

© *Higher Education Politics & Economics*

Volume 12, Issue 1 (2026), pp. 92-117

ISSN: 2162-3104 (Print), 2166-3750 (Online)

doi: 10.32674/b2a4a612

ojed.org/hepe

Political Participation and Research Motivation of Iran Specialists in American Academia: How an Academic Community Responds to Events in the U.S. and Iran

Julio Borquez

University of Michigan - Dearborn

Camron Michael Amin

University of Michigan - Dearborn

Razieh Araghi

Arizona State University

ABSTRACT

We report initial results from a longitudinal study of political participation among Iranian Studies scholars working in U.S. academia. Qualtrics surveys of Iranian Studies specialists were conducted in 2016 and 2023, the surveys featuring questions about reported political activities such as voting, contacting public officials, signing petitions, and participating in demonstrations. The surveys also included questions about media outreach and interactions with journalists. Iranian Studies scholars reported very high – in some cases, astonishingly high – levels of political activity, exceeding those found in previous studies of political participation among academics. Moreover, in several instances participation levels increased from 2016 to 2023. We believe these high levels of political participation are not just a function of high levels of education but are a response to political developments in Iran and the United States, including *Women, Life, Freedom*, the Trump travel ban, and ongoing tensions in US-Iran relations. Our findings suggest that studies of academic political behavior should account for the political pressures that can influence specific subfields in distinctive ways.

Keywords: Iranian studies, American academia, political participation, engaged scholarship, *Women, Life, Freedom*

On September 13th, 2022, a young Kurdish Iranian woman, Zhina (Mahsa) Amini, was arrested in Tehran, accused of not wearing the hijab correctly. She died in a hospital three days later. The official explanation was that Amini died from a heart attack and brain seizure, but eyewitness accounts pointed to police brutality shortly after her arrest. Amini's death sparked a large-scale protest movement in Iran, *Women, Life, Freedom*, as well as global outrage. It also inspired activism on U.S. university campuses, which took the form of student demonstrations, teach-ins and public discussions, and activism by faculty, including those with heritage connections to Iran.¹ Iran specialists in the diaspora also authored traditional peer-reviewed scholarship (Bayat, 2023; Karimi, 2023; Kazemi, 2023; Khajehi et al. 2023) and engaged scholarship from which we might infer an enhanced level of civic engagement.

Faculty political activity is the focus of this paper. We report some initial results from a longitudinal study of Iranian Studies scholars working in U.S. academia, with an aim of learning more about the political participation of this academic community. Qualtrics surveys of Iranian Studies specialists were conducted in fall 2016 and spring 2023. The surveys featured questions about reported political activities such as voting, contacting public officials, signing petitions, and participating in demonstrations. The surveys also included questions about media outreach and interactions with journalists.

The results we share here highlight three important points. First, Iranian Studies specialists in American academia report higher levels of political activity than seen in other studies of academicians or Americans generally. Moreover, participation levels for some activities increased dramatically between 2016 and 2023. Second, factors that are associated with academics' assessments of their professional life, such as academic rank, gender, and social identity, appear to have little connection to levels of political participation. Third, an important predictor of political engagement was a stated desire for research activity to contribute to social change. This is a factor that has received little attention in previous studies of academic political activity, but it appears to be a telling one for Iranian Studies specialists. There are some nuances within these results (for example, ambivalence about lending one's professional standing to public political debates). Because of the nuances, along with qualitative results shared in the comment section of the survey, we are conducting focus groups with survey respondents and are planning a survey in the course of the next academic

¹ For examples of student demonstrations, see McDonald (2022), McKenzie (2022), and Rusting (2023). Examples of teach-ins and panels events include Community Engagement, Design and Research Center (2022), Columbia Climate School (2022), and Kohout (2023). Instances of faculty activism include Boise State University (2023) and University of Southern Maine (2023).

year to explore further how political and civic life intersect with the professional and personal lives of this community of scholars in American academia.

LITERATURE REVIEW: CONNECTING STUDIES OF AMERICAN FACULTY POLITICAL ACTIVITY AND IRANIAN DIASPORA STUDIES

There has been a vigorous academic debate about the political *orientations* of academics, especially ideology and partisanship (e.g., Gross & Simmons, 2014; Mariani & Hewitt, 2008; Whittington, 2021), but there has been very little research documenting the extent of political *participation* among academics. Like other highly educated individuals, faculty across the academy tend to be politically active (Abrams, 2018). Our findings confirm this, but we also add some important detail and elaboration. Our study focuses on a specific community of scholars, Iranian Studies specialists, who work in an environment that is politically charged and that poses a distinct set of challenges and pressures that we anticipate will be associated with elevated levels of political engagement.

As a field of academic endeavor, Iranian Studies in the U.S., like many other area studies fields, has some expressly political origins, owing in part to federal government support after World War II (Szanton, 2004; Tari, 2015). Marandi and Tari (2018) contend that Iranian Studies cannot be divorced from larger political developments, namely Iran-U.S. relations. As one example, the 1979 Iranian Islamic Revolution was a seismic event for Iranian Studies in the U.S., shaping academic research agendas and creating political factions among scholars in the field.

More recent political developments contribute to continued political sensitivity. *Women, Life, Freedom* is part of that context, along with Trump-era policies such as the Muslim ban and the termination of the Iran nuclear agreement (JCPOA). The tumultuous political environment received ample news coverage, and it was also on display at conferences and other academic settings, with its impact felt both on and off campus. There has been considerable thought and discussion about the implications that *Women, Life, Freedom* might, or should, have on research and writing in Iranian Studies (Hamidi, 2023; Rahbari, 2024), and public discussions of *Women, Life, Freedom* have created tense and nervous moments at academic panels (Razavi, 2023). The toll that the polarized responses of the diaspora to *Women, Life, Freedom* was taking on US based Iran specialists - especially those with heritage ties to Iran – was evident to one of the present authors who was able to attend several academic events in North America that either focused on *Women, Life, Freedom* or pivoted to accommodate discussions of responses to unfolding events in Iran. There was a rapid shift in the tenor of these conference-based discussions over the course of the first half of 2023. A January 14th Persian-language hybrid symposium on imagining Iran’s “democratic future” was hosted by the University of Toronto.² But, by the one of time our team member attended a conference on the Iranian Diaspora

² For official notes and YouTube archive of the event, please see:

<https://iranianstudies.utoronto.ca/event/women-life-liberty-irans-democratic-future/>

at UCLA in on February 16th and 17th, not only were there presentations oriented to the issue but also expressions of dismay at the response of the diaspora in which scholars who did not clamor for more aggressive or even militarized regime change in Iran were attacked as regime collaborators in social media and sometimes in person.³

The 2016 and 2023 surveys cover a pivotal period, with a chain of events that was highly salient, highly relevant, and for some Iranian Studies specialists, highly threatening. These kinds of circumstances, although perhaps not unique to Iranian Studies, are nevertheless distinctive. They are the kinds of circumstances that scholars in most other fields do not have to worry about. And they are the kinds of circumstances that should motivate high levels of political activity.

Research on political participation in the United States has always pointed to formal education as a primary driver of political activity (Persson, 2013). From voting to signing petitions to engaging in protests, participation increases with formal education. Education is thought to provide individuals with the capacity to digest and assess political information, to navigate and engage the political process, and a sense of efficacy and civic duty that fosters political involvement (Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993; Verba & Nie, 1972).

Academics should be well-equipped to engage in political activity. But surprisingly little is known about levels of political participation. Much more attention has been paid to the partisan and ideological orientations of university professors, leaving unanswered questions of what actions academics actually take. Studies of political activity in US academia have been sporadic and much of the research is quite dated. There was a spurt of research during the Vietnam War, which found anti-war sentiment to be common among college faculty, but anti-war political action such as protest and demonstrations to be much less prevalent (Faia, 1974; Ladd, 1969; Lipset & Ladd, 1971).

The most comprehensive recent study of political activity among US academics is Abrams' 2016-2017 survey of over 900 university professors (Abrams, 2018). Respondents were asked about their involvement in seven different political activities, such as attending a rally, contacting an elected official, or engaging in social media. Not surprisingly, for every activity, academics were more active than the general public, confirming the well-known connection between formal education and political involvement. However, US academics did not appear to be appreciably more active than other well-educated Americans. Nor were there notable differences in participation across academic disciplines.

³ *The Iranian Diaspora in Global Perspective* Feb. 16th-17th, 2023 (<https://www.international.ucla.edu/cnes/event/15895>). Dr. Nasrin Rahimieh's presentation, for example, focused on hostility in the diaspora and even by some anti-Islamic Republic activists in Iran against NIAC (National Iran American Council, see: <https://www.niacouncil.org/mission-and-vision/>) for being "pro-regime" because they do advocate against US Sanctions on Iran and were supportive of the JCPOA. Diaspora-based monarchists and supporters of the Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK) and other groups lobby the US for a much more aggressive "regime-change" posture towards the Islamic Republic.

Scholarship on political participation, in the US and in democratic politics more generally, has noted shifts in the focus of political activity, with an expansion and diversification of citizens' participation "toolbox" (Harris & Gillion, 2010) and a broader shift from "allegiant" citizenship, with a focus on electoral participation, toward more "assertive" citizenship, which includes protest and other non-electoral activities (Dalton & Welzel, 2014). This shift toward more assertive political engagement, and a fuller repertoire of political activity, has been most apparent among younger citizens (Dalton, 2020) and among highly educated and more highly politicized citizens (Dalton, 2017).

Our study of Iranian Studies scholars covers a tumultuous period for politics in both the United States and Iran. Donald Trump's 2016 and 2020 presidential campaigns were defined by divisive rhetoric that targeted and marginalized non-native, non-white, non-Judeo-Christian populations, as well as by controversial policy initiatives, including a travel ban that applied to Iran, among other countries (Abramowitz, 2017; Sides et al., 2018). While the Trump campaigns succeeded in mobilizing white racial resentment (Abramowitz, 2017; Schaffner et al., 2018; Sides et al., 2018; Sides et al., 2022), Trump's 2016 run also inspired a "resistance" movement that began to take root soon after his election (Gose & Skocpol, 2019; Meyer & Tarrow, 2018).

That resistance took multiple forms. Most visible were large-scale demonstrations such as the Women's March in Washington DC (M. Berry & Chenoweth, 2018; Martin & Smith, 2020; Tambe, 2017). Another important component included efforts by professional and academic groups to express opposition and provide services in response to Trump administration actions. For example, lawyers organized, often at airports, to help individuals cope with the travel ban and more broadly voiced opposition to the policy (Dorf & Chu, 2018), while scientists mobilized against Trump administration climate proposals (Fisher, 2018). Some 150 academic associations issued statements or organized petition drives criticizing the travel ban (Olson Beal et al., 2018), including the Association for Iranian Studies and the Middle Studies Association, both US-based professional societies with international membership.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Iranian Studies scholars constitute a "low incidence population" (J. Berry et al., 2018). It is a small community of academics, scattered across many academic disciplines, making it difficult to locate with sampling procedures developed for general population surveys. So, a critical task for our survey was to identify and contact the appropriate pool of respondents. We employed a *list sampling* approach in which a targeted list of individuals was assembled from multiple sources (J. Berry et al., 2018). We sought to construct lists that included all individuals who fit a broad definition of Iranian Studies, including Iranian American studies and Iranian diaspora studies.

This task was complicated by the fact that Iranian Studies is a broad interdisciplinary field without clear boundaries; we ultimately contacted scholars

from disciplines ranging from history to literature to political economy to cinema studies. Very few colleges and universities have dedicated Iranian Studies or Persian Studies departments, programs, or centers. Middle Eastern Studies and Arab-American Studies programs, while more common, are a less than perfect fit with the scope of Iranian Studies as an academic field. These circumstances made it more difficult to determine just who should be contacted and invited to participate in the survey.

We assembled respondent lists by drawing on three core databases. Two important sources were the membership directories for the Middle East Studies Association and the Association for Iranian Studies; from these lists we selected individuals whose subfields/specialties appeared to fit a broad conception of Iranian Studies. These searches were supplemented by a search in JSTOR for peer-reviewed publications since 2000 that appeared to fall into the realm of Iranian Studies; the authors of those articles were added to the list.⁴ The lists were cross checked to avoid duplicate names. This effort produced a roster of 262 Iranian Studies specialists in 2016 and 365 scholars in 2023. We included all academic ranks from advanced graduate students to emeritus professors. Because these were small respondent pools, we did not draw samples but instead attempted to obtain information from every individual we identified.

The respondent pools were contacted by email with links to a Qualtrics survey.⁵ The survey windows ran October- early December in 2016 and February-March in 2023. Prospective respondents were offered a chance to win Amazon gift cards and received multiple follow up emails. We collected 99 complete interviews in 2016 (37.3% response rate) and 123 complete interviews in 2023 (33.6% response rate).⁶ Although some individuals participated in both the 2016 and 2023 surveys, this was not constructed as a panel survey, and in the analysis that follows, we treat the 2016 and 2023 surveys as separate cross-sections.

The questionnaire consisted primarily of closed-ended questions, though respondents were occasionally invited to provide open-ended comments to elaborate on their answers, some of which we share in our analysis below. In addition to questions about political activity, the questionnaire also featured items about various aspects of academic and professional life, as well as attitudes toward the field of Iranian Studies. Prior to launching the 2016 survey, we had no specific expectation

⁴ A similar list approach was taken in a 2013 survey of Iranian American physicians in California. In that study, respondents were identified from several medical directories and professional association membership lists (Rashidian et al., 2016).

⁵ The 2016 respondent pool received an initial contact by hardcopy mail in September 2016 notifying them that they would be receiving an email request and encouraging them to respond to the survey. Experiments conducted in conjunction with surveys of faculty have shown that initial hardcopy mail contact can improve response rate as much as 10% over surveys that rely only on email contact (Tourangeau et al., 2013). Budget constraints prevented us from sending out the initial hardcopy contact in 2023.

⁶ These response rates are in line with those for web surveys of this kind (Tourangeau et al., 2013; Wu et al., 2022).

that the looming US presidential election would break through into responses or that the JCPOA was anything but a durable, multilateral attempt to reduce tensions between the Islamic Republic and the United States. But, in open-ended comments it was clear that anxiety about the 2016 election and its results which, for some respondents, were known before they completed the survey, was on the minds of this community of scholars. A series of events following the 2016 survey - the Muslim Ban, the US pullout of the JCPOA and, of course, the effects of the pandemic - led us to undertake a follow-up survey. In the 2023 survey, we added some more specific questions about media contacts and outreach, as well as the impacts of the pandemic, to better capture the effects of those environmental factors on the subfield. The complete text of survey questions used in this paper is included in Appendix A.

RESULTS

Political Participation in 2016 and 2023

In 2016 and 2023, respondents were shown a list of political activities and asked if they had engaged in any of them over the respective past 12 months for each year surveyed. This list covered a broad array of political activities, including voting and other election-related activities, protest activities, and newer forms of digital political activity. The activities encompass both allegiant and assertive behavior.

Table 1: Political Activities, 2016 and 2023 Percentage of Respondents When Engaged in Each Activity

Political Activity	2016 (%)	2023 (%)
Voted in election	72.7	67.5
Written a letter to a public official	32.3	34.1
Worn a political button, sign, or bumper sticker	15.2	33.3
Signed a petition circulated by a candidate, party, or political organization	52.5	52.0
Attended a campaign rally or speech	25.3	26.8
Contributed money to a political organization or candidate	37.3	44.7
Worked for a political organization or candidate	4.0	4.1
Participated in a lawful demonstration	31.3	53.7
Participated in an act of civil disobedience	6.1	12.2
Visited a campaign or candidate-sponsored website	33.3	31.7
Forwarded an online campaign commercial or news story	32.3	29.3
Blogged about politics or a campaign	6.1	11.4
Voiced or shared thoughts on social media	36.4	46.3

Note. Percentages represent respondents who reported engaging in each activity during the past year. Sample sizes were $n = 99$ (2016) and $n = 123$ (2023).

Table 1 displays the percentages of Iranian Studies specialists who reported participating in each activity in 2016 and 2023. Given the educational attainment of these respondents, it is not surprising to see that this is a politically active group. But there are two striking features to these results: (1) just how active respondents are, especially on some of the more assertive activities, and (2) the increases in participation in 2023, often from already high levels.

Reported voter turnout was impressive in both 2016 (72.7%) and 2023 (67.5%), and in line with other results for highly educated individuals (Leighly & Nagler, 2013). Roughly a quarter of respondents attended a campaign rally in both years, comparable to the results reported by Abrams. The percentages of respondents contributing money to candidates – 37.3% in 2016 and 44.7% in 2023 – were a bit higher than the figures reported by Abrams (2018). And these figures comfortably exceed those found by the National Election Study (NES) in their 2016 and 2020 surveys of the overall US electorate (ANES Guide to Public Opinion, electionstudies.org).

When it comes to election-related political activities, our portrait of academics is similar to the one reported by Abrams. Iranian Studies specialists are clearly more involved than the general public, but more similar to other well-educated citizens. That characterization changes when we examine more assertive non-election political activity. Just over 50% of Iranian Studies scholars signed a petition in 2016 or 2023; general population figures for signing a petition are typically in the low to mid 20% range (Verba et al., 1995; Zukin et al., 2006).

Perhaps the most striking figures in Table 1 are those for participating in a lawful demonstration and engaging in civil disobedience. Over 30% of Iranian Studies scholars reported participating in a lawful demonstration in 2016. That is indeed impressive, considering that reported levels in the general public are usually in single digits (Verba et al., 1995; Zukin et al., 2006). In 2023, over 50% of Iranian Studies specialists reported participating in a lawful demonstration, a remarkable increase from an already high rate of activity.

At first glance, reported participation in civil disobedience is less eye-catching at 6.1% in 2016 and 12.2% in 2023. But civil disobedience is by definition illegal, it requires considerable commitment, and it is potentially dangerous, so these participation rates might actually be pretty high. It is hard to find benchmarks for assessing our results; in a 2022 survey conducted by the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication, less than one percent of registered voters reported engaging in civil disobedience “against corporate or government activities that make global warming worse” (Leiserowitz et al., 2023). Although this is admittedly an imperfect comparison, the figures for Iranian Studies scholars, especially the double-digit percentage in 2023, are genuinely striking.

Finally, we note that in both 2016 and 2023, roughly one-third of all respondents reported engaging in various digital forms of participation, such as visiting campaign websites, forwarding online content, and voicing or sharing thoughts on social media. By 2023, nearly half (46.3%) of Iranian Studies specialists shared thoughts on social media, a ten-point increase from the 2016 survey. As a basis for comparison, Pew Research surveys in 2016 and 2020 found that almost one-third of social media users

posted about politics and government either “often” or “sometimes” (Duggan & Smith, 2016; McClain, 2021). Pew’s baseline – social media users – was different from ours; we included all of our Iranian Studies scholars. With that in mind, the level of online activity in our sample probably surpasses that reported by Pew.

Subgroup Differences in Political Participation

Because formal education is such a driver of political participation, it is not surprising to see these high levels of activity in a survey of academics. But in a survey of academics, the range of educational attainment will be quite limited. All of our respondents have bachelor’s degrees, and nearly all of them either have an advanced degree or are working toward one. Limited variability in this key explanatory variable likely contributed to limited impact of other explanatory factors in our study. We looked at several subgroup breakdowns in reported political activity in 2016 and 2023, and we found few consistent, discernable differences. Full tables for these subgroup analyses are not shown here, but the asterisks in Table 2 indicate those instances where there were statistically significant differences in political participation within subgroups.

The high levels of political participation are most consistently connected to a value we observed across different subgroups within this scholarly community: the desire to have one’s research has a social impact. That said, we did probe for differences among a variety of subgroups. Some research on gender differences in political participation suggests that women are more likely to favor electoral participation while men are more apt to engage in protest or other forms of direct activism (Coffé & Bolzendahl, 2010). But by and large, studies in the United States point to only a modest gender gap in participation, one that vanishes once education is held constant (Carreras, 2018). That is confirmed in our survey of Iranian Studies specialists. There are very few asterisks in the gender columns of Table 2, indicating that gender differences in participation are sporadic, with no clear pattern as to form of political activity.

We also compared participation by self-described heritage identity, specifically whether respondents described themselves as Iranian, American, or Iranian-American. These self-descriptions have been found to differentiate respondents’ perceptions about academic and professional experiences and assessments of the state of Iranian Studies as a subfield (Borquez & Amin, 2022), but they tend not to be related to levels of political activity. When distinctions arise, self-described Iranian respondents tend to be less active than others. But as seen in the heritage identity column of Table 2, those instances are infrequent.

Academic rank has also produced differences in perceptions concerning academic and professional experiences (Borquez & Amin, 2022), but rank is only weakly related to participation in 2023. The most noticeable split is between non-tenured (adjunct faculty and graduate students) and tenure-track faculty. Differences are more common for election related activities, with the tenure-track faculty more likely to take part. But these differences are generally of a small magnitude, and most

are significant only at a .10 level, so these distinctions should be treated with caution and some healthy skepticism.

Table 2: Political Activities by Selected Respondent Attributes, 2016 and 2023

Political Activity	Heritage	Gender Identity	Academic Rank	Professional Activity	Research Impact
Voted in election	**	*	**	**	—
Written to public official	**	*	—	**	*
Worn button/sign	—	—	—	—	*
Signed petition	—	*	**	**	**
Attended rally	**	*	*	**	—
Contributed money	*	**	**	*	**
Worked for candidate	—	—	—	—	—
Lawful demonstration	—	—	—	**	**
Civil disobedience	—	*	**	*	**
Visited campaign website	—	*	—	*	*
Forwarded online content	*	—	**	**	*
Blogged about politics	—	—	**	—	**
Shared thoughts on social media	—	*	**	**	**

Note. This table is based on crosstabulations between each political activity and the five respondent attributes shown. Asterisks indicate statistically significant differences in participation across categories of each attribute.

$p < .10$. ** $p < .05$.

A full set of crosstabulations, including percentages, is available from the corresponding author upon request.

Another comparison that we examined was based on professional activity. In both 2016 and 2023, we asked respondents if they had served as an officer in a professional association, if they had served on the editorial board of a journal, or if they had helped organize a conference. Involvement in professional associations or journals reflects a degree of professional commitment, but it also suggests ongoing communication and relationships with others in the subfield. In other words, this professional activity might be taken as a rough indicator of connection to a social network. Since connection to social networks has been associated with higher levels of political participation (Campbell, 2013; McClurg, 2003), we compared reported political activity among the more professionally involved to the less professionally involved. There was evidence of a relationship in 2016; more professionally active

respondents were more likely to engage in a range of political activities, including voting, contributing money to candidates, and digital participation. Curiously, few of those differences were found in 2023. One possibility is that the statistically significant differences in 2016 were something of a fluke, perhaps a function of the small respondent pool in 2016. But the fact that differences were seen across a range of activities seems to argue against that interpretation. Another possibility is that events and developments between 2016 and 2023 – the travel ban, *Women, Life, Freedom*, etc. – created a sense of urgency, if not threat, that coursed throughout the Iranian Studies community, crossing gender lines, identity lines, and the boundaries of existing networks within the subfield. Thus, professional activity would become less of a differentiating factor.

The final subgroup breakdown in Table 2 is based on a survey question that asked Iranian Studies scholars to identify factors that have influenced their current research agenda. About one-third of respondents cited social impact (2016) or social change (2023) as a motivator for their research. We compared reported levels of political activity between those who mentioned social impact/social change and those who did not. The abundance of asterisks in the rightmost columns of Table 2 indicate that research motivation was related to a variety of political activities in both 2016 and 2023. We turn to a more detailed discussion of these relationships.

Research Motivation and Political Participation

A notable feature in both the 2016 and 2023 surveys is the extent to which Iranian Studies specialists express a connection between their research endeavors and their political engagement. This connection was apparent in two different survey questions. As previously explained, respondents were shown a list of considerations that might influence their current research. That list included such things as gender identity, ethnic identity, intellectual interests, and a desire to have a social impact or pursue social change.⁷ In both 2016 and 2023, intellectual interest was the most frequently mentioned motivator, but social impact/social change was mentioned by about 30% of respondents in both years, a figure that easily surpassed mentions of gender identity, ethnic identity or religious identity.

A different survey question took a *reverse angle* approach to the connection between research agendas and political participation. That question asked respondents about various considerations that might influence their political activity, such as ethnic identity, gender identity, religious identity, academic position, and research interests. Sixty-one percent of respondents in 2016 and 57% of respondents in 2023 said that research interests had a “great deal” or “a lot” of influence on their

⁷ In both 2016 and 2023, respondents were asked “Which factors influenced your research interest?,” and they were provided a list of items to select. In 2016, one of the items was “desire to have social impact,” and in 2023 one of the items was “to foster social change.” The modification in 2023 was made in response to open-ended comments from respondents as well as more informal feedback from survey respondents.

political activities. These percentages were 20-25 points higher than those for any of the other factors included in the survey question.

Table 3: Political Activities by Social Impact/Social Change as a Motivator for Research

Political Activity	2016: Mention (%)	2016: No Mention (%)	2023: Mention (%)	2023: No Mention (%)
Voted in election	87.9	65.2**	68.4	67.1
Written a letter to a public official	39.4	28.8	42.1	30.6
Worn button/sign	18.2	13.6	44.7	28.2*
Signed petition	66.7	45.5**	65.8	45.9**
Attended rally	30.3	22.7	26.3	27.1
Contributed money	48.5	31.8*	47.4	43.5
Worked for candidate	0.0	6.1	2.6	4.7
Lawful demonstration	48.5	22.7**	65.8	48.2*
Civil disobedience	12.1	3.0*	26.3	5.9**
Visited campaign website	45.5	27.3*	42.1	27.1*
Forwarded online content	54.5	21.2**	39.5	24.7*
Blogged about politics	12.1	3.0*	15.8	9.4
Shared thoughts on social media	45.5	31.8	63.2	38.8**

Note. In each year, the left column shows the percentage of respondents who mentioned social impact/social change as a motivator for research; the right column shows those who did not. Sample sizes were $n = 33$ (mention) and $n = 66$ (no mention) in 2016, and $n = 38$ (mention) and $n = 85$ (no mention) in 2023.

$p \leq .10$. ** $p \leq .05$.

Many Iranian Studies scholars appear to see a connection between their research endeavors and their political engagement, and the connection is seen in two different question formats. For a more detailed look at the relationship between research motivations and political activity, we focus on a comparison of reported political activity between those who mentioned social impact/social change as a research motivation and those who did not. These comparisons for both 2016 and 2023 are displayed in Table 3. For just about every activity covered in the questionnaire, reported participation was higher among those motivated by social impact/social change. In some cases, the differences were considerable, in the neighborhood of twenty percentage points. This included voting in elections in 2016, signing a petition

in both 2016 and 2023, participating in a lawful demonstration in both 2016 and 2023, civil disobedience in 2023, and sharing thoughts on social media in 2023.

Once again, some of the percentages in Table 3, especially for those motivated by social impact/social change, are extraordinarily high. For instance, about two-thirds of respondents motivated by impact/change signed petitions in 2016 and 2023, with a similar proportion participating in a lawful demonstration in 2023. Over 25% of scholars motivated by impact/change reported taking part in civil disobedience in 2023, and over 60% reported sharing thoughts on social media in 2023. These percentages easily eclipse available baselines, either for general populations or for highly educated populations.

Note that the relationship between prioritizing social impact/social change and levels of participation applies to a range of activities, from the “conventional” or “institutional” (Harris & Gillion, 2010) such as voting, to the more “unconventional” or “non-institutional” such as participating in a lawful demonstration, as well as digital forms of participation such as sharing thoughts on social media. Conservative critics might see this as an inappropriate politicization of academic life (Maranto et al., 2009), while others might see it as a healthy striving for relevance in academic endeavors (Rojas, 2014). Either way, the connection between scholarly motivations and political participation merits additional investigation.

Public Outreach and Media Interactions

The connection between research motivation and political activity suggests that many Iranian Studies specialists see a public facing element in their academic lives, and they want their scholarship to make a difference outside traditional academic settings. One such effort is the Iran 1400 Project (iran1400.org), a platform that produces commentary and videos academic specialists, including an interview series with Iranian Studies scholars on the impact of *Women, Life, Freedom* (see <https://www.youtube.com/@Iran1400Project/videos>). Across academia, there is growing range of digital platforms for public outreach, and there is also an increasing recognition of the value and importance of the “public scholar” role, sharing expertise and commentary with audiences outside the academy (Cann & DeMeulenaere, 2020; Hoffman, 2021; Jones, 2022). These kinds of activities are not covered in traditional research on political participation in the general public. But in a study of academics, outreach efforts such as using social media or speaking to journalists can be considered political to the extent that they involve efforts to reach out and inform the public and influence the focus and direction of policy discourse.

Our questionnaire was not intended to capture the full breadth of activities that can comprise “engaged” or “public” scholarship, but some questions do touch upon aspects of public outreach and contact with the media.

As noted in Table 1, it is not unusual for Iranian Studies specialists to share thoughts on social media; nearly half (46.3%) of our respondents reported doing this in 2023, and that figure hit 63.2% among scholars whose research was motivated by a desire to encourage social change (see Table 3).

Another set of questions asked Iran specialists how they reacted to news about Iran. The 2016 questionnaire featured separate questions about reactions to positive news and negative news, but in 2023 there was a single item inquiring about reactions to news about Iran. Respondents were presented a list of possible reactions and asked to select any that applied to them. The results for 2016 and 2023 are shown in Table 4. In both 2016 and 2023, Iran specialists most commonly reported that they reflected alone about news, discussed news with family or friends, or discussed news with colleagues. The percentages were by and large consistent between 2016 and 2023, and there were negligible differences in reaction to positive news or negative news in 2016.

Table 4: Reactions to News About Iran, 2016 and 2023

Reaction	2016 Positive (%)	2016 Negative (%)	2023 (%)
Reflect alone	45.5	45.5	48.8
Discuss with family or friends	65.7	67.7	74.8
Discuss with colleagues	47.5	49.5	53.7
Protest	4.0	9.0	25.2
Contact officials	5.1	14.1	11.4
Contact community leaders	2.0	2.0	5.7
Contact advocacy group	3.0	6.0	11.4
Contact media	9.0	14.1	16.3
Outreach	25.3	27.3	43.9

Note. Respondents could select more than one reaction; therefore, percentages do not sum to 100%. The 2016 survey included separate questions for reactions to positive and negative news, whereas the 2023 survey included a single question about news in general. Sample sizes were $n = 99$ (2016) and $n = 123$ (2023).

Of special note are the percentages for several of the more public facing reactions. In 2023, 25.2% responded to news about Iran by participating in a protest or demonstration. That one in four academics would react to news with such direct political action is truly striking. A substantial proportion of Iran scholars also reported that they responded to news about Iran by engaging in outreach efforts such as public lectures and panels; about a quarter of respondents did this in 2016 (responding similarly to good news and bad news), with the percentage increasing to 43.9% in 2023. We cannot say how Iran Studies scholars compare to other academics, but it is clear that public engagement is a priority for many individuals in the subfield.

In 2023 we asked respondents if they had been contacted by a journalist or news organization in the past year and asked to comment on current events or issues, and we asked about the topic of those media requests. Nearly half of the Iranian Studies scholars (48.0%) reported such contacts. Given the timing of the 2023 survey, it is not surprising that media inquiries were most frequently about the *Women, Life, Freedom* protests following the death of Mahsa Amini in September 2022, as well as

women's issues more generally; this was the focus of 58% of the reported media exchanges. A smaller percentage (17%) of inquiries were about JCPOA and US-Iran relations in general.

Insights from Open-Ended Survey Comments

Both the 2016 and 2023 questionnaires included some open-ended prompts that invited respondents to share insights on various aspects of working in U.S. academia. These open-ended comments reflect the striking results we have reported and add nuance to the results regarding the political involvement of Iranian scholars and enhancing our understanding of challenges. Observations from the comment sections of the surveys suggest that Iranian Studies scholars are motivated by an awareness of political currents affecting them and by a sense of obligation to be active and vocal. However, they are also sensitive to the risks involved in public commentary or advocacy.

Comments from Iran specialists in the 2016 and 2023 surveys illustrate their awareness of the difficult professional and political environment in which they operate. Some observations reflect the issues and challenges facing many area studies subfields, but others speak specifically to political developments in the U.S. and Iran during the time of our study.

In 2016, one respondent highlighted the awareness among Iranian scholars of their marginalized roles within American institutions, noting,

As a non-tenure track associate professor on a long-term contract, my position is tenuous. Whenever I have directed interdisciplinary programs, my views are generally respected by colleagues and administrators, and I have had a major impact on programming at the college during those periods.

However, the respondent also emphasized marginalization within their area of specialty, stating,

Otherwise, my views and role are marginalized despite my professional activities and publications. I am the only person doing Iranian Studies at my institution, and the marginality of my position reflects the (lack of) importance given to this field of study.

The respondents' contrasting experiences of respect in interdisciplinary settings and marginalization within their specialized field highlight the precarious nature of their professional existence and the broader implications of their political engagement. The same anti-Iran bias was echoed in 2023 by another participant, who stated,

I suspect that I have been denied sabbatical twice (without explanation) because I work on Iran... There is very little interest in Iran among my colleagues or the university administration (although the students are interested), and very little support for work in this area.

These comments point to the difficulty and vulnerability of working and conducting research as an Iranian specialist scholar in American academia.

However, to add more nuance to the above mentioned comments, it is important to note that for some of our respondents the obstacles were caused by the lack of support from within the community of Iranian scholars. As another 2023 respondents

noted, “The difficulty or tension is relevant on this campus due to the presence of Iranians (mostly graduate students), rather than due to possible hostility from non-Iranian students or faculty.” Part of this tension may arise from the fact that Iranian American opinion on the question of “regime change” (which would necessitate a more aggressive and even a militarized response to Iran) has shifted. As the executive summary of the 2023 Public Affairs Alliance of Iranian American survey noted, support for regime change was up 16 points from a previous survey in 2020 (from 25% to 41%, the highest jump since 2018, Zogby Research Services and PAAIA, 2023, p. 12). Sometimes the tension was caused by lack of communication among scholars as another participant highlighted, “We own this failure due to not communicating and sharing ideas and wanting to do things alone and not as a team.” These comments reveal many layers of nuance that can be explored in more detail in a focus group study, including the political and professional dynamics experienced by Iranian Studies scholars in American academia, the intersection of political and civic life with the professional and personal lives of this community, and the dynamics within the Iranian Studies specialist community. Understanding the impact of political events on professional lives emphasizes the potential value of focus group work in this ongoing project.

Turning more specifically to matters of political engagement, some respondents expressed concerns regarding their roles as Iran Studies specialists, navigating the intricate landscape of political involvement and public/media interactions. These comments add depth to our quantitative findings, highlighting the desire for research activity to contribute to social change. In the 2023 survey, one participant elaborated on the difficulty of engaging with social media on political matters: “The toxic climate on social media, particularly attacks on academics and journalists with ideas that do not squarely fit those of the Islamic Republic and its diaspora opponents, has made academic contributions to public debates very hard.” This comment underlines the tension and challenges faced when engaging politically. Another respondent noted, “There are new and more intense tensions between Iranians (Iranian-Americans) due to the fallout from the killing of Mahsa Zina Amini and the subsequent protests. There is a polarization in the discourse and a climate of intimidation if one points out US policy, criticizes sanctions, or raises doubts about the possibility of the success of the ‘revolution.’” In contrast, some respondents highlighted the positive aspects of this struggle. One remarked,

Current conditions in Iran have brought in the perspective that reveals the realities of the lives of Iranians every day and the struggles they face. Having the people’s voices be amplified has brought more support for Iranians who are fighting for their basic human rights. In the US, people are recognizing the brutalities of the Islamic-Iranian regime and are shifting their perspectives and becoming more supportive of the Iranian people. I personally feel proud to be Iranian at this time.

This clearly speaks to the role personal identity plays in shaping how Iran specialists in American academia are experiencing their professional and civic lives.

CONCLUDING NOTES AND FUTURE PLANS

The results from our 2016 and 2023 surveys of Iranian Studies scholars portray a very politically engaged community, with reported levels of participation easily exceeding available benchmarks for academics or other highly educated Americans. It is telling that reported participation for several activities increased between 2016 and 2023. Increases in “assertive” activities such as demonstrations and civil disobedience are especially noteworthy. We believe the increases between 2016 and 2023 are driven in an important way by political developments in the U.S. and in Iran that spurred political engagement. Our findings call for a modification of the view that high levels of political participation among academics is primarily a function of high educational attainment. Some scholars, such as Iranian Studies specialists, work in environments that are politically fraught and that motivate political action. Moreover, many Iran Studies scholars see connections between political action and their research agendas, expressing a goal that their research contributes to social change. A large proportion of Iran Studies scholars also see a public-facing component to their professional lives, taking the form of public outreach and media interactions. This is an aspect of political engagement that has been outside the realm of traditional research on political participation, but that should be included in studies of academic communities.

Our findings, based as they are on a single subfield, naturally raise questions about their broader applicability. These questions point to promising avenues for further inquiry.

We have argued that the high levels of political participation among Iranian Studies scholars are driven in part by political developments in the U.S. and Iran. We believe that many Iranian Studies scholars are conscious of these developments and that they motivate political action. We also recognize that this might not be unique to Iranian Studies. Other area studies fields have their own expressly political beginnings, and scholars in these fields have had to contend with the vagaries of U.S. government policy and international political events. We encourage other area studies academics to explore some of the questions we have addressed and see if similar findings and parallel storylines emerge.

Iranian Studies, like most other area studies fields, is rooted primarily in the humanities and social sciences. Our survey did not reach out to U.S. academics with heritage ties to Iran working in engineering or the sciences. A useful future step would be to expand our research beyond Iranian Studies per se and to collect data from Iranian diaspora scholars in other academic fields. That would allow us to see if, or how, that broader set of academics perceive political pressures or embrace a public facing aspect to their work.

The signals we picked up in the survey data, especially the comments some respondents shared and the informal conversations the authors had with colleagues in a variety of professional settings, have convinced us of the value of having direct conversations with willing members of our respondent pool. To that end, we are currently arranging focus group sessions with 2023 survey respondents. In addition to the nuance one can more easily obtain in a confidential focus group conversation,

we expect to gain insights into how we might refine future iterations of our survey. The other opportunity post-survey focus groups will provide is to give a sense of how Iran specialists in American academia are processing the heightened tensions on American campuses in relation to the events since October 7th, 2023. The way the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has become fully integrated into Iran's proxy war with Israel and the first instances of direct military confrontation between the Islamic Republic and Iran has changed the stakes of professional engagement in policy debates. Plans are also underway for a third online survey to capture the impacts of the 2024 Iranian and American presidential elections, both of which are perceived as being high stakes political developments.

REFERENCES

- Abramowitz, A. I. (2017). It wasn't the economy stupid: Racial polarization, white racial resentment, and the rise of Trump. In L. J. Sabato, K. Kondik, & G. Skellet (Eds.), *Trumped: The 2016 election that broke all the rules* (pp. 202-210). Rowman and Littlefield.
- Abrams, S. J. (2018). The facts behind the myths about faculty activism. *Academe*, 104(1), 35-39. <https://www.aaup.org/academe/issues/104-0/facts-behind-myths-about-faculty-activism>
- Bayat, A. (2023). Is Iran on the verge of another revolution? *Journal of Democracy*, 34(2), 19-31. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/jod.2023.0019>
- Berry, J., Choudoud, Y., & Junn, J. (2018). Reaching beyond low-hanging fruit: Surveying low-incidence populations. In L. R. Atkeson & R. M. Alvarez (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of polling and survey methods* (pp. 181-206). Oxford University Press.
- Berry, M., & Chenowith, E. (2018). Who made the Women's March? In D. S. Meyer & S. Tarrow (Eds.), *The resistance: The dawn of the anti-Trump opposition movement* (pp. 75-89). Oxford University Press.
- Boise State University (2023, January 17). Crisis in Iran: Faculty raise the alarm. <https://www.boisestate.edu/news/2023/01/17/crisis-in-iran-faculty-raise-the-alarm/>
- Borquez, J., & Amin, C. M. (2022). Gender differences in the professional experiences of Iran specialists in American academia. *SN Social Sciences*, 2(12), 272. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43545-022-00585-4>
- Campbell, D. E. (2013). Social networks and political participation. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 16, 33-48. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-033011-201728>
- Cann, C., & DeMeulenaere, E. (2020) *The activist academic: Engaged scholarship for resistance, hope and social change*. Myers Education Press.
- Carreras, M. (2018). Why no gender gap in electoral participation? A civic duty explanation. *Electoral Studies*, 52, 36-45. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2018.01.007>

- Coffé, H., & Bolzendahl, C. (2010). Same game, different rules? Gender differences in political participation. *Sex Roles*, 62, 318-333. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-009-9729-y>
- Columbia Climate School. (October 17, 2022). *Women, Life, Freedom: The Iranian feminist uprising in context*. <https://www.climate.columbia.edu/events/women-life-freedom-iranian-feminist-uprising-context/>
- Community Engagement, Design and Research Center (CEDaR). (2022, November 28). *Woman, Life, Freedom: Supporting the Iranian women's revolution, Nov 30, 6-8pm*. <https://www.colorado.edu/cedar/2022/11/28/woman-life-freedom-supporting-iranian-women's-revolution-nov-30-6-8pm/>
- Dalton, R. J. (2020). *The good citizen: How a younger generation is reshaping American politics* (3rd ed.). Sage CQ Press.
- Dalton, R. J. (2017). *The participation gap: Social status and political inequality*. Oxford University Press.
- Dalton, R. J., & Welzel, C. (Eds.). (2014). *The civic culture transformed: From allegiant to assertive citizens*. Cambridge University Press.
- Dorf, M. C., & Chu, M. S. (2018). Lawyers as activists: From the airport to the courtroom. In D. S. Meyer & S. Tarrow (Eds.), *The resistance: The dawn of the anti-Trump opposition movement* (pp. 127-142). Oxford University Press.
- Duggan, M., & Smith, A. (2016, October 25). *The political environment on social media*. Pew Research Center. <https://pewresearch.org/internet/2016/10/25/the-political-environment-on-social-media/>
- Faia, M. A. (1974). The myth of the liberal professor. *Sociology of Education*, 47, 171-202. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2112104>
- Fisher, D. R. (2018). Climate of resistance: How the climate movement connected to the resistance. In D. S. Meyer & S. Tarrow (Eds.), *The resistance: The dawn of the anti-Trump opposition movement* (pp. 109-124). Oxford University Press.
- Gose, L. E., & Skocpol, T. (2019). Resist, persist, and transform: The emergence and impact of grassroots resistance groups opposing the Trump presidency. *Mobilization: An International Journal*, 24, 293-317.
- Gross, N., & Simmons, S. (2014). The social and political views of American college and university professors. In N. Gross & S. Simmons (Eds.), *Professor and their politics* (pp. 19-50). Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Hamidi, Y. N. (2023). Women, Life, Freedom, and the question of multiculturalism in Iranian studies. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 55, 744-748. doi:10.1017/S0020743823001411
- Harris, F. C., & Gillion, D. (2010). Expanding the possibilities: Reconceptualizing political participation as a toolbox. In J. E. Leighly (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of American elections and political behavior* (pp. 144-161). Oxford University Press.
- Hoffman, A. J. (2021). *The engaged scholar: Expanding the impact of academic research in today's world*. Stanford University Press.
- Jones, A. (2022). *Street scholar: Using public scholarship to educate, advocate, and liberate*. Peter Lang.

- Karimi, P. (2023). Art of protest in five acts. *Iranian Studies*, 56, 585-95. doi: 10.1017/irn.2023.18
- Kazemi, A. V. (2023). Everyday movements and massive socio-cultural shifts in Iran. *Critique (Glasgow)*, 51, 181-196. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03017605.2023.2238443>
- Khajehi, Y., Mohammad, A. Z., & Schechner, R. (2023). Fragments of a revolution: Performativity vs. theatricality in Iran, September 2022-January 2023. *TDR: The Drama Review*, 67, 81-89. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1054204323000163>
- Kohout, T. (2023, April 5). GW community shows solidarity with the women of Iran: Diplomats and women's rights advocates lead discussion on human rights violations. *GW Today*. <https://gwtoday.gwu.edu/gw-community-shows-solidarity-women-iran>
- Ladd, E. C. (1969). Professors and political petitions. *Science*, 163, 1425-1430. doi: 10.1126/science.163.3874.1425
- Leighly, J. E., & Nagler, J. (2013). *Who votes now? Demographics, issues, inequality, and turnout in the United States*. Princeton University Press.
- Leiserowitz, A., Maibach, E., Rosenthal, S., Kotcher, J., Carman, J., Lee, S., Verner, M., Ballew, M., Ansah, P. O., Badullovich, N., Myers, T., Goldberg, M. & Marlon, J. (2023, January 31). *Climate change in the American mind: Politics & policy, December 2022*. Yale Program on Climate Change Communication. <https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/publications/politics-global-warming-december-2022/>
- Lipset, S. M., & Ladd Jr., E. C. (1971). The Divided Professoriate. *Change*, 3, 54-60. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00091383.1971.10567994>
- Marandi, M. M., & Tari, Z. G. (2018). Iranian studies in the United States and the politics of knowledge production on post-revolutionary Iran. In T. Keskin (Ed.), *Middle East studies after September 11: Neo-orientalism, American hegemony and academia* (pp. 271-296).
- Maranto, R., Redding, R. E., & Hess, F. M. (Eds.). (2009). *The politically correct university: Problems, scopes, and reforms*. AEI Press.
- Mariani, M. D., & Hewitt, G. J. (2008). Indoctrination U.? Faculty ideology and changes in student political orientation. *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 41, 773-783. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20452310>
- Martin, J. L., & Smith, J. (2020). Why we march! Feminist activism in critical times: Lessons from the Women's March in Washington. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 81, 102375. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2020.102375>
- McClain, C. (2021, May 4). 70% of U.S. social media users never or rarely post or share about political, social issues. Pew Research Center. <https://pewresearch.org/short-reads/2021/05/04/70-of-u-s-social-media-users-never-or-rarely-post-or-share-about-political-social-issues/>
- McClurg, S. D. (2003). Social networks and political participation: The role of social interaction in explaining political participation. *Political Research Quarterly*, 56, 448-466. <https://doi.org/10.1177/106591290305600407>
-

- McDonald, M. (2022, September 30). Students, faculty gather at Harvard to protest Iran's treatment of women. *WBZ News*. <https://www.cbsnews.com/boston/news/harvard-university-mahsa-amini-iran-protest/>
- McKenzie, B. (2022, November 30). UVA students join in worldwide protest. *UVA Today*. <https://news.virginia.edu/content/uva-students-join-worldwide-protest/>
- Meyer, D. S., & Tarrow, S. (2018). *The resistance: The dawn of the anti-Trump opposition movement*. Oxford University Press.
- Olson Beal, H. K., Beal, B. D., & Sandul, P. J. P. (2018). Trump's travel ban and embodied activism. *Academe*, 104(1), 29-34. <https://www.aaup.org/academe/issues/104-0/trumps-travel-ban-and-embodied-activism>
- Persson, M. (2013). Review article: Education and political participation. *British Journal of Political Science*, 45, 689-703. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/43821840>
- Rahbari, L. (2024). (Gender) politics in the field: The precarities of diasporic (women) scholars of Iranian politics during and after the 'Woman, Life, Freedom' uprising. *Politics and Gender*, 1-7. doi: 10.1017/S1743923X24000072
- Rashidian, H. A., Zeighami, E., & Zeighami, B. (2016). Barriers to sexual health care: A survey of Iranian-American physicians in California, USA. *BMC Health Services Research*, 16, 263. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-016-1481-8>
- Razavi, S. (2023). Discord in the diaspora: Agonism in the Woman, Life, Freedom movement for democracy. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 55, 754-758. doi:10.1017/S0020743823001435
- Rojas, F. (2014). Activism and the academy. In N. Gross & S. Simmons (Eds.) *Professors and Their Politics* (pp. 243-266). Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Rosenstone, S. J., & Hansen, J. M. (1993). *Mobilization, participation, and democracy in America*. Macmillan.
- Rusting, A. (2023, March 9). Bruins rally for Iranian women in International Women's Day march. *Daily Bruin*. <https://dailybruin.com/2023/03/09/bruins-rally-for-iranian-women-in-international-womens-day-march/>
- Schaffner, B. F., MacWilliams, M., & Nteta T. (2018). Understanding white polarization in the 2016 vote for president: The sobering role of racism and sexism. *Political Science Quarterly*, 133, 9-34. <https://doi.org/10.1002/polq.12737>
- Sides, J., Tausanovitch, C., & Vavreck, L. (2022). *The bitter end: The 2020 presidential campaign and the challenge to American democracy*. Princeton University Press.
- Sides, J., Tesler, M., & Vavreck, L. (2018). *Identity crisis: The 2016 presidential campaign and the battle for the meaning of America*. Princeton University Press.
- Szanton, D. L. (2004). The origin, nature, and challenges of area studies in the United States. In D. L. Szanton (Ed.), *The politics of knowledge: Area studies and the disciplines* (pp. 1-33). University of California Press.
- Tambe, A. (2017). The women's march on Washington: Words from an organizer: An interview with Mrinalini Chakraborty. *Feminist Studies*, 43, 223-229. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/10.15767/feministstudies.43.82031.0223>

- Tari, Z. G. (2015). The development of Iranian Studies programs in the United States: From philological to a contemporary approach. *Iranian Review of Foreign Affairs*, 6, 31-52.
- Tourangeau, R., Conrad, F. G., & Couper, M. P. (2013). *The science of web surveys*. Oxford University Press.
- University of Southern Maine. (2023, January 10). 'Woman, Life, Freedom': Professor stands in solidarity with Iranian protesters. <https://usm.maine.edu/news/woman-life-freedom-professor-stands-in-solidarity-with-iranian-protester/s/>
- Verba, S., & Nie, N. H. (1972). *Participation in America: Political democracy and social equality*. Harper and Row.
- Verba, S., Schlozman, K. L., & Brady, H. (1995). *Voice and equality: Civic voluntarism in American politics*. Harvard University Press.
- Whittington, K. E. (2021). The value of ideological diversity among university faculty. *Social Philosophy and Policy*, 37, 90-113. doi: 10.1017/S0265052521000066
- Wu, M. J., Zhao, K., & Fils-Aime, F. (2022). Response rates of online surveys in published research: A meta-analysis. *Computers in Human Behavior Reports*, 7, 100206. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chbr.2022.100206>
- Zukin, C., Keeter, S., Andolina, K M., Jenkins, K., & Della Carpini, M. X. (2006). *A new engagement? Political participation, civic life, and the changing American citizen*. Oxford University Press.
- Zogby Research Services and PAAIA, 2023 National Public Opinion Survey of the Iranian American Community, 2023. <https://paaia.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/2023-PAAIA-Survey.pdf>

APPENDIX A

Text of Survey Questions Used in Analysis

[2016, 2023] Thinking back over the past year, please select the following political activities you have done. (select all that apply)

- Voted in an election
- Written a letter to a public official
- Worn a political button or displayed a political sign or bumper sticker
- Signed a petition being circulated by a candidate, party, or political organization
- Attended a campaign rally or speech given by a candidate for political office
- Contributed money to a political organization or candidate for office
- Participated in a lawful demonstration
- Participated in an act of civil disobedience
- Visited a campaign or candidate-sponsored website
- Forwarded an online campaign commercial or news story to a friend or family member

- Blogged about politics or a campaign
- Shared thoughts on social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter)
- Other

[2016] What is your typical response to *positive* news regarding Iran? (select all that apply)

- Reflect on it alone
- Discuss it with family and close friends
- Discuss it with work colleagues
- Participate in protest or demonstration
- Contact elected officials
- Contact community leaders
- Contact advocacy group
- Contact media (letter to the editor, post comment on the internet, etc.)
- Engage in outreach (public lectures, panels, etc.)

[2016] What is your typical response to *negative* news regarding Iran? (select all that apply)

- Reflect on it alone
- Discuss it with family and close friends
- Discuss it with work colleagues
- Participate in protest or demonstration
- Contact elected officials
- Contact community leaders
- Contact advocacy group
- Contact media (letter to the editor, post comment on the internet, etc.)
- Engage in outreach (public lectures, panels, etc.)

[2023] What is your typical response to news regarding Iran? (select all that apply)

- Reflect on it alone
- Discuss it with family and close friends
- Discuss it with work colleagues
- Participate in protest or demonstration
- Contact elected officials
- Contact community leaders
- Contact advocacy group
- Contact media (letter to the editor, post comment on the internet, etc.)
- Engage in outreach (public lectures, panels, etc.)

[2023] Thinking back over the past year, have you ever been contacted by a journalist or news organization and asked to comment on current events or issues? If yes: What issues were you asked for input on?)

[2016] Which factors influenced your current research interest? (select all that apply)

- Previous Research
- Funding Opportunities
- Ethnic Identity
- Gender Identity
- Religious Identity
- Desire to Have Social Impact
- Other (specify)

[2023] Which factors influenced current research? (select all that apply)

- Gender Identity
- Religious Tradition
- Intellectual Interest
- Ethnic or National Heritage
- Race
- Previous Study
- Economic Opportunity
- Professional Aspirations
- To Foster Social Change
- Other (specify)

[2016, 2023] What influence do you think the following factors have had on your political activity?

(response options: a great deal, a lot, a moderate amount, a little, none at all)

- Research Interests
- Ethnic Identity
- Gender Identity
- Religious Identity
- Stage in Academic Career

[2016] To which gender identity do you most identify?

- Male
- Female
- Transgender Male
- Transgender Female
- Gender Variant/Non-Conforming
- Other
- Prefer Not to Answer

[2023] How would you describe yourself? (check all that apply)

- Male
- Female
- Transgender Male

- Transgender Female
- Gender Fluid
- Gender Non-Binary
- Gender Non-Conforming
- Other
- Prefer Not to Answer

[2016] Please select the single ethnic heritage that best describes you.

- Iranian
- American
- Iranian-American
- Other (specify)

[2023] How would you describe yourself? (check all that apply)

- Iranian
- American
- Iranian-American
- Middle Eastern
- Southwest Asian
- White
- Non-White
- Multi-Racial
- Other (please specify)

[2016, 2023] What is your current academic rank?

- Non-Tenured Instructor/Adjunct Professor
- Tenure-Stream Assistant Professor (or equivalent)
- Tenured Associate Professor
- Tenured Professor
- Research Faculty (Non-Tenured)
- Academic Staff (e.g. Library)
- Graduate Instructor or Teaching Assistant
- Other
- Retired

[2016, 2023] Have you been an officer in a professional society? (please indicate organization and years of service)

- President
 - President-Elect
 - Member of Advisory Board (or equivalent)
 - Member of Executive Committee (or equivalent)
 - Editor of Journal
 - Member of Journal Editorial Board
-

- Conference Committee
 - Other
-

Julio Borquez, PhD, is an Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Michigan – Dearborn. His teaching and research interests are in the areas of electoral politics and survey methodology. Email: jborquez@umich.edu

Camron Michael Amin, PhD, is a Professor of Middle East and Iranian Diaspora Studies at the University of Michigan – Dearborn. He also serves as the University of Michigan’s Inclusive History Project director of research on the Dearborn campus. Email: camamin@umich.edu

Razieh Araghi, PhD, is an Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature and Middle Eastern Studies at the School of International Letters and Cultures, Arizona State University. Her research explores the intersections of modernity, translation, and women’s intellectual history. Email: razieh.araghi@asu.edu
