

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### A.1 Background of the Research

*The Holdovers* is an American comedy-drama film directed by Alexander Payne. Set during the 1970 Christmas holiday at a boys boarding school in New England. The film centers on the relationship between Paul Hunham, a strict and emotionally distant classics teacher, and Angus Tully, a rebellious and intelligent student abandoned by his family. Their interactions reveal the tensions between authority and resistance within an educational institution. In addition to these central figures, the film also features supporting characters such as Ollerman and Kountze, students whose presence reflects the broader social environment of the school and reinforces its hierarchical and disciplinary structure. The film is not just a holiday story, it is also a subtle sociological narrative about grief, alienation, and the possibility of human connection amid institutional decay. Paul hunhams character represents the dying ideals of classical education and moral absolutism while Angus embodies the resistance of young people to emotional neglect and systemic expectations. The film suggests that empathy and shared vulnerability can exist within fractured social systems.

Previous studies of *The Holdovers* have examined the film from a pragmatic perspective, focusing particularly on conversational implicature in

teacher student interaction (Ainiyah & Sholichah, 2025). This research highlights how violations of Grice's cooperative principle in the film convey hidden meanings, such as sarcasm, humor, subtle criticism, and emotional responses. These violations reveal power dynamics, generational differences, and communication styles within the educational context. However, recent research points to *The Holdovers* as a nuanced critique of social limitations and class divisions within educational and familial settings. This research emphasizes the film's portrayal of social stratification and its enduring individual effects. These studies focus on social stratification and institutional critique, highlighting the film's portrayal of power relations within educational and familial settings.

In the context of education, films portray authority and resistance within academic environments, illustrating how cinematic narratives reflect and critique educational ideologies. Films can deconstruct the traditional teacher-student hierarchy, revealing power imbalances, modes of resistance, and opportunities for pedagogical transformation. This approach aligns with Foucault's Panopticon theory of analyzing disciplinary power within institutional settings (Cheng et al., 2023).

These studies highlight a growing interest in analyzing how film reflects and shapes the public's understanding of societal roles, emotional struggles, and institutional values. However, none of these studies have directly

addressed *The Holdovers* as a cinematic text that reveals social tensions surrounding authority and disciplinary power. This study thus aims to address this gap by exploring *The Holdovers* through the framework of disciplinary power and the Panopticon, revealing the intersections of power, control, and social values within educational institutions.

This study uses Michel Foucault's theory of disciplinary power and the Panopticon as analytical lenses to investigate how *The Holdovers* portrays teachers as agents of institutional surveillance and control. Foucault's Panopticon metaphor illustrates a spatial arrangement that enables continuous observation, leading individuals to internalize discipline by assuming they are always being watched. In the film, this concept is reflected through Hunham's strict enforcement of educational norms and the self-regulation students internalize. Schools can function as modern-day Panopticons, with both their physical layout and institutional culture embedding systems of surveillance, hierarchy, and behavioral control (Çeven et al., 2021). These structures compel conformity not only through explicit discipline but also by fostering an environment of constant visibility and evaluative scrutiny that encourages students to regulate themselves in alignment with institutional expectations.

Teachers align with this disciplinary gaze, acting as the watchtower through which power is exercised and behavior and social values are shaped within institutional settings. Furthermore, Foucault recognizes that disciplinary

power, while pervasive, also cultivates spaces for resistance and negotiaton. These spaces are evident in the characters' subtle acts of defiance and emotional complexity within the school environment.

## **A.2 Problem of the Research**

Based on the background and focus on Michel Foucault's theory of disciplinary power and the Panopticon, this study aims to analyze how *The Holdovers* shows the ways power, control, and constant surveillance work in a school setting. It also seeks to reveal how teachers embody disciplinary power by enforcing norms and regulations on students, and how this contributes to the internalisation of discipline.

Therefore, this research proposes the following problem:

How does *The Holdovers* depict disciplinary power role?

## **A.3 Objective of the Research**

*The Holdovers* by Alexander Payne illustrates the intricacies of authority and control in a school setting during a period of social transformation. Using Michel Foucault's theories of disciplinary power and the Panopticon as a framework. This research specifically aims to analyze how *The Holdovers* functions as a cinematic text that exposes the mechanisms of disciplinary power through the portrayal of the teacher's character.

The objective of this research are:

To describe how disciplinary power is represented in *The Holdovers*.

#### A.4 Significance of the Research

Theoretically, by examining how *The Holdovers* uses the sociology of education and film studies to represent constant surveillance, in which supervision does not always require the physical presence of an authority figure. What matters most is the internalized sense of being watched, leading individuals to comply with rules, regulate their behavior, and maintain discipline without direct coercion.

Using Foucault's concepts of disciplinary power and the Panopticon deepens our understanding of how institutional authority and control mechanisms are depicted cinematically within educational contexts. This makes the study of film as a cultural medium more interesting, because it shows how film can reflect and critique power relations and authority structures in schooling environments.

Practically, this study provides a clearer understanding of how disciplinary practices operate within educational institutions, as depicted in *The Holdovers*. It illustrates how teachers strictly enforce rules and authority to maintain order and influence students' behavior. By examining how students respond to these methods, either by obeying or struggling emotionally, the research provides clarity regarding the psychological and social impact of such authority. These insights can encourage educators to reflect on striking the right balance between authority and empathy in real-life teaching contexts.

Furthermore, the study has practical value for teachers, educational policymakers, and sociologists, as it reveals how discipline and authority in the classroom can influence students personal growth, motivation, and social interaction.

#### **A.5 Limitation of the Research**

Based on the problems and objectives of this study, the researcher limited the scope to the depiction of disciplinary power and social values in *The Holdovers*. The analysis focuses on the representation of authority, surveillance, and resistance. This research is primarily grounded in the film's narrative, character development, and dialogue relevant to institutional power dynamics and social negotiation within an educational setting.

#### **A.6 Definition of the Key Terms**

In order to clarify the key terms used in this study, some definitions are put forward.

##### **Disciplinary Power**

According to Foucault (1995), disciplinary power operates through continuous forms of supervision that do not necessarily require the constant physical presence of an authority figure. What is central to this mechanism is the internalized awareness of being observed, which encourages individuals to regulate their own conduct. As a result, compliance with rules and institutional expectations emerges naturally, as individuals adjust their behavior in

anticipation of possible observation rather than through direct force or explicit punishment. In this way, discipline is maintained through subtle, everyday practices that shape self-control and obedience without relying on overt coercion.

### **Panopticon**

Jeremy Bentham created the architectural idea of the Panopticon, which Foucault subsequently postulated as a metaphor for contemporary disciplined societies. It talks about a surveillance technology that allows one watchman to keep an eye on everyone without them knowing the precise time of the observation. Because of the ongoing threat of being observed, this results in self-discipline (Foucault, 1995). This idea demonstrates how surveillance systems in schools motivate pupils to absorb regulations and control their conduct in accordance with established standards (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012).

### **Teachers Authority**

A teacher's authority refers to the power they hold as representatives of the institution. Teachers are responsible for establishing rules to maintain discipline. According to Foucault, power operates through the internalization of norms rather than through direct control or visible supervision. This process encourages students to regulate their own behavior as they come to accept institutional expectations as personal standards. In *The Holdovers*, disciplinary power functions implicitly within the school environment, shaping student

compliance and resistance even in the absence of constant, direct observation (Anderson & Grinberg, 1998).

### **A.7 Organization of the Research**

This research consists of three chapters in total. The first chapter is a introduction, consist of background of the research, problem of the research, objective of the research, limitation of the research, the significance of the research, and the organization of the research report. The second chapter is the theoretical framework is an overview of the research to be carried out, where in this framework, the procedure is described and what will be studied in the research. The third chapter deals with research methodology, which consists of the type of research, data, source of the data, method of collecting data, the technique of collecting data, and method of analyzing data.