Iranian Movies and Gender display: a Study in Post Revolution Cinema

Mehdi Soltani-Gordfaramarzi and Abbas Varidj Kazemi

Abstract—The present treatise aims at analyzing1 the scene pictured by Iran's post-revolution cinema for its audience. How the gender inequalities would arise as actors and actresses interact in post-revolution cinema is the body of the main question. The theoretical frame of this research is greatly indebted to Goffman's theoretical approach to the gender display in visual media. The research findings depict the ritualized gender displays in post-revolution cinema and reproduction of traditional gender patterns and norms in Iranian cinema. Ritualizing the subordination, the films produced thereafter confirm and demonstrate the traditional gender values and norms.

Index Terms—Gender Display, Iranian cinema, Erving Coffman, reutilization of Subordination

I. INTRODUCTION

That gender has no biological origin but is constructed by human society and imposed to men is nowadays accepted and developed in sociological thought, so that different subfields of sociology focus in their investigations on gender discussions as one of their important priorities [11],[14],[18];[13]. In fact, gender is linked with "Culturally established correlates of sex" [4]. So, gender is constructed in accordance with social interaction and social structure [4]. Consequently, gender surrounds and interprets all the social domains of men-women relations. All the mosaics constructing the society, from the smallest of them (e.g. family) to the biggest social organizations, are influenced by gender patterns established in society.

The main goal of this paper is to analyze the image of gender relationships represented by Iranian cinema. To answer the question of how gender inequalities are represented and constructed through the interactions between actors and actresses in post-revolution cinema, we make use of theoretical approach of Interaction to analyze gender relations in Iranian cinema sociologically.

Specially, Goffman's theoretical approach to gender display in visual media can offer an appropriate way to account and find the right answer to this paper's question. Goffman,in "Gender Advertisement" [3] puts forth a fascinating, unique and complicated theory under the name of "Gender Display" so as to analyze gender representation

Mehdi Soltani-Gordfaramarzi is with the Department of Social Problem, Iranian Academic Center for Education Culture and Research (ACECR), Tarbiat Moallem Branch, Mofatteh Ave. No.49, , P. O. Box: 15615-186, Tehran, Iran (corresponding author, phone number: 00989125263521; Fax: 009888831976102; e-mail: m.soltani55@gmail.com).

Abbas Varidj Kazemi is with Department of Communications, Faculty of social Science, University of Tehran, P. O. Box: 14395/773, Tehran, Iran (avkazemi@gmail.com).

in visual media. He considers the process of gender construction as performing rituals, which are "displayed" by individuals interacting with others (esp. with opposite sex) [4]. For him the best way of how gender is displayed can be traced in visual media and advertisements. Therefore Goffman, in his work "Gender Ads", pursues the problem by empirical analysis of gender relationship in ads pictures and distinguishes characteristic patterns of gender relationships therein.

Here, Goffman's work is developed beyond the nonverbal sphere of advertisements and used in analyzing screens.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Goffman in "G. Ads" discusses how individuals reveal their gender identities and how this identity is employed in advertisements [9]. In his opinion Gender "is constructed as a picture with different forms in media ads sphere"[12]. The focus of discussion in "Gender Ads" is the concept of "Gender display". It means "gender is given expression in social situations

through what Goffman calls 'display'[1]. Displays are vehicles of "information about social identity, way of living, intentions and expectations" [19] of one person to another.

In Goffman's discussion, the concept of display is linked with the concept of "ritualization", in such a way that displays are performed by means of rituals. Ritual "can be defined as formal, conventionalized acts through which one displays his ideas for the other"[4]. The ritual is a kind of place-finding mechanism, in which the majority of social subordinates confirms and submits the position of superordinates, also "If gender is defined as culturally established correlates of sex (whether in consequence of biology or learning), gender display refers to conventionalized images of these correlates", Goffman argued [4]. The paramount cultural model for displaying gender is child-parent model of relationship in Goffman's point of view; for it offers an available and universal model of unequal, asymmetrical and one-sided relations and as a result portrays in the best way the ritualization of subordination [4],[19]. Therefore, using this discussion, he considers the gender display as the ritualized expression of parental authority of men and childish submission of women. He believes that gender display in social situations not only substantiates the social hierarchy of gender but also brings them in existence [4],[8].

Relying on such an intellectual approach, Goffman starts to analyze the gender relationships in ads pictures. Putting forth the idea of "Hyper-ritualization" of gender displays in ads (and other visual media), "he shows us how advertisements help 'naturalize' our socially constructed

gender differences, and thus enforce gender stereotypes." [2]. Hyper-ritualization of gender displays in visual media means here that relationships, which have already been ritualized in social situations, are again ritualized in ads (and therefore in other visual media), and as a matter of fact "a transformation of what is already a transformation" [4].

Employing this theoretical background, Goffman deals with analyzing the visual patterns related to gender representation (and esp. femininity) in ads and tries to investigate some gender display principles in them.

He has recognized six visual patterns of gender display in ads, through which some of the differences between men and women is represented:

1) Ritualization of Subordination; the constructing elements under this concept to analyze films are asking for help, smiling, expressing debility, obtaining approval, supporting, domination, coquetry, emotional ecstasy/ seething, giving welcome and saying goodbye, expressing anxiety, giving service, politely requesting, ordering, imposing.

2) Relative Size: It indicates that women generally are depicted shorter than men in ads & visual media and this is a symbol of lesser authority. The men are depicted shorter than women under only one circumstance, if he is socially lower in rank than her [4].

3) Function Ranking; this paper is to analyze function ranking in Iranian cinema films. To evaluate this issue in male-female relations, the type of men's occupation and women's in films are observed(Male Occupations (Business owners/ managers, Mechanics/ skilled craftsmen, Factory workers/ laborers, Engineers/ architects, Physicians/ pharmacists/ dentists, Researchers/ Professors),Female Occupations (Office workers/ clerical, School teachers), Gender-neutral Occupation (Musicians/ artists/ interior designers, Writers/ journalists); and on the other hand, the occupational relationships (Occupational supervising, Occupational report, Occupational order, Occupational training) of each sex interacting with other sex are studied.

4) Feminine touch; it indicates that women in ads pictures and visual media are found to finger and caress things, but never grab or claw, While men manipulate things or form them.

5) Licensed Withdrawal; it includes that women because of psychological involvements and engagements often withdraw from social situations or are swept aside. Some practical examples of such a behavior in cinema films include, closing eyes when excitements arise, withdrawal, furtive glance, keeping hand in front of mouth while laughing, hiding face behind hand, looking for safety behind things or people, screaming, fainting, hurrying, crying before opposite sex.

6) Family; being at home and in family circle is one of the important dimensions related to gender display in visual media. In addition, the type of activities done by men and women in films can indicate distinctive gender manners in such cultural productions.

After Goffman's work, several researchers have extended the inquiry into gender stereotypes.

Replications of Goffman's work using content analysis methodology showed that gender stereotyping in advertising was in some respects undiminished in the 1980s and early 1990s. These studies enhanced Goffman's methodology by incorporating more systematic and representative sampling of advertisements [17]. Belknap and Leonard [16], like Goffman, found that women in advertisements were more likely to caress objects while men purposively grasped them. Female participants also exhibited more submissive gestures such as head or body canting and licensed withdrawal ('tuning out' psychologically from their surroundings).

Surprisingly, the modern magazines (Rolling Stone, MS, and Gentlemen's Quarterly) exhibited more stereotyping than the traditional magazines (Good Housekeeping, Sports Illustrated and Time). Klassen et al. (1993) classified poses in advertisements where both males and females appeared into three categories: traditional, reversed, or equal. The three magazines sampled each exhibited a high proportion of traditional sex-role representations: Playboy (85%), MS (71%) and Newsweek (85%). Nevertheless, the researchers found a trend (over three 6-year intervals) towards a decreasing proportion of traditional poses and more equality poses. Analysis of Sirakaya and Sonmez (2000) confirms this trend, with women still much more likely to be featured (decoratively) touching objects or themselves. The researchers also found support for Goffman's propositions about relative size and nearly all indicators of subordination, as well as a special mother-daughter and (more distant) father-son relationship.

Philip Bell and Marko Milic (2002) used Goffman theory on Gender Advertisements to analyse 827 advertisements from a representative sample of magazines demonstrates. Their goal was to demonstrate the usefulness of combining content analysis and semiotics methods to effect an analysis of gender stereotypes in display advertisements in magazines, the work that they suggest Goffman in his work does it in visual analytical patterns to analyses of gender display in advertisement. This empirical study confirms Goffman findings that advertisements featuring female participants are often different from those featuring males.

Therefore, many of the researchers reached different conclusions about the degree to which the ode of gender portrayal in advertising has changed since the 1970s. Each of these studies uses a different method to measure change, making it difficult to compare them and judge the validity of their interpretations and conclusions.

Although Goffman's work has concentrated on ads picture analysis, other researchers of communication and mass media fields have enjoyed Goffman's work a lot. One of researchers, thus, has prepared an article under the name of "Erving Goffman as a theorist of mass media"[5] and has emphasized how Goffman's work contains elements of theoretical framework for analyzing the mass media.

Accordingly, Goffman's analytical framework can also be employed for analyzing gender relationships in cinema as one of the important mass media. But as far as cinema benefits from both verbal and nonverbal elements, this analysis may find more intricate features. Because making

use of Goffman's visual patterns in analyzing cinema films demands not to be dependent only on pictures (nonverbal) but also for conceptualization on verbal cinema elements. However in spite of all limitations, this paper attempts to employ Goffman's theory of "gender display" in analyzing the gender relationships in cinema films.

III. METHOD

This research employs "Content Analysis" Method. In content analysis questionnaire, each of variables for male and female figures in films is counted and evaluated separately so as to be clear the differences and inequalities of two sexes. In the process of film analyzing, the unit of analyzing or evaluating of each variable has been "scene".

The statistical sample in this study has been constituted of those Iranian cinema films which were produced between 1980 and 2004, and have had both men and women in their narrative structure. There are 62 films investigated and analyzed; 18 of them belong to the period of 1980 to 1990, 28 of them belong to the period of 1991 to 2000 and 16 of them belong to the period of 2001 to 2004.The sampling method here is Proportionate Random Selection, it means: all films belonging to each period are listed and then samples are chosen in proportion to number of films in each period. In analyzing and studying the data, having done the content analysis through reverse questionnaire, the research data have been analyzed by SPSS. To evaluate the validity of "Content Analysis" questionnaire, this research makes use of "formal validity". It means that a single film is analyzed by two judges and then their results are compared with the result of our analysis of the same film. Therefore, the faults of primary questionnaire are removed and operational definitions in research, if necessary, have been more precise for the main stage of content analysis. To evaluate the final measurement, it is used "Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient" for indexes.

IV. RESULTS

Five patterns among six patterns related to gender displays in visual media – processed and conceptualized by Goffman – have been put to the test in this study. These five patterns include ways of touching things by men and women, ritualization of subordination, psychological or licensed withdrawal, family and Function ranking.

V. WAYS OF TOUCHING THINGS

As it's noticeable in Table 1, things are touched and caressed by women more than twice in comparison with men, the phenomenon called "Feminine Touch" by Goffman. On the other hand, men, compared with women, have grabbed and grasped (twice), and also manipulated and formed things (almost three times). It is noteworthy that such differences between two sexes are statistically meaningful and they are thus analyzable.

These findings confirm Goffman's theory but in a different field i.e. in cinema films; it means that Iranian cinema films construct gender dissimilarities and differences through screening the ways things are touched by two sexes, and therefore reproduce traditional gender relationships.

TABLE1. WAYS OF TOUCHING THINGS BY BOTH SEXES IN CINEMA FILMS UNDER STUDY

Way of touching things	men		women	
	No. scenes	Average	No. scenes	Average
Touching or Caressing	63	1.02	129	2.06
Grabbing or grasping	63	1.02	18	0.29
Manipulating or Forming	188	3.02	63	1.02

Lambda = 0.273   sig = 0.000
Cramers V = 0.421   sig = 0.000
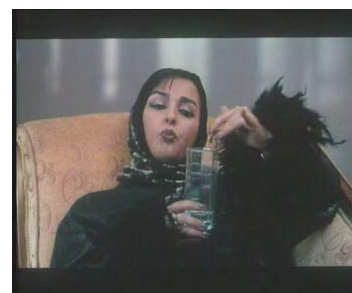

Figure 1: Manipulating of object by men

Figure 2: Feminine Touch

VI. RITUALIZATION OF SUBORDINATION

As it's noticeable in Table 2, in films being studied women interacting with men have had a bigger rate in some actions such as asking for help, smiling, coquetry, gaining approval, expressing inability and anxiety, presenting service, giving welcome and saying goodbye and emotional seething. These behaviors are customarily viewed as subordinate and modesty ones. On the other hand, men interacting with women have had a greater rate in some actions such as giving order, imposing, supporting and having domination and control over things. These actions are customarily viewed as super-ordinate and authoritative. An important point is that statistics shown in Table reflect meaningfulness of such dissimilarities between sexes.

TABLE2. RITUALIZATION OF SUBORDINATION IN FILMS UNDER INVESTIGATION (ACCORDING TO NUMBER AND MEAN OF SCENES)

Type of action before opposite sex	Men		Women	
	No. of scene	Average	No. of scene	Average
Asking for help	19	0.3	61	0.98
Smiling	125	2.02	307	4.95
Gaining Approval	20	0.32	38	0.61
Expressing inability	11	0.18	31	0.51
Supporting sb. against dangers & attacks	17	0.27	9	0.15
Dominating position	55	0.89	12	0.19
Losing Emotional Control	10	0.16	34	0.55
Giving welcome/saying goodbye	4	0.06	15	0.25
Coquetry	18	0.29	125	2.02
Presenting services	40	0.65	93	1.5
Expressing anxiety	3	0.05	28	0.45
Impetration	111	1.79	200	3.22
Giving orders	173	2.79	92	1.48
Imposing	49	0.79	19	0.3

Lambda = 0.108   sig = 0.000
Cramers V= 0.393   sig = 0.000

Figure 3

Figure 4

Figure 5

Figure 3: Presenting services
Figure 4: Female Impetration and Male Dominating position

Figure 5: Coquetry

VII. LICENSED/ PSYCHOLOGICAL WITHDRAWAL

As it is noticeable in Table 3, generally women more than men in films under investigation are screened doing actions which are typical signs of licensed or psychological withdrawal in Goffman's theory and it is worthy of attention that inter-sex differences relating to this issue are statistically meaningful. It means that women, more than men, perform such actions which make them inactive in the position or situation of interaction.

TABLE 3. LICENSED/PSYCHOLOGICAL WITHDRAWAL IN CINEMA FILMS INVESTIGATED (ACCORDING TO NUMBER OF SCENES)

Type of action	Men		Women	
	No. of scene	Average	No. of scene	Average
Furtive glance to opposite sex	39	0.65	154	2.63
Seeking protection behind sb /sth	25	0.40	65	1.05
Covering mouth while laughing	2	0.03	16	0.25
Withdrawing against attack or fear	12	0.19	70	1.11
Hiding face behind hand	16	0.25	128	2.05
Screaming	1	0.02	58	0.95
Closing eyes when emotional	0	0	45	0.71
Baffled when faced with opposite sex	10	0.16	24	0.38
Fainting	2	0.03	5	0.08
Crying before opposite sex	56	0.98	285	4.7

Goodman and Kruskal tau = 0.037   sig = 0.000
Cramers V= 0.193   sig = 0.000

Figure 6

Figure 7

IACSIT
International Association of
Computer Science and Information Technology
WWW.IACSIT.ORG

to opposite sex				
Occupational reporting to opposite sex	4	0.06	18	0.29
Occupational ordering to opposite sex	4	0.6	3	0.05

Lambda = 0.023   sig = 0.00
Cramers V= 0.167   sig = 0.000

Figure 8

Figure 6: Seeking protection behind sb /sth
Figure 7: Withdrawing against attack or fear
Figure 8: Hiding face behind hand

VIII.   FUNCTION RANKING

Two dimensions of occupational ranking are chosen here to be worked on, namely occupational prestige and occupational relations.

A. Occupational prestige

As it is noticeable in Table 4, in cinema films under investigation, each occupation generally belongs to a specific gender. It means, while 82.03 per cent of men are employed in occupations customarily known for men, only 27.2 per cent of women in films were active in such occupations. On the other hand, while 57.14 per cent of women in under-investigation films are employed in occupations customarily known for women, only 7.8 per cent of men were active in such occupations. This finding reflects the idea that Iranian post-revolution films are practically symbol of gender display, and statistically distinguishing between men and women in getting jobs, they in some way reproduce traditional occupation relations in correlates of sexes.

TABLE4. TYPE OF OCCUPATION OF CHIEF PROTAGONISTS

Type of occupation	Men		Women	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Male occupation	210	82.03	21	27.2
Female occupation	20	7.8	44	57.14
Gender-neutral occupations	26	10.15	12	15.58

Lambda = 0.263   sig = 0.001
Cramers V= 0.554   sig = 0.000

B. Occupational Relations

As it is clear in Table 5, men more than women give occupational order to opposite sex and train or supervise them in films. On the other hand, women are screened to submit reports to their super-ordinate men. Interestingly, these data are statistically justifiable and meaningful. Such results confirm Goffman's theory.

TABLE5. FUNCTION RANKING IN FILMS UNDER INVESTIGATION
(ACCORDING TO NUMBER AND MEAN OF SCENES)

Type of action before other sex	Men		Women	
	No. of scene	Mean	No. of scene	Mean
Occupational training to opposite sex	3	0.05	0	0
Occupational supervising	10	0.16	4	0.06

Figure9

Figure10

Figure 9: Occupational reporting to opposite sex
Figure 10: Occupational training to opposite sex

IX.   FAMILY

As it's demonstrable in Table 6, women are generally more than men screened at home or in family circle. That is to say they are seen accompanying their children either indoors or outdoors; they look after a child or do babysitting in films under study; they are often seen to be on the phone indoors and not outdoors, indicating a link between women and home, men and outdoors.

TABLE6. FAMILY REPRESENTATION IN CORRELATES OF SEXES IN CINEMA FILMS

	Men		Women	
	No. of scene	Average	No. of scene	Average
Being indoors	1020	16.45	966	15.58
Being outdoors	1754	28.29	1004	16.19
Being indoors with children	234	3.77	347	5.60
Being outdoors with children	155	2.50	160	2.58
Babysitting	36	0.58	45	0.73
Making calls indoors	61	0.98	71	1.15
Making calls outdoors	108	1.74	48	0.77

Lambda = 0.023   sig = 0.00
Cramers V= 0.167   sig = 0.000

Figure11

Figure12

Figure 11: Being indoors with children
Figure 12: Being indoors with children

X.   CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed at developing and testing Goffman's theory about gender display. Goffman's analytical patterns and theoretical framework are here applied to another domain, rather than his special domain which is analyzing ads picture. It has been attempted here to investigate Iranian post-revolution films through his analytical framework. But this research has required reforming Goffman's analytical patterns in order to make them function because of the difference between films and ads pictures; namely the verbal dimension.

The research findings for five patterns among six have reflected gender differences and inequalities in films under study; according to Goffman's theoretical framework, these inequalities are shown as follows:

Feminine Touch, Ritualization of Subordination, Licensed or Psychological Withdrawal, Function Ranking and Family.

Visually hyper-ritualized representing of gender inequalities in society, Iranian cinema films take step to construct and reproduce such inequalities. Ritualizing of subordination and expressing women's worthlessness in comparison with men, they display priority of one sex compared with the other, and confirm and substantiate traditional gender norms and values. And all this would occur through performing subordinate and super-ordinate rituals in actors' interaction. Behaving differently when faced with the same situation and event provide the audience with such a gender display that in first view differences appear naturally, while such differences are accepted not to have natural root, but are caused sociologically.

Nevertheless, these findings confirm and substantiate the

logical applying of Goffman's analytical patterns about gender display to cinema domain. While Goffman has employed this theory for analyzing the ads pictures, this study's role in sociology has been applying and expanding his unique theory in cinema domain. Regarding what is viewed in analyses, it seems that such ways of gender representing in cinema are unpleasant, and there should be amendments.

REFERENCES

[1]   A. Branaman. "Goffman's Social theory", in Goffman reader, edited and with preface and introduction by Charles Lemert and Ann Branaman, Oxford, Blackwell Publisher Ltd, 1997.

[2]   C, Dohlberg. "Negotiating: A Sociological Approach to the analysis of Advertisement Image", Stockholm university, PHD student, the department of sociology,2004.

[3]   E, Goffman,." Gender Advertisements." Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication, 1976, 3: 69--l54.

[4]   E, Goffman. The Goffman Reader, edited and with preface and introduction by Charles Lemert and Ann Branaman,Blackwell Publisher Ltd,. 1997.

[5]   E,Ytreberg, " Erving Goffman as a theorist of the mass media", Critical Studies in Media Communication, Volume 19, Routledge, part of the Taylor & Francis Group,2002, pp: 481 – 497.

[6]   E. Goffman. Gender Advertisements, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press [hardback]; New York: Harper and Row [paperback], 1979.

[7]   E. Sirakaya and S. Sonmez. 'Gender Images in State Tourism Brochures: An Overlooked Area in Socially Responsible Tourism Marketing', Journal of Travel Research,2000. 38(4): 323–2.

[8]   G, Smith. Gender Advertisements Revisited: A Visual Sociology Classic. Electronic Journal of Sociology: 2, 1. [iuicode: 100.2.1.1], 1996.

[9]   J. Verhoeven."goffman's frame analysis and modern micro-sociological paradigm", quoted in micro Sociological Theory, perspectives on sociological theory(volume2),Edited H.J Helle and S.N.Eisentand,London,Sage publication Ltd, 1985.

[10] Klassen, Michael L., Jasper, Cynthia R. and Schwartz, Anne M. (1993) 'Men and Women: Images of their Relationships in Magazine Advertisements', Journal of Advertising Research 33(2): 30–9.

[11] K, Millet. sexual politics. Granada publishing, 1969.

[12] L, Stanley. "should sex reality be gender-or gender reality be sex", from Stevi Jackson and Sue Scott (eds), Gender: A sociological reader (2002), London, Routledge,1989.

[13] L. McLaughlin. "Beyond 'Separate Spheres': Feminism and the cultural Studies/Political Economy Debate", Journal of Communication Inquiry, SAGE publication, Inc, 1999, pp 327-359.

[14] M. Daly. After death of God the Father, Pittsburgh: know, Inc, commonweal, 1971.

[15] M. Klassen.,C. Jasper and A. Schwartz. 'Menand Women: Images of their Relationships in Magazine Advertisements', Journal of Advertising Research,1993 33(2): 30–9.

[16] P. Belknap and W. Leonard 'A Conceptual Replication and Extension of Erving Goffman's Study of Gender Advertisements',Sex Role, 1991, s 25(314): 103–18.

[17] P.Bell and M. Milic, "Goffman's Gender Advertisements revisited: combining content analysis with semiotic analysis", Visual Communication, SAGE publication, Inc, 2002, 1, p206.

[18] S. Jackson, and S. Scott, Gender: A Sociological Reader, London, Routledge, 2002.

[19] T, Burns .Erving Goffman, London and New York, Routledge, 1992.