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Intergenerational Conflicts in Iran: Myth or Reality?

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Abstract

One of the important social issues attracting the attention of social thinkers in post WWII era has been the issue of intergenerational conflict. Presented by scholars such as Karl Manheim and Margaret Mead, it was thought that in post WWII era intergenerational conflicts or gap rose to a degree that it made the communication and understanding between pre and post WWII generations very difficult. It was theorized that this unbridgeable gap between the two generations was due to grave and rapid social changes that occurred in that era, so that these two generations experienced and lived in two totally different worlds. Although this thesis was criticized in the west with later studies, the issue of generation gap continues to be one of the cross culturally studied subjects. It is claimed that in the developing countries, such as Iran, which experience rapid social change in their transformation from traditional to modern societies, a high level of generation gap has emerged. Focusing on the studies carried out in Iran by the author and others, this paper proposes that in order to acquire deeper understanding of the phenomenon, and the way to encounter it, generation gap should be analyzed into *value-oriented* and *norm-oriented* types. The findings in this research revealed that both *value-oriented* and *norm-oriented* generation gaps in Iran were considerably wide.

Keywords

Generation conflict, Value-oriented generation gap, Norm-oriented generation gap, Management of generation gap.

Intergenerational Conflicts in Iran: Myth or Reality?

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Abstract:

One of the important social issues attracting the attention of social thinkers in the post WWII era has been the issue of intergenerational conflict. Presented by scholars such as Karl Mannheim and Margaret Mead, it was thought that in the post WWII era intergenerational conflicts or gaps rose to such a degree that they made communication and understanding between pre and post WWII generations very difficult. It was theorized that this unbridgeable gap between the two generations was due to grave and rapid social changes that occurred in that era, so that these two generations experienced and lived in two totally different worlds. Although this thesis was criticized in the west in later studies, the issue of generation gap continues to be one of the cross culturally studied subjects. It is claimed that in the developing countries, such as Iran, which experience rapid social change in their transformation from traditional to modern societies, a high level of generation gap has emerged. Focusing on the studies carried out in Iran by the author and others, this paper proposes that in order to acquire deeper understanding of the phenomenon, and the way to encounter it, generation gap should be analyzed based on *value-oriented* and *norm-oriented* types. The findings in this research revealed that neither *value-oriented* nor *norm-oriented* generation gaps in Iran were considerably wide.

Key Words: Generation conflict, Value-oriented generation gap, Norm-oriented generation gap, Management of generation gap.

1. Introduction:

Nowadays we often encounter parents stressing that they cannot communicate well with their children, especially with their teenagers and youths. They say: "We obeyed our parents and respected them totally, and did not stand against them such that our kids do. In fact, today's kids are totally different from our times." Such complaints are often heard from the previous generations in Iran, too, when they encounter the differences in manners and behaviors between them and their offspring. These

complaints promote questions such as: Is it the case that the new generation has abandoned the values and norms of their parents? If this is correct, how deep is the level of such differences? What should be done in order to overcome such differences, if any?

In every society, culture is transformed from one generation to the next through socialization of the new generation by the previous. Therefore, it becomes problematic analyzing what makes the two generations different. In reality, due to the complexities of the new societies, many factors other than parents, such as social change, major social events, education system, and media, affect the socialization process such that the cultural system of parents is not completely and exactly transformed from the previous generation to the next. As a result, a difference develops between cultural values, norms, attitudes and symbols of different generations. Of course, the level of these differences depends upon the magnitude of factors affecting the socialization process. Therefore, one can hypothesize that the higher the level of social change and factors affecting socialization process, the deeper the gap between the two consecutive generations. This implies that owing to the rapid social changes occurring in the world today, especially in the developing third world countries, the level of generation gap will grow higher.

The concept “generation gap” refers to cultural differences between two consecutive generations. Such a difference varies from one society to the other, and from one generation or period to another. In one period or society the difference may be very low and unimportant, while in another period or society it may become very high and important, causing one to talk about the existence of generational conflict. Consequently, it is important to empirically study the real level of generation gap in every society, in order to find plausible ways to address these differences and/or conflicts, rather than basing generational relations on unfounded myths. In fact, unfounded claims and beliefs about the existence of intergenerational gap or conflict may end in social construction of such conflicts, and lead to discord and breakdown of communication between the two generations, and cause serious family problems and social cleavages.

This paper starts with a glance at the previous studies about the generation gap and then briefly reviews the theories trying to explain the generation differences or conflicts. In the next section, the paper focuses on the types of generation gap in Iran, and formulates the concepts *value-oriented* and *norm-oriented* generation gaps. Using this new conceptualization the paper compares the level of generation gaps in these two cultural aspects.

2. A Glance at the Background and Previous Studies:

The issue of differences between generations is rooted in the past, but the concept of generation gap became popular in the 1960s in the west. Mannheim (1952) discussed the issue of generation problems in the 1950s, Berger (1960) wrote about the length of a generation in the 1960s, and Aldous (1965) studied the consequences of intergenerational continuity in 1965. In 1970 the subject of generation gap became so deeply rooted in academia that different aspects of generation gap were studied, including the generation conflict between senior and junior university professors (Paul & Schooler, 1970). Again in 1970, Resenhaupt, acknowledging the existence of a considerable generation gap between the young and the old, discussed how to bridge the existing generation gap.

One of the very important studies on this subject was that of Margaret Mead in the 1970s, where she studied the new relationships between generations (Mead, 1978). In her book she maintains that Generation Gap is a world-wide phenomenon, but one that never had occurred before the 1960s and 1970s. She claimed that “I came to see that both the search for identity and the uncertainty about commitment were part of the same larger issue: the way in which the whole world was caught in an unprecedented situation, as young and old—adolescents and all their elders- faced each other across a yawning gap” (Mead, 1978, p. xviii). According to Mead those born and raised before WWII have experienced a world totally different from the post WWII era, so that their generation will not have any successors. They lived in a world without the atomic bomb, TV, satellites and world-wide media, computers, space shuttles, and without many other new technologies. As a result, they never can understand the experiences of the new generation. Therefore, there is an unbridgeable gap between the pre- and post-war generations (Mead, 1978, p. xv-12).

Studying the grave social changes that had occurred, Mead differentiated three types of societies: One type is where

change is so slow that it seems as if a child’s cultural expectations could be defined at birth, and those in which change was more rapid so that some young people and even some adults had to learn from their peers rather than from their elders. We have now entered a new phase, in which adults all over the world have to recognize that all children’s experience is different from their own. To distinguish these cultural styles I am using the words *postfigurative*, when the future repeats the past, *cofigurative* in which the present is the guide to future expectations, and *prefigurative* for the kind of culture in which the elders have to

learn from their children about experiences they never had. (Mead, 1978, p. 13)

In the first type of society change is so slow that usually three generations live with each other, and their culture is transferred from one generation to the other without much change. In the second type, change does occur to the extent that the previous generation cannot be a suitable model for the next. They live in two different worlds, so that the previous generation's culture is partially transferred to the next. The next generation has to learn how to live from one another, rather than from their parents. This situation exists not only in industrializing societies, but also can be experienced when one is converted to another religion, or migrates from one society to another. In the third situation the change is so rapid that the previous generation not only cannot be a model for the next, but in order to continue the life, one should learn how to adjust to the new conditions by learning from the next generation. The new generation too has no model for his/her life. One must learn for oneself how to live and manage one's life in a vague and risky condition (Mead, 1978, p. 13-91).

Other studies in the early 1970s corroborate Mead's findings. Friedman and Gold studied correlations between fathers and sons in the United States. They found that "it was impossible to escape the feeling that parents and sons were almost in separate worlds and could only vaguely comprehend matters of crucial importance to the other" (Friedman et al., 1972, p. 346). Of course, some other findings challenge Mead's claims. For example, Abrams claims that what is seen as the generational differences is the impact of life-cycle differences, and that his findings do not reveal much difference between political attitudes of sons and fathers (Abrams, 1970, p. 177). Sigel and Reynolds studied the generation gap between mothers and their students' daughters in 1975-1976 concerning the women's movement. They found that although there were differences between the two generations, however, the differences were not so wide to be called a pronounced generation gap (Sigel & Reynolds, 1980, p. 646). Also, Niemi and others studied the differences in the political values of the two generations of the 1960s and 1970s in the United States. They found that there were no significant differences between college students and their parents (Niemi, et al., 1978). These and other studies reveal that Mead's views and other such assertions are to be examined critically to find out whether the existence of generation gap or conflict is defensible.

In Iran, too, the issue of generation gap has followed the same pattern. After the revolution, especially in the last decade, many observers have asserted the existence of generational conflict between the pre and

post-revolution generations. Some even have used concepts such as generational divide, generational disconnect and disruption referring to the conditions of generational relationships between the pre- and post-revolution era (Aghajeri, 2003; Alikhani, 2003; Ghaderi, 2003; Sheikhi, 2001; Tajik, 2002). Despite these assertions, empirical studies about generational relations indicate otherwise: None of them have revealed major generational differences between the two generations (Panahi, 2001, 2004; Tavakkoli, 2001).

3. Theoretical Framework:

Generation gap is discussed under concepts such as generation differences, generation conflict, generation divide, generation distance, generation discord, generation disconnect, etc. Under any concept, it refers to cultural differences between the two consecutive generations. Although it is difficult to exactly define and separate two generations, and to draw a clear border between them (Kain, 1990, p. 222-223), some definitions do exist. Some hold that a generation is about 30 years, the time required for a son to replace his father (Berger, 1960). Demographers use the concept generation cohorts. Kertzer places different uses of the concept in four categories: "Generation as a principle of kinship descent; generation as cohort; generation as life stage; and generation as historical period" (Kertzer, 1983, p. 126). Sociologically, "a generation can be defined more sharply, as a social cohort whose collective experience of history is shaped by a significant event, or events, and whose memory is constructed around recurrent rituals and significant places, as in the Sixties' Generation" (*Dictionary of Sociology*, 2000, p. 150). According to the above definition, generation does not refer to a certain age, such as 30, 25, or 20 years, but to cohorts having shared experiences. This kind of generation gap is usually referred to as 'historical generation' (Corsten, 1999; Dassbach, 1995). Whatever the definition of generation, generation gap refers to major differences between two generations' culture and life styles, which ends in the lack of mutual understanding between the youth and elderly.

As we saw, Mead's explanation of generation gap was based on socio-cultural changes that happened from one generation to the next. For her, there were a variety of technological changes that occurred during and following the WWII period. Socio-cultural changes transform the conditions wherein children are raised and socialized. As a result, the cultural system of the previous generation is not completely internalized by the next generation. Being socialized in two different conditions, it is difficult for them to live similar lives and have similar experiences and understandings; they have different cultures and live in different worlds.

According to Mead, a new culture has been developed internationally that has created an unbridgeable gap between the two pre- and post WWII generations.

Durkheim has similar views. He holds that in traditional societies with mechanical solidarity three generations lived with each other in large families, where culture was transmitted from one generation to the next without considerable change. When societies gradually became more complex, the differences within societies and between various strata and professions increased. Gradually large extended families were transformed into small nuclear families, and the differences between generations, social classes and professions increased, and along with the emergence of cultural differences and weakening of collective consciousness, values and norms, mechanic solidarity was transformed to organic solidarity, in which, instead of similarities among individuals, individuality and differences were accepted. Overall, according to Durkheim, social change through increasing division of labor decreases similarities between generations and leads to generation gap, so that the faster the social change, the wider the generation gap, and the more difficult to bridge the gap (See Durkheim, 1973, p. 63-69).

Others focus on the impact of industrialization that promotes new values, norms, and behavioral changes. Encountering such changes the new generation tries to accommodate itself through acquiring new life styles, attitudes, and behaviors. The previous generation that is not so adaptive gradually becomes distant from the new generation, ending in a generational gap. Such conditions lead to feelings of loneliness, isolation, depression, and social alienation by the new generation, causing various types of deviance and delinquencies (See Leslie & Korman, 1985, p. 219-247). Following this path, Inglehart focuses on the impact of economic growth and well-being on generation differences. According to his theory, generations that are raised under the conditions of economic affluence tend to consider economic values less than those raised under economic hardship. Combining two hypotheses of socialization and scarcity he argues that in the post WWII era a generation gap is developed between the new and old one, so that the new generation tends to value non-material values higher, while the older generation tends to value material values higher (See Inglehart, 1990, Chapter. 2).

Bourdieu explains generation gap using inequality and conflict approaches. He maintains that, like social classes, different generations have conflicts of interests. Such conflicts are rooted in inequalities of power and wealth, which is controlled by the older generation. As a result, generation conflict is not a new phenomenon; it is a social structural factor that goes back to centuries ago, and is based on the struggle between the

young and the old in different fields of society. Based on this approach, a generation as a social unit is constructed by the older generation in order to maintain its own superiority and interests. Moreover, Bourdieu does not think that all age groups falling under one generation have similar interests, because they belong to different classes and social positions (Tavakkol et al., 2006).

Considering an historical approach to generation gap, one can hypothesize the existence of a high level of generation gap between the two pre and post revolution generations in Iran. Theoretically, several factors may contribute to a large divide between the two generations: one being the revolution itself, another rapid socio-cultural change after the revolution through modernization, and still another, the high level of urbanization and the immigration of the rural population to the city. One can definitely add to the above list the exposure of the new generation to the western culture through new international media, such as foreign television, films, internet, etc. All these factors can exacerbate and expand generational differences in Iran. It is due to these factors that some Iranian thinkers claim that there is a major generation gap between the young and old generations. To highlight this gap some use the concepts generation divide and generation disconnection (Ghaderi, 2003; Jalali, 2003; Semati, 2003; Tajik, 2002).

Despite the above theoretical considerations, one might ask the question: Does such a generation divide exist in Iran? Although there are some indications that there are differences between the younger and the older generations, does empirical sociological research confirm the existence of such a gap? To answer these questions, the author reviewed the existing research, and conducted researches in collaboration with others, which is presented in the rest of this paper. The author differentiated between value-oriented and norm-oriented generation gaps, in order to scrutinize the situation of generation gap in Iran.

4. Research Method:

The method of this research has been both the secondary analysis of the previous data, and the data from other studies that were collected from various populations in Iran. The findings of the later studies are used to check and supplement the findings from the secondary analysis of the author.

The original data of the secondary analysis were collected randomly from a sample of 3,540 people, aged 16 and older residing in 15 Iranian cities in 1995, to survey socio-cultural attitudes and behaviors of Iranians (Mohseni, 1995). Our sample is a subset of the foregoing sample, that includes 1,409 people aged 25-34 and 55 and older. In our sample, 726

respondents out of 1,409 (52%) were aged 25-34 and 683 people (48%) were 55 and older. The reason for choosing this age range was to make sure that the respondents passed through the adolescence period, and that their values and norms were stabilized and matured. An important variable for our study was education that was distributed as follows: 45 % had elementary and lower education, 38.5% had middle and high school, and 16% had higher education; which shows a typical sample from the urban population of Iran at the time. It is important to mention that the present education distribution of the Iranian population, due to the advancement of education system, is much different.

If we consider the timing of the revolution in 1978-79, the two generations to be compared are those aged 55 and older (the pre-revolution generation who were about 37 years old or older during the revolution) and those aged 25-35 (the post-revolution generation who were at most 17 during the revolution). This means that at least there was about 20 years of difference between the two generations. As a result, the chosen age groups could be considered different generations both in terms of age and socio-historical experience.

As was mentioned, we differentiated *value-oriented* and *norm-oriented* generation gaps. Values were defined as those beliefs that are used as standards to judge the quality of behaviors and to guide people in their choices of various activities. Norms were defined as socially acceptable rules of appropriate behaviors. Thus values are more abstract than norms and refer to how people think, while norms refer to tangible behaviors. To examine generation differences of the respondents in values, we compared their economic values (the importance of money, wealth and work), social values (the importance of power, fame, status, science, health and honesty), and beliefs (in fate, determination of sustenance, effectiveness of predetermination, and chance). To examine generation differences in norms, we compared the respondents' observations of family norms (such as seeking parental satisfaction in marriage, paying for dowry, relationship prior to marriage, polygamy, birth control and women's labor participation out of home), and religious norms (participation in mosques for prayer, going to religious shrines, paying religious dues, going to bereaving ceremonies), economic norms (trusteeship and reliability, fairness, benevolence, fraud and theft), and social norms (discrimination, divorce, political freedom, unlawful relations, nepotism, telling the truth, participation in war, and helping the deprived).

Since we are dealing with the existing data and the distributions are in percentages, we will use the following rules to categorize the kinds of generation gap that exists between the two generations in question: 0 to 5

percent of difference will be considered as *unimportant* due to the fact that in social sciences such a difference is attributable to sampling errors. A difference of 5-10 percent will be considered as a *meaningful* generation difference; 10-20 percent difference will be considered as a *moderate* generation gap; and 20-30 percent difference will be considered as a major generation difference or gap that may cause generation discord and conflict.

5. Research Findings:

In this section first we will present our findings about value-oriented generation differences, by examining values and beliefs of the two generations about some economic and social values and beliefs. We will supplement these data from two other studies comparing values of fathers and sons, and mothers and daughters.

5.1. Value-Oriented Generation differences

We start with economic values. Table 1 shows the distribution of those respondents who considered the economic values "to some extent important" or "important". To be brief we have eliminated responses of those who considered economic values "unimportant" or "of little importance."

Table 1: Generation Differences in Economic Values (in percent)

Economic values	Age 25-34	55 and older	generation difference
Importance of money	48.9	53.1	4.2
Importance of wealth	73.2	69.8	3.4
Importance of occupation	91.5	84.9	6.6

Table 1 indicates that the two age groups or generations differ in the values of money and wealth less than 5 percent, which can be considered unimportant. For the value of occupation the difference is more than 5 % for which one can accept the existence of a meaningful generation difference. However, the difference is not high enough to be considered a moderate or major gap.

Table 2: Generation Differences in Social Values (in percent)

Social Values	Age	25-34	55 and older	Generation difference
Importance of power		77.7	75.6	2.1
Importance of fame		69.1	72.4	3.3
Importance of status		99.6	99.8	0.2
Importance of honesty		98.9	99.4	0.5
Importance of Science		98.3	98.0	0.3
Importance of health		99.8	99.7	0.1

A glance at Table 2 reveals that the highest difference between the two generations is about fame, which adds up to 3.3 percent, and still cannot be considered a meaningful generational difference. In fact, the table shows that in social values the two generations are almost identical.

Table 3: Generation Differences in Social Beliefs (in percent)

Beliefs	Age	25-34	55 and older	Generation Difference
Belief in fate		65.1	77.4	12.3
Belief in determination of sustenance		81.1	84.9	3.8
Belief in effectiveness of providence		89.0	91.1	2.1
Belief in chance		78.5	80.0	1.5

Table 3 shows that only in the belief in fate there is a generation difference of 12.3, which can be considered a moderate generation gap. This difference can be interpreted as the new generation is gradually moving toward the belief that one's fate lies in one's own hands, and that one's deeds and actions determine one's future. All other beliefs differ less than 5 percent, and cannot be considered as important differences.

The following table summarizes the above findings:

Table 4: A Summary of Value-Oriented Generation Differences

Types of Values and Beliefs	0-5%	5.1-10%	10.1-20%	Average Diff.
Economic Values and Beliefs	2	1	-	4.7
Social Values	6	-	-	1.1
Social Beliefs	3	-	1	4.9
Totals	11	1	1	Mean=3.6

To sum up, Table 4 shows that in 11 out of 13 values (85% of them) there is no meaningful difference between the two generations. In one value there is a mild difference and in another value there is a moderate difference between the two generations. The table also reveals that the least difference is in social values, while the greatest difference is in social beliefs, owing to the difference of belief in fate. Average value difference between the two pre and post revolution generations is 3.6 percent, that according to our categorization is an unimportant generation difference.

Consequently, these comparisons indicate that empirical research studies strongly reject the existence of a major value difference, or the so-called value-oriented *generation disconnect*, between the younger and older generations in Iran. Note that this is the case despite the existence of various factors that theoretically lead to the emergence of major generation gaps. Then, the question arises: “What causes some scholars to herald the existence of major generation conflict and disconnect in Iran?”

5.2. Norm-Oriented Generation Differences

In this section we will present our findings about *norm-oriented* generation differences, via the comparison of family related norms, religious norms, economic and social norms and behaviors between the two generations of our study.

Table 5: Generation Differences in Marriage Norms and Behaviors (Percent of Agreement)

Types of Norms	Age	25-34	55 and older	Generation Difference
Parental Consent in Marriage		93.3	93.3	0.0
Payment of Mahr (estate)		80.5	75.4	5.1
Providing Dowry		72.6	74.2	1.6
Pre Marital Relations		70.3	64.7	5.6

Table 5 shows that there is considerable agreement about the main issues related to marriage between the two generations. There is almost no difference between the two concerning the necessity of parental consent in marriage and in providing dowry for the bride. However, there seems to be a mild difference concerning payment of mahr (estate) and premarital relations between the two generations, although the difference is not considerable. In any ways, the data do not confirm the existence of a major generation gap or divide between the two in this regard.

Table 6: Generation Differences in Some Family Norms and Behaviors (Percent of Agreement)

Age	25-34	55 and older	Generation Difference
Types of Norms			
Polygamy	6.8	8.5	1.7
Family Planning	98.9	94.5	4.4
Women's Employment	54.1	49.4	4.7

Table 6 again shows that there is not a meaningful difference between the two generations concerning some family norms and behaviors, such as acceptance of polygamy, family planning and women's employment out of home.

Table 7: Generation Differences in Some Religious Norms and Behaviors (Percent of Agreement)

Age	25-34	55 and older	Generation Difference
Type of Norms			
Participation in Mourning Ceremonies	50.7	66.5	15.8
Participation in Collective Prayers	35.2	53.7	18.5
Visiting Shrines	66.1	73.6	7.5
Offerings of vow	73.0	78.3	5.3

This table shows that the younger generation is much less interested in some religious norms and behaviors than the previous generation. The data especially reveal that the generation difference is higher in those activities that are collectively performed compared to individual actions. This accords with the process of individualization as societies get more modernized. Religious differences are more pronounced than differences in family issues probably due to the fact that family as a social institution is much more resilient than religion.

Now we will examine the generation gap in some other norms and behaviors of Iranians, based on the data gathered from another national survey carried out in 2001, to study values, attitudes and norms of Iranians aged 15 and older. For this study we shall compare some norms and behaviors of the two generations aged 15 – 29 and 50 and older, that the data allows. This national survey was conducted in 2001 in 28 Iranian cities that were provincial centers, with a sample size of about 17,000 people (*Values & Attitudes of Iranians, 2001*). Basically, these data are meant to be comparable to the data that we just used.

Table 8: Generation Differences in Some Economic Norms and Behaviors
(Percent agreeing that such qualities regularly or highly exist among people)

Age Type of Economic Norm or Behavior	15-29	50 and older	Generation Difference
Trusteeship and Reliability	61.7	60.2	1.5
Fairness	45.4	48.0	2.6
Benevolence and Helping Others	65.4	66.1	0.7
Fraud	81.0	83.8	2.8

Table 8 examines the respondents' belief in regular or high level of existence of 4 economic norms and behaviors among the Iranians. The data indicate that in none of them a considerable generation gap exists between the two generations.

Table 9: Generation Differences in Some Social Norms and Behaviors
(Percent agreeing that is very important)

Age Types of Norms and Behaviors	15-29	50 and older	Generation Difference
Seriousness of Discrimination	60.2	57.6	2.6
Problem of Unlawful Relations	65.8	60.9	4.9
Problem of Nepotism	88.5	84.7	3.8
Telling the Truth in conflict of interest	69.9	82.2	12.3
Participation in War of Defense	51.8	58.6	6.8
Serving in Deprived Parts of Iran	64.4	67.2	2.8

According to the above table, in 4 of 6 issues related to social norms and behaviors there is less than 5 percent of difference between the two mentioned generations. In one of the above issues the difference is

between 5 to 10 percent, showing a mild generation gap; and only in one issue a difference of 12 percent exists that can be considered as a moderate generation gap. Again, these findings do not confirm the existence of a major generation divide between the two generations. Table 10 summarizes our findings related to the norm-oriented generation differences:

Table 10: A Summary of Norm-Oriented Generation Differences

Types of Norms and Behaviors	0-5%	5.1-10%	10.1-20%	Average Diff.
Marriage Norms and Behaviors	2	2	-	3.1
Family Norms and Behaviors	3	-	-	3.6
Religious Norms and Behaviors	-	2	2	11.8
Economic Norms and Behaviors	4	-	-	1.9
Social Norms and Behaviors	4	1	1	5.5
Total	13	5	3	Mean = 5.2

Table 10 shows that in 13 out of 21 (62%) of the norm-oriented issues related to family life, religious, economic and social issues there is less than 5 percent of difference between the two generations of pre and post revolution Iran. In 5 of them the difference is 5 to 10 percent, showing a mild generation gap, and in 3 of them a moderate generation gap exists between the two generations. The lowest generation gap (1.9) is among economic norms and behaviors, and the highest (11.8) is among religious norms and behaviors. This reveals that the generation gap in religious norms and behaviors is considerable compared to other issues, which could be very important in an Islamic society. The average norm-oriented generation gap is 5.2 percent, which can be considered as a mild gap.

Based on these findings, in norm-oriented issues, too, it is very difficult to verify a hypothesis claiming the existence of a generation divide or disconnect between the two pre revolution and post revolution generations in Iran. However, the norm-oriented generation gap is wider than the value-oriented generation gap, by 1.6 percent. This means that if there is no meaningful value-oriented generation gap, there might be a mild norm-oriented generation gap in Iran. Overall, a review of the above data, presented in tables 4 and 10, is shown in table 11:

Table 11: Overall Comparison of Value and Norm-Oriented Generation Gaps

Level of Generation Gap	Frequency	Percent	Type of Gen. Gap
0-5 Percent	24	70.6	No meaningful gap
5.1-10 Percent	6	17.6	Mild gap
10.1- 20 Percent	4	11.8	Moderate gap
Total	34	100.0	--

This table shows that in 24 out of 34 values and norms (70% of them) no meaningful generation difference is observed. In 6 cases (17%) a mild generation gap is present. And in 4 cases (12%) one can claim that a moderate generation gap is confirmed. Overall, these findings do not support the existence of a major gap or divide between the two pre and post revolution Iranian generations, which seems quite normal for a developing and rapidly changing society; and that those claiming the existence of such a gap have to prove their claims via concrete empirical studies.

6. Conclusions:

The purpose of this paper was to examine the condition of generation gap in the Iranian society. Many scholars claim that there is a major generation gap between the two pre- and post-revolution generations in Iran. To demonstrate this gap they utilize concepts such as generation conflict, generation divide, generation disconnect, and generation disruption. Concerning the fact that intergenerational relations depend on the level of internalization and practice of public national culture in people's everyday lives, and the fact that values and norms constitute two main parts of a cultural system, to examine this claim thoroughly we conceptualized generation gap into two types of *value-oriented* and *norm-oriented* generational differences. This conceptualization is based on the fact that values are internalized and deeply entrenched in one's personality, and change very slowly in one's life, compared to norms that are more situational and adaptable to changing conditions. As a result, one can expect that value-oriented generation gap in a society be less prevalent than a norm-oriented gap. In fact, in my previous studies such a difference was observed between the two pre and post revolution generations in Iran (Panahi, 2001, 2004). This conceptualization allows one to hypothesize that in a rapidly changing

society, such as Iran, a norm-oriented generation gap will be deeper and more prevalent. Furthermore, a norm-oriented generation gap should be more acceptable and manageable than a value-oriented one, because it is to some extent natural due to the changing socio-economic conditions of the existing societies.

Reviewing explanations of generation gap, we noticed that most of them point to rapid socio-economic change. Such change, being the case in the developing countries, prevents complete socialization and internalization of a country's cultural system in the coming generation and exposes the new generation to events and situations not experienced by the previous generation, which makes the two generations different and promotes a gap between them. In the case of Iran, besides rapid socio-economic change since 1963, the advent of a major socio-political revolution in 1978-79 exposed the post-revolution generation to a situation different from the one in which their parents were raised and socialized. Moreover, rapid educational advancement after the revolution caused the new generation to become much more educated than that of its parents, and to be able to utilize the new communication technology with all its encompassing cultural impact. According to theories of generation gap, one would expect that all of these factors should end in the creation of a major generational gap and divide. Probably, it is based on these theories and some personal observations that many scholars emphasize the existence of a generation divide in Iran. However, as sociologists we cannot accept such claims on their face value, unless empirical studies support those claims. That is what we tried to carry out in this research paper.

To examine the situation of generation gap in Iran, we utilized the data collected from two national surveys in Iran, and performed secondary analysis on them. Based on our conceptualization, from these data we selected and used those related to the values and norms of the new and old generations. From among the values and beliefs we selected 13 elements related to social and economic issues and compared them among the two generations. From among norms and behaviors, we selected 21 elements related to the same issues as much as the data allowed, and compared them to find out the myth and reality of the claimed generation conflict.

Our findings showed that, from among 13 values and beliefs related to various areas of society, the generation difference in 11 fell below 5 percent, one between 5 to 10 percent, and one between 10 to 20 percent, averaging 3.6 percent. From among 21 norms and behaviors related to various areas of society, the generation difference in 13 fell below 5 percent, 5 between 5 to 10 percent, and 3 between 10 to 20 percent, averaging 5.0 percent.

We can make the following conclusions from the above findings.

1) Due to the fact that less than a 5 percent difference in social studies is not considered meaningful, and is attributable to sampling errors, in 24 out of 34 cases or about 70 percent of the selected values and norms there were no meaningful generation gaps between the two generations. In 6 cases out of 34, or in 17 percent of the selected values and norms, a generation difference of 5-10 percent exists, allowing one to claim the presence of a mild generation gap. In 4 cases out of 34, or in 12 percent of the selected values and norms, a moderate generation gap exists. The average generation difference in both value and norm oriented areas is just about 5 percent. Overall, these findings do not confirm the existence of a major generation gap, or divide, or disconnect between the pre- and post-revolution generations in Iran. As a result, such claims are mostly myth rather than a reality.

2) Although the distribution of generation differences is not the same in *value-oriented* and *norm-oriented* issues, and the latter is 1.6 percent higher than the first, as we observed above, the difference between the two generations is not very high. However, one can confirm the hypothesis that the level of norm-oriented generation gap is higher than the value-oriented, which at worst condition can be considered as a mild generation gap that supports my own previous findings.

3) A glance at the findings reveals that there is not an even distribution of generation differences among the two generations. In most values and norms (70% of them) findings support the lack of generation gap in our population, but in some values and norms there is a mild or moderate gap between them. This condition prevents one from proposing a sweeping generalization about the case and persuades one to embark upon new and more precise studies to reveal the hidden agenda concerning the important issue of generation gap in Iran.

4) For those scholars who stress the existence of a major generation divide and disconnect in Iran, these findings show that their hypothesis is unfounded. It is possible that these scholars based their hypotheses on theoretical observations adopted from western studies, such as those mentioned in this paper, and without any critical empirical studies conducted in Iran, and have made unfounded generalizations. In fact, one of the major problems in the field of social sciences is that some scholars overgeneralize the theories and findings from the western studies to the cases of developing countries, without critically examining them in their own socio-cultural settings. This kind of generalization may be due to their commitment to positivist paradigm, which itself is under serious criticism nowadays. Or, perhaps some focus on the temporary adolescent culture and do not distinguish it from lasting social norms and values.

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