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# Family Changes in Iranian Kurdistan: A Mixed Methods Study of Mangor and Gawerk Tribes

**Abstract** Over the last few decades, the Iranian Kurdish society, including family and kinship systems, has experienced enormous changes as a result of government implemented modernization efforts. This paper reports the results of a quantitative/qualitative mixed methods study aimed at exploring (a) the nature of change in family and kinship systems and (b) how people understand and interpret these changes. The sample for this study was drawn from the Mangor and Gawerk tribes residing in the Mahabad Township located in the West Azerbaijan Province of Iran. Using standardized questionnaires, 586 people were sampled as part of the quantitative portion of the study. For the qualitative portion, data was collected on 20 people using both in-depth interviews and participant observations. The quantitative data was analyzed by SPSS software and the qualitative data was interpreted using grounded theory procedures. The quantitative findings showed that the urbanization, modern education, and mass media have all contributed to the emergence of a new form of family and kinship life. In addition, while supporting quantitative findings, the qualitative results revealed that participants were aware of and sensitive to sources, processes, and effects of modernization on their family and kinship life.

**Key words** Family Changes; Modernization; Mixed Methods Research; Grounded Theory; Mangor and Gawerk Tribes

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William Good, as far back as 1963, stated there has been a global revolution in family and kinship systems. In many parts of the world, this revolution continues today bringing considerable change to what had been known as traditional values and customs. Among the changes are: declining birth rates; delayed marriage; delayed childbearing amongst married couples; increasing divorce rates; single parent or single sex families; and an ever increasing number of women receiving higher education and working outside the home.

Thornton, Binstock and Ghimire (2004) have pointed out that changes in family systems are not confined to western societies. Increasingly, they are occurring in non-western countries although the degree and form of change are often different. For example, in recent years, Iranian society has witnessed considerable change to its family systems largely as a result of government instituted modernization processes. Among the modernization processes are: the expansion of education to all levels of society; encouragement of economic development and growth; and the introduction of modern health facilities and health care practices. Though modernization processes have been beneficial in many ways, they have also brought challenges to a society that for so long has been characterized by family cohesiveness and traditional ways of life.

This paper reports on the findings of a mixed methods quantitative/qualitative study undertaken to explore the impact of government sponsored modernization processes on families of people living in the area of Kurdistan, Iran. This area was chosen for study because the people living in this region have had a long history of tribal relations and adherence to traditional family values and roles. It can be assumed therefore, that if any group of people living in Iran was to expe-

rience conflict and disruption to family systems they would most likely be found in this area.

## Theoretical Approach

This study considered both the *emic* and *etic* aspects of family changes in the society studied. Therefore, a mixed methods design is employed to guide each aspect of the qualitative and quantitative part of design.

Modernization theory was utilized to guide the quantitative part of the study. Modernization is defined by Hulme and Turner (1990) as a total transformation of a traditional or pre-modern society into types of technology and associated social organization that characterize the advanced nations of the Western world. This process includes four different, but interrelated dimensions: social; cultural; economical; and political elements. All of the theories of modernization place emphasis on some aspects of change and development. The main features of modernization emphasized in the literature are industrialization, urbanization, communication, transportation, secularization, modern education, mass media, modern health, modern technology and socio-political participation. This combination of social change is argued to effect the attainment of modernization in nearly all societies (Ervin 2000; Ember and Ember 2002; Scupin and McCurdy 2004). Modernization theorists maintain that during the modernization process the family system, along with the other aspects of the social system, will be structurally and functionally differentiated and transformed; as a result, new family structures and related functions will emerge (Peet and Hartwick 1999; Bernstein 2002; McMichael 2004).

The social interpretive perspective guided the qualitative portion of the study. This perspective views people as social beings that create meaning in order to make sense of their worlds. Meaning is derived based on a fluid definition of the situation and created through human interactions. The aim of social research is to understand and describe meaningful social actions, which are constructed and reconstructed in everyday life. According to this perspective, the *emic* and native point of view of subjects is highly respected and considered a main source of scientific explanation (Bryman 1988; Creswell 2003; Neuman 2006; Blaikie 2007; Teddlie and Tashakkori 2009).

## Literature Review

A review of studies focusing on family changes in contemporary societies revealed that a considerable number of them used modernization theory to examine the role of modernization efforts in bringing about family and kinship changes and challenges (Lesthaeghe 1983; Lesthaeghe and Surkyn 2002; Thornton et al. 2004; Seltzer et al. 2005; McDonald 2006). Other studies that have specifically explored the impact of modernization on family systems include: Jones (1981), "Malay Marriage and Change in Peninsular Malaysia: Three Decades of Change;" Malhotra and Tsui (1996), "Marriage Timing in Sri Lanka: The Role of Modern Norms and Ideas;" Al-Haj (1988), "The Changing Arab Kinship Structure: The Effect of Modernization in an Urban Community;" Al-Haj (1995), "Kinship and Modernization in Developing Societies: The Emergence of Instrumentalized Kinship;" Hirschman and Nguyen (2002), "Tradition and Change in Vietnamese Family Structure in the Red River Delta;" Toren (2003), "Tradition and Transition: Family Change in Israel;" and Mikheeva (2007), "Family Change and New Balance of Family Roles: The Case of Siberia."

In addition to global studies, there are a number of studies that have examined change in family systems in Iran. Among these studies are: Behnam (1971), on family and kinship structure in Iran; Lajavardi (1997), power structure in family; Seyyed Rabih (2000), the change from extended to nuclear family relationships in contemporary urban Iran; Saraei (2007), on family changes in context of demographic transition in Iran; Abbasi-Shavzi and McDonald (2007), family changes in Iran and the "ideational" and structural forces that brought about that change.

In addition, there are several studies that are especially pertinent to the investigation reported in this study. Among these are the works of: Heckmann (1991), on tribes and kinship among Turkish Kurds; Mohammadpur (2001), on the process and consequences of modernization of the Sardasht Township of Iranian Kurdistan; and Mohammadpur (2007), on meaning reconstruction of modernization consequences in the Ouramanat region of Iranian Kurdistan. Each of the above-mentioned works concluded that the more traditional, extended family is moving towards a modern-nuclear family system and that traditional family life is gradually disappearing.

## Research Question and Design

The questions explored in this study were: What were the characteristics of family life among Mangor and Gawrek in the past;? What are the current features of family life among these communities;? How have modernization processes and elements influenced family life and systems;? And, how have the people come to understand and interpret the conditions, process, and consequences of the changes that have occurred in their family lives?

A mixed methods design was used to explore these questions. Mixed methods research has been defined by Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998; 2003; 2009) as the third methodological movement in social and behavioral sciences. The intellectual roots of mixed methods research goes back to the works of Campbell and Fiske (1959), Brewer and Hunter (1989), Brannen (1992), Newman and Benz (1998), Morgan (1998), Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998; 2003; 2009), Niglas (2004), Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2005), Neuman (2006), and Bergman (2008), who introduced and discussed it in different terminology, such as multi-method and multi-trait matrix, multi-method approach, quantitative and qualitative continuum, and triangulation. During the last decade this methodology has been widely described and employed by Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998; 2003), Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009), Creswell (1994), Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), Johnson and Christensen (2008), and Greene (2007).

According to Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003), Creswell (2003) and Johnson and Christensen (2008), mixed methods research is a broad type of research in which elements or approaches from quantitative and qualitative research are combined or mixed in a single research study. The fundamental principle of mixed research indicates that the researcher should strategically mix or combine qualitative and quantitative approaches to produce an overall design with complementary strengths and non-overlapping weaknesses (Creswell 2003:16; Johnson and Christensen 2008:443). To understand and explain the complexities, dimensions, structures and forms of realities, it is an ontological and epistemological necessity to employ multiple methods, data and theories simultaneously when approaching any study. As Brewer and Hunter (1989:102) have argued that "no method is complete alone."

The emergent mixed methodology places its emphasis on the systematic and fluid-floating nature of social realities; the simultaneous task of understand-

ing and explaining of phenomena; and the combining of both qualitative and quantitative approaches in order to capture the *emic-etic* points of view of research participants when studying social reality. Paradigmatically rooted in pragmatism, mixed methods research offers a viable alternative to the traditional dichotomy posed by quantitative *versus* qualitative research. It combines both quantitative and qualitative approaches in complementary and unique ways. However, mixed methods research is still in its adolescence, and thus still relatively unknown and confusing to many researchers.

## Setting and Sample

The sample for this study was drawn from a population consisting of the Mangor and Gawerk tribes of Kurdish people residing in both urban and rural parts of Mahabad city that is located in the western Azerbaijan province of Iran. The tribes are considered to be among the larger ones in the northern Kurdistan region of Iran.

Sampling in mixed methods research includes both quantitative and qualitative sampling strategies. The objective is to achieve both the representativeness and the purposefulness of the selected sample (Tashakkori and Teddlie 1998; 2003; Teddlie and Yu 2007). Thus, both random sampling and purposeful snowball strategies were employed for the quantitative and qualitative part of the inquiry respectively. Based on the Cochran formula, a sample of 575 people over the age of 20 was selected from a larger population of 16.925. For the qualitative part of the study 25 key informants over the age of 20 were interviewed. The table below describes the sample characteristics.

| Characteristics | | Percent | Characteristics | | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Age | 20–34 years old | 47.4 | Birth Place | Rural | 79.0 |
| | 34–49 years old | 28.0 | | Urban | 21.0 |
| | 50 years old and upward | 24.6 | | | |
| Gender | Male | 51.0 | Residence Place | Rural | 48.0 |
| | Female | 49.0 | | Urban | 52.0 |
| Marital Status | Single | 22.2 | Education Level | Uneducated | 45.2 |
| | Married | 71.3 | | Elementary | 20.3 |
| | Single due to spouse death | 5.6 | | High School/ Immediate | 18.5 |
| | Single due to divorce | 0.9 | | B.A. and upwards | 16.0 |
| Class Belonging | Peasant | 81.2 | Tribal Attribute | Mangor | 51.5 |
| | Feudal | 18.8 | | Gawerk | 48.5 |
| Using Satellite | Yes | 90.6 | Watching T.V. | Yes | 81.1 |
| | No | 9.4 | | No | 18.9 |
| Sample Size | | 580 | Sample Size | | 580 |

Table 1. Main Characteristics of Sample Selected.





## Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection process in mixed methods research requires the inclusion of both qualitative and quantitative data. To meet the triangulation logic of inquiry, qualitative and quantitative data was collected simultaneously. A survey questionnaire was used for gathering quantitative data and participant observation, and in-depth interviews were utilized to collect the qualitative information required. Finally, a research team consisting of four researchers was responsible for conducting the inquiry in practice.

The data was analyzed using analytical tools and procedures as soon as the data collection process was completed. The quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS software to produce the descriptive and referential results. Grounded theory strategies of analysis were utilized to analyze and interpret the qualitative data. This method was originally developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and later modified by Strauss and Corbin (1998), and Corbin and Strauss (2008). Grounded theory is an inductive method of inquiry that has as its purpose theory building rather than theory testing. In this study, data analysis was carried out using a variety of strategic procedures mainly constant comparisons and the asking of questions. There were three stages of coding, namely, open coding, axial coding and selective coding, which lead to the emergence of the core category, the integrating thread of the research. The final results were a theoretical explanation of change in family systems in this population organized around three main headings, conditions representing context, action/interaction representing process, and consequences representing outcomes.

Finally, because this was a mixed methods study both qualitative and quantitative findings were combined and integrated into a single unified concluding explanation

## Findings

In this part of the paper both quantitative and qualitative findings are presented.

### Quantitative Findings

The quantitative findings of this study reveal the nature of change in the family system within the targeted population and some of the socio-cultural and economic factors that brought about that change. Table 2 summarizes and classifies the changes in family systems. The main aspects of family changes in the community include the following: as the first aspect of family change (23.9%), the respondents respectively indicated an increase in the quality of life due to greater availability of possibilities for improvement, such as better healthcare facilities. Also mentioned were changes, such as: a decline of deference to parents, especially to elders and retired members of the family (22.5%); changing attitudes and increasing education (12.3%); a weakness of kinship and family ties (7.2%); and a decline of emotional relationship among relatives. On the other hand, there was an increase in emotional relationship among children and parents (6.7%). The other aspects have been listed in the table.

| ASPECTS AND PATTERNS OF FAMILY CHANGES | FREQUENCY | PERCENT |
|---|---|---|
| Increasing welfare facilities, such as health services | 140 | 23.9 |
| Decreasing respect (deference) to parents, elders | 132 | 22.5 |
| Changing attitudes and ideas | 72 | 12.3 |
| Decreasing kinship ties | 42 | 7.2 |
| Changing emotional relationships (decreasing among relatives and increasing interactions among family members) | 39 | 6.7 |
| Limiting family size and decreasing fertility | 33 | 5.6 |
| Increasing family economic problems (such as poverty, youth unemployment) | 27 | 4.6 |
| Increasing materialism, emulations, and competitions | 21 | 3.6 |
| Increasing rate of nuclear family | 20 | 3.4 |
| Increasing women's power and status | 18 | 3 |
| Filialism (children-oriented family) | 10 | 1.7 |
| Changing power structure towards participatory pattern | 5 | 0.8 |
| Decreasing abduction marriages | 4 | 0.7 |
| Increasing family pathologies (such as divorce, immoral affairs) | 3 | 0.5 |
| Decreasing role of religion and fatalism in family life | 3 | 0.5 |
| Decreasing or weakening male domination | 2 | 0.3 |
| Increasing out-group and non consanguineous marriages | 1 | 0.2 |
| Increasing individual autonomy | 1 | 0.2 |
| No change | 5 | 0.9 |
| Unanswered | 8 | 1.4 |
| **N** | **586** | **100** |

Table 2. The most important aspects of family changes based on the respondents' view.





In another question (Table 3), the respondents were asked to explain what they believed were the main sources and forces that lead to these family changes. Among the most significant factors mentioned were: the increase of modern education (24.9%), modern mass media, especially T.V. and Satellite (14%), the increase in family welfare and household possibilities (12.6%), economic problems (10.8%), and emulation and competition (8.7%). The other factors and sources affecting family changes have been listed in Table 3.

| MAIN FORCES OF FAMILY CHANGES | FREQUENCY | PERCENT |
|---|---|---|
| Increasing modern education and literacy | 146 | 24.9 |
| Mass media, especially television and satellite | 82 | 14.0 |
| Increasing welfare facilities (such as health and electricity) | 74 | 12.6 |
| Economic problems (unemployment, high costs of living) | 63 | 10.8 |
| Increasing expectation and emulation | 51 | 8.7 |
| Changing ideas and attitudes | 46 | 7.8 |
| Materialism | 33 | 5.6 |
| Population explosion | 17 | 2.9 |
| Urbanization and its requirements | 14 | 2.4 |
| Political changes (such as land reform and revolution) | 12 | 2.0 |
| Governmental laws and policies | 8 | 1.5 |
| Promoting women's status | 4 | 0.7 |
| Increasing individual autonomy and individualism | 4 | 0.7 |
| Expanding family pathologies | 4 | 0.7 |
| Losing religious beliefs | 2 | 0.3 |
| Family planning and contraception | 2 | 0.3 |
| Destroying feudalism | 1 | 0.2 |
| Westernization | 1 | 0.2 |
| Do not know | 3 | 0.5 |
| Unanswered | 19 | 3.2 |
| **N** | **586** | **100** |

Table 3. The main sources and forces directing family changes.

Findings in Table 4 reveal that modernization factors have a greater impact on family systems than other factors. Table 4 shows the relationship between family changes and three modernization elements including modern education, urbanization, and modern mass media.

| SOME ASPECTS OF FAMILY | URBANIZATION (RESIDENCE PLACE) | | EDUCATION (EDUCATIONAL LEVEL) | | | | MASS MEDIA | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | Using Satellite | | Watching T.V. (Daily) | | |
| | Urban | Rural | Diploma and Higher | High School / Immediate | Elementary | Uneducated | Yes | No | 3 Hours and More | 1-2 Hours | Never Watching |
| Average age of marriage for men (year) | 23.4 | 22.7 | 24.6 | 23.3 | 22.6 | 21.3 | 24.6 | 22.9 | 23.9 | 23.2 | 22.9 |
| | *Ns* | | * | | | | *Ns* | | *Ns* | | |
| Average age of marriage for women (year) | 17.9 | 17.5 | 17.6 | 17.7 | 17.3 | 17.8 | 17.8 | 17.4 | 17.8 | 18.5 | 17.3 |
| | *Ns* | | *Ns* | | | | *Ns* | | *Ns* | | |
| Average of idea age of marriage for boys (year) | 24.8 | 22.4 | 25.8 | 24.7 | 23.2 | 22.6 | 23.8 | 22.7 | 24.6 | 23 | 22.4 |
| | ** | | ** | | | | * | | ** | | |
| Average of idea age of marriage for girls (year) | 20.9 | 19.5 | 22 | 20.2 | 20.1 | 19.9 | 20.3 | 19.9 | 20.7 | 19.8 | 19.7 |
| | ** | | * | | | | *Ns* | | * | | |
| Rate of kinship based marriage (%) | 54.3 | 32.1 | 44.7 | 61.8 | 37.8 | 40.4 | 42.9 | 48.9 | 48.6 | 34.7 | 46 |
| | ** | | ** | | | | *Ns* | | *Ns* | | |
| Accepting tribal in-group marriage (%) | 40.1 | 45.4 | 23.4 | 37.4 | 44.5 | 52.5 | 42.8 | 49.1 | 43.2 | 44.4 | 43.3 |
| | * | | ** | | | | *Ns* | | *Ns* | | |
| Degree of personal mate selection (%) | 52.1 | 41 | 66 | 42.6 | 47.8 | 43.8 | 47.2 | 41.6 | 50.5 | 45.3 | 41 |
| | ** | | ** | | | | * | | ** | | |
| Accepting divorce for families having troubles (%) | 68.7 | 58.4 | 75.5 | 73.1 | 63.2 | 54.9 | 66.4 | 63.3 | 70 | 59.3 | 53.2 |
| | * | | ** | | | | *Ns* | | ** | | |
| Average of fertility of married women (CEB) | 4.3 | 5.3 | 1.2 | 1.5 | 2 | 5.5 | 4.7 | 4.8 | 4.2 | 4.5 | 5.4 |
| | * | | ** | | | | *Ns* | | * | | |
| Average ideal number of children | 2.5 | 2.6 | 2.2 | 2.4 | 2.5 | 2.7 | 2.5 | 2.6 | 2.4 | 2.6 | 2.7 |
| | *Ns* | | * | | | | *Ns* | | *Ns* | | |
| Rate of sex-preference index | 7.5 | 8.7 | 7 | 7.4 | 8.6 | 9.2 | 7.9 | 9.4 | 7.6 | 8.3 | 9.8 |
| | ** | | ** | | | | * | | ** | | |
| Accepting nuclear family (%) | 64.5 | 38.3 | 73.4 | 55.6 | 49.6 | 43.8 | 57.3 | 52.4 | 55.6 | 50.3 | 45 |
| | ** | | ** | | | | *Ns* | | *Ns* | | |
| Believing in decreasing kinship relationships (%) | 90.8 | 70.6 | 93.6 | 88 | 83.1 | 81.5 | 87 | 84.7 | 87.6 | 81.2 | 84.7 |
| | ** | | ** | | | | *Ns* | | *Ns* | | |

Table 4. The relationship between family changes and modernization indicators (to show the differences and effects, we respectively used T-Test, F-Test, and $^2\chi$; Ns means insignificant relationship, * means significant in 95% confidence, and ** refers to 99% confidence).





According to the the results (Table 4), modernization factors, such as the urbanization, expansion of modern education, and mass media, have intensively influenced attitudes and orientation towards family life in Iranian society. It should be pointed out that the impact of modern education is even more important than other factors. The low effect of satellite television on family change is due to the low variance of it among users. About 91% of those questioned had access and used satellite television.

In addition to the above findings, this study sought to measure the attitudes of the people towards family changes from factors, such as urbanization and modern education. The results are presented in Table 5.

| FAMILY VALUES AND BEHAVIORS | | FAMILY ATTRIBUTES ARE MORE COMMON IN (%) | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Rural Area | Urban Area | Same | Illiterate and less educated people | More educated people | Same |
| Marriage at a High Age (Girls above 25, and Boys above 30 years old) | 24.5 | 53.8 | 21.7 | 22.1 | 57.9 | 20 |
| Non-Relative and Out-Group Marriages | 10.9 | 64.8 | 24.3 | 15.7 | 59 | 25.3 |
| Personal Mate Selection, and Decreasing Role of Parents | 5 | 70.5 | 24.5 | 14.3 | 65.2 | 20.5 |
| Polygamy | 46.4 | 32.6 | 21 | 69.8 | 13.2 | 17 |
| Increasing Divorce Rate | 1.7 | 86.1 | 12.2 | 49.3 | 21.3 | 29.4 |
| Continuing Girl Education | 1 | 91.1 | 7.9 | 3.8 | 83.6 | 12.6 |
| Promoting Women's Statutes in Family | 7.8 | 81.2 | 11 | 1.9 | 86.8 | 11.3 |
| Extended Family | 76.6 | 12.1 | 11.3 | 66.5 | 17.5 | 16 |
| Nuclear Family | 6.7 | 78.1 | 15.2 | 8.6 | 63.6 | 27.8 |
| Fewer Children | 2.2 | 81.5 | 16.3 | 3.6 | 84 | 12.4 |
| Using Contraceptives | 0.9 | 54.1 | 45 | 3.1 | 67.2 | 29.7 |
| Participatory Decision Making in Family | 17.5 | 51.7 | 30.8 | 3.1 | 76.9 | 20 |
| Limiting Kinship Ties | 18.1 | 60.6 | 21.3 | 23 | 47.9 | 29.1 |
| Sex-Preference (Valuing Boys over Girls) | 56.4 | 8.5 | 35.1 | 58.2 | 15.4 | 26.4 |
| Respecting Parents and Elders | 52.5 | 14.9 | 32.6 | 16.6 | 49.6 | 33.8 |
| Supporting Parents when Retired | 60.3 | 13.9 | 25.8 | 26.3 | 37.1 | 36.6 |

Table 5. Typical attitudes regarding the impact of urbanization and modern education on family changes in various aspects (N=586).

According to this sample of respondents, the new patterns and aspects of family life are greater in urban regions and among educated families than among rural areas and the less-educated families. Among the urban and more educated families can be found: a delay in marriage to a later age; out-of-group mate selection; independent mate selection by youth; increased divorce rates; improved status of women in the family; more educational possibilities for girls; increased emphasis on the nuclear rather than extended family; fewer children; more use of family planning; collaborative decision making in family life; and a limited range of kinship ties. In contrast, in rural areas with less-educated families, there are still traditional characteristics that can be found in family life. The features mentioned by respondents are: polygamy, extended family, gender preference (preferring boys), respecting parents and elders, protecting elders and retired members, and so on. Therefore, it can be concluded that urbanization and modern education have profoundly reshaped the family life among the communities studied. Detailed results are listed in the Table 5.

**Qualitative Findings**

The main questions asked of participants in the qualitative part of the mixed methods design were: What have been the characteristics of traditional family life among Mangor and Gaverk in the past;? What are the current features of family life among these communities;? And, how do the people understand and interpret the conditions, processes, and consequences of family changes? The qualitative findings were collected and analyzed using procedures and techniques found in grounded theory methodology. Three coding procedures were used. In the open coding stage, all interviews were coded line by line; in this analytical stage, 19 original concepts (subcategories) were extracted from the raw data. In the next coding stage, using axial, the original concepts were condensed to 7 main categories. Then, seven extracted main categories were linked logically and theoretically around the core category in a way that the grounded theory model came to emerge. Below, each subcategory is explained briefly (Table 6) and documented with one or two quotations by participants.

| CONCEPTS | MAIN CATEGORIES | CORE CATEGORY |
|---|---|---|
| Feudalism, Patriarchy | Supporting Factors | DISEMBEDDING THE CONCEPT OF THE TRADITIONAL FAMILY |
| Arranged Marriage, Tribalism | Traditional Family | |
| Land Reform, Modern Education, Governmental Protection of women, Mass Media, Urbanization, Increasing Welfare Facilities | Elements of Modernization | |
| Inter-Regional Communication, Non-Local Patterns | Enculturation | |
| Weakness of Kinship Ties, De-traditionalization | De-traditionalization | |
| Increasing Social Awareness, Women Empowerment | Empowerment | |
| Increasing Self-Decision Making, Economic Independence, Nuclear Family | Modernized Family | |

Table 6. Concepts, Main Categories, and the Core Category Extracted from Data.





***Supporting Factors***

The first category we extracted was "supporting factors," which is based on two subcategories of Feudalism and Patriarchy. This category encompasses the macro-level conditions that have widely affected the whole community and determined all social relationships both in the family and the community. Historically, supporting factors served as a determinative condition for constituting particular, rigid, inflexible relationships in a family. The concept of patriarchy implies the male-centered nature of a society, including kinships and family systems in which all social affairs and decision-making are directed by men. In this respect, one of the informants who belonged to a former feudalist of the Mangor tribes asserted:

> The family relationships was centered around male power, nobody could resist or question what the master of the family intended to say; it characterized not only the family life, but also was common in our whole kinship and tribe, one person (man) ruled over the rest; this was our family life in the past.

A woman who was originally raised in a "feudal family" said:

> I came from a family with 30-40 members. Our household affairs were managed and controlled by my uncle, and we had to respect and obey his orders. Even if he asked us to die, we have to die! We possess no power. My uncle's wife lived more than 20 years with him, but seldom dared to talk with him in person.

Another concept categorized in the supporting factors is Feudalism, which has long shaped and organized the socio-economic structure of the two tribal communities, from approximately four decades ago. In Iran, before the initiation of Land Reform in 1962, the feudalist mode of production made farmers socially and economically dependent on land owners; they had no opportunity to own land or a house. As a result, they had to accept being exploited by the feudal land owners in various ways. An elder (83 years old) described this:

> The feudal was our master, he had total power, if solicited him, he provided you with a house with one or two rooms, not more than this, we should live there with 7-8 members, you cannot imagine how difficult it was. As to restore, we had to work on feudal lands and shared the products unequally. We had to offer unpaid work during the working seasons, more often with our family whether children or elders. Nobody could change his house or dwelling place. All important decisions were made by the feudal.

***Traditional Family***

This category, which interacts with supporting factors, demonstrates that family relationships, interactions and rules are internally regulated and function based on in-group solidarity. It is said that family affairs are organized around in-group traditions, values and norms. Therefore, it is nearly impossible to disobey the traditionally defined obligations. This category is extracted from two main concepts of "tribalism" and "arranged marriage."

The concept of tribalism refers to a situation in which a tribal community's interests and goods have priority over the individual. It is a family responsibility to familiarize their children with tribal rituals and customs, and the children have to develop tribal networks and kinship ties at the expense of achieving their individual goals. As one of the participants stated:

> In the past, the family relationships were too warm, fixed, and very frequent; we visited our relatives without any expectation, we did not intend to be compensated in return, the kinship and family ties

were very tight. It was the same about tribal relationships; even, we did our best to support each other economically if needed. In many cases, especially in marriage issues, we preferred our relatives for marital relationships.

The arranged family represents a mate selection mechanism for two tribes in which the community, not the person, determined whom youth may marry (Mohammadpur 2001; 2007). One informant described this situation as follows:

> If a father decided to give away his girl, whether she is small or mature, in marriage to someone, she could not refuse or oppose. Somehow, the same situation was for boys. For example, my father took me in marriage with two females I had not seen them before at all until the wedding day, but my father thought they were suitable for me, and I said, if he thinks they are good, it should be so, I had no idea other than my father's choice. Now, I am living with one of them, we have six children, and I feel happy with her.

***Modernization***

The rise of modernization in Iranian Kurdistan began in 1921 as an overall plan to modernize Iran by the Pahlavi government. Our participants frequently pointed to modernization processes and elements that challenged and changed many aspects of their family lives during the last decade. Notably, all participants articulated that the dynamics and practices of modernization as directed by the state, including modern education, modern health service, urbanization, mass media, has directly and indirectly influenced their family lives. Thus, this category is considered as an exogenous context/condition to create a new family system quite different from the previous generation. Toward clarifying the meaning of this shifting context of everyday life, one research participant explained:

> In the past, the child was trained by his/her father, uncles and family elders, getting familiar with tradition, ritual, and customs; he/she was socialized and taught about what is considered as good or bad; but nowadays, the situation is quite different, children, whether in rural or urban regions, spend most of their time watching television, or satellite; he/she learns something new, leaves many cultural characteristics of his/her society; the children and youth now have lost and ignored much of their heritage and traditions.

In a similar way, another participant referred to the impact of modern education on the family as follows:

> My boy is 17 years old and moved to the city in order to continue his education; now he has returned to the village, but asked me to comply with his request: marriage with a girl who lives in the city. I am really surprised, I do not want to accept, but it seems that I have no choice.

The modernization process has brought about family changes in many other ways. For example, one of the participants pointed to an interesting issue:

> Nowadays, the men cannot impose their ideas on women; the women are mostly educated, conscious, and aware of their rights. They can complain to the court because they are benefited by governmental support. Women today know that if they complain, their husbands will be punished.

The informants also pointed to the mass media and their impact on the informants' family lives. An informant said:

> These days, a majority of people watch television and satellite; it brought them many things, they have become more open, sensitive to their surroundings. They are tempted by mass media, by advertisements; they say: watch this or that! Look at this family who has provided these facilities, and bought this equipment advertized by T.V.! Why do we not also buy one? So, the people imitate; in the past, we never had such imitations.

The participants believed that mass media, while bringing many positive changes, has led to many negative consequences. The loosening of emotional ties in family is demonstrated in the following quote:

> As a result of watching television and satellite, the negotiation and interaction among family members has been highly reduced compared to the past; as soon as one would like to talk, he/she requested to be calm or quiet as nearly all family members watch a film, news or something similar. When the night comes, all family members fix their eyes on the T.V. screen and this very dejected.

***Enculturation***

As participants mentioned, the modernization process prepared new conditions/contexts for emerging a new kind of family life. Therefore, the new processes and interactions are expected. "Enculturation" is a process/interaction category extracted from the subcategories of non-local patterning and inter-regional communication. According to this category, as a result of entering the modernization process, the cultural system of two tribes studied is no longer regulated and developed by its own cultural capacity and potentials because the exogenous forces (elements of modernization) contribute to its new organization and regulation. This is true about family life in which many family aspects are redefined and restructured.

One of the informants pointed to inter-regional communications and expressed:

> Now, we could go to urban regions and cities even every day, or every now and then; we can buy new things; our wives and children learn many new behaviors and things when they travel to cities visiting their relatives there. In the past, we did not get to move out of our region so simply! We were the same as each other, nobody knew more or less than another. Nowadays, the families live differently; they know more about their lives and the new world, mostly because of their communications with other regions.

***De-traditionalization***

According to this category, respondents believe that modernization processes have resulted in the weakening of traditional ways of life, including family traditions. They expressed that many positive rituals and costumes respected in the past are increasingly being shunned and therefore, are weakly represented in their communities as sources of identity especially among youth. The category "de-traditionalization" is based on two subcategories of weakness of traditions and loosening kinship networks. Toward illustrating how this dynamic is operating in the Mangor community, one of the informants said:

> Now, we are witnessing that most people, particularly our children and youth, have forgotten their tribal origins and kinship ties. Tribal affiliation is not important for them; they do not think of them as valuable and needed; the everyday life affairs are more attractive, other things seem to be replaced; the youth do not mind who had been their ancestors; they just pay attention to their own life; in the past, we recognized more than ten ancestral chains, we tried to keep our heritage and past; but today, a few people remember to whom they belong, where they came from…

Another participant talked about loosening kinship ties as follows:

> In the past, we visited our relatives often, without any compliments and stayed there for two or three days; it was the same as our own home! Now, the situation is different, I do not call on until I am invited; I am not willing to visit with anybody at my house, having

tea there, without invitation; there is a gradual disappearance of hospitality and sympathy.

*Empowerment*

While there is a weakening of most traditional patterns of family life among the two tribes studied, the modernization process provided them with many positive aspects as well such things as modern education, modern health, mass media and welfare. In other words, modernization created a context for both disabling and enabling members of the communities to decide how to manage their life and works. The category of "empowerment," extracted from two subcategories of relative empowerment of women and increasing general knowledge, could describe the enabling side of the modernization process. According to this category, by introducing the modernization process, the traditional position of women in society has been replaced by a new position in which women are able to determine most of their own interests and affairs. In addition, there is an increased degree of social consciousness and understanding, which enables people, whether men or women, to manage their social world and to control their lives. The empowerment characterizes the process/interaction indicating people dealing with this new condition and the impact it has on their family life. One of the participants stated thus:

> Women's power has been increased, and it is still increasing because the culture has been changed; in the past, if a woman got sick, she felt ashamed to go to the city to visit a doctor; nowadays, my boy takes his wife to the doctor if she is sick, he loves her very much, no shame; he thinks that his wife has priority over everything!

Another informant expressed the following idea:

> In past years, the women had no power, now they are masters of their families; once, in time, if they got sick, even in the worst conditions, their husbands did not pay much attention to them, even if they gave birth, they should have stayed in their home for a few days, they were not asked to visit a doctor; but now, before the childbearing period, even in pregnancy time, they are forced to visit a doctor!

*Modernized Family*

The final category extracted from the grounded theory analysis is "modernized family." This category characterizes the now-predominant family pattern among two communities studied. It covers three subcategories of self-decision making, economic independence, and nuclear family. The category of modernized family implies a kind of family which is shaped and restructured through exogenous forces, mainly the modernization process. This new kind of family is mainly based on features, properties, and practices developed out of non-traditional contexts. One of the participants expressed:

> Today, as soon as the youth get married, they will separate from their original families, find a new job, often not the same as their father's job, and work by themselves manage their new family life; although I do not accept that, but it seems inevitable in current days; women today want an independent family life; we never left our parents in the past, unless we did not have enough house space, and spare rooms; we supported each other in all circumstances; but, today there is a small number of youth who adhere to their family traditions.

Another informant asserted thus:

> The feudal removed, the feudalism eradicated by government, now we work for ourselves, independently, we all have the same opportunity to follow what we like, we have independent farming, and herding; nobody could oppress like in the past; we can do what we are interested in; all income we earn is ours, no need to do unpaid work, nobody can take our earnings.

## Conclusion

The quantitative findings (Figure 1) clearly demonstrated that the two tribes investigated have experienced many elements of the push towards modernization in Iran. Some of the changes the two study tribes experienced were: an introduction to modern education, and opportunities for new economic activities, such as services, official work, and non-traditional activities. The urbanization process is expanding and new lifestyles are emerging as well. Along with these recent developments, the people of the two tribes, the Gawerk and the Mangor, have taken advantage of many modern technologies and possibilities, education for girls, health services, and mass media. Consequently, exposure to modern life has had noteworthy impacts on their social worlds including those of kinship and family systems. In this respect, the family characteristics have been changed and redefined entirely based on modern circumstances.

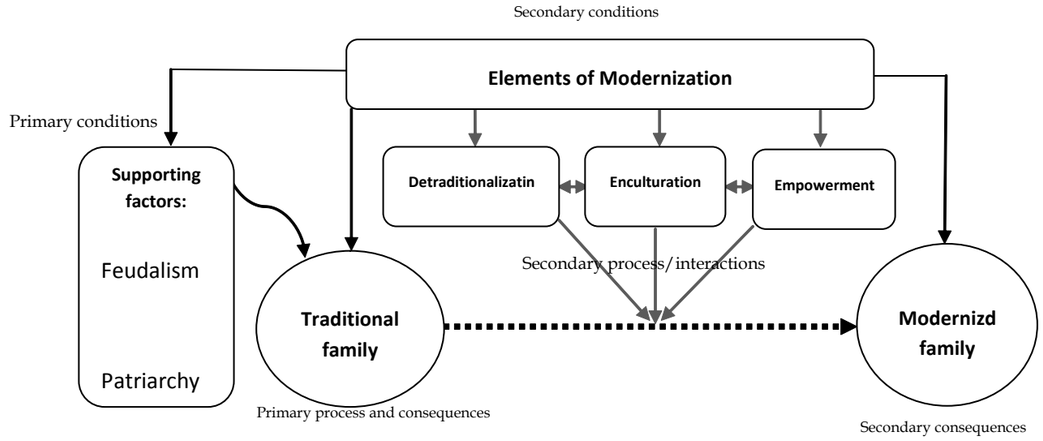


Figure 1. Theoretical model; Understanding Family Changes as Disembedding the concept of the Traditional Family.

According to quantitative results, the influence and determinacy of family traditions and kinship ties in all aspects of family life ranging from mate selection to family management has profoundly declined and in some cases been eliminated. The new standard for mate-selection is based mainly on achieved status not ascribed one, and the nuclear family increasingly forms the new center of family life among the two tribes studied. This implies that the patriarchy authority and kinship networks are losing their position of centrality and importance in relationship to family regulations. The quantitative findings revealed that recent developments in education, economics, urbanization, welfare facilities, and other modernization indicators had an impact on people's attitudes and orientations towards family size, age

of marriage, strategies of family planning, contraception, and inter-family and intra-family policies as a whole. For example, there is seen a high tendency towards a smaller size of family, having two children as an ideal family, increasing the age of marriage, and the privatization of family life.

Changes brought by the modernization process not only transformed the objective aspects of family structure, but also redefined and reshaped the subjective, normative and the value sides of family among the two tribes. In this respect, it could be pointing to an extensive decline of kinship and tribal ties, increasing social power of women, relative decrease in traditional and arranged marriage, relative gender equity, the increasing of individual autonomy, transforming emotional relationships, and family competitions.

Therefore, the current family structure took a very different form than the past both in terms of structural differentiation and functional integration. The interesting point is that the mentioned social transformation, including family changes, are mainly resulting from exogenous factors (modernization process), such as urbanization, modern health, mass media, and modern education, which are mainly directed and performed by government. As a result, the family change in these communities has been based on eternal forces and state-directed policies.

The qualitative part of inquiry tried to capture the *emic* or native point of view regarding the changes occurring in family life. The aim of the study was to explore how people interpret current family life in light of the past, the forces and sources change, how people understand and evaluate the new family systems that are emerging. The qualitative data demonstrates that historically, two traditional sources of feudalism and patriarchy have created a kind of social structure with a rigid hierarchy that controlled both family life and social system. The family life was mainly based on inflexible gender stratification, gender inequality, in-group marriage, arranged marriage, extended and highly interconnected kinship ties, and the subordination of women. The family was male-dominated and the society was feudal directed. The women and girls had no right to determine their lives. In addition, the families were socially and economically interrelated in kinship systems in response to subsistence difficulties and suffering economic conditions. Thus, families had to be mutually dependent in order to survive and to control their environmental circumstances. Personal goods and desires were ignored for public benefits. This is the situation narrated by participants about their family life in past times.

The participants believed that their family life had been profoundly transformed during the last decades. Similarly, the informants stressed that the modernization processes including those of urbanization, land reform, modern education, modern health, mass media and other new possibilities contributed to their family changes. The modernization provided the conditions for the two tribes studied to communicate with other regions, and to obtain new knowledge, which, in turn, led to a transformation of many aspects of their family life. The new emerged family is no longer based on traditional foundations and patterns. It is now a nuclear family, independent, self-managed, individualistic, de-traditionalized, and both male and female-centered.

The mixed findings, including both quantitative and qualitative data, demonstrate that family life among the two communities was both transformed on structural-functional and subjective-meaning levels. The theoretical framework employed in the quantitative part of the study was proven, and the people's native point of view supported the quantitative results. Both research strategies clarified that the sources of family changes were external forces directed by government. Both quantitative and qualitative data indicated that changes, such as modern education, modern health, urbanization, and other aspects of modernization contributed to family transformation. The two data sets complemented each other and emphasized the forces directing family changes and the participants' point of view.

The mixed results explained that the modernization, whether from an *etic* or *emic* perspective, through its dynamics, has transformed many aspects of the two tribal societies that were studied. In this process, a new socio-economic and cultural system has emerged. The urbanizing tribal communities, engaging in new economic activities, using modern mass media, involving in modern education, improvement of public health, changing women's status, replacing vertical social stratification by a horizontal one, are among significant consequences. Accordingly, as mixed results proved, the family system took a new form.

This new family is characterized mainly by losing traditional patterns of family management, privatization of family life, personalization of marriage, declining kinship role in getting married, decreasing kinship ties, limiting family size, changing attitudes towards family, and redistribution of power among sexes. The important point is that the people are aware of the sources and consequences of such transformation in their family life. They reflexively and consciously understand and interpret the new social world that has emerged.

But, we have found some divergent cases in the field: since modernization has not entirely taken place among the two communities, there are several traditional resistances and concerns; that is, there are still those who react adversely towards the new modern situation. In this respect, the mixed data revealed that there are a large number of people who warn against the new modern life and consider it as perilous and dehumanized conditions. They still have nostalgia for their past and are anxious for the negative consequences of modernization, such as losing morality, friendship, sympathy, and hospitality. While embracing most of the positive aspects of the new family life, they are sorrowful about destroying or losing some aspects of their traditional life and are concerned about their future.

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