

Sociological Analysis of the Relationship between Ethnic Identity and Civic Participation in the City of Ilam

Masoud Darabi^{*1}

Received 10 February 2020, Accepted 21 May 2020

Abstract

The present research with a sociological approach studies the relationship between ethnic identity and civic engagement in the city of Ilam. The research methodology is survey and data collection tool is questionnaire. The statistical population includes all male and female people higher than 15 years old in the city of Ilam based on census in 2006. According to Cochran sampling, 400 people were selected by the method of stratified sampling. And in the theoretical issues, the ideas of scholars such as Robert Putnam, Habermas-Shiltz and Geertz's theory of evolution of public fields and archaism and modernism perspectives were used. The main question focuses on the fact that, why Ilami citizens have less participation in civic and regional activities than that of ethnic affairs? The results of this study indicate that ethnic identity and meta-ethnic social capital, gender and age influence on forming civic engagement.

Keywords: Identity, Ethnic identity, Civic participation, Social capital.

^{1*}. Assisntnt Professor of Sociology, Malek Ashtar University, Iran, masuod.darabi@yahoo.com
(Corresponding Author)

1. Introduction

In the era of “big collapse” (Fukuyama, 1990, p. 20), when the macro-narratives were collapsed and replaced by micro-narratives, ancient ethnic identities emerged in new forms and proved a new identity and modern human learned to introduce himself with titles such as belonging to a particular group or ethnicity, and tried to stabilize this identity. The issue of ethnic identities is not a local special issue, but as a global issue, both European and American developed countries and less developed Asian and African countries involve in this problem and the difference is only in ways of dealing with it. Iran is also one of multi-ethnic countries that, however, many tribes live in different parts of it, but interact with each other, and whenever this interaction is deviated, it can have the adverse consequences for agents in the both sides of the association; that is, both in the private world and the public world. Therefore, it is necessary to deal with ethnic issues in Iran, particularly due to more strategic position and to do further analysis in this field.

2. Statement of the Problem

Civic participation is one of the important issues in social and political development of new communities, so that they try to increase the rate of this participation in different ways. In recent years, in our country, many theoretical discussions have been conducted in this field, but unfortunately, the conditions of civic participation in small towns and deprived regions have not been provided as are needed and suffer from lack of development fields and increasing the optimum participation. Different constraints and problems have caused the lack of civic participation growth in various regions of the country including lack of enough facilities, lack of the required cultural, social and economic contexts, low level of awareness of citizenship, etc. and perhaps the major barriers to civic participation can be known as the ethnic identity in Iran. In Iran, due to existence of many ethnicities, ethnic identity is an important factor in social changes, and in its intensive case, it may cause some disorders such as the gap between society strata, separation from central government, and at its more obvious form, it may lead to increase the lack of individuals' civic participation. In the cities and regions that tribal system governs, ethnicity can be one of the most important barriers in civic participation at different

levels (regional, national, and international). It seems that in Ilam, that is influenced by ethnic inclinations, the lack of civic participation is completely obvious in its various forms in recent years, so that it is observed that people act indifferently toward their present and future status of themselves and their children, city and province and it seems that they have faced to a kind of isolation and alienation toward government and their national destiny. In spite of national interest, the rate of participation in development of society, in the local and national levels is at very low level, and in the other side, our society in the present stage is in sensitive conditions in terms of social renovation and civic development, so that achieving to the above development requires to provide and expand the conditions of developing civic participation, and without defining the principles of civic participation, the possibility of realization of civic development is not provided at national level. The paper, in line with mentioned contents, attempts to explain ethnicism, why it is so, and its outcomes associated with individuals' civic participation in the city of Ilam to suggest solutions to increase civic participation by achieving practical results.

3. Research Objectives

3.1. Main Objective

Sociological explanation of the relationship between ethnic identity and civic participation

3.2. Secondary Objectives

- Explaining why and how citizens participate in civic engagements in Ilam.
- Measuring the level of civic participation in the city of Ilam.
- Explaining the relationship between different levels of ethnicism of Ilami citizens with the aspects of civic participation.

3. Review of the Literature

Fakhriosadat Ahmadi in 2002 has studied the issue of citizenship and civic participation in Tehran to examine the rate of citizen's awareness of their rights and commitments as well as their activities to realize these rights and commitments. In that paper, civic engagement has mainly focused on political aspects especially objection to political affairs and has been measured by

indices such as participation in election activities, signing an appeal, proposing a solution for a public problem, etc. Therefore, citizens based on the sense of political efficacy are involved in various activities, and if they feel the government does not respond, they are not engaged.

Yarmohammad Ghasemi in 2004 investigated the interaction between ethnic relations in the area of economic cooperation, authority, emotional, intellectual and convergence among the eight tribes of Ilam. The findings of his research indicate that by increasing the collective cooperation and relation that is the resultant of economic, political, social and cultural relations, attachment and loyalty of tribes to larger units are increased and reducing of these relations causes the reinforcement of collective micro-units and undermining collective macro-units.

Eldin Fahnmy (2001) studied the ethnicity, citizenship and civic participation in Britain. In this field, he has used theories of Social capital, mental-political orientation and socio-political situation.

In general, we can say that these models greatly explain the citizens' political behavior, but ethnic identity and group solidarity are less involved, and this approach is less supportive.

3.1. Research Theoretical Principles

There are three perspectives on ethnic identities: 1) archaism, 2) modernism, 3) structuralism or ethnic symbolism.

1. Archaism view: in this view, ethnic identity is based on the old and deep attachments to a group or a culture and mainly is used to describe the roots and the strength of ethnic dependencies. What all archaists confirm is the continuity and stability of ethnic identities. They have two basic claims: the first is that, tribes and nations are ancient phenomena. The second is that tribes and nations are natural, so they are universal.

2. Modernism view: This perspective has emerged as a reaction against archaism view. According to this view, tribes and nations are new phenomena and are the results of very modern processes such as capitalism, industrialization, etc. According to these theorists, ethnic differences may emerge to be the basis of main political conflicts and political contradictions,

and ethnic identity itself is not the fixed feature of individuals, but is a forming identity.

3.View of ethnic symbolism: Some scholars of ethnic studies know neither the archaism views nor the modernist view complete to explain ethnic issues. And to solve this problem, they have presented a combination between these two approaches. Anthony Smith and John Armstrong at the same time that tried to emphasize on ethnic origin in the formation of modern societies, showed that ethnic and traditional natureforms the culture, myths, memories, values, institutions and traditions, and directs democratic societies toward discriminated nations and cultural communities (Epstein, 2000).

3.2. Public Domain

Habermas knows the evolution of public domain an effective method in demolishing the exploitation of life world and getting ride of the domination of this system and establishing the relationship between these two. He argues that in recent ages, development of capitalism has caused polarity of the whole social system and its division into two poles of life world band system and the system (including political and economic sub-systems) dominates on the life world (including social and cultural sub-systems). Although these two separate poles enjoy integrity, but the real issue is the connection between them or inother words, is the social integration and system integration (Habermas, 2001, p55).Habermas knows the most important feature of the public field the formation of public opinion. The public opinion, in fact, is a structure created by environment conditions, a structure resulted from the changed needs and requirements and increasing of human populations (Nozari, 2002, p.470).

3.3. Exploitation of LifeWorld

Habermasknows the life world environment as a compliancethat is the background of everyday life, and is like a repository of knowledge that is transferred from generation to generation (Piozzi, 1999, p.174).He considers the concept of the life world as a correlative principle of processes required to achieve understanding(ibid, p.144). In contrast, there is the life worldwith an

internal activated panorama, a system with an external vision under control (Ritzer, 1995, pp.736-737).

The system includes a private field (economy) and a public field (politics). The system is not to create sharing and solidarity, but to create power, wealth and exploitation of life world. Unlike life world that is regulated through verbal and communicative interaction, the system has been separated from communicative and understanding interaction and is adjusted by money and power and tries to apply these intermediaries in life world and dominate them and make them to obey their organizational regulations (ibid, p.145).

3.2. Theoretical Framework

In the present research, according to approximate knowledge about statistical population, both archaist and modernist views can be applied; because this property is special for developing societies that both are dependent to archaic elements and are admitting new elements and are influenced by them. Therefore, by applying and comparing these two approaches, we can perhaps better understand the problem and open a new window. In this regard, since there are ethnic, language and kinship relations, and common cultural traditions among ethnical groups of statistical community, the archaists' theories can be used. Geertz and Shiltz consider the hereditary, genetic and apparent signs of individuals as the determinant factors of their social and historical positions in the world (Smith, 1999).

In the statistical population of the present research, ethnic identity, the shared life-world actors are all agents, and ethnicity is considered as a strong factor in redirecting the actions and ideas; with the difference that here the life-world is not exploited but has been separated from the system that has been isolated; and the main problem is to remove the gap between the system and life-world and establishing an interaction based on free discourse; and this is impossible unless the ethnic agents are going to bridge the public field of the life-world to public field of the system and create a common public field.

According to presented theories and hypotheses, the following causative model can be considered for conducting the research in which ethnic identity

influences on civic participation as an independent variable through social capital as an intermediating variable.

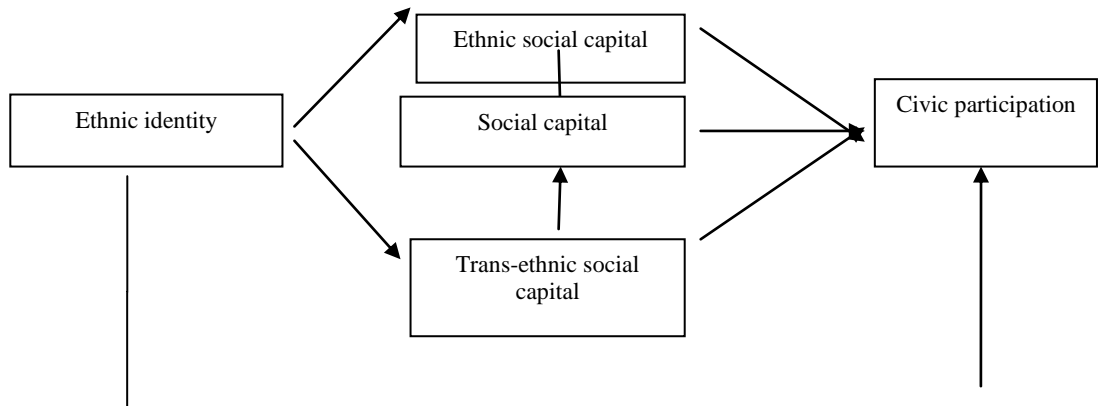


Figure 1: Social capital indexes

4. Research Hypotheses

1. There is a relationship between the background variables (gender, age, and status) and the rate of civic participation.

2. There is a relationship between ethnic identity and civic participation.

3. There is a relationship between ethnic social capital and civic participation.

4. There is a relationship between trans-ethnic social capital and civic participation.

5. There is a relationship between ethnic identity and the rate of ethnic social capital.

6. There is a relationship between the rate of ethnic identity and the rate of ethnic social capital.

5. Research Methodology

Methodology is defined as the way of collecting data which is common in all sciences or a part of them (Miller, 2002, p. 51). When the intended population is very extensive and access to all population is impossible, the most appropriate technique is to apply survey, that in the present study, it has been

used the technique employed is touse questionnaire. The statistical population of this study is all individuals over 15 years inIlam city (including male and female) in 2011 (1390 in Iranian calendar),which is based on the statistics of2006census;and based on Cochran’s formula, by method of stratified sampling, 384 subjects were chosen as the sample size in this study and to avoid loss during the study, a sample size of 400 subjects were considered and in the end, after deleting some quite bias questionnaires and with unanswered options, data of 393 questionnaires were analyzed. Analysis unit and the observed level was individual. To collect data, a questionnaire with 40 main questions and 5 field questions were designed based on Likert scale. For data analysis, parametric correlation tests, comparison of means, ANOVA, multi-variable regression analysis, and factor analysiswere used. After collecting the questionnaires, data were processedby SPSS software and were analyzed based on descriptive and inferential statistics. The face validity of the questionnaire was done, so that after designingthe questionnaire and collecting experts’ opinions about it, the general consensus was achieved about the validity of the questionnaire.

5.1. Theoretical and Operational Definitions of Variables

Ethnic identity: ethnic identity, separating from a person’s identity as an individual, is a set of ethnic awareness, ethnic recognition, ethnic attitudes and ethnic behaviors (Phinney, 2004).Ethnic identity has two internal and external aspects that ethnic awareness and attitudes are internal aspects and ethnic recognition and ethnic behaviors are external aspects of ethnic identity. Ethnic identity by awareness of origin indices and tribal and ethnic dignitaries with 4 items; ethnic attitudes with indices of emotion towards ethnicity and tribal and sensation toward the other tribeswith 4 items; ethnic self-identification with an ethnic label indexwith 4 items; ethnic behavior with indices of dialect and maintaining ethnic traditions with 4 items were measured in an ordinal level.

Social capital: social capital is the different aspects of social organization such as trust, interaction norms and social networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitate coordinated actions (Putnam,2001, p.1285).To measure social capital,its three dimensions (trust,interaction norms and social networks)

are indicated metrically and measured. Social networks, based on relationship variable, density indices and homogeneity in relations were measured at the ordinal level in four-groups, family, kinships (secondary family), friends and neighbors with 4 items; social interaction norms with indices of moving in new house, agricultural affairs, baby-sitting, job finding, financial problems, participating in joy and grief with 4 items and the confidence directly in all these four groups, and non-Kurdish tribes and government with 4 items.

Civic Participation: Civic participation in a general term is the engagement in the public domain, that is, active participation in general topics, interesting in and readiness to engage in public affairs and public activities (Putnam, 1997, p. 88). To measure civic participation, four cultural, social, economic and political aspects are indicated metrically and measured. In the social aspect, with indices of membership in voluntary associations, contributing to people at the time of social and natural events with 4 items; in the cultural aspect with indices of cooperation with associations and cultural and educational institutions, reading newspapers, watching the media and using internet with 4 items; in the economic aspects with indices of membership in stock market, credit networks and business unions with 4 items; in the political aspect with indices of participation in elections, meeting with senior government officials, participating in protest sit-ins, protest rallies, protest expression with 4 items were measured in an ordinal level.

6. Results and Findings

6.1. Description of the Data

Statistical population of the research consists of two age groups of males and females in five age groups. The studied population were 393 individuals that the number of individuals less than 20 years was 70 cases with 17.8 percent, the number of individuals from 21 to 30 years was 153 cases with 38.9 percent, the number of individuals from 31 to 40 years was 89 cases with 22.6 percent, the number of individuals from 41 to 50 years was 53 cases with 13.5 percent and the number of individuals from 51 years and higher was 28 cases with 7.1. 55.5% of the respondents, that is, 218 individuals were males and 44.5%, that is, 175 individuals were female that in terms of socio-economic

status (income, education, occupation), 27.5% of the respondents had low socio-economic status and 44% had an intermediate status and 28.5% had high status. Most respondents were in the age group of 20-30 years; that is, 153 individual and the least rate of respondents were in the age group of 51 years and higher, that is, 28 individual.

The state of civic engagement among respondents was respectively at very low level, 36 individuals with 9.2 percent and at low level, 137 individuals with 34.9%, and at the average level, 155 individuals with 39.4% and at high level, 57 individuals with 14.5% and at very high level, 8 individuals with 2 percent. Generally, the rate of civic participation among male and female age groups is at the level of low toward average and among men this rate increases by increasing the age, and among women is associated with irregular increasing and decreasing. And about the status of ethnic identity among respondents, the rate of ethnic identity is at very low level, 25 cases with 6.4%; at low level, 17 cases with 4.3%; at intermediate level, 263 cases with 66.9%; at high level 12 cases with 3.01% and at very high level 76 cases with 19.3%, that the rate of ethnic identity in age groups is intermediate and higher.

6.2. Hypothesis Test Results

Since measuring table variables (except gender) are at the interval measuring, we used Pearson correlation test to measure them.

6.2.1. Comparison of Means

1. Since the situation of the gender variable has been considered as a two-state nominal variable, and civic participation is an interval variable, thus the most appropriate method to test them is to use ANOVA (analysis of variance). Based on the descriptive findings, the average rate of civic participation for men is 26.89 and for women, is 24.48. Also, the results of the test according to the significant level ($\text{sig} = 0.000$) shows that there are significant differences between male and female respondents in terms of civic participation; in other words, the rate of civic participation is different between these two groups, and hypothesis one (H_1) that states there is a significant difference between these two groups, is approved, and the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected.

2. To test the relationship between age and civic participation, Pearson correlation was used that the results show that there is a significant relationship between age and civic participation with participation equals to -0.089 and a significance level of 0.008. In other words, there is a relationship and correlations between age and civic participation.

3. There is NOT a significant relationship between respondents' social status and civic participation.

4. The rate of correlation between ethnic identity index and civic participation equals to 0.151 and the significance level is 0.003. Therefore, hypothesis one (H1) that states there is a relationship, is approved, and the null hypothesis (H0) indicating the lack of relationship, is rejected.

5. To test the relationship between the variable of ethnic social capital and civic participation, Pearson correlation was used that the results show that there is NOT a significant relationship between ethnic social capital and civic participation with significance level of 0.117 and correlation of 0.079. In other words, there is NOT a relationship between ethnic social capital and civic participation.

6. To test the relationship between the variable of trans-ethnic social capital and civic participation, Pearson correlation test was used that results show there is a significant relationship between trans-ethnic social capital and civic participation with a significance level equals to 0.000 and correlation coefficient of 0.214. In other words, there is a significant relationship and correlation between trans-ethnic social capital and civic participation. Therefore, hypothesis one (H1) that states there is a significant relationship between these two variables, is approved, and the null hypothesis (H0) states there is NOT a significant relationship between these two variables.

7. There is a relationship between respondents' ethnic identity and trans-ethnic social capital.

8. The rate of correlation of ethnic identity index and ethnic social capital equal to 0.203 ($r=0.203$) and the significant level is 0.000 ($\text{sig}=0.000$); that is, by increasing the trans-ethnic social capital, the civic participation increases. Therefore, hypothesis one (H1) states there is a significant relationship between

these two variables and the null hypothesis (H0) states there is NOT a significant relationship between these two variables.

6.3. Multi-variable Analysis of Data

Based on multi-variable regression by *Enter* method in determining civic participation through the sum of available independent variables, it is observed that the multiple correlation coefficient has obtained as 0.293 and determination factor as 0.086; that is, the amount of 0.08 of the variance of dependent variable of civic participation is explained by existing significant independent variables in the model and the remainder is explained by factors outside of the model. According to the significant t-test results of each variable and beta coefficients, among existing variables, respectively trans-ethnic social capital with beta factor of 0.229, ethnic identity with beta factor of 0.140 and the age with beta factor of -0.145 (but reversely) are effective in explanation of civic participation. According to beta coefficients obtained, the variable of trans-ethnic social capital and the variable of ethnicity identity and age variables have the highest and lowest share in explanation of the research dependent variable.

Table 2: Multi-variable regression to explain civic participation

Multiple correlation coefficient	Determining factor	Modified determining factor	f-equation	Significance level
0.29	0.086	0.07	7.396	0.000

6.4. Modeling the Structural Equations by Amos Application

In this section, we deal with the construct validity of the test by measuring the fitness of the intended structure using Amos software based on having access to data derived from hypotheses (Ghasemi, 2005).

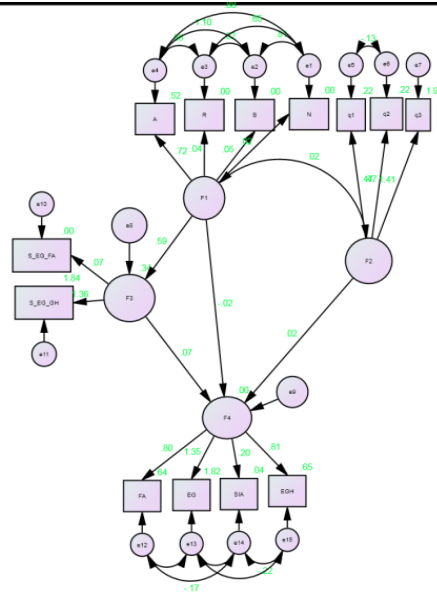


Figure 2. Structural equations

DF	P-value	Chi-square	AGFI	RMSEA	GFI	IFI	CFI	TLI	CMIN/DF
50	0.000	148.1	0.90	0.07	0.94	0.96	0.96	0.94	2.961

The above model has dealt with construct validity by measuring civic participation and fitting test of its structure. As the model suggests, in measurement part, most of the determinants of variables have relatively appropriate been loaded on it, and variables which have had lower item loads have been deleted from equations. The construct part of the model indicates that the ethnic identity variables (0.80) and social capital (0.23) had a role in explaining the variance in civic participation. Indices of test model indicate the fitting of the proposed theoretical structure with observed data and construct validity of the discussed measurement tool. All compatible model indices also relatively indicate values close to the accepted limit which means the relative power of the model to become far from an independent model and to approximate to a saturated model based on defined standards for them, and according to model's df, the model is super-specified. Since the coefficient of determination of results obtained from regression (Table 2) indicates that only

0.08 of civic participation variance are explained by the variables existing in regression equation (Table 2) which are at the level of significance; therefore, the fitness of the above model the rate of *rmsea*, which shows the strong function of the reminders in the model, is a confirmation for this claim; and since chi-square test is influenced by the studied sample size, and the sample size in the present study is big, the significance or non-significance of chi-square is NOT an appropriate criterion to make judgments about the model.

7. Conclusion

In determining theoretical framework to explain the relationship between ethnic identity and civic participation, some theories had been used. In explaining how the ethnic identity is formed, the two main theories of archaists and modernists were used. To illustrate the civic participation, Habermas' theories in the public domain and the exploitation of life world by the system were used. In relationship between independent variables and the mediators and dependent variable; that is, civil participation and the correlations showed that among variables of ethnic identity, ethnic social capital, trans-ethnic social capital, age, gender, and status, only the variables of ethnic identity and trans-ethnic social capital, gender and age have significant relationships with civic participation. Overall, after analyzing the relationship between variables based on regression analysis, the determination coefficient was obtained as 0.086, *i.e.*, the value of 0.08 of the variance in the dependent variable, civic participation, is determined by significant independent variables existing in the model and the reminder of variance is explained by factors outside of the model. According to beta coefficients, among existing variables, respectively trans-ethnic social capital with beta factor of 0.229, ethnic identity with beta factor of 0.140 and the age with beta factor of -0.145 (but reversely) are effective in explanation of civic participation. According to beta coefficients obtained, the variable of trans-ethnic social capital, and the variable of ethnicity identity and age variables have the highest and lowest share in explanation of the research dependent variable. Among the three underlying variables, the gender variable due to being nominal was included in the analysis of variance that the obtained results showed that there is a significant relationship between gender and civic

participation. Also comparing the means of civic participation between two genders, it was observed that the rate of civic participation is different among men and women. The square of eta(η^2) coefficient and f-test confirmed this fact. While it was expected that ethnic identity could be an important factor in explaining the rate of civic participation, unfortunately, the research model could not explain a lot of variance in civic participation in the target population; that is, Ilam city; and it only explained 0.86 % of changes. At this stage, a glance at the whole issue would not be unpleasant. As it was seen in the results, the level of civic participation in Ilam is generally low, so that more than half of the population; that is, 9.2 percent participated at a very low level, 34.9% at the low level, 39.4% at the average level, 14.5% at the high level and 2% at very high level, that if we subtract the indices of watching television programs and listening radio during a week (local and national TV and radio), and membership in religious and charity institutions and sport programs and activities from the set of civic participation indices, we may achieve to a very low number, because there is not much involvement in other aspects. About ethnic identity, it is observed that at a very low rate it comprises 6.4% and at low rate 4.3% and at the average level 66.9 %, and at high rate 3.01%, and very high level 9.3% that the rate of ethnic identity is in the average age groups upward. Why though in most places, ethnic groups have higher rates of civic participation, but in the studied population, although ethnic identity is the most important factor in all aspects of personal and collective fields, it can not increase the participation rate of the groups? The only reason that might be justifiable is that the ethnic identity in Ilam is NOT the collective identity derived from the collective awareness. To support this subject, some points must be mentioned: the factor of feeling inequality and discrimination that always in all places and times has formed the special groups, does not have any role in forming ethnic identity in the city of Ilam; and in contrast, the cultural commonalities that have become the obligatory forces, are the effective factors and these commonalities are not selected by individuals and have been associated. But whether which factor can play this role and what are the inhibitive factors in civic participation in city of Ilam, are question that require further researches. It is hoped that those who love their

homeland try to take steps in this way in order the blossom of civic participation be flourished. "Only when the human being, a real man, returns the nominal citizens to themselves, and human being as an individual in his/her routine life, and personal duties and relations becomes a typical creature, ... it is only then that human freedom will become perfect" (Marx, 2002, p. 43).

8. Recommendations

1. Modifying the socialization process with emphasis on reconstruction and development of the educational system corresponding to today's needs and conditions of world and Iran.
2. Expanding the rationalism and creating unity among people of different ethnic groups and strata to achieve the common principles of mass and inter-religious dialogue in Iran.
3. Encouraging dialogue between nations in order to identify similarities and differences among ethnic groups in order to strengthen the commonalities and to tolerate differences.
4. Modifying the type of elites and public officials 'view toward the common national collective identity.
5. Applying the policy of ethnic and cultural plethora based on the principle of unity in diversity or collective solidarity based on respect for the rights of all people and their ethnic identity.

References

- Ahmadi, F. (2002). *Citizenship and civic participation: the study of the effects of awareness of citizenship rights and obligations in city on the process of rights of citizenship (case study: Tehran Metropolitan)*. Tehran: Tehran University.
- Fahmy, E. (2001). *Ethnicity, citizenship and political participation in Britain*.
- Fukuyama, F. (2000). *The end of order*. Tehran: Iranian Publication.
- Ghasemi, Y. (2004). *Ethnic relations and its association with the evolution of collective identity (case study of Ilam community)*. Ilam: Ilam University.
- Habermas, J. (2001). *Constitutional crisis: A theory of the modern capitalist government*. Tehran: Ney Publication.
- Nozari, H. (2002). *Reinterpreting Habermas' ideas*. Tehran; Cheshmeh Publication.
- Phinney, S. J. & Alipuria, L. (2004). At the interface of cultures: multi ethnic multiracial highschool and college student *Journal of Social Psychology*, 5, 136-158.
- Piore, Michael. (1999). *Reinterpreting Habermas' ideas*. Tehran: Tehran Publication.
- Putnam, R. (2001). *Democracy and civil traditions*. Tehran: Tehran Publication.
- Putnam, Robert. (1997). *Democracy in America at century*. New York: New York Publication.
- Tajik, M. (2005). Modern human and conundrum of identity. *National studies Journal*, 6(1), 25-35.