education sciences

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Experiencing Anti-Immigrant Policies on Both Sides of the U.S./Mexico Borderland: A Comparative Study of Mexican and Iranian Families

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Received: 9 April 2019; Accepted: 30 April 2019; Published: 18 June 2019

Abstract: The experiences of Mexican and Iranian immigrant families are often unheard and unpacked. The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine how race, ethnicity, and national identity are at the core of the sociopolitical and economic issues that Latino and Iranian families undergo in the United States. Using critical race theory as a framework, this research analyzed the ways in which Mexican immigrant families who were deported, and Iranian-immigrant families living in the United States, have been differently affected by post 9/11 anti-immigrant policies and by zero tolerance policies enacted by the Trump administration. The research question guiding this study was: How do U.S. anti-immigrant policies affect Iranian and Mexican immigrant families and their children's futures? Our findings uncovered that both groups were negatively affected, however, in different ways. Iranian immigrant parents worried about their socioeconomic status in the United States and their children's future. They also feared that their relatives might not be able to visit them due to the U.S. Muslim Travel Ban placed on people from seven Muslim-majority countries, including Iran. On the other hand, Mexican immigrants who lived in the United States undocumented were deported to Mexico. However, after deportation, and responding to the threat of the Trump administration to deport millions more, the Mexican government provided dual citizenship to U.S.-born children of Mexican returnees to facilitate their access to government services, including education. All people and place names are pseudonyms.

Keywords: Mexican immigrant families; Iranian immigrant families; deportation; zero tolerance immigration policies; educational access

1. Introduction

As a result of the recent anti-immigrant policy and inflammatory rhetoric of the current U.S. administration, Mexican and Iranian immigrants have been particularly targeted, and negatively affected. The last 40 years have been a time of large-scale immigration of Iranians to the United States. Despite stereotypical conceptions about immigrants' backgrounds, most Iranians who migrated to the United States after the Islamic Revolution of 1979 were professionals and intellectuals who left their home under social, cultural, and political pressures of the post-revolutionary government [1]. Furthermore, living in the United States was far from their expectations due the discriminatory practices against Iranian immigrants in American society, particularly after 11 September 2001. Consequently, Iranians, who suffered due to socio-political issues in their country, have been experiencing different forms of oppression in the United States. For Mexicans, the reduction in salaries and the decline in the quality of life that resulted from the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in the mid-1990s, forced them to migrate to the United States, without documents, in search for better opportunities [2].

In addition, the militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border after 9/11 pushed undocumented Mexican migrants to stay in the United States for longer periods of time, prompting them to establish residency and to have American-born children [2]. However, harsher immigration laws and the economic crash of 2008, resulted in a reduction of undocumented Mexican immigrants from 6.9 million in 2007 to 5.6 million in 2014 [3]. According to a 2017 estimate, more Mexican immigrants were returning to Mexico than migrating to the United States, and deportations of Mexicans were at a 40-year low [4]. Among these factors, the events of 11 September 11 have had the greatest negative impact on Latino and Iranian immigrants in the United States [5].

The experiences of Mexican and Iranian immigrant families are often unheard and unpacked. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative study is to examine how race, ethnicity, and national identity are at the core of the sociopolitical and economic issues that Latino and Iranian families undergo in the United States. More specifically, this research analyzes the ways in which Mexican immigrant families who were deported, and Iranian-immigrant families living in the United States, have been differently affected by zero tolerance policies. The insights shared in this research are drawn from two larger qualitative studies, which aimed to elaborate on how racial issues affect immigrants' families in the borderlands. Hence, the research question guiding this study is: *How do U.S. anti-immigrant policies affect Iranian and Mexican immigrant families and their children's futures?*

2. Background and Context

As a result of the changing demographic of immigrants in the last decades and increasing social and political pressures on non-European immigrants in the United States [5,6], there is a need to unpack how the intersectionality of immigrant families impact the pressures they face in the United States, which often go unnoticed. Dominant groups' discourses against Muslims and Latinos in the United States have increased, particularly after 9/11 [6]. Research shows that, among all immigrants in the United States, Europeans are less rejected compared to Muslims and Latinos [7]. This is because politics play an important role in the way that the U.S. government treats immigrants from different countries, which results in the discrimination against these groups. Immigrants in general experience repression in America [8]; however, non-European immigrants, such as Mexicans and Iranians, face double oppression. On the one hand, Iranians face oppression that stems from an authoritarian government in Iran, while Mexicans face oppression that stems from poverty and lack of resources in Mexico. When they arrive in the United States, both groups encounter oppression based not only on repressive and socioeconomic factors, but also on their nationality, intersectional identity, and socio-political U.S. climate. Scholars have found that Muslims and undocumented Latino immigrants are targeted more than any other group due to the zero tolerance policies [8,9]. For example, under Trump administration, immigrants from eight countries, including Iran, were banned from entering the United States [10]. Similarly, undocumented Mexicans who under the Obama administration were allowed to stay in the United States as long as they checked periodically with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) are now deported immediately under the Trump administration [10]. For this reason, the researchers of this study tried to amplify the voices of these groups of immigrants, which are often unheard.

As Oppenheimer, Prakash, and Burns [8] declare, other countries around the world view the United States of America as a diverse country that welcomes all immigrants regardless of their race and ethnicity, but the recent anti-immigrant policies against particular groups of immigrants can be considered as a violation against American history and constitution. Similar to other immigrants, Iranian and Mexican immigrants are full of hopes and fears. They view America as a land of opportunities with equality and eventual prosperity for everyone. Most of the time, the American dream is difficult to achieve or clashes with the reality of living in the land of opportunities because of the discriminatory behaviors that immigrants face in society, especially post 9/11. Some of the social and economic difficulties that Iranian immigrants with children face after arriving in the United States include cultural and language conflicts, difficulties finding a job, and children's poor academic performance, among others [5]. Mexican immigrants also struggle with cultural and language barriers,

but because they often lack formal education, accessing upward mobility is harder, if achieved at all [11], with detrimental consequences for their children. Mostly, both groups of immigrants are unsure of how to navigate these barriers in the dreamland.

Coming from different origins, but sharing similar oppression, Iranian and Mexican immigrants experience immigration differently, but share similar forms of subjugation as members of minoritized groups. This paper will compare and contrast the experiences of Iranian and Mexican immigrants in the anti-immigrant climate of post 9/11 events that got exacerbated under the Trump administration. Our findings will uncover the different and similar ways in which these two groups are negatively affected. We will also explain how, ironically, after being deported to Mexico, Mexican groups benefitted from policies established by the Mexican government in response to Trump's threats to deport millions of undocumented immigrants. Last, this paper will discuss not only how immigrant parents are affected, but also how the lives and education of their children are impacted. The article will end with a discussion of our findings, and recommendations for future studies to improve the situation of these minoritized groups.

3. Authors' Positionality

As researchers of color and immigrants, we felt that this study was important to highlight common experiences as well as differences between immigrant groups from the East and the West. There is a common thread in our oppression, namely discrimination and a negative stigma as unwanted as members of Mexican and Iranian immigrant groups, particularly post 9/11 and under the Trump administration. According to Oppenheimer, Prakash, and Burns [8], "From the formation of the Republic, our immigration laws have reflected racist policies toward various and changing racial, ethnic, and religious minority groups" (p. 3). However, it is important to note that we do not experience the same levels of oppression. As an example, due to the proximity of Mexico to the United States, many Mexicans are able to cross the border regardless of socioeconomic status. Therefore, the vast majority of Mexican immigrants happen to be from some of the poorest areas who come to the United States escaping poverty [12]. According to Zong and Batalova [4], "Mexicans on average are more likely to be Limited English Proficient (LEP), have lower levels of education, experience poverty, and lack health insurance" (para. 4). This is not the case for Iranians who come to the United States, who are mostly professionals and intellectuals that enjoyed a certain level of class privilege in Iran and were able to embark on the long journey across the globe to join a society and culture much different from their own [1,13,14]. According to data pulled from the U.S. Census Bureau, Bagherpour [15] was able to conclude that Iranians "are one of the most highly educated minority populations in the country" (p. 3).

In much the same way as in the literature, these differences also represent the authors' backgrounds. One of the authors was born in Guadalajara, Mexico, and came to the United States after completing her primary and secondary education to pursue higher education in the United States, but mainly, she migrated to escape a sexist society that limited her opportunities due to strict gender norms in her native Mexico. Although poverty was not as big of an issue in her case, gender oppression was the main reason that forced her to migrate to the United States. The other author was born in Iran and came to the United States with her family in the early 2000s. After completing her bachelor's degree, she also experienced gender discrimination and limited opportunities for women in higher education in Iran, therefore, she decided to immigrate to the United States with her entire family to provide better academic opportunities for her daughters in higher education.

4. Theoretical Framework

In order to understand the effects of recent anti-immigrant policies on immigrant families and the challenges they face, this study used critical race theory (CRT) to analyze the ways in which the power and privilege of dominant groups impact immigrants and their children's future. At its core, CRT challenges the status quo with the end goal of eliminating all forms of subordination [16]. In this

study, CRT examines the ways in which race and racism continuously construct U.S. policy, practices, and social structures [17–19]. In addition, CRT highlights how anti-immigrant policies enacted by dominant groups influence the fears and hopes of immigrants in the borderlands.

5. Literature Review

In this study, the researchers reviewed literature regarding the different ways in which anti-immigrant policies affect Iranian and Mexican immigrants in the United States.

For Mexican groups, undocumented status in the United States has devastating effects. As Prieto [20] postulates, "deportability, or the threat of deportation sustains the exploitation of undocumented immigrants" (p. 11). Despite this threat, Mexican undocumented immigrants have found ways to resist through avoidance, isolation, and activism. Avoidance and isolation refer to immigrants' efforts to avoid risky behaviors and situations, therefore, isolating themselves as much as possible. This isolation includes not taking part in government social services, not reporting crimes to authorities—including domestic violence—and keeping a low profile in order to avoid unwanted attention. Nevertheless, they find creative ways for activism, for example, by gathering at a friend's house to discuss their fears and hopes for a more positive future. Resistance, in the case of these undocumented Mexican immigrants, consists of "turning inward, avoiding risk, and isolating oneself and one's family from danger" [20] (p. 9). Ironically, these are survival strategies that at the same time inspire and constraint their ability to organize.

Anti-immigrant laws have also affected agricultural workers, who are one of the most stigmatized among the Mexican undocumented groups. Koreishi and Donohoe [21] debunk some of the most prevalent myths, such as that undocumented farm workers overburden public health insurance systems, or that they are "free riders" that drain the United States economy. These claims are unfounded, since undocumented workers do not have access to social services, and as Koreishi and Donohoe explains, "immigration practices and policies dictate the extent to which undocumented migrant farmworkers have access to governmental health and social services and are ever-changing based on the political climate" (p. 64).

Lastly, anti-immigrant policies make it extremely difficult for undocumented Mexicans to access upward mobility [22]. With an education that often only includes elementary school, Mexican undocumented immigrants are forced to accept menial low-wage service jobs [11]. Therefore, for children of undocumented migrants and for undocumented youth, educational attainment is one way to achieve economic security. Unfortunately, because of their lack of proper documentation, and/or the lack of human and economic capital, undocumented Mexican youth do not have access to college grants or scholarships. Without financial help, they cannot afford a college education, which perpetuates the precarious living conditions of their parents [11].

For Iranians, the negative perspectives of dominant groups toward the Muslim populations, especially after 11 September, affects Iranian immigrants who have migrated to the United States. In both social and academic contexts, Iranian immigrant families face numerous obstacles, which conflicts with their American dream. In addition to the emotional and financial struggles of the immigration process and leaving family, friends, and belongings behind, Iranian immigrants face an uphill battle when trying to find jobs in the United States comparable to what they had at home. Most professional Iranian immigrants struggle to find jobs and accept poorly paid jobs which do not match their skills and professions. Most companies and institutions devalue the skills and professions of educated Iranian immigrants and deny their applications regardless of their knowledge.

Similar to Latino immigrants, Iranian newcomers communicate with Iranian friends and family to find different ways to resist against social obstacles. As Jalili [14] states, friendship is very important in Iranian culture. Iranian community and social networks help Iranian immigrants to be resilient and improve their social and economic status. Most Iranian immigrants value both Iranian and American culture and language. In this way, most Iranian immigrant parents use different strategies with their families regarding acculturation without full assimilation towards American culture and

values. New laws, which ban Iranian visitors to enter the United States, influence Iranian children's acculturation. Since Iranian children learn their culture and language from their extended families, such as grandparents and other family members, this limitation of Iranian visitors affects Iranian immigrants' families, especially their children's emotions, mental health, and acculturation to the American culture.

According to Jalili [14], Iranian families and particularly elders play an important role in resolving conflicts among families and friends. Elders, such as grandparents, use predictable patterns for solving conflicts among family members, including parents and children, which positively influence the mental health and self-esteem of Iranian immigrants. Iranians often rely on the education, position, and power of their extended family, and their support is essential for survival, particularly in hard times [14]. Iranian immigrants depend on family ties, relationships, and communication with extended family for support. Therefore, the travel ban imposed on Iranians by recent anti-immigrant laws negatively influences Iranian immigrants' mental health, particularly for those immigrants who are not able to visit Iran any more.

Similarly, research shows that Middle Eastern newcomers and Latino immigrants in the United States have hopes of achieving the American dream, while recognizing a long journey ahead in the dreamland [23,24]. These groups of immigrants are mostly affected by the conflict between laws and the ways that laws are ignored in American society [23]. Weaver [24] explains that after 11 September, the discriminatory atmosphere against Middle Eastern immigrants has increased in American society and schools. Similar to Iranian immigrants, Arab and Latino immigrants are the victims of racial and ethnic discrimination in American society and schools. Research shows that pre-migration ethnicity plays an important role on the post-migration situation of immigrants in the United States [13]. Similar to Latino immigrants, Iranians in the United States share a premium on the treasure of family and close friends. Iranian immigrants also enjoy spending a considerable amount of time with Iranian friends, which has a direct effect on their resilience and delayed assimilation [13].

The literature reviewed covered how zero tolerance policies affect, and even interrupt, Mexican undocumented immigrants' day-to-day lives, being unable to do the most basic things, like gather and socially organize, move around freely, or access higher education. In addition, the literature highlighted the difficulties for Iranian families to obtain jobs that match their skills, how they face obstacles in educational institutions in the United States, and the negative effect the Iranian travel ban has on their mental health. However, there is no research yet comparing the experiences of Mexican and Iranians, two of the targeted groups under Trump's administration. Therefore, this research fills an important gap by exploring the ways in which new forms of racism masked under recent anti-immigrant policies impact Mexican and Iranian immigrant families and their opportunities in the United States.

6. Methodology

This article is part of two larger qualitative studies conducted by the researchers that were combined to compare and contrast the discrimination immigrants from the East and West experience. Both researchers in this study are members of the same community of Latino and Iranian immigrants in the United States, and as a result, they both are familiar with the culture, language, and the barriers their communities face. Both researchers used their original studies to compare and contrast the effect of recent anti-immigrant policies on both groups of immigrants, and both used their cultural intuition [25] to gather and analyze data and to disseminate findings. The authors used composite counterstories [16] to document the ways immigrants have been coerced by anti-immigrant policies in the United States. As Solórzano and Yosso [16] state, "composite stories draw on various forms of data to recount the racialized, sexualized, and classed experiences of people of color" (p. 33).

Research Site, Participants, and Data Gathering Methods

The first study was conducted in a southwest city during the fall of 2016. Participants include 3 Iranian immigrants who came to the United States in the last 20 years, and who are mothers of

Iranian-born youth who came with their parents when they were 6 to 12 years old. Those children are known as 1.5-generation children, and their age is particularly important in the acculturation literature to adapt to the American culture, language, and identity. Participants and their children currently reside in the southwest U.S. where the researcher lives. Case study methodology was used for collecting, analyzing, and reporting data. Consistent with multiple case study methods, this study used pre-interviews and interviews for data collection. The original study used interviews with 8 Iranian mothers, however, only 3 were included in this research because their interview answers fit the purpose of this study. Data sources provided a greater opportunity to understand the interpretations and experiences of participants in various situations as immigrant parents of 1.5-generation children in the United States.

The second study was conducted in a Mexican city five minutes away from the US-Mexico borderline from March to October of 2017. The second study took place at the Grupo de Atención a Alumnos Migrantes (GAAM), a State Department of Education organization tasked with supporting migrant students. After learning about the organization through their website, the first author contacted the coordinator, and after an introductory meeting, the coordinator agreed to locate potential participants using GAAM's records to locate migrant students in the city. The second study included Mexican immigrants that had lived in the United States for over 16 years, but after deportation, they had been living in Mexico for 3 to 5 years. Participants included 3 undocumented Mexican mothers and their U.S.-born and Mexico-born children aged 9 to 17 years that were forced to move to Mexico due to the deportation of their parent(s), and that attended schools in Alamar, Mexico. In addition, the study included the GAAM coordinator. The study used criterion sampling and only participants who were living in Mexico with their U.S.-born children as a result of a deportation were selected. The second study used interviews and focus groups for data gathering. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data, using emergent and predetermined codes identified in the literature and theoretical framework.

7. Findings

Our findings revealed that anti-immigrant laws and zero tolerance policies enacted post 9/11, and more recently, during the Trump administration, have negatively affected Iranian and Mexican immigrant families in similar, but also different ways. Iranian parents in the United States worried about their socioeconomic status and their children's future. They also feared that their relatives might not be able to visit them in the United States. For deported Mexican immigrants living in Mexico, the effects have also been negative, but surprisingly, Trump's zero tolerance policies have forced the Mexican government to enact policies to ease their transition into Mexico. The Mexican government provided dual citizenship to U.S.-born children to facilitate their access to government services, including education. Although these policies have been beneficial for Mexican deportees, the benefit has been miniscule compared to the emotional and economic drawbacks they have undergone. We discuss our findings in detail below.

7.1. The Iranian Experience

Participants in this study were 3 Iranian immigrant mothers of children who were born in Iran and moved to the United States when they were aged between 6 to 12 years old. Those children are known as 1.5-generation children in the literature since their age is particularly important in acculturation. Learning American culture and language for these children is essential in their identity development, acculturation, and success. Anti-immigrant policies against Iranian immigrants after 9/11 affects the way dominant groups view Iranian immigrants in the United States. Iranian parents and their children mostly face discrimination due their race and ethnicity. The obstacles that Iranian immigrants undergo in society and schools affect their hopes and dreams since it is far from their American dreams.

It is clear that American society and schools have become more discriminatory against certain immigrants' nationalities after the events that took place on 11 September 2001. Hilda is an Iranian professional immigrant who came to the United States with her family and she lost her job after 9/11.

Hilda explained: "I got a job offer, but because it was after September eleventh, then, everybody was laid off, and then, the job was not available for me anymore and … they didn't give me any job." Hilda was not able to find any job for a while, and she decided to move to the southwest with her family in order to find a job and pursue higher education. She moved to the southwest because she had a friend in that area. She added that she was culture shocked and homesick for a while since people were not friendly there. Finally, she received her bachelor in a medical field in order to find a better job in the West.

Nooshin is another professional Iranian immigrant who came to the United States with her family while she received her U.S. Permanent Resident Card due to her mother who had lived in the United States for a long time. I asked Nooshin if the recent anti-immigrant laws in 2016 affected her family and she explained:

> Yeah, it's a great, it has a great impact on our lives, because you know, with all these things that happen, you can see that some people let themselves to invade other people, immigrants, different kinds of people—shoot them, insult them, and these are the things that you see every day, all over the United States. So, this is a great impact on our lives also. Sometimes I was so disappointed that I was thinking about going back to Iran because the things that I can see here, we never had shoots or shootings like; we never seen those things in our country. They say that we are terrorists, but we have never seen those ones in our country. And every day here, people, some people, let themselves to do whatever they want with other people because they're immigrants, or they're from other countries, or they're Muslims … this dictatorship that we have here right now, it doesn't make a difference from the dictatorship that we have in our country. So at least, my country better works for me because I'm Iranian than here because I'm an immigrant.

Positive Resistance and Empowerment by Education in the United States

Minoritized groups in the United States use different strategies to respond to the social and academic obstacles they face in society and schools. Among immigrants, Iranians consider these barriers as contemporary issues that can be resolved in the future by hard work. Similar to most Asian immigrants, Iranian newcomers tend to learn English as fast as possible and try to work hard to be successful. Most Iranian families face discriminatory oppression in society and schools particularly after 9/11. Ladan is an Iranian immigrant who migrated with her family to the United States when her daughter was 12 years old. Ladan described her husband's job as white collar in Iran because of his position in business and high income before moving to the United States, but he could not find any jobs for a year after moving to America. She described her immigration as a complicated process because it took almost 12 years to receive her U.S. Permanent Resident Card. Although Ladan's lifestyle was different in Iran, she decided to come to the United States for her daughter's better future. Ladan's description demonstrates what Yosso [26] refers to as aspiration capital regarding immigrants' hopes for their future in the United States. Ladan mentioned that her family's socioeconomic situation was not great after they migrated to the United States, since they did not have family and financial support. Ladan added, "We came here without anything, and we didn't have any family, and it was so hard." Ladan also explained her daughter's hard work at school and discussed how she is always worried for her future in the United States: "Actually, she always worried about her future. She is always worried and have a stress, and I try to help her to be free and not have a stress because it doesn't help her." Nieto [27] explains the way that minoritized groups are excluded in American schools, which illustrates the fact of institutional discrimination. Some groups of immigrants, such as Iranian immigrants, try to work hard and use this strategy as positive resistance and resilience as a push back strategy to be ahead and be successful in U.S. schools and work places. She believes that she has more responsibility to help her daughter since she does not have her relatives around to support her as they had in Iran. Later, I asked whether Ladan fears for her daughter's future, and she replied, "Sometimes yes, because it is so hard to study in another language. Yah, sometimes I'm worry about

her . . . I always tell her . . . you can make it, or you can just keep going for your goals." Ladan also described her fears regarding the new immigration rules against Iranian immigrants since her family might not be able to visit Ladan and her daughter in the United States.

7.2. The Mexican Experience

For the three undocumented Mexican mothers participating in this study, the effects of anti-immigrant U.S. laws resulted in deportation. Nadia, Elsa, and Mariana lived undocumented in the United States for over 16 years, but after their deportation they had been living in Mexico for 3 to 5 years. Nadia and Elsa decided to settle in Alamar, a Mexican city three miles away from the U.S.-Mexico border, because they were born there. Mariana had family members in Alamar.

7.2.1. Deportation Stories

In a matter of minutes, Mariana's fate and that of her husband and two young U.S.-born children was drastically changed. As of 2017, she had been living in Mexico for the last five years. Mariana shared her deportation story:

> [The immigration judge] told me, "You know, your son is really young. He'll be able to adapt moving to Mexico." And she kept on going about other stuff and said "You know what? I deny your residency here in the States, and you have to leave the States within . . . " and they gave me an exact date that I had to move out.

Nadia was deported because the paralegal that was handling her immigration case filed a petition for asylum on her behalf. Nadia signed the petition not knowing that Mexico does not have an agreement for asylum seeking in the United States, therefore, her petition was considered fraudulent and she was deported. In Elsa's case, she lost her two jobs due to sickness as a result of exhaustion, and was forced to get involved in petty drug dealing in order to support her four children as a single mother, because her ex-husband never paid child support. She was caught and deported for life after spending three months in a U.S. jail.

7.2.2. Inadequate Education

Mexican deported mothers considered that the education their children were receiving in Mexico was inadequate. Students and parents considered Mexican teaching practices overall to be less effective than U.S. practices. Nadia gave the following example:

> For example, some teachers when they teach these kids, like for example, it happened to me, when they teach History, they taught one of my children and he did not understand, and the teacher would not explain to him. The teacher would just write a bad comment and say: "Did not cooperate." That's what he would write. So, when I went to talk to him I asked him why, instead of giving him just a bad comment, why did he not spend 5 or 10 min explaining to the child that did not understand Spanish well.

Elsa's experiences with her children's teachers was similar. She added:

> At first sight, the teachers do not teach them the way they are supposed to. Since Hans is in middle school and Paloma is in high school, some teachers are prepared but a lot of them are not. The majority I feel are very incompetent to tell you the truth.

Similarly, Mariana mentioned that her daughter, who had a difficult time understanding the lessons due to her lack of academic Spanish, did not receive the differentiated instruction that she needed. Mariana said:

> I find that there are kids that, for instance, like mine, she needs extra help and you kind of have to go slow with one kid, and kind of have to catch up with the other 'cause you

> can have a kid that it's really smart or ahead of the class, and I don't see that help. I think what happens here is the teachers are like: "OK, you're all at the same level." For example, [some kids are at level] 5, when you have one or two kids at level 2, and you kind of have to help them out and push them to a level 5, and [teachers] don't do that, they all go at one pace and I don't think that's right.

This issue gets aggravated in secundaria, or middle school, where students receive even less attention from their teachers. Elsa, Mariana, and Nadia experienced this issue with their middle school children. Nadia mentioned:

> Teachers make the difference with their everyday interactions, there's teachers that are nice people, others not so much, others don't care. Like in middle school things change, teachers don't care, if you learned, you learned, and they say it to the students: "I'm here, in front of the class, teaching, [but] you're the one who's going for your future."

7.2.3. Disempowerment

Mexican immigrant mothers developed a sense of disempowerment as a result of the trauma of deportation, the discrimination they experienced in Mexico, and the disenchantment of not feeling heard by people who they perceived were in a position to help them. For example, Elsa had to endure persistent stereotypical remarks from teachers about her children. Teachers would often complain about Elsa's son for his gangster dressing style. Teachers also complained about the assertiveness of Elsa's daughter, who often confronted teachers about their lack of instruction. Elsa felt disempowered because no matter how much she would try to plead with the teachers, she was always met with resistance. Teachers would often tell her that she could not make the same demands that she used to make in the United States because she was now in Mexico and things worked differently here. Elsa shared:

> I said [to the teacher] "because [in the United States], they do discriminate against us, but if somebody sees that you are being discriminated, somebody else comes to help you." I said, "and you, here, like *nuestra raza* (our own people), you discriminate against us even more, simply because we come from a country that is not even ours." I said, "yes, we did live [in the United States] for a while, but that does not mean that we are from there, we are all from here! From Mexico!" And believe me, since I got here, the discrimination has been very noticeable and very hard not just for my children, but for me too.

Similarly, when parents advocated for their children, even if it was only for basic rights, they got silenced. Nadia, who constantly advocated for her children at school, was met with the same type of resistance as Elsa, and also felt a sense of disempowerment. Nadia explained:

> When one dares to ask, since we get labeled as coming from the U.S., they tell us: 'It is different in the U.S., ma'am. You're in Mexico now.' Then we get silenced and we don't say anything. Why? Because we know that they are right. We're in Mexico. Then we stop asking.

The result is that mothers soon learn that being critical and demanding their rights is counterproductive. They find that not only are their rights ignored, but they also receive a backlash for demanding them. In addition, mothers are silenced because they are constantly reminded that holding Mexico and the United States to the same expectations is unrealistic.

7.2.4. Prejudice in Mexico

In their condition as deported returnees to Mexico, mothers were the most affected by prejudice and discrimination. They experienced a sense of displacement that prevented them from feeling that they were part of their communities. Mothers yearned to go back to the United States and reported not feeling a sense of belonging despite having been born in Mexico. This was aggravated by the fact that

none of the mothers in this study planned their return to Mexico but were forced to leave the United States due to their deportation. Mariana was the perfect example, during our interview she shared:

> For me my home is the States, I did kinder, elementary, middle, high school, I even went to community college over there, and this is something that nobody would understand unless you get taken away from your home and thrown somewhere that you're not part of, and to be by yourself also, and try to stay strong for your family, for your kids is the worst. [Crying]. I feel like an alien. I feel like I don't fit here.

Deported mothers also encountered discrimination when locals judged them for having chosen the United States over Mexico, something that is viewed as a betrayal to the very nationalistic Mexicans. Nadia mentioned:

> Many people are deported, and they're embarrassed to say it, you know why? Because unfortunately here in Mexico we get judged! [Emphasis placed by participant]. The other parents, parents who find out we're from 'the other side' [the United States] they tell you 'It's good that you got deported, why did you leave in the first place?' You know? Then, they make us feel bad.

7.2.5. Unexpected Positive Outcomes of the "Trump Effect"

Unexpectedly, for families who were living in Mexico due to deportation from the United States, Trump's threats to deport Mexican undocumented populations in massive quantities had a positive outcome, prompting the Mexican government to lift the restrictions required for U.S.-born children to obtain dual citizenship in order to access medical services, as well as K-12 and higher education. The GAAM coordinator explained in more detail what this policy entailed, she shared:

> Trump threatened to deport 3 to 4 million Mexicans from the U.S., and the Mexican government reacted by creating programs aimed at absorbing these anticipated 3 million return migrants. Well, since March 2016 and due to the harsh immigration policies that the new U.S. administration has established, we received an announcement that was delivered at the federal and national levels here in Mexico that prohibited the requirement of any type of documentation that prevents any incoming U.S. migrant student of any educational level from enrolling in the Mexican educational system. This means that at the high school level, and at the university level, I am going to accept the documentation that you have and the documentation that you do not have, in good faith, and I am going to believe what you are telling me, and I'm going to grant you access to the school so that you can remain in school and continue your education. I'm going to test you, and I'm going to find ways to assess your knowledge, so that we can place you at the same level where you said you were before you came here.

This policy was enacted as this research was about to conclude, therefore, this study was able to capture first-hand how participants of this study benefitted. Nadia was particularly excited about this amendment, she mentioned:

> Now, the change the government is making right now, they're helping us by giving our children the dual citizenship, and that's a great help because our children, having the Mexican citizenship, they will be able to have medical benefits, if they are children with good grades they can get scholarships to help them, right?

After the conclusion of this study, the author kept in contact with two participants. Through this contact we found out that Nadia's four children were able to obtain their dual citizenship. Elsa, however, was only able to obtain dual citizenship for one of her two U.S.-born children because of errors in the second child's birth certificate that she was unable to resolve because of her inability to travel to the United States. Unfortunately, we were not able to establish contact with Mariana, who was planning to move to Canada rather than remain in Mexico.

8. Discussion

This study sought to indicate how anti-immigrant policies affect immigrant families from the East and the West who are double-oppressed in the United States. Our findings revealed that post 9/11, anti-immigrant laws negatively affected Mexican and Iranian groups of immigrant families. Research shows that similar to Muslim immigrants, Latino families, including Mexicans, suffered discrimination in the United States [12]. Consistent with CRT tenets [17,19], we saw how dominant U.S. immigration policies reflected racial biases that disproportionately affected Iranians and Mexicans. This is consistent with the literature [11,20,23,24] that postulated that minorities, especially non-European, are more negatively affected by these policies.

Although both groups were affected in different ways, we also found commonalities. For example, in this study, both groups of Iranian and Mexican participants were mothers. The authors did not intend to limit participation to mothers exclusively, this happened because when invited to participate, both groups of fathers declined participation. Iranian fathers argued that their wives knew better about family matters and children's issues. Interestingly, Mexican fathers refused to participate only after learning that the study included exclusively deported parents, at which point they completely denied their deportation and also argued their wives were better informed on issues pertaining to their children. On the one hand, this reveals the clearly delineated gendered roles in Mexican and Iranian cultures, in which fathers work outside of the home and whose main responsibility is to provide for the family, while mothers—whether they work outside of the home or not—are mainly responsible for keeping the family affairs and raising the children. On the other hand, Mexican fathers' reluctance also uncovers how toxic masculinity notions prevent fathers from seeming vulnerable, which they equate with being weak. In their case, admitting they had been deported was equivalent to admitting they had failed as head of the household and as providers. However, we also must take into consideration that their reluctance could have also been influenced by Trump's rhetoric that Mexican immigrants were drug dealers, rapists, and criminals [28], and fathers could be trying to disassociate from these public negative perceptions.

Both groups also shared a double oppression. When they were in their countries of origin, Iranians faced an authoritarian regime [1], while Mexicans faced structural oppression represented by a declining standard of living and lack of opportunities [2]. Yet, even when they migrated to the United States, seeking to mitigate their oppression, both groups faced discrimination in the United States based on their minority group status under the current anti-immigrant climate. Iranians struggled to find jobs that were commensurate with their skills, and when they did, many of them got fired following the anti-Iran climate brought about by the Trump administration between 2016 and 2017. Mexican mothers participating in this study faced triple oppression. They struggled financially in Mexico and migrated to the United States in search of better opportunities. Once in the United States, they were in permanent fear of deportation. When they finally were deported to Mexico, they faced discrimination in their own country from their fellow Mexicans for being considered traitors who renounced to their Mexican roots.

Also, both groups shared similar hopes and fears, especially regarding their children's futures, however, they experienced these fears and hopes differently. Although Iranian and Mexican immigrants struggled with a U.S. culture and language that were different from their own, and they both were unsure of how to navigate these situations, Iranians were better equipped to deal with these issues. This is because, as the literature revealed, most Iranian immigrants are highly educated professionals [1,13,14], while Mexican immigrant in the United States had lower levels of education [4]. This explains the difference in the types of fears both groups experienced about their children's futures. Iranians mothers worried mostly about their socioeconomic status and the education of their children in the United States. On the other hand, Mexican deported mothers worried about more basic needs, such as their children receiving a substandard education in Mexico compared to the education they received in the United States, and the inability of their U.S.-born children to access medical coverage in Mexico because of a lack of proper documentation.

Although not deliberately examined in this research, the authors noticed another important difference during the dissemination of our findings. We both had different perceptions of the word diaspora, and we struggled to come to a common understanding. While the Iranian author's conception of diaspora in the United States referred to a more privileged population, the Mexican author thought about mostly unprivileged groups. This is because of the geographical spaces Iranians and Mexicans occupy. Due to the proximity to the border, Mexicans' migration to the United States is somewhat facilitated. This is why a great number of Mexican immigrants can travel to the United States even when they experience poverty, have low educational levels, or do not have proper documentation. There are approximately 33 million Mexicans in the United States [29]. Since Iranians need more resources to initiate the move to the United States, it follows that they are better educated and from more privileged backgrounds. Currently, there are over one million Iranians living in the United States [15].

Finally, the greatest difference uncovered by our findings was the different effects of Trump's anti-immigrant policies for Iranians and Mexicans based on what side or the border they inhabited. For Iranians in the United States, these policies had negative outcomes because not only were Iranians negatively stigmatized in the United States, affecting their job prospects and increasing the level of discrimination they experienced. They also were practically trapped because they were unable to leave the United States and their families in Iran were unable to visit them, affecting their mental and emotional well-being. For Mexican returnees living in Mexico, the response of the Mexican government to Trump's threats to deport millions of undocumented immigrants had an unexpected positive outcome. Thanks to the granting of dual citizenship to U.S.-born children of Mexican nationals, and to lifting all restrictions to access education, Mexican returnees and their children were able to access social benefits in Mexico that had been previously denied to them because of a lack of proper documentation. However, the authors want to stress that we are in no way suggesting that we support anti-immigrant policies. When considering the drawbacks brought by anti-immigrant policies, this benefit is minimal in comparison. The fact remains that Mexican deportees and their families still experience stigmatization in Mexico, and that the rights of U.S.-born children are still not fully respected in Mexico or in the United States.

9. Conclusions and Recommendations

This study sought to uncover the ways in which Iranian and Mexican immigrant groups were similarly yet differently affected by anti-immigrant U.S. policies. This research also sought to unpack how their intersectional identities contribute to the degree of oppression they experience. The intersection of geographical location, socioeconomic status, class, gender, religion, immigration status, and nationality either eased or aggravated the effects of anti-immigrant policies. The main contribution of this study consisted in examining anti-immigrant policies comparatively between Mexican and Iranian groups. By doing so, we gained a better understanding of the intricacies of both cultures, the commonalities that they share, and the differences that affect the level of oppression they face in their home countries as well as in the United States Because part of this study was conducted in Mexico, we have first-hand knowledge of how U.S. policy influences international policy as well.

Therefore, the authors argue that more collaborations, even at the local level, but that include the global South should be undertaken, with data collection that transcends U.S. borders whenever possible. Due to our interconnectedness, we cannot overlook how the decisions taken in one part of the world have a global impact. In addition, the undertaking of comparative studies allowed us to not only gain a better understanding of the contexts, groups, issues, and countries being compared, but also about the unintended consequences for all involved.

Most importantly, we should engage in research projects that not only produce knowledge, but that benefit our participants. This research contributed to the networking of Mexican deported mothers, which in turn led to participants feeling supported by other mothers who understood their plight. In addition, this research was a link between deported mothers and the Mexican educational

system that provided free assistance for the dual citizenship project in Mexico. For Iranian participants, this research helped to put a face to the millions of Iranians that were affected by the policies that limited their right of movement to and from the United States. This research made visible the, often underemphasized, human cost of government policies.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, S.L.C. and S.F.; methodology, S.L.C. and S.F.; software, not applicable; validation, S.L.C. and S.F.; formal analysis, S.L.C. and S.F.; investigation, S.L.C. and S.F.; resources, not applicable; data curation, S.L.C. and S.F.; writing—original draft preparation, S.L.C. and S.F.; writing—review and editing, S.L.C.; visualization, S.L.C. and S.F.; supervision, S.L.C.; project administration, S.L.C. and S.F.; funding acquisition, not applicable.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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