



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Manifestations and Implications of Social Values in Iranian Cinema: An Analytical Study of "A Separation"

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: Apr 23, 2024 Accepted: Aug 15, 2024	This study explores the portrayal of social values in Iranian cinema, a key player in the global film industry known for its rich thematic content. Unlike the dominant globalized Western cinema, which often emphasizes materialism, violence, and sexuality, Iranian cinema profoundly engages with social and ethical themes. Employing content analysis, this research focuses on "A Separation," a film that has been translated into Arabic and made available online. The findings indicate a clear predominance of values over disvalues in the film, showcasing Iranian cinema's emphasis on deep familial values such as filial piety, respect for the elderly, and the nurturing of children. Furthermore, the film highlights critical social values including respectful communication, gender respect, and altruism, with a notable preference for demonstrating these values through actions rather than words. The integration of these values not only delivers significant social, humanitarian, and political messages but also showcases the filmmakers' intent to infuse their creative work with culturally resonant themes. This deliberate inclusion helps the films navigate through censorship while providing a realistic portrayal of Iranian society, enhancing their appeal and recognition at international festivals. This strategic representation has notably contributed to the global acclaim and numerous accolades awarded to Iranian cinema.
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INTRODUCTION

The cinematic industry has emerged as a pivotal economic and cultural force globally. Historically dominated by American cinema in terms of revenue, the global film landscape has seen the rise of formidable contenders such as India, which boasts the largest volume of film production worldwide, alongside significant contributions from European, Nigerian, Korean, Turkish, and Iranian cinemas.

Cinema, despite its relatively nascent status compared to other art forms, has ascended to a preeminent position within the cultural sphere, serving simultaneously as an artistic medium, a cultural artifact, and a potent tool for social and critical engagement. It functions as both a conduit for political narratives and a platform for artistic critique of policy, integrating various art forms into its fabric and engaging actively with political dynamics.

However, the primary focus on entertainment and commercial objectives in global cinema often overshadows its educative and cultural potential, diluting its capacity to convey profound moral and humanitarian messages. Driven by capitalist imperatives, mainstream cinema frequently emphasizes themes of individualism, materialism, homosexuality and hedonism. Consequently, essential human

values such as social solidarity, altruism, reverence for family bonds, and the sanctity of marriage and procreation have been marginalized.

In stark contrast, Iranian cinema articulates a resistance to these capitalist narratives, positioning itself against what is officially termed "destructive cinema." Despite the profound influence of Iran's political oscillations and ideological shifts on its film industry, Iranian cinema distinguishes itself through a commitment to authenticity and a refusal to mimic imported narratives (Fatima Al-Samadi, 2019.P, 1). This cinema is marked by its nuanced engagement with familial and social themes, striving to resonate with audiences seeking substantive films without compromising narrative realism, plot integrity, or directorial finesse.

Despite facing stringent governmental censorship, particularly regarding content that critiques political authority or contradicts the Islamic Republic's doctrines, Iranian cinema persists in its artistic endeavors. Filmmakers, especially the emerging generation, are increasingly gravitating towards low-budget productions that cleverly address socio-political and economic issues through allegorical and metaphorical storytelling. This innovative approach has propelled Iranian films to international acclaim, securing prestigious accolades and fostering global discourse on Iran's societal narratives (Mohammed Yousry, 2023). Among these, "A Separation" by Asghar Farhadi stands out, having garnered multiple international awards and critical acclaim for its incisive exploration of social values.

This raises the question of what social values are embedded within Iranian cinema, specifically through an analysis of the film "A Separation." The central question we must consider is:

- What social values are portrayed in the Iranian film "A Separation," how are they presented, and what implications do they carry?

From this central question, several sub-questions emerge:

- What types of values are depicted in "A Separation"?
- What specific social values are embodied in "A Separation," and what is their nature?
- How does "A Separation" present these values?
- What are the broader implications of their portrayal?

Research Significance

This study is anchored in the global significance of Iranian cinema, which consistently produces films that resonate on international platforms and garner widespread acclaim. Recognized as one of the premier sources of world cinema, Iranian films have garnered numerous accolades at major international festivals, both pre- and post-revolution. The zenith of this acclaim was reached in the 1990s, with notable achievements such as winning the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival in 1997 and having six films featured at the Berlin International Film Festival in 2006 (Majid Sarsangi and Hamed Soleimanzadeh, 2018, p. 643). Additionally, Iranian cinema has triumphed at the Venice Film Festival, earning the Golden Lion in 2000 for Jafar Panahi's film, who also secured the Golden Bear at Berlin in 2015 and the Best Screenplay Award at Cannes in 2018.

The significance of this study lies in its examination of the unique cinematic approach of Iranian filmmakers, distinguished by their thematic focus and stylistic originality. Iranian cinema offers profound insights into issues of nationhood, culture, and identity, presenting a rich tapestry of social values that are often neglected in mainstream Western cinema, particularly in American films. By analyzing these social values—especially familial and ethical values—this study highlights the contrasting narratives between Iranian and Western cinematic practices. The pervasive influence of Western cinema on global cultural and artistic expressions underscores the need for a broader

dissemination of the humanistic values championed by Iranian filmmakers. Promoting these values is essential for fostering a more stable and cohesive global society.

Definition of Values

The notion of "value" encompasses a broad spectrum of meanings and interpretations across various disciplines. According to "Al-Mu'jam Al-Wasit," the term refers to the inherent worth or price of an object, and metaphorically, it can denote the steadfastness or consistency of an individual in their endeavors (Mustafa Ibrahim, 1973, p. 774). Max Weber, a seminal figure in sociology, articulates value as a lifestyle adopted by individuals or groups, which imbues existences and life practices with a desirable and commendable attribute. Weber posits value as both an abstract concept that engages individuals and a tangible manifestation evident in life's practices (Guy, 1982, p. 56).

Expanding on this framework, Algerian thinker Azi Abd-Alrahman, an advocate of axiological determinism, interprets values as elevating factors that enhance an individual's moral stature. He argues that values primarily stem from religious foundations (Azi Abd-Alrahman, 2009, p. 183) positioning humans not as the originators but as vessels through which values manifest (Nassir Bouali, 2005, p. 28).

Lotfi Barakat Ahmed offers a further delineation, defining values as a constellation of laws and standards that emerge from a community. These standards serve as benchmarks for evaluating actions and behaviors, endowed with the power to enforce compliance and embody the collective's principles, goals, and higher ideals. Deviations from these established values signify a breach of the community's foundational ethos (Mosaed bin Abdullah Al-Mahya, 1993).

In the context of this study, "social values" are construed as the norms and mores upheld by characters in the Iranian film "A Separation." These values are articulated both overtly through dialogue and subtly through character behavior, influencing the interpersonal dynamics within the narrative. The film illustrates that values are not monolithically positive; disvalues (negative values) also permeate the societal fabric, reflecting the complex tapestry of human needs and motives. Importantly, the social values depicted in "A Separation" serve as a lens through which the identity and cultural ethos of the Iranian society are viewed, distinguishing it from other global communities.

A Concise History of Iranian Cinema:

Iranian cinema's genesis aligns closely with the early days of global film history. In 1900, Mozaffar ad-Din Shah, then monarch of Iran, imported a camera from France, marking the inception of film in Iran. The royal cinematographer, Mirza Ebrahim Khan Akkas Bashi, documented royal ceremonies and screened French comedic shorts and Russian documentaries for an elite audience, diverging from the commercial entertainment trajectory typical of cinema's evolution elsewhere (Massoud Mehrabi). Unlike the populist and market-driven film industries emerging globally, Iranian cinema initially catered to the aristocracy and was confined within palace walls (Shahin Parhami, 1999).

The public's first interaction with cinema came in 1904 with screenings organized by Mirza Ebrahim Khan. By 1905, Tehran boasted its first cinema hall, where audiences experienced films while seated on carpeted floors, echoing the seating arrangement of mosques or mourning spaces. However, Mirza Ebrahim Khan's engagement with cinema was truncated due to his political activities advocating for constitutional monarchy and democracy, leading to his arrest and the subsequent seizure of his cinema equipment—this episode marked the advent of film censorship in Iran (Omid Jamal, 1995, p. 870).

The 1920s saw films that mirrored newsreels, focusing on Iran's political landscape, including events related to the royal family and key political figures like Reza Shah Pahlavi (Fatima Al-Samadi, 2019). The era culminated in 1939 with the production of Iran's first sound film, although a significant precursor, "Dokhtar-e Lor" ("The Lor Girl"), directed by Ardeshir Irani, appeared in 1932. This film,

derived from local folklore, heralded the nascent sound era in Iranian cinema (Fatima Barjakani, 2009, p. 10).

The 1960s and 1970s represented a golden era under the last Shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (Hamid Naficy, 1989), with the film industry flourishing through the production of melodramas, historical epics, and crime dramas. It was during this period that "counter-cinema" emerged, characterized by its political symbolism, a response to extensive censorship and differing markedly from comparable movements in other developing regions due to its unique socio-historical context. Many filmmakers chose exile over compromise, contributing to a rich diaspora of Iranian cinematic expression (Hamid Naficy, 1989).

Post-1979, following the Islamic Revolution, Iranian cinema underwent profound transformations, adapting to the new political, social, and cultural landscapes. Despite these changes, the film industry continued to thrive, aligning itself with other serious cultural forms like theater, literature, and music. During the Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s, the genre of "Sacred Defense Cinema" emerged, focusing on war narratives and contributing to the national discourse. This period solidified the foundations for contemporary Iranian cinema, which continues to enjoy both domestic acclaim and international prestige (Fatima Barjakani, 2009, pp. 10-11).

Today, Iranian cinema frequently employs documentary techniques within narrative films to critique social injustices and class disparities exacerbated by post-revolutionary policies. Notably, numerous female directors have adeptly navigated the cinematic landscape, addressing issues of gender discrimination, political participation, and the broader struggles for women's rights in Iran, often through subversive and artistically refined methods (Fatima Al-Samadi, 2019).

Iranian Cinema and Government Censorship

The advent of government censorship in Iranian cinema can be traced back to the mid-20th century. In 1950, the Iranian government instituted regulations and established a supervisory body to oversee cinemas, films, and plays. This body strictly prohibited content deemed contrary to religious principles, anti-Islamic or anti-Twelve Shia, critical of the constitutional monarchy, or disparaging of the royal family. Additionally, topics like coups in other nations that might incite rebellion within Iran, and narratives where criminals escaped punishment, were banned. Films that portrayed successful prison riots or incited social unrest among students, workers, and farmers were also prohibited (Hamid Reza Sadr, pp. 131-132).

This censorship extended to foreign films, banning those that criticized the Shah or royal officials. In the 1950s, the government also restricted cinema access for viewers under sixteen, aiming to shield them from potentially harmful content (Fatima Barjakani, 2009, p. 43).

The 1979 Islamic Revolution brought a new era of stringent control. Initially, there was significant religious opposition to cinema, perceived as a Western instrument that undermined social and cultural values. The previous regime had leveraged cinema to promote a Westernized modernization agenda. However, the new regime quickly recognized cinema's potential for ideological education and established governmental bodies to oversee and support film production, which led to the creation of films extolling the revolution. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's 1979 pronouncement encapsulated this perspective: "We are not against cinema, radio, or television. These are modern inventions that should be used for educating people. But, as you know, they have been used instead to corrupt our youth. It is the misuse of cinema that we oppose, a misuse stemming from the treacherous policies of our rulers" (Hamid Naficy, 1995, p. 548).

Post-revolution censorship imposed rigorous standards on film content, including prohibitions on women appearing without hijab and any physical contact between male and female actors. Iranian critic Hamid Reza, in his book "Iranian Cinema: A Political History," elucidates that post-revolution

censorship adopted political, religious, and moral dimensions. This censorship not only removed entire scenes but also altered narratives to ensure compliance with Islamic principles, such as modifying storylines to depict unmarried characters as married (Mohammad Yousry, 2023).

To navigate these constraints, Iranian filmmakers developed innovative techniques to avoid direct confrontation with censors. Abbas Kiarostami, for instance, often selected stories that did not require depicting intimate domestic scenes between husbands and wives, thereby maintaining narrative realism within the boundaries of censorship. Generally, any film expressing dissent against the regime faced severe censorship, leading to a cinematic landscape deeply influenced by governmental ethical and religious standards (Mohammad Yousry, 2023).

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

Research Type and Methodology

This study is categorized as a descriptive-analytical study, designed to delineate phenomena in their present contexts by systematically gathering and interpreting data. Specifically, it aims to dissect the values portrayed in the Iranian film "A Separation," examining both content and form. The methodology entails a comprehensive classification of all depicted values, the extraction and differentiation of social values into positive and negative spectra, and a detailed analysis of how these values are articulated—whether verbally expressed or suggested through action.

Research Population and Sampling

The scope of this study encompasses Iranian films that are dubbed into Arabic and accessible via online platforms and social media networks. Due to the vastness and inaccessibility of the entire corpus, the research focuses on a single film, selected purposively: "A Separation." This film was chosen based on its critical acclaim, numerous awards, and its rich, symbolic representation of Iranian socio-political life, making it a poignant case study for examining embedded social values.

Research Instrument

The primary tool employed in this analysis is content analysis, as defined by Harold D. Lasswell and Bernard Berelson. This method strives for a precise, unbiased description of the manifest content of communication within a defined context, aimed at achieving a systematic, objective, and quantitative portrayal of the message content (Rochdi Taima, 1989, p. 22). This approach facilitates the extraction of values from the film "A Separation," allowing for a nuanced categorization of these values as either positive or negative and determining their modes of presentation as either verbal or behavioral.

Analytical Categories

Content Categories: (What is said?): The study employs two main content categories:

1. **Value Types:** This foundational category encompasses:
 - Social values
 - Religious values
 - Economic values
 - Scientific values
2. **Social Values Type:** Divided into:
 - **Values:** Beneficial societal values, including solidarity, helping others, filial piety, respect for elders, child rearing, appreciating spouses, respecting women, maintaining honor,

greeting others, honesty, respecting dialogue etiquette, love, apologizing, accountability, justice, self-defense, openness to Western values, giving advice, sacrifice, pride in identity, family cohesion, hospitality, and steadfastness.

- **Disvalues:** Undesirable societal values, including irresponsibility, disrespecting women, insult, lying, inferiority complex, arrogance, breaking promises, injustice, disrespecting dialogue etiquette, lack of courtesy, and betrayal. These are generally viewed as detrimental to societal welfare and coherence.

Form Categories: (How is it said?): This category encompasses one primary category:

- **Value Presentation:** This category is bifurcated into:
 1. **Verbal Social Values:** Explicitly stated values in the film, including solidarity, helping others, filial piety, respect for elders, caring for children, respecting women, maintaining honor, greeting others, honesty, respecting dialogue etiquette, apologizing, accountability, giving advice, sacrifice, pride in identity, family cohesion, hospitality, and steadfastness.
 2. **Behavioral Social Values:** Values inferred from actions and contexts within the film. These include irresponsibility, disrespecting women, insult, lying, inferiority complex, arrogance, breaking promises, injustice, disrespecting dialogue etiquette, lack of courtesy, and betrayal.

Units of Analysis

Given the multimedia nature of the study object, the units of analysis are tailored to the specificities of audiovisual content:

- **Scene Unit:** Each scene is analyzed as a discrete unit where values are manifested and their representations assessed.
- **Word Unit:** This unit is used to quantify explicitly stated values in the film, such as insults, honor, greetings, apologies, injustice, and responsibility.

PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF STUDY RESULTS

First: Introduction to the Film

The film "Jodaeiye Nader az Simin" (A Separation), produced in 2011, is a seminal work by Iranian filmmaker Asghar Farhadi. Spanning 123 minutes, this film has garnered extensive critical acclaim, winning thirty awards, including the 2012 Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film and the Golden Bear at the Berlin International Film Festival. It stands out as the first Iranian film to achieve both honors. Additionally, it has received accolades for acting, editing, and cinematography. The principal cast includes Peyman Maadi as Nader, Leila Hatami as Simin, Sareh Bayat as Razieh (the maid), Shahab Hosseini as Hojjat (Razieh's husband), Sarina Farhadi as Termeh (Nader and Simin's daughter), and Ali-Asghar Shahbazi as Nader's father.

The movie explores the lives of Nader and Simin, a middle-class couple in Iran. Their plans to emigrate are disrupted when Nader chooses to stay and care for his father, who has Alzheimer's disease. Simin, intent on leaving, seeks a divorce to take their daughter, Termeh, abroad. Nader's refusal to divorce her leads Simin to temporarily move in with her parents to pressure him. She assists Nader in hiring Razieh, a maid, to look after his father, setting off a chain of events that profoundly affect all involved.

Razieh, a poor and pregnant woman, begins working for Nader to support her unemployed husband, Hojjat. An incident occurs when the elderly father wanders off, and Razieh is hit by a car while protecting him from traffic. The following day, she ties the father to his bed to prevent him from leaving the house again and visits a doctor to check on her pregnancy. When Nader and Termeh return home, they find the father unconscious and tied to the bed, nearly suffocated. Additionally, some money is missing, which Simin had previously used. Enraged, Nader accuses Razieh of neglect and theft and forcefully expels her from the house. That evening, Razieh suffers a miscarriage.

When Nader and Simin visit Razieh in the hospital, Hojjat, Razieh's husband, learns about her employment and blames Nader for the miscarriage, claiming he struck her. Hojjat files a murder charge against Nader, who denies any physical altercation and countersues for neglecting his father. During the investigation, Nader claims ignorance of Razieh's pregnancy, but Termeh discovers he is lying to avoid prison, shattering her image of him as an ideal father and prompting her to move in with Simin at her grandparents' home.

Amid mutual accusations of selfishness and irresponsibility, Simin meets with Hojjat to settle the matter with a large sum of money to cover his debts, but Nader initially refuses, suspecting exploitation. Under pressure from Termeh, he eventually agrees. However, during the transaction, Nader insists Razieh swear that he caused the miscarriage. Razieh, being deeply religious, refuses to swear falsely, revealing that the fetus had stopped moving before the incident with Nader and that she had previously been involved in a car accident. Hojjat, overwhelmed by shame, leaves the house in a fit of rage. The film concludes ambiguously with Termeh being asked to choose between her parents in court, leaving the outcome open to interpretation.

Two: Presentation and Interpretation of Content Categories Results:

Types of Values in the Film "A Separation": The table below illustrates the different types of values depicted in the film "A Separation":

Table 1: types of values depicted in the film "A Separation"

Value Type	Frequency	Percentage
Social Values	395	80.12 %
Religious Values	59	11.96 %
Economic Values	11	2.23 %
Scientific Values	28	5.67 %
Total	493	100 %

The table shows a significant predominance of social values, constituting over 80% of the total values depicted, followed by religious values at 11.96%, scientific values at 5.67%, and economic values at 2.23%. The subsequent analysis will focus primarily on the social values, which are the core of this study.

Types of Social Values in the Film "A Separation": The following table categorizes the social values in "A Separation" into values and disvalues:

Table2: Social Values and Disvalues in "A separation"

Social Value Type	Frequency	Percentage
Values	293	74.17 %
Disvalues	102	25.82 %
Total	395	100 %

This table reveals that social values dominate the film, representing 74.17% of the total social values, compared to 25.82% for social disvalues.

Specific Social Values in the Film "A Separation": The detailed table below lists the specific positive and negative social values depicted in the film:

Table 3: Depicted Social Values and Disvalues in the Film

Values	Frequency	Percentage	Disvalues	Frequency	Percentage
Filial Piety	43	14.67 %	Insult	46	45.09 %
Love	18	6.14 %	Injustice	3	2.94 %
The Ethos of Altruism and Mutual Assistance	14	4.77 %	Feelings of Inferiority	3	2.94 %
Respect and Appreciation for Women:	29	9.89 %	Disrespect towards Women	6	5.88 %
Child Rearing	28	9.55 %	Pride	5	4.90 %
Responsibility	12	4.09 %	Irresponsibility	5	4.90 %
Honesty	10	3.41 %	Lying (Breaking Promises and Deceit)	10	9.80 %
Respect for Dialogue Etiquette	34	11.60 %	The Breakdown of Respectful Dialogue	15	14.70 %
Admitting Fault and Apologizing	6	2.04 %	Other	9	8.82 %
Justice and Legal Integrity	16	5.46 %	-----	----	-----
Self-Defense	9	3.07 %	-----	----	-----
Openness to Western Values	10	3.41 %	-----	----	-----
Preserving Honor and Reputation	9	3.07 %	-----	----	-----
Greeting Etiquette	33	11.26 %	-----	----	-----
Spousal Care	10	3.41 %	-----	----	-----
Other	12	4.09 %	-----	----	-----
Total	293	100 %	Total	102	100 %

The social values (positive ones) depicted in the film are presented in order of their frequency as follows:

Filial Piety and Respect for the Elderly

Filial piety is the most prominently depicted positive value in "A Separation." This value is embodied through Nader's dedication to his father, who suffers from Alzheimer's disease. Nader sacrifices his plans to emigrate to ensure his father's well-being. The film presents numerous scenes highlighting this value, such as Nader's meticulous care for his father's hygiene, transporting him in the front seat of his car, purchasing his favorite newspaper despite his memory loss, and taking him to the doctor to document the maid's neglect. This value extends to other characters, such as Termeh, who shows concern for her grandfather, and Razieh, who tries to care for Nader's father -despite her own challenges- and her daughter's promise to keep her mother's secrets.

Respect for Dialogue Etiquette:

Respectful and calm dialogue is a recurring positive value in the film, making it the second most frequently depicted value. The film's screenplay focuses on discussions and arguments conducted in a composed manner, particularly in Nader's conversations with his daughter about her education

and his interactions with the maid. Simin, despite the turmoil of the separation, maintains a calm and respectful demeanor in her interactions with Nader, their daughter, the maid, and other characters.

Greeting Etiquette:

The act of greeting is a recurring social value in the film, appearing 33 times across various scenes. The characters consistently use the phrases "Salam" or "Assalamu Alaikum" to greet one another. This form of greeting, deeply rooted in Arabic, originates from the Quran and is integral to the Islamic faith, which is widely practiced in Iran. Notably, this traditional expression has remained unchanged, resisting replacement by either local dialects or global expressions.

Respect and Appreciation for Women:

Respect for women is a significant value depicted in the film. Women are consistently shown as respected figures whose opinions and testimonies are valued. This is evident in scenes where women, regardless of their age or role, are treated with deference and their contributions to the narrative are acknowledged.

This value is further recognized as "A Separation" was included in the IMDb list of top ten films focusing on women's issues, showcasing women in serious secondary roles or as the main protagonist (iFilm, 2021).

Child Rearing

"A Separation" poignantly underscores the profound role that children play in their parents' lives, emphasizing the parents' willingness to sacrifice their most cherished possessions to ensure their children's happiness and future security. The film intricately explores this theme through its portrayal of Nader and Simin, alongside Razieh, the maid, all of whom embody the archetype of devoted parents. The plot pivots on the concept of emigration as a strategy for securing a better future for Nader and Simin's daughter, Termeh, outside of Iran. However, the narrative complexity deepens as Nader's reluctance and the ensuing familial conflicts precipitate a custody dispute over Termeh, with each parent convinced of their indispensable role in her well-being.

The film portrays Nader's interactions with Termeh, highlighting his attentive involvement in her education and daily life. He is depicted transporting her to and from school, engaging in her educational development, and shaping her moral character. Nader's efforts to instill resilience and integrity are depicted through his teachings that urge Termeh to uphold truth and justice, even in the face of others' failings. He also prepares her to navigate life's adversities and to assert herself when justifiably in the right.

Conversely, Razieh's dedication to her young daughter is woven throughout the narrative, demonstrating her inclusion in daily activities and underscoring their profound bond. The ethical quandary Razieh faces towards the film's conclusion—her decision against accepting money that might compromise her daughter's future—illustrates her deep moral convictions. Furthermore, the film delves into the collective emotional turmoil triggered by Razieh's miscarriage, poignantly capturing the shared grief that pervades and affects both her and her young daughter, who had eagerly anticipated the new sibling.

Love

In "A Separation," the film articulates the value of love through a series of understated yet potent cinematic elements, primarily through non-verbal communication such as meaningful glances and subtle gestures. This emotive expression is predominantly portrayed by Nader towards his daughter Termeh and his wife Simin. These affectionate exchanges, reciprocated especially by Termeh, serve to underscore the resilient emotional bonds that sustain them through familial turmoil. Additionally,

the film poignantly captures the grandfather's affection towards Simin during a critical narrative juncture—his inquiry about her impending departure and his consequential firm grip on her hand, which symbolizes a desperate plea for connection. Termeh's profound connection to her grandfather is further depicted in her attentive care and visible distress when he fell from bed. Moreover, the young daughter of the maid Razieh exhibits a nascent but heartfelt affection towards her mother and the unborn sibling.

Justice and Legal Integrity

The film explores themes of justice and legal integrity through its detailed portrayal of courtroom dynamics that involve the family of Nader and Simin. The legal proceedings depicted in the film revolve around several pivotal issues: Simin's petition for divorce to secure custody of their daughter and relocate abroad, Razieh's accusation against Nader for allegedly causing her miscarriage, Nader's lawsuit against Razieh for neglecting his ailing father, and the consequential custody battle over Termeh. These proceedings are meticulously captured, with the judiciary depicted as engaging in thorough and scrupulous examination of testimonies and evidences. This depiction not only emphasizes the judiciary's dedication to ascertain truth but also its resolve in enforcing legal and ethical standards.

A particularly notable scene involves the rigorous handling of Hojjat, Razieh's husband, whose vociferous protestations disrupt the court proceedings. The judge's decisive action to detain Hojjat for three days reflects a stringent enforcement of judicial decorum and an uncompromising stance on maintaining procedural integrity.

The Ethos of Altruism and Mutual Assistance

"A Separation" meticulously portrays the ethos of altruism and mutual assistance, underscoring the characters' commitment to support one another amidst challenging circumstances. This thematic exploration is vividly presented through a series of incidents where characters extend help beyond conventional expectations, often transcending adversarial boundaries. For instance, when Razieh, the maid, experiences a fall, she is promptly aided by Nader's neighbor, who helps her regain her footing. This gesture is mirrored in another scene on a bus where Razieh, visibly exhausted, is supported by two fellow passengers—one physically preventing her fall and the other offering her seat. Furthermore, Razieh receives guidance from a teacher who provides her with a referral to a private gynecology clinic and advises her to mention that she was referred by "Mrs. Ghahraei" (the teacher).

Additionally, the narrative extends this theme to familial and legal conflicts. Despite the ongoing legal dispute with Nader, Simin's mother provides significant financial support by posting bail for him. In a similar vein of compassionate legal interactions, Nader requests the judge's leniency towards Hojjat, advocating against his imprisonment out of concern for Hojjat's family.

Responsibility

The film also delves deeply into the value of responsibility, as demonstrated by Nader and Simin through their respective handling of domestic and ethical dilemmas. Nader's assumption of household duties, including the care of his ailing father, is depicted with an emphasis on his determination to prove his independence and capability to Simin. Conversely, Simin demonstrates her sense of responsibility after Nader accuses her of hiring a maid she barely knew, which leads to severe legal consequences and allegations of murder. Simin's response to the accusations against Nader showcases her proactive approach to resolving the resultant legal complications. By arranging to sell her car to finance a settlement with Hojjat, Simin takes concrete steps to mitigate the consequences of her earlier decisions, reflecting a profound sense of accountability. This scenario is paralleled by Razieh's response when she realizes the elder, she cares for is missing. Her frantic

search through the streets, culminating in a personal accident, starkly illustrates the extreme lengths to which she goes to fulfill her responsibilities.

Openness to Western Values

In "A Separation," the character Simin embodies a progressive ethos, juxtaposed against the traditional backdrop represented by Razieh, the maid. Simin's modern attire—jeans paired with a distinctly orange-dyed hair—visually and symbolically distinguishes her from more conservatively dressed characters, underscoring her openness to Western cultural norms. This aesthetic choice complements her lifestyle choices: driving a car, wearing sunglasses, and working as an English teacher, activities that connect her with a globalized worldview. Her admiration for Shajarian, a musician known for his political dissent and banned from state broadcasts, further aligns her with a resistance to authoritarian constraints, reflecting a broader cultural narrative of individual freedom often celebrated in Western contexts.

Simin's desire to emigrate for better living conditions epitomizes her pursuit of these liberal ideals. This is mirrored in the depiction of Termeh's teacher, who also sports a modern look and drives a car.

Nader, another central character, encourages his daughter to embody strength and assertiveness. His advice to Termeh to confidently claim her rights at a gas station, regardless of bystanders' judgment, serves as a narrative device to promote values of self-reliance and moral righteousness. The setting of Nader's home, filled with contemporary decor, framed art, animal figurines, a piano, and various music devices, all signifying a blend of traditional and contemporary aesthetics. Even the grandfather, despite his age and Alzheimer's, is dressed in a modern suit and tie, signaling a quiet but profound shift from traditional to more contemporary standards within the family.

Honesty and Truth

The narrative arc of "A Separation" is significantly propelled by the dynamics of truth and deception. The film meticulously explores the repercussions of obscured truths and half-revealed facts, which are pivotal in escalating the familial disputes that form the crux of the plot. During critical legal examinations, characters like the teacher and Simin adhere strictly to honesty, emphasizing the film's thematic concern with truth as a moral cornerstone. For instance, the teacher's candid testimony about Nader's whereabouts and Simin's integrity in her judicial interactions underscore their commitment to truth, even under legal and personal pressure. For instance, Nader, despite the potential consequences, allows Termeh to tell the truth during her questioning by the judge, recognizing the importance of her honesty, even though her testimony could significantly affect his fate.

Moreover, Simin's interaction with Razieh—reassuring her of Nader's character despite their personal strife—illustrates the complex layers of trust and integrity woven through their interactions.

Preserving Honor and Reputation

In "A Separation," the motif of honor and reputation permeates the narrative, particularly highlighted in the interactions between Hojjat and Nader. This value is closely linked to several pivotal incidents, such as the alleged assault on Razieh, leading to her miscarriage. The tension escalates with Razieh's employment under conditions deemed inappropriate by societal standards—working alone with a man while his wife is absent. Simin's proposal to Hojjat, offering monetary compensation to withdraw the lawsuit, further complicates the discourse on honor. Hojjat frequently articulates this value, underscoring its profound influence on his responses and decisions throughout the film.

Nader's concern for his father's dignity is poignantly depicted when he discovers his father in a compromised position. His request for Termeh to leave the room to prevent any embarrassment to

his father illustrates a deep commitment to preserving familial honor. Furthermore, Nader's efforts to maintain his own integrity are evident as he strives to prove his innocence in Razieh's miscarriage case. His concern for his own reputation is particularly pronounced in his interactions with Termeh, whom he regards as the person whose understanding of the truth matters most to him. His refusal to call Termeh's teacher as a witness during the investigation is also motivated by his desire to protect his daughter's reputation at school.

Self-Defense

The theme of self-defense is central to the unfolding drama between Nader and Hojjat's families following Razieh's tragic miscarriage. Nader finds himself constantly defending his actions and integrity, not just to Hojjat and Razieh, but also in legal settings and to his own family. He insists that his physical interaction with Razieh was limited to ejecting her from his home, vehemently denying any violence. Conversely, Razieh robustly defends her honor when accused of theft, a charge that deeply distresses her, indicating the severe impact of such accusations on her personal dignity.

Spousal Care

Amidst the film's conflict, moments of spousal care provide a counterpoint to the prevailing tension. For instance, after Simin is injured during Nader's altercation with Hodjat at the hospital, Nader expresses genuine concern for her well-being. His request for her to return to his home, ostensibly to prevent her family from seeing her injured, underscores a protective instinct that belies the couple's fraught relationship. Razieh's advocacy for Hojjat during his courtroom outburst, where she pleads for judicial mercy citing his health and temperament, further illustrates the complex layers of spousal support within the narrative. Her secretive employment at Nader's home, driven by a desire to support their financial needs, speaks to the sacrifices made in the name of marital solidarity and she had ensured her husband found work there after she had to leave due to religious obligations.

Admitting Fault and Apologizing

In "A Separation," the theme of admitting fault and offering apologies is portrayed with significant emotional depth. This value is notably illustrated when Nader confesses to his daughter, Termeh, that he was aware of Razieh's pregnancy, despite repeatedly denying this in court. His admission, coupled with an apology, is a poignant moment that risks damaging Termeh's trust and faith in him. Similarly, Razieh eventually reveals that she had concealed the fact that she was involved in a car accident, which likely led to her miscarriage. She confesses this just as she is about to receive compensation from Nader in exchange for dropping the charges against him—a sum that could have alleviated her family's financial struggles. Razieh's decision to confess is driven by her fear of divine retribution and concern for her daughter's future, believing that taking money under false pretenses could bring misfortune.

Social Disvalues in "A Separation"

Insult

Insults are the most frequently depicted social disvalue in "A Separation," accounting for 45.09% of all negative interactions in the film. This was measured by tracking instances of derogatory language and behaviors that conveyed disrespect, such as hostile or contemptuous glances. Hojjat, Razieh's husband, is particularly prone to using insults, directing his anger towards Nader, Simin, Termeh's teacher, and even his own wife. He berates Razieh for working in a man's house and threatens her with legal action. Hojjat also insults the judge, accusing him of bias and lack of integrity, and uses derogatory terms towards Nader, calling him dishonorable, unjust, and unmanly.

Nader, too, engages in insulting behavior, particularly after discovering that his father had been tied up and left to fall from his bed. He accuses Razieh of theft, dismisses her from his home without

paying her for that day's work, and uses harsh language towards Simin, accusing her of cowardice and irresponsibility. Even when Simin sacrifices her car to help Nader avoid a murder charge, he dismisses her efforts and refuses her help, further highlighting the film's exploration of disrespect and verbal aggression.

The Breakdown of Respectful Dialogue

"A Separation" is filled with scenes of shouting, arguments, and accusations, especially between Hojjat and Nader. Hojjat's quick temper and loud outbursts, whether in the courtroom, at Nader's home, in the hospital, or in his own house, exemplify a breakdown in respectful dialogue. His inability to control his emotions exacerbates the conflicts and makes it difficult to reach any resolution or understanding.

Lying

Lying and the concealment of truth are central to the escalating conflicts in the film. Nader initially hides his knowledge of Razieh's pregnancy, fearing that revealing the truth could lead to imprisonment and jeopardize his daughter's future and his father's care. On the other hand, Razieh lies about the circumstances of her fall, accusing Nader of causing her miscarriage, and conceals the fact that she had been in a car accident the day before. This concealment stems from her fear that disclosing the truth would weaken her case and harm her husband's legal standing. The film poignantly captures Razieh's inner turmoil as she struggles with uncertainty over whether her miscarriage was caused by the car accident or Nader's actions. This tension culminates when Nader demands that Razieh swear on the Quran that he was responsible for her miscarriage. Razieh's refusal, motivated by her fear of divine punishment, leads her to confess to her husband that the car accident might have been the cause.

Disrespect Towards Women

The film's opening courtroom scene vividly portrays the theme of disrespect towards women, particularly in the way Nader and the judge dismiss Simin's desire to secure a better living situation for their daughter outside Iran. Despite their shared plans to emigrate, Nader suddenly abandons the idea, citing his father's illness, without fully considering the impact on Simin and their daughter. He refuses to grant Simin a divorce, effectively trapping her in Iran and preventing her from taking their daughter with her. The judge's response reinforces this disrespect, as he dismisses Simin's concerns and frames the issue within a traditional and political context, rather than as a matter of individual rights and justice.

Hojjat's interactions with women throughout the film further illustrate this lack of respect. He consistently dismisses the perspectives and testimonies of the women around him, including his wife, his sister, Simin, Termeh's teacher, and Nader's neighbors. His behavior towards them is often coarse and dismissive, as he accuses them of conspiring against him and undermining his authority.

Irresponsibility

In "A Separation," the theme of avoiding responsibility is illustrated through the actions of both Simin and Nader. Simin's decision to leave Iran and her family reflects a complex conflict between her personal aspirations and her familial obligations. Her desire to emigrate, driven by the hope of securing a better future for her daughter, comes at the cost of her family's cohesion. By seeking a divorce from Nader, Simin prioritizes her need to leave the country, disregarding Nader's emotional turmoil and the critical care required by his father, who suffers from Alzheimer's. The film portrays Simin's departure from the marital home as a failure to uphold her responsibilities, particularly in the context of her duties towards Nader's ailing father. This decision, which places the burden of household management and caregiving solely on Nader, is depicted as a disvalue (negative value)—

"avoiding responsibility." Despite the cascading consequences of her choice, Simin's persistence appears to stem from a blend of pride and an unwillingness to yield, even as she wrestles with internal conflict.

Nader's behavior similarly reflects a refusal to accept full responsibility. Despite the long and arduous process of securing visas, he ultimately decides against emigrating, choosing instead to stay in Iran to care for his father. This decision, while ostensibly noble, is depicted as shortsighted, as it jeopardizes the future prospects of his daughter and family. Nader's stubbornness and reluctance to reconcile with Simin, or acknowledge the sacrifices she makes—such as selling her car to help him avoid legal repercussions—further exemplify his failure to meet his responsibilities as a husband and father.

Pride

Pride, classified as disvalue in "A Separation," plays a significant role in the film's unfolding drama, particularly in the strained relationship between Nader and Simin. Both characters allow pride to dictate their actions, preventing them from reaching a compromise or understanding. When Simin decides to leave the family home, Nader, despite his visible emotional turmoil, refrains from asking her to stay, allowing her to leave without protest. His pride prevents him from expressing his vulnerabilities, even in moments of evident distress, such as when Simin is injured during a confrontation with Hojjat in the hospital. Instead of showing concern for her well-being, Nader's primary focus is on preventing her family from seeing her injured, revealing his inability to put aside pride for the sake of their relationship.

This theme is further highlighted in smaller, yet significant moments, such as Nader's refusal to ask Simin for help with household chores, despite his clear need for assistance. His reluctance to admit his limitations or seek help from Simin contributes to the deterioration of their marriage and impacts their daughter, Termeh, who is left disillusioned by her father's behavior.

Simin, too, exhibits pride in a crucial scene where she informs Nader about her negotiations with Hojjat to pay blood money in exchange for dropping the charges. Nader's rejection of this solution, driven by his own pride, leaves Simin feeling defeated, despite her bringing her staff with her.

Breaking Promises and Deceit

The theme of broken promises and betrayed trust is vividly portrayed through Nader's profound disappointment upon discovering his father tied to the bed and left unattended by Razieh. This incident is a pivotal moment that shatters Nader's trust in Razieh, whom he had relied on to care for his father. This sense of betrayal extends to his relationship with his daughter, Termeh, when he fails to keep his promise to ask Simin to stay and rebuild their family. This broken promise profoundly alters Termeh's perception of her father, leading her to change her allegiance and ultimately leave with her mother.

Feelings of Inferiority

Hojjat's pervasive sense of inferiority is a driving force behind much of his behavior in the film. The dismissal of his wife, Razieh, from Nader's household and the subsequent accusation of theft only deepen his belief that he and his family are looked down upon by others. This insecurity is particularly evident in his interactions with those he perceives as more privileged, even though they, too, face their own challenges. Hojjat feels that Nader has violated his honor by employing his wife in a setting he considers inappropriate—alone in a house with only Nader and his elderly, incapacitated father. This perceived slight to his dignity fuels Hojjat's resentment and exacerbates his already heightened sense of social inadequacy.

Hojjat's inferiority complex is starkly revealed when he fiercely defends his wife against the accusations leveled at her. He asserts that they are not thieves but ordinary people, just like everyone else. In a moment of bitter frustration, he tells Nader, "Your daughter is a human, and mine are dogs," highlighting his internalized belief that society views him and his family as lesser beings.

His feelings of inadequacy are further highlighted when Simin offers him money to withdraw the charges against Nader. Hojjat interprets this offer not as a gesture of goodwill, but as an insult, seeing it as an attempt to exploit his financial desperation and further diminish his sense of self-worth. When Razieh hesitates to swear an oath regarding her miscarriage—an event she attributes to Nader's actions—Hojjat insists on taking the oath himself, even if it means assuming her guilt before God. He does this to avoid the humiliation of being seen as dishonorable in front of both families and the men from whom he has borrowed money.

Injustice

Injustice is a recurring theme in Hojjat's experiences with the judge. He perceives his detention by him as an unjust act, reinforcing his belief that the system is rigged. This sense of injustice is rooted in past experiences, such as a previous legal case where he felt wrongfully dismissed from his job at a shoe factory without fair recourse. His perception of systemic bias within the Iranian judiciary, particularly against individuals from lower social strata, colors his interactions throughout the film.

The theme of injustice is also evident in the film's opening scene, where the judge's dismissive attitude towards Simin's request to leave Iran with her daughter highlights the systemic marginalization of women's voices and rights. The judge's decision to side with Nader, despite Simin's well-reasoned arguments, reflects a broader societal bias that prioritizes traditional and political considerations over individual justice and fairness.

PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FORM CATEGORIES RESULTS

Social Value Forms in the Film "A Separation"

Table 4: Distribution of Social Value Forms in 'A Separation'

	Verbal Values		Behavioral Values		Total	
	Frequency	Rate	Frequency	Rate	Frequency	Rate
Values	104	35.49 %	189	64.50 %	293	100 %
Disvalues	38	37.25 %	64	62.74 %	102	100 %

The data underscores a cinematic approach where "A Separation" articulates its thematic concerns predominantly through behavioral manifestations, regardless of the valence of the values being depicted. A significant 64.5% of values are conveyed behaviorally, and similarly, 62.74% of disvalues are expressed through actions. This tendency highlights the film's emphasis on actions as pivotal elements of narrative expression, reflecting the intricate interplay between individual actions and societal norms within the Iranian cultural milieu.

The film meticulously employs respectful dialogue as a narrative tool, registering 32 instances where characters engage in respectful and courteous exchanges despite underlying tensions. This is closely followed by the depiction of respect towards women, noted 24 times, and reverence towards elders and parental figures, also depicted in 24 scenes, signifying a cultural reverence deeply ingrained within the storyline. Conversely, the portrayal of negative behaviors is most prominently observed through insults, with 17 occurrences, and a disrespect for the dialogue etiquette, marked by 15 instances.

In terms of verbal expressions, disvalues slightly outweigh positive verbalizations, with negative utterances constituting 37.25% of all verbal expressions compared to 35.49% for positive verbal

expressions. Insults dominate this category, with 29 instances of demeaning language primarily utilized by Hojjat against Nader and the judge. Conversely, greetings, particularly the use of "Salam", emerge as the most prevalent positive verbal expression, repeated 33 times, showcasing a fundamental cultural courtesy. This is followed by the values associated with filial piety with 19 repetition and child rearing with 18 instances.

Significance of Social Values in "A Separation"

Our analysis of the film reveals a range of social, psychological, ethical, political, and humanistic implications embedded by director Asghar Farhadi. These insights reflect the complexities of Iranian society, its identity, and the struggles within it.

Class Conflict

The film poignantly illustrates the class struggle in Iranian society through the conflict between the families of Nader and Simin, and Hojjat and Razieh. Nader and Simin are depicted as members of the middle class, characterized by their education, professional status (Nader works at a bank, and Simin is an English teacher), and their ownership of separate cars, symbolizing a modern, progressive lifestyle. In contrast, Hojjat and Razieh are portrayed as part of the lower, uneducated class, struggling with unemployment and financial instability. Hojjat, beset by debt and emotional turmoil, is depicted as suffering from the pressures of his dire circumstances. Despite their hardships, they adhere to conservative and religious values, which are evident in their speech and behavior.

The relationship between these two families becomes strained when Razieh begins working as a maid in Nader and Simin's home. Unexpected events trigger confrontations and legal disputes, with Hojjat accusing Nader's family of demeaning him and his wife—particularly after Razieh is accused of theft and subjected to physical harm. Hojjat perceives Nader's actions as an affront to his honor, claiming that employing his wife in a house without a female presence and attempting to buy their way out of trouble represents an exploitation of his family's financial vulnerability. This dynamic highlights Hojjat's deep-seated feelings of inferiority, as he believes that the wealthier family views him as little more than a thief or an animal—a powerful representation of the proletariat in a society on the brink of social unrest.

The Duality of Values

The film also explores the theme of moral duality, particularly through the character of Nader. At the outset, Nader is portrayed as a virtuous figure, respected by those around him—his wife, despite their marital tensions; his daughter's teacher, who tries to convince the judge of his good character; and even Hojjat's sister, who urges her brother to accept a financial settlement. Nader's refusal to emigrate, choosing instead to care for his aging father and focus on his daughter's upbringing, underscores his commitment to familial duty and ethical principles.

However, as the narrative unfolds, Nader's moral integrity is called into question when he lies about his knowledge of Razieh's pregnancy prior to the incident that led to her dismissal. This deception, once uncovered by his daughter, causes her to lose faith in him, a particularly painful blow given Nader's emphasis on values such as honesty and righteousness.

This shift in Nader's character suggests that even the most steadfast commitment to social and ethical values can erode under the weight of severe personal and social challenges. Farhadi's portrayal of Nader's moral decline highlights the psychological and ethical complexity of human behavior, suggesting that even those with strong moral convictions can be driven to selfishness and narrow self-interest when faced with difficult circumstances. Nader's justification—that he wanted to avoid prison for the sake of his father and daughter—rings hollow when considered alongside the potential harm caused to the other family, especially if Nader's actions led to Razieh's miscarriage.

Triumph of Religious Conscience

In *A Separation*, the character of Razieh is depicted as deeply religious and conservative, embodying the values of traditional Iranian society. She is always seen wearing a chador, a traditional garment that fully covers her body, and she is meticulous in avoiding any actions that could be considered sinful. For example, she refuses to touch Nader's elderly father, who suffers from dementia, going so far as to seek religious consultation on how to clean him without violating her religious principles. Razieh's profound upset over being falsely accused of theft by Nader starkly contrasts with her response to the miscarriage of her unborn child, illustrating a complex layering of moral and emotional priorities. Despite severe financial need, Razieh's ultimate refusal to accept settlement money from Nader—which she considers tainted—underscores a victorious adherence to her moral convictions, fearing divine punishment upon her daughter more than temporal hardship.

In contrast, Hojjat, who outwardly professes his religiosity by accusing Nader and his family of lacking faith and frequently swearing by God, reveals a stark hypocrisy. He opposes his wife working in a man's home and claims to uphold his family's honor, yet his actions betray his words. Throughout the film, Hojjat frequently insults others, harbors deep suspicion, and even urges his wife to lie about the cause of her miscarriage and to falsely swear that Nader was responsible. Farhadi uses these contrasting characters to demonstrate that true religiosity is reflected in one's actions and convictions, not merely in words and outward displays.

Women's Rights in Iran

The film subtly critiques the social and legal constraints faced by women in Iran, suggesting that a woman's ability to exercise her rights is often contingent upon the will of men. The first and last scenes of the film are particularly telling in this regard. In the opening scene, Simin seeks a divorce to take her daughter abroad, but her request is opposed by her husband and ultimately denied by the judge, who dismisses her concerns as trivial. Simin, an educated and assertive woman, challenges the judge's denial of her rights, but to no avail. In the final scene, the court finally responds to Simin's persistence, summoning her daughter to choose between her parents. It is unclear whether Nader has had a change of heart due to the significant events that transpire or whether their daughter's insistence on living with her mother pressures him into agreeing to the separation. Nonetheless, it is Nader's eventual consent that leads the court to grant Simin custody, highlighting the persistent influence of male authority in such decisions.

Modernity or Tradition?

The film exposes the deep ambivalence within Iranian society, which is caught between a conservative religious regime and the inevitable pull of modernity. Iran is depicted as neither fully traditional nor entirely modern, neither wholly religious nor secular, neither feudal nor capitalist. The characters in the film are caught in this transitional phase, each grappling with the tensions it creates. Nader, for example, is portrayed as secular and non-religious in his speech and actions. He is progressive in raising his daughter and does not object to his wife's partial adherence to the hijab. Yet, he remains a traditional Eastern man, prioritizing his family—his father and daughter—over his own desires, and he struggles to communicate effectively with his wife. Nader's preference for the music of Shajarian, a symbol of Persian classical music and political dissent, reflects his internal conflict.

Simin represents the modern, liberated woman, yearning to escape an oppressive social environment. Her name, of ancient Persian origin, evokes Iran's pre-Islamic past, yet she wears the hijab in compliance with the Islamic norms prevalent in Iran. The elderly grandfather with Alzheimer's symbolizes a fading past—disconnected from his family and unfit for the present. His lost memory represents an obsolete identity in a modern world. He clings to relics of the past: a well-tailored suit, an old radio, and photographs from his youth, indicating his secular past before the

Islamic Revolution. His fascination with a newspaper he can no longer read symbolizes those who claim to be in tune with the times but are, in fact, out of sync.

The Stifling Political Atmosphere

The film begins with a stark depiction of judicial authority, where the camera serves as the eyes of the unseen judge, symbolizing the invisible yet pervasive control of the state. This scene sets the tone for a narrative that explores the blurred lines between justice and power, as influenced by the prevailing religious and political ethos in Iran. The film's open-ended conclusion reflects the uncertainty of the future and the challenges of administering justice in a complex societal and political landscape. The investigating judge, overwhelmed by contradictions, is seen holding his head in frustration, asking for the windows to be opened, and adding sugar to his tea in an attempt to escape the bitterness of the problems he faces (Ali Taher Nasser).

The film is devoid of joy or happiness, a natural outcome of the contradictions and the lack of prospects faced by individuals in Iranian society. Each character responds to the pressures in their own way: Nader breaks down in tears while washing his father, later exploding in anger at his wife, accusing her of running away from their problems. Razieh disregards social taboos by working in Nader's bachelor apartment without her husband's permission. Termeh, the somber daughter, is on the verge of a breakdown, despairing of her parents' reconciliation. The crowded streets, narrow corridors, and cramped apartments symbolize the limited choices and the difficulty of life in Iran.

Simin asks her husband for permission to take a music tape of Shajarian, an iconic singer in Iran who symbolizes political opposition and is banned from official media. This indicates the couple's alignment with the opposition, although this is not overtly depicted in the film.

A Humanitarian Message

In *A Separation*, Farhadi presents a powerful humanitarian message: ordinary social problems can escalate into significant conflicts that destroy relationships between individuals and families, with dire consequences for society as a whole. The story begins with a simple act of leaving the house to pressure the other party, but it quickly escalates into a nightmare for all the characters involved. Pride and avoidance of confrontation hasten the worsening of crises, bringing out the worst in each individual. Simin, who desires to escape her society and homeland, ends up on the path of destroying her family. Nader, driven by overwhelming pride and selfishness, tramples on the rights of the poor. Razieh, the devout woman, engages in socially unacceptable behavior to help her husband, then fabricates a lie to exact revenge on an innocent person. Meanwhile, Hojjat, in his quest to protect his honor and reject others, is willing to harm everyone, including himself.

STUDY CONCLUSION

In addressing the research questions, the following key conclusions have been drawn:

1. The film *A Separation* presents a range of values, with social values being the most prominent, followed by religious, scientific, and economic values.
2. Positive social values outweigh negative ones in the film, with family values and social manners ranking highest among values. Among disvalues, insult ranks first, followed by disrespect for dialogue and lying.
3. Behavioral values dominate over verbal values in the film, whether positive or negative.
4. The film's values carry significant implications, documenting a critical moment in Iran's social, political, cultural, and human history.

Conclusion

At a time when Iran is under severe Western sanctions due to its nuclear program, its cinema continues to receive international acclaim. Farhadi's *A Separation*, the subject of this study, made history by winning the Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film in 2012. Since the 1990s, not a year has passed without Iranian cinema participating in and competing at the global level. Through its realistic portrayal and the dedication of its directors, Iranian cinema presents a true image of Iranian society to the world, offering both political and humanitarian messages about the nation, society, and humanity. In doing so, it captures the historical moment in Iran with precision.

Iranian cinema, since its early filmmakers, has drawn heavily from the richness of the Persian language, literature, and ancient myths, with a strong emphasis on ethics and humanity from the beginning (Majid Sarsangi and Hamed Soleimanzadeh, p. 642). Their successors have deepened this focus on societal norms, ethical dilemmas, and human experiences, using modest budgets to create compelling narratives that resonate with audiences, drawing them into the lives and challenges of the characters.

A Separation centers on family values and explores how a couple can dismantle their family and abandon each other due to personal motivations. The film examines how the family, once a fundamental institution, can be reduced to mere rhetoric. As events unfold, all the characters become entangled in the details, each viewing themselves as innocent while others see them as guilty. The audience, too, is left questioning, often trying to place themselves in the characters' shoes, realizing that each character has a sincere perspective and that there is no clear villain in the story. Farhadi himself has said of his approach to filmmaking: "Classical tragedies are built on a battle between good and evil, and our position is clear— we want good to triumph over evil. But true tragedy, as it happens in life, occurs when the battle is between good and good. In those cases, it doesn't matter who wins; our hearts will break regardless." On the open-ended nature of his films, he adds, "I'm not trying to provide answers for the viewer. If I gave an answer, the film would end in the cinema. But if I leave questions, the film begins in reality after people watch it and stays with them."

In conclusion, *A Separation* is not just a film; it is a profound philosophy on the complexities of human life, making it one of the most significant cinematic works globally, revered by audiences and critics alike.

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