

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### B.1 Theoretical Framework

This study uses Michel Foucault's theory of disciplinary power and the concept of the Panopticon as its main theoretical framework. According to Foucault (1995), power is exercised through mechanisms such as constant and internalized surveillance, normalization, and examination. Disciplinary power shapes behavior by making individuals comply with rules. The Panopticon serves as a metaphor for modern institutional structures in which control operates primarily through self-discipline.

This framework helps to understand how power operates within social structures and moral regulations in educational settings. This theoretical framework will be used to examine how systems of authority, surveillance, and moral regulation operate within the context of the film. It will guide the analysis of how power is embedded in everyday interactions and institutional practices.

In educational settings, power is exercised not only through overt rules and disciplinary actions but also through gradual processes that foster self-regulation and self-awareness, ultimately cultivating self-motivation among students. These stages encourage individuals to internalize institutional norms and take responsibility for their own behavior. The Panopticon concept

further illustrates how surveillance is embedded in routines and structures. By applying this framework, the study examines how authority is maintained, internalized, and negotiated, highlighting the dynamic relationship between institutional structures, individual agency, and moral regulation within educational contexts.

### **B.1.1 Disciplinary Power in Education**

In educational settings, disciplinary power refers to the various ways schools regulate student behavior through institutional rules that guide conduct and expectations. Rather than relying on direct supervision, these rules foster a sense of internal monitoring, where students perceive themselves as being continuously evaluated. Through this internalized process, students come to categorize their own performance and behavior, which influences how they understand their roles, academic identities, and social positions within the institution. As a result, disciplinary mechanisms shape students' self-perception, academic identity, and social behavior through self-regulation rather than overt control (Aryal, 2025).

These mechanisms operate subtly through routine activities. Schools regulate student conduct without relying on physical force or overt coercion. Rather than constant direct supervision, disciplinary power in education functions through internalized rules and expectations that lead students to monitor their own behavior. Order and compliance are maintained through

self-regulation and evaluative frameworks embedded in daily school practices. This perspective provides a theoretical foundation for understanding how authority is exercised implicitly within learning environments.

Foucault (1995) explains that disciplinary power in schools does not rely solely on visible supervision but functions through interconnected mechanisms that gradually shape students' conduct and self-perception. Rather than positioning teachers or administrators as constant observers, disciplinary power operates by cultivating self-regulation and self-awareness, which eventually develop into self-motivation. Through internalized norms and evaluative expectations, students learn to assess their own behavior according to institutional standards. As a result, discipline is maintained not through direct force or continuous observation, but through students' willingness to take responsibility for regulating themselves within the educational environment.

Disciplinary power operates beyond formal punishment by shaping students' identities and social interactions through continuous processes of classification, comparison, and evaluation. These practices become normalized, making institutional authority appear natural and necessary within school life, and are rarely questioned (Çeven et al., 2021). These disciplinary practices become a normal part of the day, students learn to watch their own behavior. This shows how disciplinary power works on a deeper level, moving control

from outside forces to self-regulation. Students adjust to the school's expectations over time and pick up the academic and social habits that go along with the school's norms. This process shows how power works in the background, affecting how students act and how they see themselves in the school's hierarchy. This means that disciplinary power becomes a force that influences everyday educational experiences.

### **B.1.2 Michel Foucault's Panopticon Theory**

The architectural concept of the Panopticon was expanded on by Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*, drawing upon the work of Jeremy Bentham, *The Birth of the Prison*. The Panopticon was a prison designed by Bentham featuring a central watchtower surrounded by cells. This design created a psychological effect in which inmates believed they were constantly being observed, even when no one was actually watching. Foucault used this model as a metaphor to understand the mechanisms of power and surveillance in modern society (Foucault, 1995) .

Panopticism is not simply an architectural technology but rather a form of power that automatically reinforces itself, whereby as the individual becomes more visible, the urge to comply increases in proportion. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault expounds on the notion of the Panopticon as a system designed to produce subjects who are capable of self-surveillance, thereby signifying a shift in the paradigm of power from physical coercion to

internalized surveillance. Foucault (1995) refers to this as a power that does not have to impose punishment directly, because the effect of surveillance itself has led to compliance. It is evident that the Panopticon functions not solely through the perspective of the ruler but also through the subject's cognizance of perpetual observation, thereby engendering a psychological state that governs conduct.

Foucault (1995) emphasizes that the panopticon establishes automated power relations, as surveillance does not need to be visibly present to function. The fundamental issue at the core of contemporary discipline is the prevailing uncertainty. Individuals no longer respond to physical punishment but rather comply with norms because they perceive themselves to be perpetually under possible observation. Through his concept of panopticism, Foucault illustrates how surveillance and discipline become pervasive mechanisms of power that enable individuals to regulate their own behavior based on the awareness that they might be watched at any moment. This dimension of power is most effective when internalized, leading individuals to voluntarily conform to prevailing norms (Sheridan, 2016). Foucault emphasizes that the Panopticon's visibility is a “trap” that transforms observation into a mechanism of control, producing knowledge that enables authorities to categorize and regulate individuals.

In addition to Foucault's architectural model of surveillance, contemporary educational research highlights the ways in which disciplinary power functions through student motivation, engagement, and voice. Students' behavioral compliance at school is shaped not only by external control but also by the internalization of institutional expectations. They argue that when students perceive themselves as being evaluated, monitored, or judged, whether academically, socially, or behaviorally, they tend to self-regulate in ways that align with institutional norms (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012). This insight reinforces Foucault's notion of panopticism by demonstrating how modern educational systems encourage internalized discipline, prompting students to monitor their own conduct without direct coercion.

### **B.1.3 Authority of Teachers in Institutional Discipline**

The authority of teachers, as representatives of educational institutions, lies in their role in establishing rules and expectations that sustain discipline. Drawing on Michel Foucault's concept of disciplinary power, this authority operates through implicit processes such as normalization and internalized surveillance, rather than through overt coercion or explicit commands. These processes cultivate a sense of self-awareness among students, leading them to internalize institutional authority. Consequently, students gradually regulate their own behavior and comply with institutional demands without external

pressure, becoming what Foucault describes as “docile bodies” who willingly conform to academic and social norms (Lenartovicz & de Oliveira, 2018).

Within this framework, the teacher functions as an agent of disciplinary authority by upholding institutional regulations and shaping expectations that sustain the school’s hierarchical order. Rather than relying on overt displays of control, teachers exercise authority by fostering an environment in which students internalize rules and come to view regulation and evaluation as routine aspects of everyday school life. Through these subtle and distributed mechanisms, disciplinary power operates implicitly, encouraging self-regulation and compliance without the need for force, thereby reinforcing broader institutional power structures.

Anderson & Grinberg (1998) emphasize that disciplinary authority in educational institutions operates through systems of normative regulation in which rules and routines function as mechanisms of control. Rather than depending on direct disciplinary intervention, these mechanisms work by embedding institutional expectations into everyday practices that shape students’ conduct and self-understanding. The effectiveness of such regulation lies in the internalized awareness of being subject to evaluation, prompting individuals to adjust their behavior in accordance with anticipated norms. This perspective aligns with Foucault’s argument that power becomes most

effective when it is internalized, enabling individuals to regulate themselves even in the absence of visible supervision.

#### **B.1.4 Cinematography**

Cinematography is an art and technical craft that captures moving images to convey tone, meaning, and narrative depth. Key elements of visual language, such as camera movement, composition, lighting, lens choice, color, and framing, work together to shape the audience's emotional and cognitive engagement with a story. Cinematography is more than just capturing events; it is a visual language. According to Azzarelli et al., (2025), cinematography actively interprets and enhances the narrative. It does so by guiding the viewer's focus, shaping spatial perception, and using visual composition to evoke specific emotional responses.

The story is further supported by the camera techniques employed, which include static shots and symmetrical framing that capture the rigidity and limitations of the boarding school setting. These decisions highlight the protagonists' social and emotional estrangement at the start of the movie. The cinematography progressively switches to warmer tones, softer lighting, and more intimate compositions as the plot develops and the characters get closer, representing a move toward empathy and connection. This alignment of visual style with character growth is known as "narrative motivation through stylistic

unity,” in which the film's form and content cooperate to create a cohesive emotional and thematic experience.

Furthermore, it can be argued that cinematography can itself become a fundamental narrative agent, not merely a supporting element to the story, but one that actively shapes or even redirects the narrative. According to Eeno (2021) images and their properties can be the sole instrument of storytelling, meaning that visual elements such as shot composition, camera movement, and framing can produce meaning independently of dialogue or plot structure, it suggests that when images and narratives are closely intertwined, and when the visuals carry significant narrative weight, films can offer a kind of “poetic” or non-linear storytelling. In this type of storytelling, emotions and ideas emerge through visual rhythm and montage, rather than through conventional cause-and-effect developments.

## **B.2 Previous Studies**

Previous Foucauldian studies have laid the groundwork for understanding the application of the concepts of the Panopticon and disciplinary power to filmic institutions. Specifically, Maharani & Nirmalawati (2025) demonstrated how films such as *Shutter Island* depict institutions as spaces of intense surveillance, normalization, and the production of “docile bodies”. This theoretical framework provides a valuable lens through which to analyze other

films, including *The Holdovers*, revealing the pervasive mechanisms of institutional power that shape behavior and identity.

*Shutter Island* portrays psychiatric institutions as panoptic environments where surveillance is both visible and internalized, producing “docile bodies” that self-regulate and conform to institutional power. Similarly, *The Holdovers* extends this Foucauldian lens by exploring how the film portrays institutional power dynamics that govern subjectivity and behavior through subtle and overt disciplinary practices.

Previous studies have examined the sociological and moral aspects of literature and film using visual and narrative analyses. For example, Zhong & Wang (2022) demonstrate how visual elements, such as color and contour encoding, influence audience perception and emotional engagement. This illustrates the potential of film as a medium for conveying complex social meanings.

In an educational context, Alfianti (2023) notes that moral narratives in visual media often emphasize values such as empathy, care, and respect, which are embedded in characters and storylines. These works also suggest that the visual language of film, including composition, tone, and color, can function as a form of cultural pedagogy, enabling viewers to question and reinterpret dominant ideologies.

More specifically, Zhong & Wang (2022) demonstrate that strategically using visual features, such as contour detection and color modulation, can mirror deeper social structures and emotional tensions. Together, these studies lay the groundwork for analyzing *The Holdovers* as a social artifact and a moral narrative. However, limited scholarship has examined how the film reflects and critiques education and social values through the framework of the sociology of literature. This study seeks to address this analytical gap.

Foucauldian analyzes of institutional power and surveillance have been built upon, with research on cinema increasingly exploring how visual techniques convey panoptic dynamics within filmic spaces. Camera techniques are noted as descriptive elements in depicting the relationship between seeing and being seen in studies of surveillance and panoptic imagery in cinema. This offers a useful way of understanding how school environments are depicted on screen.

This work highlights the fact that cinema is merely a descriptive element. For example, Cantas & Can (2022) emphasize that camera angles and composition can represent Foucault's concept of the Panopticon. This creates a dynamic of continuous observation and self-regulation within the filmic space. These cinematic strategies demonstrate how power relations are embedded in school settings, where surveillance shapes behavior and identity. These insights provide a critical framework for understanding how visual storytelling can

expose and critique disciplinary regimes in educational institutions. This approach links existing Foucauldian theory to visual and cinematic analysis in the context of *The Holdovers*.

Previous cinematic analyses using Foucauldian theory have examined power and surveillance in institutions. Rajkhowa (2024) demonstrates how the films *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and *The Shawshank Redemption* depict panoptic structures, in which authority figures such as Nurse Ratched and Warden Norton exert control through constant surveillance. These films illustrate Foucault's idea that power is pervasive, yet contestable. Similarly, *The Holdovers* explores themes of institutional control, making Foucault's perspectives on disciplinary power and panopticism highly relevant for analyzing school dynamics.

Several studies combine Foucauldian theory with visual analysis to demonstrate how the editing of cinematic form, shot composition, and lighting operationalize disciplinary techniques. This methodological approach integrates Foucauldian concepts of power and surveillance with the visual elements of film, revealing how film form embodies disciplinary power structures. This framework informs the analysis of the film form employed in this study (Liang, 2023). It focuses on how *The Holdovers* employs cinematic techniques to represent the dynamics of control and social discipline within its narrative.

As discussed by Hitlin & Piliavin (2004), sociological film analyses that emphasize moral values, empathy, and social cohesion offer a conceptual framework that bridges Foucauldian power theory with interpretations of affective relationships onscreen. This framework supports the study's focus on empathy, responsibility, and solidarity in *The Holdovers*, enabling a deeper understanding of the film's social and emotional dynamics.

The concept of *body discipline* in *Turning Red* from a Foucauldian perspective. They demonstrate how institutional and familial control influence the behavior, emotions, and self-acceptance of the protagonist, acting as a means of social regulation (Neisya et al., 2024). Meanwhile, Ay (2023) applies Foucault's Panopticon theory to analyze *Kitchen Stories*, highlighting how surveillance, the gaze, and everyday tactics construct and challenge power relations. This approach also informs the present study of *The Holdovers*, which explores disciplinary control and resistance within institutional spaces.