twin Cities, and Time of
Migration, 1992**

<u>Relatives in Twin Cities</u>	<u>Before Revolution</u>	<u>After Revolution</u>	<u>Totals</u>
Yes	83.3	50.0	63.2
<u>No</u>	<u>16.7</u>	<u>50.0</u>	<u>36.8</u>
Totals	100.0	100.0	100.0
Basis	30	46	76
Percent Distribution	39.5	60.5	100.0

Note: All Associations statistically significant at the Level of .001.

Table: A-6

**Percent Distribution of Iranian Women in the Twin Cities,
Iranian Neighbors and Time of Migration, 1992**

<u>Iranian Neighbor</u>	<u>Before Revolution</u>	<u>After Revolution</u>	<u>Totals</u>
Yes	36.7	60.9	51.3
<u>No</u>	<u>63.3</u>	<u>39.1</u>	<u>48.7</u>
Totals	100.0	100.0	100.0
Basis	30	46	76
Percent Distribution	39.5	60.5	100.0

Note: All associations all significant at the level of .05 levels.

Table: A-7
Percent Distribution of Iranian Women in the Twin Cities,
Time of Migration and Visiting patterns with
Americans, 1992

Visiting Americans	Before Revolution	After Revolution	Totals
Everyday	30.0	10.9	18.4
Once per week	23.3	13.0	17.1
<u>Less than once a month</u>	<u>46.7</u>	<u>76.1</u>	<u>64.5</u>
Totals	100.0	100.0	100.0
Basis	30	46	76
Percent	39.5	60.5	100.0 Distribution

Note: All Associations are significant at the .05 level.

Table A-8

Adaptation for pre-Revolution migrants (# of cases)

1. I feel adapted here, I live in two cultures	27
2. I am not adapted here. I don't feel I belong to this place.	<u>3</u>
Total	30

Table A-9

Adaptation for pre-Revolution migrants (# of cases)

1. I feel adapted, because Minnesota is "home"	32
2. I am not adapted here. I am ready to leave anytime	<u>14</u>
Total	46

The Samples of life stories of post-Revolution Iranian migrant women

Case #1

Background

I am thirty-three years old and was born in Ardebil, northwestern part of Iran. I have a high school diploma from Iran. My father was a businessman and had six years of education. My mother was a homemaker and had no schooling. I am married to an Iranian who has master degrees in business. I have two children and I am a Muslim.

Reasons for Migration

In 1990, I came to Minnesota for my husband's job. Prior to coming to Minnesota, I lived in Turkey for four years and France for five years. I also visited: Germany, Bulgaria, Greece, London, Geneva, Sweden,

and Virginia. I speak French, Turkish, and Farsi fluently. My English is average. I am not an American citizen and I would like to go to Iran as soon as possible. If I stay in the United States, I will move to a warmer state.

Present Status

At the present time, I am a homemaker. I have no relatives here and have four Iranian and three American friends, I contact them once a week I have a few Iranian friends who live out of the state and I contact them once a month. I eat at Iranian restaurants two times a month and I cook Iranian food at home every day. I am also a Muslim.

Attitudes about Living Experiences in the United States and Iran and the Process of Adaptation

The things I like the most about the United States are: freedom, comfort, and availability of working and studying conditions for youth. The things I like the least about the United States are: the high crime rate, rape, and violence, lack of relationships such as, contacts, care, and kindness between family members. The things I like the most about Minnesota are the good people and the safe cities. The things I like the least about Minnesota are mosquitoes and a lot of snow. The things I miss the most about Iran are: family, the city of Tehran, tradition, and childhood memories. The thing I like the least about Iran is the government.

As far as adaptation, I am not adapted here. I am thinking about returning to Iran all the time. When I came here I had a lot of help. Now, I have become more mature and independent and I don't ask for support. My concern here is my daughter. I am worried for her. There is too much crime, rape, and violence here. My daughter had some vaginal problems. I took her to a doctor and he said "somebody must of have molested her, otherwise, she would not have this problem."

As far as coming to the United States, I am happy about it. My husband got a degree that he always wanted and reached his goal. My husband had a bachelor's degree in agriculture. We went to France for him to get his Ph.D. But the work conditions were poor there. We lived there for some years and we decided to come to the United States. We came first to Virginia and then we moved to Minnesota. Here they have a better program for my husband's education. Even though we do well here, no matter what, we plan to return home. I miss Iran very much. I visit Iran and have company from Iran every year. I just love the warmth and kindness among our people. I still keep my tradition. The very first time, when I came to the United States, I was nineteen years old and a single woman. I learned to be responsible and independent. If I stayed in Iran, I would have been in a better condition mentally. Being away from my family was very painful for me. I lost my mother when I was in France and that was very tough. In France, I felt more secure for medicine, education, and welfare. In Turkey, I was very comfortable for their culture is the same or similar to ours. I loved it there. Here, I would be more comfortable, if I had a good friend. I am very lonely. In Iran, you are able to get help from people. I was comfortable to leave my children with older people there. Here you are scared of people and you don't dare to leave your children with anyone.

Iranians here have many problems especially financial problems. If I return home, I will be comfortable there financially. In Iran if I feel insecure and I need help, I will have it right away. Doctors in Iran are not helpful and schools are not good. Here, I get a lot of help from teachers. In Iran, there is a lot of hardship and scarcity of resources. But the family relationships are strong.

I don't believe in adaptation. We belong to Iran and we will remain Iranians. As far as migration, I have better communication with my children here. If we were in Iran, I probably would treat my children like others. I found Americans less prejudiced than the French. In France, there are many Arabs.

French don't like foreigners at all. In Turkey, Iranians are basically students. In France, Iranians are diverse as far as politics and interests. In America, Iranians are very close and dependent on each other.

Case#2

Background

I am thirty-two years old and was born in Disful, south of Iran. I have a bachelor degree in nursing and was a mid-wife from Iran. I practiced as a mid-wife for many years there. My father was a businessman and my mother was a homemaker. Both had six years of education. I am married to an Iranian businessman and I have one son. I am also Muslim.

Reasons for Migration

In 1990, I came to Minnesota for my husband's job. Prior to coming to Minnesota, I lived in India for six months and a year in Cyprus. I also visited Italy, Turkey, and Dubai. My English is average. I am not an American citizen and would like to return home as soon as I can.

Present Status

At the present time, I am enrolled in the nursing program at the University of Minnesota. They only accepted sixteen credits from my bachelor's courses. So, I am basically updating my knowledge again. Also, I am working part-time in a local nursing home. My brother in-law lives close by. I have many friends in the area and I contact them once every two weeks. I have four Iranian neighbors and they visit me twice a week. The only time I can see them all is when I am on vacation. I have no American friends but I have one Arab friend with whom I am very close to. I have many Iranian friends out of the state and I am in contact with them once a month. My real good friend is my husband. I eat at the Iranian restaurant once a year and I cook Iranian food at home every day.

Attitudes about Living Experiences in the United States and Iran and the Process of Adaptation

The things I like the most about the United States are: education, good healthy choices, and good facilities for medical care, excellent medicine, and the usage of drugs. The things I like the least about the United States are: loneliness, isolation, no time for communication and contacts, crime, and a lot of ugliness. The things I like the most about Minnesota are safety and peace. The things I miss the most about Iran are: family, friends, and gatherings. The things I miss the least about Iran are: working conditions, hardships, scarcity of medicine, scarcity of medical supplies, lack of sanity in the clinics and hospitals, shortage of staff in the hospitals, ratio of nurse to patient one to sixteen, lack of doctors, expensive drugs, lack of medicine, too many poor people with no insurance, unclean hospitals, usage of the same injection for many people because of lack of sufficient syringes, wearing the same gloves over again because of lack of supplies, miserable and sad conditions working in the hospitals.

As far as adaptation, I feel adapted here. We speak our own dialect at home. My husband was forcing me to speak English so that I could learn English fast. But we gave up. My son is only seventeen months of age. I would like to return to Iran because of him. I don't want my son to grow up here. Even my baby-sister is from Iran. When I came here I was very dependent. Now, I know the language and feel more independent. I know once I get a job I will be even more independent. When I came to Minnesota, I called home in a week and I found out my mother passed away accidentally. That was the hardest thing that I went through in my entire life. Not knowing the language, homesickness, and the loss of mother was too hard for me. I gradually adapted here and I think several things helped me: having a very flexible personality, good friends, frequent contacts with them, having a very good husband and that makes a difference and I never had any encounter with Americans. The fact that I am from the Middle East has not

bothered my American coworkers and friends. I also got to know a lot of international people here. My cultural experiences are becoming richer here. My income is less than in Iran but I am more comfortable.

Case#3

Background

I am twenty-four years old and was born in Tehran. My high school diploma is from Norway. I was an interpreter for Iranian immigrants there. In Iran, my father was employed at the oil company and had a master's degree in business. My mother was an architect and had a Ph.D. degree. I have never been married. I am also Baha'i.

Reasons for Migration

In September 1991, I came to the United States for my own education. Prior to coming to Minnesota, I lived in Norway for sixteen years, in Israel for one year, and visited Australia. I speak Norwegian, German, Hebrew, English, Yugoslavian, and Farsi fluently. I am not an American citizen but I would like to stay here as long as I can. If I go to Iran, it will be for a visit.

Present Status

At the present time, I have a bachelor's degree in mass communication, am enrolled for a Ph.D. program in comparative societies and cultural studies at the University of Minnesota, and am working as a teaching assistant. I have no relatives in Minnesota, I only know one Iranian family and I am in contact with them once a week. I have two American friends and I am in contact with them every day. I eat at the Iranian restaurant once a month and I cook Iranian food at home once a week.

Attitudes about Living Experiences in the United States and Iran and the Process of Adaptation

The things I like the most about the United States are: freedom, opportunity, and a good quality of education. The things I like the least about the United States are: superficial life and culture, untrue news, a lot of shopping, and unreal shows. The things I like the most about Minnesota are: progressiveness in arts and cultural programs, less social problems compared to other places, and a good quality of life. The things I dislike about Minnesota are: too much show off for boats, too much show off of wealth, and too many rich people. The things I miss the most about Iran are: New Year celebration, flowers, literature, poetry, and the spring season. I lived in Norway for so many years; however, I have no nostalgia about Norway. But I have nostalgia about Iran. When I compare Norway with the United States, I found Norway to be a racist country. Every summer I go back there and I find it worse all the time. It is difficult to find friends there for Norwegians don't open-up and communicate easily. However, once they become your friend they are there for you forever. There is less shopping there and their news is excellent and real. Norway is a good place for Norwegians to live. The standard of living is also very high.

As far as adaptation, I feel adapted here well. I like the progressive mentality. I have no real support and one friend is not enough. My concerns here are my lonely life and finding a right partner or dates. I went out with Norwegian men, but it is hard to understand or reach them. As far as my happiness, I am happy in both the United States and Iran, but not in Norway, There is no way that I can be or feel as a Norwegian. Their culture is too far remote for me. In the United States, they accept who I am and in Iran I am very happy.

Case #4

Background

I am thirty-two years old and I was born in Masjed Solieman, south of Iran. I have a community college degree from Iran. I was a secretary back home. My father worked for the oil company and my mother had

nine years of education. I was married to an American man in Iran and I have two daughters. I am also a Muslim.

Reasons for Migration

I came to the United States in 1991. I lived three years in New York, Oklahoma, one year in Miami and a few months in Pennsylvania. Prior to coming to Minnesota, I visited all the European countries and East Asia. My English is average and I am a citizen of the United States. I plan to move to Pennsylvania soon.

Present Status

I am married to an American man from Oklahoma and I have two daughters. My husband is an engineer specializing in airline engines. I am a sales person. I have no Iranian family members in Minnesota. I have only one family friend here. I have a few American friends whom I visit with once a month. I have some Iranian friends in other states and I am in contact with them once a month. I only go to the Iranian restaurant once a year. And I cook Iranian food at home every day.

Attitudes about Living Experiences in the United States and Iran and the Process of Adaptation

The things I like the most about the United States are: nature, freedom, and good opportunities for my children. The things I like the least about the United States are: job insecurity, crime, and drugs. As far as Minnesota, it is a good and affordable place to live.

The things I miss about Iran are: culture, family, friends, and availability of supports. My husband likes Iran so much that he keeps telling me that we should go back to Iran soon.

As far as adaptation, I don't feel adapted here. My only support system is my husband. He likes me a lot and he is very nice to me. My concerns are: my children, their safety, and job security.

I came here because I fell in love with my husband. In Iran, we had a lot of American neighbors, friends, and colleagues. I visited with them a lot and we used to celebrate Christmas and New Year back home. I had a wonderful life in Iran. At first when I came here as a new bride, I used to get homesick and depressed a lot. I was at home all the time. I did not even go to the shopping center. My husband was there for me and helped me a lot. Now, I am getting better but my husband is missing Iran. He loves our culture and people. When we were in Oklahoma, we were faced with a lot of discrimination. During the hostage crisis a lot of Iranian women were raped. I hardly went out alone. Thank God we moved to Pennsylvania. It was like Minnesota a good place to live. I think the factors that contributed to my not adapting well are that I never liked American culture and their people. I like international people.

Sample of interviews of pre-Revolution Iranian migrant women

Case #1

Background

I am seventy-one years old and I was born in Hamadan, South west of Iran. I have a high school diploma from Iran. I was married and I was a homemaker. My father was a doctor and my mother had religious education. I have three daughters and two sons. I am a Christian.

Reasons for Migration

In 1978, I came to Minnesota to join my family. Also, the Iranian Revolution played an important role. I did not want to be there as a Christian. Prior to coming to the United States, I visited all the European countries and I know how to speak French and English. I am an American citizen. I lived in Florida and Kentucky for a while, but I like Minnesota the most.

Present Status

At the present time, I have four of my children in Minnesota. I have two older Iranian women friends here too. We are in contact at least once a week. I have four Iranian family friends too. At church I have many American friends and I meet with them once a week. I go to the Iranian restaurant once year, but it is basically too far from the place I live. Otherwise, I would be there more often. I cook Iranian food at home every day. I have many Iranian friends who live in New York, Chicago, and California. I call them once a week.

Attitudes about Living Experiences in the United States and Iran and the Process of Adaptation

What I like about the United States and Minnesota are having my children around me. I have a house here and a lot of comfort. I also like the Minnesota weather.

When I compare my life back home to my children's life here, I feel we were blessed in Iran. We spent a lot of our time to visit. My children rarely have time to visit here. When it is dark early in the morning, they take their children to school and at night when it is dark again, they bring them home. In Iran, our children visit their cousins at least two times a week. Here there is a lot stress and mental pressure, anxiety, and worry. We never heard of children being stolen. We did not have so much worry for mass murder at school, drug use or alcoholic children. All these worries, lack of relaxation, and lack of a fulfilling social life create a lot of mental problems. I worry for my grandchildren. Also, children have no respect for their parents. Any kind of punishment is labeled as "Child Abuse". Children need guidelines, rewards, and punishment. Otherwise, they will not learn. Also there is no commitment in relationships and there is a lot of divorce.

As far as adaptation, I feel adapted here. I have always kept low expectations and that lets me be happy and I have never been disappointed. My children are very good to me. All of my children married to Americans. All of my grandchildren are mixed. My children work very hard. And they still don't have money. My husband was working with Americans in Iran. He was graduated from the American university. It was his idea that we should come to the United States and retire here. Even he says that the United States has changed. There is too much discussion of sex, and people have no shame to reveal every aspect of their lives in public. Nothing seems to be a big deal to them. We are coming from a culture with 2500 years of history. We learned: manners, shame to reveal every aspect of our lives, the differences between public and private affairs, and to be timid. I feel the mass media contributes to all of this. My husband is not comfortable here either. I never forgave Reagan when he said in one speech "Iranians are barbarians". It is not fair to do all that to our country. It makes us uprooted and it's not fair to label us barbarians. Daytimes, I go to language class and I found out that Americans don't like when we praise our culture.

My real pleasure and comfort here is our children and grandchildren. On weekends, they all have dinner with us. Also, they drop by our house during weekdays. We speak a combination of Farsi and English. My grandchildren want to learn Farsi, my children speak both languages and my in-laws know Farsi too. So our communication is interesting. My relationship with my grandchildren is a lot of fun. They learn Farsi from me and I learn English from them. At the, personal level, I am pleased with my life here and I feel comfortable.

Case#2

Background

I am twenty-seven years old and was born in Tehran. I have an education degree from Iran and I taught in elementary school there. My father was a vice president of a private company and he had a master's

degree in accounting and finance. My mother had a college degree from a community college and she was a homemaker. I am married to an Iranian man and have no children. I am also a Muslim.

Reasons for Migration

In 1978-79, I came to Minnesota twice and left for Iran. In 1981, I finally came to Minnesota for my parents. They had medical problems and I wanted to be with them. Prior to coming to Minnesota, I lived in England for one year and in Ohio for three years. I also visited Austria, Turkey, Greece, Germany, and Mexico. I am fluent in English. I am an American citizen and I would like to stay here as long as I can. If I return to Iran, it will be only for a visit.

Present Status

At the present time, I have a bachelor degree in computer science; I am working as a computer analyst, and studying toward my master's degree in business administration. I have a brother who lives out of state and parents who live close by. I have ten Iranian friends whom I have contact with two times a week. I have three Iranian neighbors and I have no American friends. I have many Iranian friends who live in other states and I contact with them once a week. I eat at the Iranian restaurants once a month and I cook Iranian food at home every day.

Attitudes about Living Experiences in the United States and Iran and the Process of Adaptation

The things I like the most about the United States are my friends and comforts of everyday life. The things I like the least about the United States are: high crime rate, too soft toward criminals, too much talk about issues that are not considered important according to our culture, and too many international brain drain professionals. The things I like the most about Minnesota are: peace, less people, good quality of standard of living, kind and warm people, nice greetings, good environment, beautiful nature, breathtaking sunsets, lakes, honesty, direct, and straightforward talks. The things I miss about Iran are: north of Iran, crowds, Iranian friendships, sincerity among people, family, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and kindness among people.

As far as adaptation, I feel I am adapted here. I have my parents and husband and this country is a home for me. I came here and went to high school. I can't speak Farsi well and my vocabulary and literature is not rich. I have never lived away from my parents. I always traveled and lived with them. Now, I am married I see my parents three times a week. They have been a strong source of support. My only concern is that there are too much freedom and moral issues out of control. I am very happy where I was then and where I am now. In every stage of life, I had my parent's support. Now my husband is my support. Ever since I came to the United States, I was always with my family and never got involved with American children. I studied and worked very hard. In our family, no matter what, we always ate lunch and dinner together. I never wanted to leave my parents. I loved them and truly enjoyed their company. I also liked my school. I was an active member in every organization at school. I have never encountered any problem with them. I never thought of getting married or having a boyfriend either. I only wanted to study. I was always open with my parents and discussed my everyday issues with them. They truly gave me a lot of freedom and I was comfortable being with them. Being raised with a good family is very important. You have a chance to learn the bad and good and are guided on the right path. Also, happiness in the family is very important. I was a happy child being with my parents. I always participated in Iranian shows, gatherings, watching Iranian movies with my mother. I always liked it and was proud to be from Iran. I also learned to speak French too. Now, I can speak Farsi, French, and English. Living here has made my cultural experiences rich. If the opportunity permits, I would like to go to France to practice French as well. In this culture, there is a lack of cultural understanding and they are not open to so many cultural differences. If we were closer to other countries like European countries, we would be in a better

situation. I am very happy that I got married to an Iranian. My husband is exactly like me. We are westernized but at heart Iranians. I don't have to explain my cultural background to him. At times, I really miss being in an environment where the only language is Farsi. I found the Iranian community in Minnesota to be from the upper class in Iran. They only represent that group of people from Iran and they are kind and hospitable people.

As far as cultural differences, I don't remember that we had prejudice against someone's minority status in Iran. But in America people have too many issues in regard to majority and minority. I also think that they open-up too much to kids. They have to let them grow up to understand. The other thing I don't like about in America is that they have to try everything. If you observe animals they go by their natural drives and they let other things alone. Here, they want to try everything even if it is against their nature. Also, the job security does not exist at all. People buy houses and they are laid off. I also am critical of the educational system here. Students have no respect for their teachers and there is no mention about it. I believe respect has to start from early childhood and right from the family and in school respect should be demanded. The other thing I don't like about the educational system is students can get by without taking a math course. The emphasis is too much on sport and they have practice sessions for it. But they don't have practice sessions for math. As far as work, I never had confrontations. In the United States networking and connection is a big deal. The differences between here and other countries is that if you work well without networking, you are still fine and can make it. One thing I noticed among Iranians is that wherever they go they want to be immediately a manager of the place, even if they may not know the culture of the place. In the United States experience is very important and in some cases is more than degrees. The thing I like about working in America is that they are honest and follow their rules. It is good but sometimes we need to use our imagination and common sense. But since everybody follows the rules, gradually they lose their common sense. Also providing the service is great here. If you request a service, it will be offered to you immediately. I feel sorry that in Iran we always were after our own interests and we did not care for others. Iranian women are faced with a lot of limitations. Our education is limited and it leads to limited opportunities. To me a healthy society is a society with a high standard of education and rich health resources available to all people. As far as our culture, unfortunately Iranians are not proud of their heritage. Also, we don't have a significant number of Iranian migrants in Minnesota. The difference between their attitudes is tremendous. I feel older Iranians will eventually return to Iran but not the younger ones. It is hard for me to return to Iran. Here I still can live with a credit card but what I can do there?

Case#3

Background

I am thirty-seven years old and was born in Abadan, south of Iran. I am a chemical engineer. My father worked for an oil company in Iran and had a bachelor degree in science. My mother had a bachelor degree in nursing and she was a nurse. I married and divorced an Iranian man in Iran and I have one daughter from him. Then, I married to American who has two daughters. Altogether we have three daughters. I am an agnostic and don't believe in religion.

Reasons for Migration

In 1978, I came to Minnesota for my husband's job and education. Prior to coming to Minnesota, I visited Spain, Greece, Germany, Italy, and England. I know English very well and I am an American citizen. I don't plan to return to Iran and if I do, it will be for my daughter, so that she can visit her father and his

family. Otherwise, I would like to stay in Minnesota as long as I can. Once I tried and left Minnesota for Delaware but I returned. I really missed living here.

Present Status

At the present time, I am a senior chemical engineer in one of the major companies in St. Paul. And I am going to the University of Minnesota to get my master's degree in engineering. My parents and a sister live close by. I have three Iranian family friends here too and I visit them once a week. I have two American friends and I visit them once a week. I have many Iranian friends who live in other states and we get together once a year. I go to Iranian restaurants once every two months and I cook Iranian food at home every day.

Attitudes about Living Experiences in the United States and Iran and the Process of Adaptation

The things I like the most about the United States are: honesty, simplicity, modesty, appreciation for music, jazz concerts, arts, plays, paintings, galleries, museum, books, and rich cultural programs. The things I like the least about the United States are: politically ignorant people, limitless freedom, and a confusing young generation. The things I like about Minnesota are hard working people and excellent cultural programs. The things I miss the most about Iran are: people, streets, and culture. The things I miss the least about Iran are behaviors and attitudes toward women. Women are constantly put down.

As far as adaptation, I feel I am adapted well here. Occasionally, I get homesick for Iran. But I really like Minnesota. I have no support here and I support myself. My concern here is my daughter. I am trying to teach her our culture, language, rituals, and traditions. So far, she is doing well and she seems to be very happy. I am worried because I am not religious but I want to teach her all the necessary morals that she needs. Also, we are living with my husband's daughters and at times, it becomes very difficult. As a woman, I am happy to be with my daughter here. It is a good place for women to live. But at times, I feel guilty that I can serve my country better and be more beneficial to my own people than here. But I chose to be here for my own welfare and it is selfish of me and that bothers me. Since I came here, I like Iranian culture more. I am becoming more Iranian, I read more about my culture, and I like my identity more too. I feel I am living in two cultures with the fullest capacity. I like the culture of here too. In our culture, we create a picture of ourselves and we live in that image. Therefore, we pretend. Here, we are ourselves and I am very comfortable with my American husband. Even though, he is a Minnesota man I feel closer to him than my Iranian husband. When I got a divorce my Iranian friends, especially women, were hard on me. They told me that I made a big mistake. Some of them left cut friendship with me. I always was an independent woman and because of it I was able to get a divorce. I could see on my own that I had marriage problems. When I got married for the second time, it was for financial support and love. My Iranian women friends again were harsh on me. They thought it was a big mistake that I chose an American over an Iranian man. However, up to this point I am happy for my decision.

I think several factors helped me to adapt well, I like both cultures and I did not grow up in a traditional family. My father had a lot of American family friends, we were not religious, I was never picky or sensitive, I had a positive relationship at work, I had a comfortable job with good pay, and I never sensed prejudice or discrimination