



**Arab American University**  
**Faculty of Graduate Studies**

**The Reflection of Social Life in the Palestinian Cinema**  
**(Hani Abu Asad's Films as a Case Study)**

By

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**This thesis was submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Master's degree in Intercultural Communication and Literature**

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## **Thesis Approval**

### **The Reflection of Social Life in the Palestinian Cinema**

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This thesis was defended successfully on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2025 and approved

by:

Committee members

Signature

1. Dr. Dalal Iriqat: Supervisor
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## **Declaration**

I declare that this thesis was composed by myself and that the work contained herein is my own, except where it states otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.

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## **Dedication**

To all those whom I found by my side in my darkest days.

To my family, friends, and little boy (Ghaith).

## **Acknowledgements**

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## Abstract

This study aims to investigate the reflection of Palestinian social aspects; social structure (gender roles and marriage), social and family solidarity, and the construction of national identity in five of Hani Abu Asad's films; *Rana's Wedding* (2002), *Paradise Now* (2005), *Omar* (2013), *The Idol* (2015), and *Huda's Salon* (2021). This study was conducted in 2024-2025. This study uses the qualitative research approach by analyzing the mentioned films using the thematic analysis method. Moreover, this research uses Foucault's theory of power to examine how power relations; sovereignty power, disciplinary power, and bio-power, influence social life and shape it. The researcher also uses Hall's theory of cultural identity to investigate how the Israeli Occupation influences Palestinian identity. The results indicate that Abu Asad presents the influence of the Israeli Occupation's power, social expectations, family, patriarchy, and collective resistance in constructing Palestinian social aspects and Identity in his films. These dynamics intertwine in society; Israeli Occupation and social expectations are the dominant themes in the films. They shape gender roles, marriage, and national identity. Besides, creating bonds among Palestinians that enhance social solidarity through armed resistance and collective unity. On the other hand, patriarchy plays a huge role in shaping marriage and gender roles. Future research would investigate Palestinian films in specific times and genres, besides conducting Comparative studies between films with other national cinemas. Additionally, studies should analyze cultural and social issues represented in Palestinian films. Moreover, comparing Palestinian society in reality with its representation in Palestinian films. In addition, investigates the influence of external funds on the narrative of Palestinian films.

Keywords: Palestinian social life, Power, cultural identity, Hani Abu Asad, Palestinian cinema, Hall, Foucault.

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## Chapter One Introduction

“Creating a relatable narrative means digging deep, asking hard questions, and potentially airing some uncomfortable truths.”

-Tobin Trevarthen

Palestinian cinema in its contemporary form emerged and shaped after the 1948 Nakba and the tragedy caused by the Zionist movement to establish a state for Jews in Palestine. It worked to document and resist the Zionist narrative and preserve Palestinian identity. During the phases of establishing Palestinian cinema, Palestinian filmmakers attempted to portray Palestinians from political and humanitarian perspectives. They present resistance against the Israeli Occupation and the dream of liberation for Palestinians in their films. They tried to show Palestinians' suffering from the Nakba's traumas and the way new generations attempt to practice armed resistance. Dabashi (2006) defines Palestinian cinema as “the mutation of that repressed anger into an aestheticized violence - the aesthetic presence of a political absence.” (Dabashi, 2006, p.11).

Palestinian films have shown various ways of resistance against the Israeli Occupation; including armed resistance, social solidarity, and preserving the Palestinian national identity. It also documents the Israeli Occupation's attempt to control the Palestinian nation by subjugating and dividing them geographically and politically, starting from the Palestinian Nakba until today. The Israeli Occupation has sought to achieve these goals by displacement of the Palestinians in the Nakba of 1948. In addition to the checkpoints separating the regions, and the apartheid wall that created a large gap and division between the Palestinians in

Jerusalem, 1948 lands, and the West Bank. In addition to completely isolating Gaza from the world. All of these issues found themselves in Palestinian cinema to show the suffering that Palestinians experience in their daily lives.

Despite the outlet that filmmakers found in cinema, the Israeli Occupation was and still is an obstacle for anyone who carries a camera to reflect the crimes of the Israeli Occupation before the world. For example, Hani Johariya filmmaker, one of the PLO film units, was shot in Lebanon while he was filming the Palestinian resistance in battle (Alawadhi, 2012). On the other hand, the filmmaker Mohammad Bakri faced lawsuits after filming *Jenin Jenin* (2002) (Saeed, 2021). Moreover, his film was banned from the show several times. Furthermore, the Israeli Occupation kept the Archive that contains old Palestinian films and put restrictions on who can view it to hide its crimes and spread the Israeli Occupation's narrative about the emptiness of the Palestinian land when it occupied it. This created obstacles that prevent the development of Palestinian cinema.

Palestinian cinema has gone through four phases of time. The first phase of Palestinian cinema started with a documentary film of the visit of the Saudi prince to Jerusalem and Jaffa in 1935 by Ibrahim Hassan Sirhan (Gertz and Khleifi, 2008). This phase ended in 1948 because of the Nakba with a loss of all the materials. Moreover, filmmakers did not produce any films in the second phase of Palestinian cinema from 1948 to 1967 (Abu El Foul, 2022). The third phase 1967-1982 started in Beirut. It focused on the Palestinian revolution and ended up as a consequence of the invasion of the Israeli Occupation of Lebanon, with a loss of the Palestinian archive. This period aimed mainly to unite the Palestinians without giving attention to the accuracy of the representations of Palestinians (Gertz and Khleifi, 2008).

Moreover, from 1967 to 1968, Mustapha Abu Ali, Hani Jawhariya, and Sulafa Jadallah established a film unit in Jordan concerning armed resistance. Moreover, films in this phase served to preserve and highlight the rich history and culture of Palestinians (Shafik, 2003a). The fourth phase of Palestinian cinema started in 1980 until now (Atshan & Galor, 2022). This phase extracts the Palestinian narrative from the story of the people of the land and focuses on different social, cultural, and political aspects (Gertz and Khleifi, 2008). Furthermore, films after 1980 shifted to portraying people who narrate their stories. According to Khalifa (2006), contemporary Palestinian cinema had to present Palestinian society accurately, including how people interact and experience events in their everyday lives by showing all aspects of the society, especially the problems that women and children face (Sela, 2018). The researcher dive deeper into presenting phases of Palestinian cinema in the following chapters.

The researcher has chose Hani Abu Asad because of the research strong interest in Palestinians films and storytelling. The researcher have always seen cinema as a tool to express culture, resist oppression, explore identity, present political narratives, and engage with themes like family, gender, and identity. Moreover, Palestinian cinema, in particular, stood out to the researcher because it tells stories that are deeply political and personal.

The researcher has chosen Hani Abu Asad's work because he is a controversial figure. Some see his films as bold and human; others criticize them for not being political enough. Besides, some see him as controversial for addressing sensitive issues for Palestinians, which are unacceptable socially and culturally. Therefore, thus controversy made the researcher curious. the researcher wanted to look deeper into films to investigate how they construct

meaning, identity, and power through discourse. That is why the researcher uses Foucault's theory of power and Hall's theory of cultural identity to explore how Palestinian cinema reflects and shapes the social realities and identity of its people.

This study analyzes *Rana's Wedding* (2002), *Paradise Now* (2005), *Omar* (2013), *The Idol* (2015), and *Huda's Salon* (2021) films using thematic analysis by applying Foucault's theory of power and Hall's theory of cultural identity.

### **Problem Statement**

Since third world cinema become one of the most influential and widespread mediators for colonial and postcolonial issues, Palestinian filmmakers found the importance of presenting Palestinian issues through films. Films that present Palestinian political, social, and cultural issues have increased by shedding light on the human side of the Palestinian issue and presenting the Israeli Occupation, resistance, and marginalized issues in Palestinian society. Films have become a way to reflect reality and the issues they are exposed to by presenting them implicitly or explicitly. Therefore, the researcher thinks it necessary to focus on studying the content of Palestinian films and analyzing them to study and understand power relations that shape and influence the Palestinian society and identity. Therefore, this research aims to understand how Palestinian social structure is presented in Palestinian cinema and the factors that influence social life and identity by analyzing Hani Abu Asad's films as a case study.

## **Research Questions**

This study explores how Abu Asad represents Palestinian social structure (gender roles, marriage, and social solidarity) in his films. It also investigates the how national identity is constructed in the Palestinian society as presented in the Palestinian cinema.

## **Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to comprehending power relations that shape social life of Palestinian society. Since Palestine is under two main powers; the Israeli Occupation and the Social power, it is important to understand how these power dynamics work and influence the Palestinian society and identity. Analyzing the chosen films through Foucault's lens of power and Hall's theory of cultural identity helps in understanding how Palestinian cinema presents social themes such as national identity, gender roles, social solidarity, and marriage within Palestinian society. Moreover, the study investigates power relations and how they shape Palestinian society and identity. This approach enhances the understanding of Palestinian social life besides illustrating how filmmakers give voices to the marginalized Palestinians who live under the Israeli Occupation, to challenge the dominant narratives and prove Palestinian agency.

Additionally, this study is important for different fields of scholarship; it gives Cinematic studies insights into how Palestinian filmmakers use narratives to embed social-political hints and make Palestinian cinema a way of resistance as part of third world cinema. Furthermore, In Palestinian Studies, this study is considered a unique social and political tool of resistance, which resisted the erasure of the Palestinian people.

Finally, this study highlights the wider influence of Palestinian film on global perceptions. As these films become more well-known worldwide, they promote understanding and empathy overcoming cultural barriers and changing how people talk about Palestine. This study affirms the ability of cinema to generate narrative, build community, promote solidarity, and advance social change by highlighting the significance of social representations in third world cinema.

## Chapter Two Literature Review

Cinema has served as a medium for shedding light on culture, identity, narrative, power, resistance, and the construction of nation and society. Within the context of post-colonialism and Third World Cinema, films have become a means of showing colonial hegemony over colonized peoples and presenting their resistance toward liberation. Since European cinema present Third World populations as 'the Other' to impose colonial control and Eurocentric ideologies on the narrative, Third World filmmakers sought to develop film practices to resist the narrative of Western hegemony and to create films that reflect the reality of these countries, their collective struggles and resistance (Stam and Shohat, 2014).

"Third Cinema" as Gabriel (1982) defines is a revolutionary cinematic movement that emerges in opposition to the aesthetic of Second Cinema (European art film) and the commercialism of First Cinema (Hollywood). Third Cinema aims to resist the systemic conditions of colonialism, occupation, and cultural erasure while also giving a voice to the oppressed. According to Guneratne and Dissanayake (2003), the movement of Third Cinema called for shedding light on key issues of social justice, ethnicity, class division, and national identity in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

Previous studies critically examine Third World cinema (Stam & Shohat, 2014, and Ponzanesi & Waller, 2012) focusing on its thematic preoccupations with colonialism, resistance, national identity, and the representation of marginalized groups, particularly within postcolonial and nationalist frameworks. For instance, the study of Stam and Shohat

(2014) “Unthinking Eurocentrism Multiculturalism and the Media”, investigates the influence of Eurocentrism on cultural and historical narratives, especially within media representations, including cinema. It examines the historical roots of colonial discourse and its ongoing impact on contemporary identities, while exploring how multiculturalism challenges dominant Eurocentric views and empowers marginalized voices. The study examines a range of films; including Western media representations that portray colonized and marginalized peoples, Third World cinema that critiques such portrayals, and contemporary revisionist films that offer alternative perspectives on historical narratives. By highlighting cinema's role as both a site of representation and a vehicle for cultural narratives, the study also seeks to reveal how films can perpetuate or contest these ideologies, ultimately offering opportunities for resistance and alternative storytelling.

Similarly, the study of Ponzanesi & Waller (2012), “Postcolonial Cinema Studies” aims to bridge the gap between postcolonial studies and cinema studies by exploring how films from formerly colonized or marginalized regions respond to colonial legacies. It examines how films engage with issues of power, identity, history, and representation beyond traditional national or Eurocentric boundaries. The researchers argue that cinema has become a vital site for theorizing postcolonial subjectivities, aesthetics, and resistances, especially in migration, displacement, imperialism, and social inequalities. The study assures that postcolonial cinema is a form of epistemic resistance to colonial knowledge systems and a space of aesthetic and political experimentation where marginalized identities are reimagined. It is also tied to social structures, power relations, and histories of domination and thus central to understanding how contemporary international issues are visualized.

## **Thematic Representations in Third World Cinema**

This thesis investigates how social life concerns four themes: gender roles and marriage, national identity, and social solidarity, are represented in Palestinian cinema. It is important to shed light first on these themes' representation in Third World Cinema, which serves as an important entry point for understanding how filmmakers present, reflect, critique, and rebuild the lived experiences and values of their communities in their films. This literature review explores existing scholarship on these thematic representations, providing the theoretical and contextual foundation for the researcher's analysis.

### **Social Structure (Gender Roles and Marriage) in Third World Cinema**

A group of studies exists on presenting gender roles and marriage in third-world cinema (Elfalih, 2024; Mostafa, 2009; Khatib, 2006; Foster, 1997; Munir and Ali, 2022). The study of Elfalih (2024) "Shifting Narratives: Gender in Moroccan Cinema", offers a critical exploration of how Moroccan filmmakers have redefined gender representation through cinematic discourse within the context of Third World cinema. The researcher analyzed themes of gender, roles, identity, social conditions, and their representation of power in four Moroccan films. This study assures that Moroccan cinema's representation of these themes shifted from strengthening patriarchal values to questioning narratives of gender and identity. It works as a center of discursive power, enabling feminist intervention and post-colonial resistance to situate itself within a broader tradition of Third World cinema that aims at social transformation.

On the other hand, Mostafa's (2009) study “Cinematic Representations of the Changing Gender Relations in Today's Cairo”, examines how recent Egyptian films portray developing gender relations within the urban landscape of Cairo in the context of neoliberal urban transformations in three Egyptian films. The examined films reflect and challenge the economic, spatial, and cultural restrictions that shape gender roles. The study acknowledges that gender roles in Egyptian cinema are progressively portrayed as fluid and context-dependent, shaped by both spatial and societal transformations.

Similarly, Khatib (2006) explores in her study, “The Voices of Taboos: Women in Lebanese War Cinema” the representation of women in Lebanese war cinema, highlighting their roles as both victims and active participants in the civil war narrative by shedding light on two Lebanese films. The author critically analyzes the films to explore cultural memory and identity by applying feminist theory and sociopolitical context. The author argues that the examined films challenge traditional gender roles representation, revealing the complexities of societal divisions during war periods.

Foster's book (1997) “Women Filmmakers of the African and Asian Diaspora” contributes to the field of Third World cinematic studies as it explores the importance of women filmmakers in reshaping narratives around marriage and identity in postcolonial contexts. It mainly highlights the works and contributions of women filmmakers from the African and Asian diasporas. It reveals the complexities and diversities in the experiences of love and partnership in the Third World. The book emphasizes the significance of decolonizing the cinematic gaze and presents varied viewpoints on race, gender, and subjectivity. It glorifies the unique perspectives and experiences of women in the African

and Asian diasporas, offering a critical lens on their cinematic practices. The book also discusses how marriage in the films by women filmmakers from the African and Asian diasporas is often portrayed as a complex interaction between cultural traditions and contemporary realities. Such films highlight the tension between traditional marital roles and contemporary identities, presenting women's agency in navigating these dynamics. Through various narratives, the filmmakers reveal how marriage can both reinforce and challenge patriarchal structures, portraying it as a site of negotiation and empowerment.

The study of Munir and Ali (2022) "Unveiling Patriarchy in Narrative Cinema: A Critical Discourse Analysis of 'Thappad'", examines how the Indian film "Thappad" portrays and challenges patriarchal norms through its narrative. The study focuses on analyzing gender roles within marriage, domestic abuse, and the social expectations set on women. The authors assure that the film critiques the normalization of male dominance and domestic violence in Indian society. The study acknowledges that cinema can be a powerful medium to expose, question, and reshape patriarchal ideologies embedded in cultural and marital norms.

Ella Shohat (2004) in her study "Post-Third Worldist Culture: Gender, Nation, and the Cinema", examines the limitations of nationalist and Third Worldist frameworks in cinema, particularly in their representation of gender. Shohat argues that women are often depicted as symbols of the nation, reinforcing traditional and patriarchal roles rather than offering fully developed characters. She critiques how many anti-colonial films replicate essentialist and heteronormative narratives, even while opposing imperialism. The chapter calls for a more nuanced, feminist, and transnational approach to film analysis one that accounts for

intersectional experiences shaped by gender, class, race, and displacement. Through examples such as *The Battle of Algiers* and *The Silences of the Palace*, Shohat highlights how some films challenge national and gendered stereotypes, offering alternative ways of representing identity beyond the confines of both colonial and nationalist ideologies.

### **Identity in Third World Cinema**

Studies on identity portrayal in Third World film arose as a form of resistance to hegemonic colonial narratives. Rather than repeating colonial discourse's imagery, third-world filmmakers assert alternative identities informed by their histories, cultures, and battles. This critical engagement with identity undermines hegemonic depictions of colonised peoples and provides new perspectives based on local realities and resistance of the colonised people.

Several studies examining identity representations in Third World Cinema (Lakhdar, 2018; Naficy's, 2021; and Mohanty, Russo, and Torres's, 1991). The study of Lakhdar (2018) aims to explore how cinematic art might create a new relationship with others focusing on a deeper exploration of self and identity. It investigates how Third World cinema functions as a philosophical and political space that enhances the formation of a resistance identity and a new consciousness among colonized or marginalized people. This study assures that cinema gives voice to the oppressed people and allows them to tolerate their realities. The highlighted word, filmmakers, challenge the dominant, ideologies and reclaim agency. According to this study, Third World film contributes to the creation of new forms of identity, consciousness, and emancipation in addition to reflecting social struggles.

In Naficy's study (2001), "An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking", Naficy develops the accented cinema concept to describe the narrative of exilic, diasporic, and postcolonial filmmakers, especially Global South. He argues that these filmmakers are often detached from their countries due to political war or postcolonial marginalization, where they create films that reflect their identity existing between cultures, languages, and film traditions. The result of his study examined how displacement, cultural hybridity, and marginality create the content and aesthetics of these films. He acknowledges that this accented cinema challenges cinematic conventions and gives voice to the collective memory, exile, national belonging, and resistance.

Mohanty, Russo, and Torres's (1991) book, "Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism", aims to challenge hegemonic Western feminist narratives by emphasizing how national identity, colonial histories, and global power structures shape the lives and struggles of Third World women. It argues that national identity is often shaped by patriarchal and nationalist discourses that use women's bodies and roles such as marriage, motherhood, and sexuality, as symbols of cultural purity and resistance. The book finds that while national liberation movements in the Global South often mobilized women, they also subordinated feminist goals to nationalist agendas, promoting traditional gender roles instead of dissociating them.

### **The Palestinian Cinema**

Some studies work as a trace to the Palestinian cinema historically and chronologically since the emergence of cinema and how it has developed to this day (Gertz and Khaleif, 2008;

Albeik, 2025; and Habashneh, 2023). For instance, Gertz and Khleifi (2008) in their book "Palestinian Cinema, Landscape, Trauma and Memory" critically examine the history of Palestinian cinema by analyzing films from 1935 to the early 2000s. They examine films across different periods of Palestinian history and explore how cinema reflects and shapes Palestinian national identity, memory, exile, and trauma. The films embody the shared experience of displacement, grief, and resistance, using the landscape as a real and symbolic place of memory and longing. The book emphasizes how cinema serves as a tool for preserving and questioning the national narrative. Gertz and Khleifi conclude that early Palestinian films aimed to unify identity through revolutionary symbols and collective trauma, while later films diverged from uniform representations, opting instead for diversity, individual narratives, and critical introspection. This shift allowed filmmakers to challenge the dominant narratives, explore fragmented identities, and use cinema as a tool for working through traumatic experiences and asserting cultural agency.

Similarly, Albeik (2025) in his book "Biography of Palestinian Cinema: Limitations of Spaces and Characters" gives a clear picture of contemporary Palestinian cinema as a multiplicity of what cinema was in the past. This book comes as a complementary study to the book by Gertz and Khalifi (2008), but the main paradox is that Gertz and Khalifi's book studies Palestinian cinema from its start to the year 2000, while this book studies only feature films directed by Palestinians from 2000 to 2024. This book discusses 57 feature films and aims to present how each film deals with the present limitations and their five manifestations: the soldier, the military truck, checkpoints, the prison, and the apartheid wall.

A great contribution to the cinematic field is Habashneh's book (2023) "Knights of Cinema: The Story of the Palestine Film Unit". The researcher discusses and documents the formation of the Palestinian film unit as the first militant film group created by the Palestinian national liberation movement. The main theme of this book is that cinema works as a weapon of resistance and is used to create Palestinian national identity through the struggle of Palestinians for liberation and to save the collective memory and identity. This book traces how Palestine film unit filmmakers rescue their lives to document the events of exile, refugees' suffering, and revolution leading to the creation of a unique Palestinian military cinema through oral history, archival recovery, and political storytelling. Habashneh assures that the films of the Palestinian film unit play a major role in shaping global perceptions of the Palestinian cause.

Another important contribution is Albeik's book (2023) "Reflections on Palestinian Film". The researcher discusses ideas about the Palestinian films, focusing on gaps and mistakes that filmmakers make in their films. The researcher gives suggestions to improve the Palestinian cinema concerning Palestinian identity, characters, and the narrative itself to a better representation. This book studies different issues related to the Palestinian cinema regarding if there is a Palestinian cinema and what the characteristics of Palestinian films are besides who are the audience and where does the funding come from. This book is based on collecting articles that the researcher writes on the subject of Palestinian cinema. The researcher analyzes films that he sees deserve critical reading. This book is critical. It gives suggestions, hints, questions, and answers that work as a starting point for more research about Palestinian cinema.

## **Thematic Representations in the Palestinian Cinema**

Palestinian cinema as part of Third World cinema has become a vital political and cultural platform for filmmakers to express their feelings, ideas, and the lived realities of Palestinians shaped by Israeli Occupation, displacement, resistance, and power relationships. Through narratives, historical events, and visual storytelling they explore significant complex social and political themes that present everyday struggles of Palestinians.

Since this thesis aims to figure out the reflection of social life in the Palestinian cinema, the researcher states and summarizes academic studies related to gender roles, national identity, social solidarity, and marriage to situate this thesis in Palestinian cinematic studies. By setting these thematic issues within broader discussions about Third World cinema, this study hopes to lay the groundwork for examining how film contributes to the production of Palestinian identity and cinematic representation of Palestinian social life.

### **Social Structure (Gender Roles and Marriage) in the Palestinian Cinema**

Previous studies show that social roles and marriage in Palestinian films are linked to patriarchy and the impact of the Israeli Occupation on both males and females. For instance, Shafik (2003a) analyses gender roles in Palestinian cinema, focusing on Michel Khleifi's *Fertile Memory* (1980), which emphasizes women's simultaneous battle against Israeli Occupation and internal patriarchal oppression. Khleifi depicts what Shafik refers to as Palestinian women's "double occupation" by contrasting an educated feminist writer with a self-sufficient traditional widow. She contends that such films challenge conventional

nationalist narratives that frequently relegate women to symbolic roles, instead placing them as active actors of both social and political opposition.

Similarly, Ball's book (2012) seeks to investigate how Palestinian film, specifically Michel Khleifi's *Wedding in Galilee* and Elia Suleiman's *Divine Intervention*, negotiates the intersections of gender, nationality, and postcolonial identity. Ball assumes that Michiel Khleifi portrays the struggles women confront in a patriarchal society in his film *Fertile Memory* (1981). Women appear as a figure of *sumud*. By sprinkling gender power diversity inside Palestinian society, women present their individual stories in opposition to the conventional narrative and stereotype. The book also examines how marriage and female representation mirror greater national problems during the occupation. Ball assures that, while these films question some patriarchal and colonial norms, they ultimately rely on symbolic depictions of women rather than giving them complete narrative agency. The book confirms that feminist opportunities remain limited because female agency is frequently overshadowed by the duties of representing the nation.

Moreover, Bresheeth (2006) acknowledges that Elia Sulaiman in his film *Chronicle of a Disappearance* (1996) depicts the Palestinian woman as a fighter against the Israeli Occupation. In that sense, Shohat and Stam (2014) and Shohat (1988) assure that *Wedding in Galilee* (1987) intertwines multiple intra-Palestinian discourses such as the narration of women's role under the occupation, the Palestinian disposition, and masculinity in Palestinian society. The authors acknowledge that women have roles in maintaining the collective memory, the family, the nation, and the liberation. Besides, they have a role in dealing with the difficulties in a patriarchal society. Moreover, Kennedy (2006) acknowledges that

Khalifa criticizes the values of the patriarchal in Palestinian society especially its honor codes in which the bride has to preserve the family honor. The author asserts that Khalifa raises the question of women's honor in his film *Wedding in Galilee* (1987).

Additionally, Shafik (2003a) assures that Michel Khleifi in his film *Wedding in Galilee* (1987), criticizes the principles of patriarchal Arab society, more specifically, the concept of male honor. Besides, he tries to present the offensive male domination by presenting gender from a perspective of traditional ideas, but neutralizes them by changing and distorting their signs, or more precisely, by linking Women's supposed weakness with power and men's power with weakness.

In a different context, Hooton (2022) argues that Hani Abu Asad tries to show women's resistance away from political activism rather than her determination to marry the man she loves in *Rana's Wedding* (2002). Similarly, Abdel-Malek (2005) acknowledges that Hani Abu Asad criticizes the patriarchal society on one hand, and the restrictions imposed upon women because of the Israeli Occupation on the other hand. Moreover, Rana's role in the film is determined by a gender role, as her father must approve of her potential spouse. The author argues that within Palestinian society, women marry to be dispatched to domestic spheres. The author argues that Abu Asad presents the patriarchal limitations against women and shows their passive role in their decisions. Moreover, *Sahar's Wedding* (1991), directed by Hanna Musleh shows a development in the role of women in the family.

Ball (2012) seeks to investigate how Palestinian film, specifically Michel Khleifi's *Wedding in Galilee* and Elia Suleiman's *Divine Intervention*, negotiates the intersections of

gender, nationality, and postcolonial identity. The paper examines how marriage and female representation mirror greater national problems during the occupation. Ball assures that, while these films question some patriarchal and colonial norms, they ultimately rely on symbolic depictions of women rather than giving them complete narrative agency. The paper confirms that feminist opportunities remain limited because female agency is frequently overshadowed by the duties of representing the nation.

A special study of Attili's (2023) "Representations of Women in Contemporary Palestinian Films" investigates how Palestinian women are shown in ten award-winning and nominated Palestinian films. The study shows a repeating pattern of traditional gender norms and unfavorable prejudices. According to the study, most films marginalize female characters, who have limited screen time, poor agency, and little influence on the plot. Furthermore, several of the films examined lacked meaningful interactions between named female characters outside of male-centric conversations. While a few films have depicted women as robust, the dominant image is one of dependency, modesty, and a lack of drive.

In a comparative study, Atshan and Galor's book (2022) "Reel Gender" examines how gender and sexuality are portrayed in Palestinian and Israeli Occupation's films, focusing on their political, cultural, and artistic interconnections. Despite glaring power and production disparities, the collection demonstrates that both cinemas have emerged as key sites for feminist, queer, and intersectional tales. The editors contend that film has become an important venue for negotiating identity, resistance, and normalization, particularly through depictions of femininity, masculinity, and queerness across national, ethnic, and religious lines. The book finds that Palestinian and Israeli Occupation's films are shaped by different

political realities, and they are intertwined in their cinematic engagement and representation with gender. Researchers assure that the cinema serves as a platform of resistance and identity assertion, while its counterpart questions tradition, gender roles, and national ideology.

### **Identity in the Palestinian Cinema**

Social identity is a feeling of belonging to a specific group or groups in which membership is contended. It exists in different statuses such as family units and political parties (Mi'ari, 2009). In his research, *Palestinian Identity and Cultural Heritage*, Al-Jubeh (2008) points out that Palestinian identity has undergone enormous changes and development throughout history. The author argues that it is problematic to understand this identity apart from the conflict. In this sense, Kennedy (2006) argues that the patriarchal structure of the society shaped the national identity and created different standpoints on the identity of Palestinian individuals under the military occupation, which Khalifa uses as a context for his film, *Wedding in Galilee*, by exploring the politics of agency within Palestinian culture.

Research shows different issues related to Palestinian identity in films caused by the Israeli Occupation (Gertz and Khleifi, 2008; Abdel-Malek, 2005; and Al-Zobaidi, 2008). For instance, Gertz and Khleifi (2008) assert that people who live in Palestinian camps have been traumatized and dream of returning. The researchers point out that *The Tale of the Three Jewels* film (1995) directed by Michel Khleifi presents living in the territory of not belonging. It also that represents the Israeli Occupation as the one who divides the unity of the family where different identities exist. The authors assure that the landscape is missing in the film

in which people live in a camp, while the Israeli Occupation drives the hero to stick to his national identity.

Similarly, Abdel-Malek (2005) believes that Saed Andoni in his film, *Alhudud Al-Akhira* (2002), represents questioning the meaning of identity in exile. Similarly, *Heaven Before I Die* film (2004), directed by Izidore Musallam, takes the issue of the cultural shock of a Palestinian man who travels from Palestine to Toronto and meets the realities of modern life outside Palestine. In the same context, Al-Zobaidi (2008) mentioned that Tawfik Abu Wael, in his film *Diary of the Male Whore* (2001), has represented the ambiguity in the sense of identity among Palestinians who live in the 1948 lands. The author argues that this sense of identity relates to space and memory where the characters of the films have not been in touch with other Palestinians because of the Israeli Occupation and the geographical isolation of Palestinians. Moreover, Ball (2012) asserts that Michel Khleifi, in his film *Wedding in Galilee*, started to shift the Palestinian discourse in films toward alternative narratives of belonging and national passion.

Shafik (2003a) points out that Michel Khleifi placed semi-traditional music in the context of Palestinian national and liberation identity. In his films *Fertile Memory* and *Canticle of the Stone* (1990), he links images and drama with songs and footage of a well-known music band, which has also been linked to the Palestinian intifada and resistance as part of Palestinian identity.

The study of Ben Labidi (2020) examines the representation of Palestinian national identity and resistance through an analysis of three contemporary Palestinian films: Rana's

Wedding, The Deceived, and Eyes of a Thief. The study demonstrated how these films seek to counter the negative stereotypes presented by Western cinema, focusing on self-criticism and preserving Palestinian political awareness, in addition to presenting a humane image of Palestinians that appeals to a global audience. The study demonstrates how Palestinian cinema offers an alternative visual discourse that promotes both political consciousness and cultural emancipation by engaging with the internal dynamics of its society in addition to resisting other narratives.

### **Social and Family Solidarity and Marriage in the Palestinian Cinema**

Few number studies have been done on the themes of social life in the Palestinian Cinema, especially the ceremonies of weddings and family solidarity. However, mention a few ideas in their research about these topics. Abdel-Malek (2005) assures that *Sahar's Wedding* (1991), directed by Hanna Musleh, characterizes a Palestinian wedding in a village under Israeli Occupation. It focuses on the groom and the bride besides their relatives. Similarly, Shohat and Stam (2014), assert that Khalifa emphasizes tradition while portraying the Palestinian wedding in his film *Wedding in Galilee* (1987). In the context of social solidarity, Shohat and Stam acknowledge that *Wedding in Galilee* (1987) represents the marriage and wedding night as a reflection of the uniting of families. Furthermore, Ball (2012) acknowledges that this film does not represent only the unity of the family but rather the solidarity of the whole nation. Kennedy (2006) acknowledges that Khalifa established an image of solidarity, revival, and permanence in the society, besides the preparation of food for the wedding by neighboring women, and the ritual preparation of the bride and groom.

To conclude, the field of Palestinian cinema is varied with a significant number of contributions that help in gathering information and analysis of Palestinian films. Studies in this field use different approaches and theories to grasp and extract themes and issues represented in films. However, as Palestinian filmmakers are developing and producing more films, these factors also drive the demand and need to do more studies about Palestinian films to help investigate and analyze social aspects in the films. This helps to show problematic issues within Palestinian society. Besides, being under the Israeli Occupation, means that more issues and problems appear every day that need to be addressed.

As demand for the increasing in Palestinian film production increases, this literature review shows that previous studies have not focused on or covered a variety of issues in the number of Palestinian films. Rather it focuses more on showing inadequate analysis and information about films. Besides, studies about Palestinian films focus on limited films that are considered pioneering in the last decades.

In subsequent chapters, the researcher builds upon the preceding studies presented in this chapter by analyzing five famous films directed by Hani Abu Asad, which are *Huda's Salon* (2021), *Omar* (2013), *Idol* (2015), *Paradise Now* (2005), and *Rana's Wedding* (2002). The researcher does a thematic analysis by extracting four social aspects from the mentioned films, which are marriage, gender, roles, national identity, and family solidarity. This adds new qualitative data to the field of Palestinian studies and enriches the previous studies.

## **Chapter Three Theoretical Framework: Identity, Discourse, and Power**

This chapter outlines the theoretical foundation that informs the analysis of cultural identity formation as presented in the Palestinian cinema. At the heart of this study are the concepts of power and identity that shape the Palestinian struggle, resistance, and social aspects representation in the Palestinian films. These concepts help to understand how Palestinian identity is shaped, negotiated, and contested in cinematic narratives, more specifically, within the context of colonization, occupation, and resistance.

This study uses critical discourse analysis (CDA) by applying Michel Foucault's theory of power and discourse, which examines how societies are created and controlled through systems of language, knowledge, and institutional control. It also uses Stuart Hall's theory of cultural identity, which views identity as a fluid, historically situated, and representational process, to examine these dynamics. When combined, these frameworks offer a critical perspective for analyzing how Palestinian cinema reflects, challenges, and reinterprets political and cultural identities.

### **Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)**

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) appeared in the 1980s as a development of the study of European discourse by Ruth Wodak, Norman Fairclough, Teun van Dijk, and others. (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000). It appeared as a network of scholars in the early 1990s. (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Since that, it has become one of the most popular departments of discourse analysis (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000). CDA is interested not in interpreting the linguistic unit itself, but in studying social phenomena, which are necessarily complicated,

and need a multi-disciplinary and multi-methodical approach to analyze (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). In this sense, many primary methodologies in discourse analysis work under the premise that our feeling of social reality is shaped by language and interactions within society (Jaworski & Coupland, 2006).

Critical Discourse Analysis as a school adopts many similar and different approaches that, in the end, can be said to be related in many respects (Wodak, 2001). CDA is characterized by its aspiration to examine, portray, and uncover power dynamics and ideologies using a methodical exploration of semiotic information (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Besides, CDA can provide skills, understanding, and tools by proving the place of language in the structure, shape, and organization of the social world (Barker and Galasin ´ski, 2001).

Van Dijk's approach to discourse analysis provides methods to examine language usage in social contexts. Van Dijk assures that discourse structure is influenced by the ideologies of the members of society. In terms of social and political discourse analysis, Van Dijk (1997) acknowledges that the concept of social practice usually implies a broader social dimension to the discussion than the various actions undertaken, by language users in interpersonal interaction.

In her approach to critical discourse analysis, Wodak's approach is considered multidisciplinary where she built on earlier contribution of Foucault, Fairclough, Van Dijk, and others. Wodak considers language as a social practice that cannot be analyzed alone but rather as understanding society by combining all main social sciences, including psychology, economics, history, political science, sociology, and anthropology (Wodak & Mayer, 2009).

Norman Fairclough contributed significantly to the field of discourse analysis. In his book, *Language and Power* (2013), Fairclough provides a three-dimensional framework for the process of critical discourse analysis. These are the linguistic descriptions of the formal characteristics of the text, the understanding of the relationship between the text and interaction, where text is considered the result of a process and resource of text production and explanation, and lastly the explanation of the connection between discourse and social reality. However, in this thesis, the researcher focuses on the third dimension that relates to the discourse and social reality analysis. It helps in understanding the social and political environment that shapes and form the Palestinian society through the narrative of the films.

### **Michel Foucault's Theory of Power and Discourse**

The power theory of Foucault has a significant impact on the understanding of Palestinian society and its reflection on films. By focusing on Foucault's idea that power is everywhere, the impact of power can be seen through analyzing social phenomena, political events, and family dynamics that imply power in its construction. In his book, *The Archeology of Knowledge* (1972), Foucault acknowledges that discourse is not neutral and cannot be understood on its own, but rather as a reflection of existing power structures in which powerful people use discourse as a tool to control the social structure. However, by examining power and dynamics in discourse, the researcher identifies how these power structures control Palestinian society and shape its portrayal in Palestinian cinema.

Foucault's concept of discourse refers to the structured well-bonded spaces of social knowledge. A discourse constrains and enables what can be said, thought, or known about a

particular topic within a specific historical period. Discourse determines what can be said or not said about something, not in a fixed but concerning historically variable bodies of knowledge. Foucault emphasizes that discourses are material conditions that both produce and are produced by power relations. They are not just representations of reality, but constructive forces that shape subjects, institutions, and knowledge itself (McHoul and Grace, 2015).

Michel Foucault considers discourse as more than using language or a means of communication. It is a cognitive structure and a system of thought that produces truth and organizes knowledge within specific social and historical contexts. Discourse is not something added to or after knowledge, but rather the tool that produces knowledge itself and determines what can be considered truth at a given historical moment. Foucault argues that discursive relations are not limited to words or sentences. They encompass entire systems of non-linguistic rules that determine what can be thought, said, who is allowed to speak, and what is recognized as legitimate knowledge (McHoul and Grace, 2015).

The hidden mechanisms that create meaning and govern thought are exposed by Foucault's discourse analyses. Understanding how history, institutions, and social relations produce particular epistemological patterns, and how these patterns are occasionally invoked to defend control, exclusion, or classification, is made easier with the help of Foucault's analytical tools. According to Foucault, discourse analysis is therefore a political and cultural instrument that aids in our comprehension of how societies generate knowledge and for what ends, rather than just being a linguistic exercise (McHoul and Grace, 2015).

Michel Foucault conceptualizes power not as a fixed or single force, but rather a multidimensional and historically changing set of relations embedded in institutions, discourses, and bodies. His critical work maps how power has shifted over time from a centralized, repressive form to more dispersed and productive networks. By tracing this evolution, Foucault shows that modern societies operate not only through commands or law, but also through more subtle methods of control, discipline, and normalization. Foucault's contributions to this field are best understood through three main forms of power: sovereignty power, disciplinary power, and bio-power.

The second model of power in Foucault's framework is sovereign power which is associated with the premodern era that was exercised by monarchs or rulers. It is characterized by the right to take life or let live notion. In the old definition and practice of power, power is enacted publicly through violence to instill obedience and fear. Acts like executions or physical punishment, in which the monarch exhibits control over the body, are examples of sovereign power. Power is strongly concentrated in this model, and exercised through spectacles of control. Despite that, this mode is no longer the predominant form of government in modern cultures, Foucault contends that it never completely vanishes. Rather, it is modified and enhanced by additional modalities (Taylor, 2011).

The second model of power in Foucault's framework is Disciplinary power. It emerged in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and concerns itself with shifting the focus from external repression to the internal regulation of individuals. Institutions such as prisons, schools, hospitals, and military barracks are key sites for this form of power. Here, observation, examination, training, and normalization are used to maintain control rather than

using violence. To comply with social norms, the body is disciplined, creating what Foucault refers to as "docile bodies," which means people who control their behaviour even when no one is looking (Taylor, 2011). Disciplinary authority is used in various ways, such as timetables, rankings, and assessments, and is frequently invisible, which increases its effectiveness.

The last model of power in Foucault's framework is biopower. It represents a further evolution in the management of life, marking a transition from focusing on individual bodies to governing entire populations. Unlike sovereign power, which is invested in the right to kill, or disciplinary power, which shapes the body, bio-power works to foster life regulating birth rates, health, reproduction, life expectancy, and productivity (Taylor, 2011). It is a form of power deeply tied to modern state apparatuses, scientific discourse, and economic systems, and it governs life through the application of statistics, demographics, and public health policies. Bio-power is closely connected to governmentality, a concept that describes how modern power encourages individuals to internalize state objectives and govern themselves. The development of Foucault's concept of power reveals a shift from the visible sovereign power to the hidden productive form of disciplinary and bio-political power. Each form of power is shaped by the transformations of the previous form of power adapting to the changing needs of society and state.

When it comes to Palestine, the Israeli Occupation uses bio-power by exercising systematic control over Palestinian life and death by controlling Palestinians' biological and social existence in addition to its military dominance. Pugliese (2020) assures that this includes controlling Palestinians' movement using surveillance, checkpoints, and population

registries to monitor and restrict Palestinian movement, turning the body itself into a site of surveillance. It also controls Healthcare and life access such as medical care, water, and vital resources in Gaza and the West Bank is tightly controlled. As Pugliese notes, this constitutes a differential allocation of life and death, who is allowed to live, and who is left to die. Moreover, the Israeli Occupation controls Palestinians' space through home demolition, zoning laws, and land confiscations, the Israeli Occupation disciplines Palestinian geography, fragmenting space in a way that aligns with bio-political control.

### **Stuart Hall's Theory of Cultural Identity**

Stuart Hall differentiates between three conceptions that reflect major shifts in modern thought of cultural identity: those of the Enlightenment subject, sociological subject, and post-modern subject. The Enlightenment subject, which presupposes the presence of a fundamental, inner essence that identifies a person and endures across time, views identity as unified, continuous, and anchored in a rational, self-aware individual. The sociological subject, holds that interactions between individuals and society shape identity. Here, the self is shaped by its position within social structures and its relationships with others, making identity a product of ongoing negotiation between internal consciousness and external conditions. The postmodern subject, which views identity as fragmented, multiple, and constantly shifting. Rather than being fixed, identity is constructed through discourse and shaped by changing cultural, historical, and institutional contexts. In this view, identity is never complete but always in process, contingent, and positioned within specific relations of power and meaning (Hall, 1996).

## **Cultural Identity in the contemporary era**

Identity is neither fixed nor stable, but rather a production that is constantly changing in accordance with history, culture, and positioning (Hall, 1996). Hall argues that identity is neither something we are born with nor a stable core of the self that does not change over time, but rather is constantly constructed and reconstructed through discourse, shaped by the interaction of historical, cultural, and social forces. Identity is always positioned and formed in relation to specific contexts, meanings, and power structures. It emerges through difference, through what it is not. Du Gay and Hall (1996) rejects the essentialist notion of identity as a stable core of the self that remains unchanged across time or as a collective cultural essence hidden beneath superficial layers. Instead, he argues that identities are fragmented, multiple, and formed through intersecting and often contradictory discourses and power relations.

In late modernity, identities are increasingly destabilized, shaped by historical disruptions such as globalization, migration, and colonialism. Hall insists that identity is not about returning to one's roots but negotiating one's paths through which people have been shaped by history and movement. Identity is a process of becoming rather than being, constructed through representation, narrative, and difference. It is formed within discourse, not outside it, and exists not in sameness, but in the marking of difference from the Other. Thus, identity emerges through the interplay and is constituted within, not outside, such representation of symbolic systems, institutional practices, and the operations of power (Du Gay and Hall, 1996). This understanding highlights the dynamic, unstable, and contested nature of identity, emphasizing how individuals and groups negotiate who they are within

particular historical and political conditions. In this sense, identity is not an essence to be recovered, but a narrative to be constructed.

In Stuart Hall's theory of cultural identity, identity is not a fixed essence, but rather a dynamic, shifting, and historically situated process, shaped by discourse, power, representation, positioning, and narrative. Hall argues that identity is not what we are, but what we have become, constructed through discourse and embedded in historical contexts, especially within postcolonial conditions. Hall rejects essentialist notions of a unified, stable self, and instead emphasizes that identity is formed through the interplay of history, culture, language, and power. Processes such as colonialism, migration, globalization, and the production of cultural narratives deeply influence how subjects come to understand who they are. In his words, identity is "always in process" and formed "within representation, not outside it," meaning that cinema, as a representational medium, plays a crucial role in shaping, negotiating, or resisting identity constructions (Du Gay and Hall, 1996).

National cultures work as regulations of meaning that organize how individuals perceive themselves and their place within a collective "imagined community" as Anderson (1983) mentioned. According to Hall (1996), the construction of identity occurs through five key strategies. These strategies include several key elements. First, there is the constant narration of the nation's past in literature, popular culture, and media. Second, there is an emphasis on origins, continuity, and tradition. Third, traditions that appear ancient are often inventions of modernity. Additionally, foundational myths are used to explain the nation's emergence and identity. Finally, identity is symbolically grounded in the notion of a pure and original people. Hall assures that such discourses navigate the conflict between nostalgia for

a mythic past and the modern nation's aspiration toward global relevance. Therefore, national identity becomes a dynamic narrative constantly rephrased through cultural representations. It also mobilized in response to political shifts, colonial legacies, and modern challenges to sovereignty and belonging.

Foucault's theory of power consider discourse as a site of power that offers a critical lens to examine narrative structures. Foucault views power as relational, productive, and positioned everywhere. It functions through institutions, knowledge systems, and cultural representations. Power is not only visible in the physical control exerted by power regimes but also in the discursive formation of the cultural identity. Power can be understood be analyzed themes that reflect how power operates through discourse to shape what can be said, shown, and known about the society.

In the context of Palestinian cinema, identity is influenced by displacement, occupation, fragmentation, and the struggle for national recognition and forces that fracture yet also fuel the ongoing production of a collective self. Therefore, Hall's framework allows to analyze how Palestinian films reconstruct cultural identity as both a site of resistance and a space of becoming, grounded in history and politics yet always evolving. In contrast, Foucault's theory of power is useful for analyzing colonial and post-colonial contexts, such as the case of Palestine, where different forms of power military (sovereign), bureaucratic (disciplinary), and demographic (biopower) operate simultaneously. Applying Foucault's theory helps to see how Palestinian society is representing not only shaped by resistance, but also by the techniques and structures of power that seek to govern it, thus providing a rich lens for reading power and identity formation in Palestinian cinema.

## **Social Structure**

According to Bradley (1996), Social structure is the regular, organized patterns of social divisions and inequalities, such as class, gender, ethnicity, religion, and region, that are deeply embedded in societies and tend to persist over time, even though they may change historically.

Social structure transforms from traditional societies to the modern ones (Modernity) because of several factors that influence this shift such as industrialization, globalization. In the pre-industrial societies, societies were divided into agrarian and feudal with clear class distinction between landowners and laborers with patriarchal family system. Traditional societies were self-sufficient, dominated by kinship and religious links, and divided into limited, inherited classes (such as nobility, priests, and peasants). After that, societies transformed into industrial one with two main classes, the bourgeoisie (capitalist class) and the proletariat (working class) because of declining the feudal systems. Focusing on gender roles, in preindustrial societies, gender roles were deeply rooted in tradition and were largely defined by biological differences (Bradley,1996).

In the industrial societies, the domestic and economic spheres were linked. Men and women often worked side by side in agricultural production despite the different responsibilities (Bradley,1996). Industrialization open the door for girls to feel equal to men when it comes to work. Bradley points out that the family was the basic unit of production. Moreover, household economy needed women's work to sustain. Despite this shift, patriarchy remained dominant in the societies where men held authority over property and

decision-making. Additionally, women were in the first place responsible for taking care of the family, raise children and take care of domestic duties. So their roles would still confined within kinship systems and religious moral codes (Bradley, 1996).

This arrangement continued to shift with the rise of modern societies. Industrial capitalism separated the workplace from the home. It relocated men to public to wage-earning labor and relegating women to the private, domestic sphere. This created the idealized women's role as caregivers and moral guardians of the home, while men became breadwinners and representatives of rational, public life (Bradley, 1996).

In the 20th century, a new shift concerned feminist movements, urbanization, and the expansion of education challenged this divide. It requested gender equality and increasing women's participation in the labor force and public sphere. The shift from traditional to modern gender roles thus reflects broader structural changes in economy, ideology, and institutional arrangements within society (Bradley, 1996).

The social structure shifted from being fixed and hierarchical in traditional society to a more complex and fluid one in modern society, based on the market, work, education, and consumption. Social identities became fluid and more closely linked to individual achievement and changing economic condition. Social structure development offers a broader framework for understanding societal transformation. It becomes even more compelling when examined in the context of Palestine, where historical, political, and colonial forces have uniquely shaped its development.

## **Palestinian Social Structure and National Identity**

Palestinian social structures changed because of the political and historical events that shape and change the structure of Palestinian society. At the same time, national identity arose and change simultaneously. Prior to 1948, when Palestine underwent drastic changes because of the Nakba, displacement, and murders of Palestinians, Palestinian society was rural and agricultural, with a substantial part of the population relying on agriculture for their livelihood. During that period, large and wealthy families led society socially and politically. These families played the role of intermediaries between the people and the ruling authorities (Ottoman and later British). These families derived their authority from their religious orientations, land ownership, lineage, and long-standing ties to the Ottoman administration. As for civil society and representation, the development of institutions was limited and responsive to immediate needs without comprehensive plans (Alashqar, 2019).

After the starting of British Mandate, the idea of Palestinian nationalism appeared due to the influence of the settlement project and British policies, such as the Balfour Declaration, and the increase in Jewish immigration, which fueled a rise in national awareness among Palestinians. According to Alashqar (2019), Muslims and Christians began a project to raise awareness and to form Christian-Muslim committees and associations to confront the threat of the Zionist project. The British Mandate led to political problems and divisions among Palestinian families responsible for the community, such as the Nashashibis and Husseinis, and weakened national ties. Where at the time, some favored diplomacy and political dialogue, while others called for armed struggle against the occupation.

The 1948 Nakba led to social and political disintegration and collapse, with the destruction of Palestinian villages and the displacement of more than 700,000 Palestinians. Palestine was split into three major areas following the Nakba: 1948 lands were directly occupied by Israel, the West Bank was ruled by Jordan, and Gaza was ruled by Egypt (Pappe, 2022). Following the establishment of the Israeli Occupation and occupying over 78% of Palestine, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were displaced to the West Bank, Gaza, and neighboring countries (Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria). UNRWA assumed responsibility for providing humanitarian aid and services to the refugees (Nachmias and Belgrad, 1994). Moreover, the shared experience of the Nakba strengthened the Palestinian people's collective consciousness and sense of identity, despite their geographical separation (Alashqar, 2019).

In 1964, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was established under the leadership of an exiled middle-class elite. Initially, it embraced the struggle. This movement revived the national project and sidelined the traditional elite leadership. Fatah became the primary national force standing for Palestinians inside and outside Palestine. In 1967, the Israeli Occupation occupied what remains of the West Bank and Gaza. After that, the Security Council issued Resolution 242, which called for the withdrawal of the Israeli Occupation forces and respect international law (Alashqar, 2019). After the defeat of the Arab armies in 1967, Palestinians began to lose confidence in the Arab regimes. After that, the goal of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) shifted from liberating all of Palestine to showing a Palestinian entity on any part liberated from occupation, with the West Bank and Gaza becoming the base for the Palestinian state-building project (Alashqar, 2019).

In the 1970s, a new generation of activists began building local institutions such as universities, unions, and student and professional associations, as means of resistance and community organization. These institutions were used for clandestine political activity due to the banning of political parties by the occupation. These structures provided social services and supported the national struggle, sometimes even covering up military activities. In this period, disagreements appeared between the PLO leadership abroad and civil society within the occupied territories. Factions such as Fatah supported certain organizations at the expense of others, such as the communists. Some independent local leaders criticized the PLO, viewing it as an attempt to hold the internal Palestinian population rather than empower it. Social organizations became an alternative force. These institutions did not merely provide services; they also stood for an alternative governance structure to Israeli Occupation military rule (Alashqar, 2019).

During the 1970s and 1980s, the Muslim Brotherhood began setting up religious and social structures in Gaza, led by Ahmed Yassin. Initially, they focused on education and charitable services rather than armed resistance, and they built a strong social base. The Israeli Occupation allowed them to work, believing they could serve as a counterweight to Fatah's influence. The Islamic Complex was established as an umbrella for these activities, and tensions began to appear between Islamists and secularists within the associations and unions. During this period, the structure of Palestinian civil society evolved to include nationalist and Islamic components, which played a vital role in resisting the occupation and building unofficial Palestinian institutions. With the outbreak of the First Intifada in 1987,

the position of the Palestinian inside Palestine was strengthened, and the center of Palestinian political gravity began to shift the diaspora to the occupied territories (Alashqar, 2019).

In 1993, Oslo Accords was assigned shaping and constituting a fundamental point of divergence in the structure of Palestinian society. It led to its restructuring in a manner that contradicted the nationalist concepts prevalent during the First Intifada. Oslo created a new elite party to worship the Palestinian Authority, which utilized its privileges and external funding, while the majority movement, especially the thousands and refugees, suffered from marginalization and a lack of creativity in addressing their living requirements (Pappe, 2022). Oslo created political resistance, anti-occupation work, and national liberation were downplayed or excluded (Alashqar, 2019).

Despite the imposition of the Palestinian Authority, its powers were limited and restricted, as Israeli Occupation controlled the law, borders, resources, and movement, placing the quasi-administrative authority within a settler-colonial system in which it did not participate. It also aimed to dismantle the rest of the Palestinian national movement, integrating certain parts into the formation of the Authority, while internal parts were marginalized or suppressed, leading to deep internal divisions. Palestinian civil society also witnessed a process of disarmament and politicization, as its elements dispersed from tools for dropping isolation to service-oriented efforts that relied on donor funding and adhered to strict donor conditions, distancing themselves from their earlier struggle role. In this context, the Israeli Occupation maintained its pragmatic approach, while feeling the ripple of illusory independence, which exacerbated feelings of frustration and disappointment among the

Palestinians, especially among the younger generation, who saw Oslo as a symbol of corruption and surrender, not liberation and a model for the state (Pappe, 2022).

At the beginning of the 21st century, Palestinian society became politically divided, economically fragile, and fragmented in its identities. The national project disintegrated under the weight of division, blockade, and international intervention, while individuals reshaped their identities and affiliations in the absence of a comprehensive liberation project (Davis and Kirk, 2013).

The status of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and its traditional leadership declined after 2000 and the post-Oslo period and the two intifadas. It coincided with the rise of Hamas as a political force after its victory in the 2006 legislative elections. The conflict between Hamas and Fatah diverted political energies into internal conflicts rather than confronting the occupation, deepening the political and societal divide. In 2007, confrontations between Hamas and Fatah escalated to the point of a de facto division of power: Fatah controlled the West Bank, while Hamas assumed control of Gaza. This resulted in significant disparities in the political and social structures between the West Bank and Gaza, as well as in aid and international relations. The Israeli Occupation imposed a suffocating blockade on Gaza, supported by the United States and Europe, and Egypt was forced to contribute to it. This led to a deterioration in living conditions. Despite reconciliation agreements between Hamas and Fatah (such as the 2011 agreement), no real progress has been made to maintaining social and political divisions (Davis and Kirk, 2013). This situation has led to a state of hopelessness and confusion within Palestinian society, which finds itself besieged internally and externally, and lacking the tools for change.

Palestinians now express multiple and complex identities: religious, secular, national, sectarian, class, and gender (Jad, 2013).

It is clear from the above that Palestinian society have been exposed to numerous historical events that transformed the social structure from a traditional agricultural society into a disintegrated society experiencing complicated economic, social, and political condition These events include the end of the Ottoman Empire, the beginning of the British Mandate (the Balfour Declaration, the Nakba, the Naksa and the displacement of Palestinians, as well as and divisions among Palestinian factions. This transformation shaped the geography of the place, the demography, and the identity of the Palestinians.

Understanding the social structure and the historical, political, social events that shape this construction is vital in helping to go deep into studying the influence of people in the society in shaping behaviors, desires, norms, and identity. The following paragraphs dive into the social constraints that are embedded in the Palestinian society.

### **Social Constraints in Palestinian Society**

Palestinian society is a hybrid society in the light of modernity. It adheres to customs, traditions, family, and religion. This means that Palestinians practice these systems on a daily basis while simultaneously embracing modernity. Social life is influenced by these systems, which form the foundation of social interactions and life. It also influenced by the occupation, neoliberal policies, and social change. A significant impact on Palestinian traditions and social practices as well. The preservation of traditional values and customs was severely hampered by the loss of land, the establishment of refugee camps, and the hunt for wage

labour in the Gulf nations, Europe, and America (Institution of Middle East Understanding, 2006).

As mentioned earlier, Palestinian society was rural and based on agriculture, but with the radical events that occurred, society changed over time. It became less attached to customs and traditions. People's concerns have become escaping poverty and securing their daily sustenance. Contemporary Palestinian society cannot be described as entirely traditional; rather, it is a hybrid and changing society. Part of it still maintains traditional social, educational, and familial patterns, especially in rural and tribal areas, while another part has embraced modernization and the shift toward an urban lifestyle, driven by wage labor, education, and post-Oslo policies. This phenomenon produces a contradictory society in which the traditional and the modern intertwine in daily economics, cultural identity, and political formation.

Palestinian society consists of Muslims which are the predominant religious group in Palestine (Banat, Yahya, Ahmad, & Halabiyah, 2022). Christians are also an integral part of the many peoples who have inhabited Palestine for centuries (Daher, 2019). Palestinian society relies heavily on religion in its structure, forming a set of customs and traditions that society associates with religion. Through this interplay between religion and popular custom, these customs form a system that regulates behavior in Palestinian society, where individuals are subject to societal control over their behavior through an intertwine system of religion and tradition (Banat, Yahya, Ahmad, & Halabiyah, 2022). During history, Muslim and Christian women framed in a similar ideology of family, honor and purity (Warnock, 1990),

this means that people of the society shape beliefs and values from each other based on the norms that dominate the society.

According to Warnock (1990), Palestinian society has historically been organized around two interlocking structures; the village and the clan. Both strongly patriarchal and controlled by authoritarian male elders who oversaw the family's resources, decisions, and honor. Women were more enclosed within the family than men, with their movements and economic contributions largely restricted to the domestic sphere, and were valued primarily as wives and mothers, often addressed socially as mother of their eldest son. Women were viewed as weak and in need of male protection. Moreover, marriage was crucial to maintaining patrilineal continuity by regulating female sexuality and guaranteeing legitimate male heirs.

Men's control over wives and daughters was essential to upholding honor, a collective family value associated with land, ancestry, and women's chastity. Men's control over women as a means of preserving their dignity was frequently reinforced by political humiliation during the Israeli Occupation. Women's roles were framed as active housewives or heroic mothers rather than as equals, and the patriarchal nuclear family continued to be the assumed natural unit even when women pursued education, careers, or political activism. The women's movement did not radically alter the family by the 1980s, although it had achieved some rights in the areas of employment, education, and marriage choice (Warnock, 1990).

Palestinian women became more visible in public life in the sphere of education and limited political participation after the Oslo Accords period (Kamal, 1998). At the same time,

patriarchal norms continued to play a significant role in shaping everyday life in gender roles. Despite that more women joined the workforce, particularly in professional fields, their participation rate remained lower than that of men, and they were still primarily responsible for taking care of the home and providing care for others (Jad, 1998). Low asset ownership, restricted access to inheritance, and dependence on male relatives for property control limited economic independence (Kamal, 1998).

Regarding male reactions to female behavior, Morgan (1998) pointed out that new reactions have emerged in Palestinian society in response to unemployment and powerlessness. A segment of Palestinian youth feel upset, jealous, and angry when their wives work outside the home. Women also face domestic violence and assaults. Morgan noted that some men remarry for the second time. This comes due to the lack of men who are socially and economically qualified to marry due to husbands' death, arrests, and deportations. The most horrific reactions are honor killings in both Gaza and the West Bank where girls are killed by their brothers when they are suspected of having an affair or even dating a man without the family's knowledge. Whether these young women actually did so is irrelevant. Mere suspicion was enough to justify young men killing and torturing their sister's honor.

Based on the above, social constraints, especially those related to gender, family, and identity, have undergone significant shifts under the influence of the Israeli Occupation and bad economic conditions. These shifts altered traditional roles and reshaped how individuals relate to social norms and social expectations. The following paragraphs show how settler colonialism represented in the Israeli Occupation influence the Palestinian society.

## **Settler Colonialism: Israeli Occupation Influence on Palestinian Society**

The Israeli Occupation has been exercising colonial control over the Palestinians since 1948. Prior to that, the Zionist movement began by transporting Jews to Palestine as immigrants. This immigration has continued to this day. Its goal is to build national home for Jews in Palestine (Gorny, 1998). Settler colonialism is an imperial structure where an entity exogenous seeks to force domination and replace the indigenous people of a specific region with a new society for settlers (LeFevre, 2015).

The Israeli Occupation has exercised comprehensive control over Palestinians through a complex system that combines military mechanisms and civilian structures. This system turns daily Palestinian life to close surveillance and management since its establishment in 1948. This control includes political aspects and bureaucratic tools such as identity cards, planning laws, and work permits, which are used to impose and maintain control over the Palestinian population (Zureik, Lyon, and Abu-Laban, 2011).

The Israeli Occupation monitors, measures, and controls the Palestinian society through a combination of military and civilian techniques. These policies led to the disintegration of Palestinian social bonds. The multiple Israeli Occupation's systems of control, from military rule to martial law to civilian bureaucracy, have fragmented Palestinian social life into fragmented spaces of citizenship and non-citizenship. This control is exercised not only through physical violence, but also through the organization and management of daily life, denying entire population groups basic political and civil rights. Due to the Israeli Occupation pressure and constant surveillance, Palestinians learn to monitor themselves. As

a result, the Israeli Occupation radically reshaped Palestinian social structures by producing a new pattern of daily life based on fear, fragmentation, and constant readjustment (Zureik, Lyon, and Abu-Laban, 2011).

The Israeli occupation continues to employ various strategies to grant Palestinian lands to settlers, displace Palestinians, and dismantle society. These include dividing Palestinian society into three regions: the West Bank, the 1948 lands, and Gaza (Alashqar, 2019). This, in turn, has contributed to demographic change. Furthermore, the ongoing migration of settlers to Palestine from various parts of the world, the confiscation of land, the construction of settlements, and the addition of checkpoints all contribute to increasing social fragmentation. Furthermore, the Israeli Occupation carries out ethnic cleansing, as occurred in 1948 Nakba and the ongoing genocide in Gaza since 2023. This is in addition to the ongoing brutal intimidation and killings, home demolitions, forced displacement over Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza that increased after the last genocide (Sayegh and Hanieh, 2024).

The Israeli Occupation also deliberately controls natural and religious resources to increase the subjugation and fragmentation of the Palestinian society. For instance, it divided the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron between Muslim and Jews (Lecoquierre, 2019). It also attempts to seize control of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem by paving the way for its demolition through excavations beneath the mosque and repeated raids. It also forced a siege on Gaza since 2007 (Handley and Ismail, 2010) which limits mobility, food, and other resources to enter Gaza. It also calculated the minimum calorie intake needed to protect people of Gaza from malnutrition and used this limit to calculate the number of aid trucks

allowed into the Gaza Strip, thus determining the maximum amount of aid allowed in as a tool of collective punishment. (Bahour, Anabtawi, Muhareb, Wispelwey, Asi, Hammoudeh, et al., 2025). Moreover, the Israeli Occupation has prevented the entry of food and medicine into Gaza, exacerbating the humanitarian and health situation and leading to the largest famine, killing, and suffering among Palestinians in Gaza (Hassoun, 2025). These colonial strategies and techniques fragment the social ties and shape how Palestinians understand power and shape their identities.

## Chapter Four Methodology

This research adopts the qualitative research approach to identify and analyze the social aspects and the way they are represented in Hani Abu Asad films. The benefit of this approach is that it allows making deep interpretations, analysis, and understandings of the study issue using existing databases.

The sample used in this study comes from five Palestinian films directed by Hani Abu Asad. The focus of analysis in this study is to decipher the meaning behind the presented narratives in the films and how they reflect the social reality; gender roles, social solidarity, marriage, and national identity of the Palestinians. The sample size of this research consists of five films directed by Hani Abu Asad performed between 2002 and 2021. The films included in this sample are *Rana's Wedding* (2002), *Paradise Now* (2005), *Omar* (2013), *The Idol* (2015), and *Huda's Salon* (2021).

As this research focuses on the representation of Palestinian society in films, the researcher conducts a thematic analysis of the narrative in the chosen films. To begin this process, the researcher watches the films thoroughly until becomes familiar with the data they hold. Since the material is visual and audible, the researcher transcribes the subtitles of the films, using different methods; downloading them from the internet, employing websites for this purpose, or doing a manual transcript if other methods are not available. After that, the researcher observes the meaning and patterns that arise in the data. The next step is creating initial codes that describe the patterns and meanings in the films to decide what to code. Once the researcher codes the narrative, the researcher arranges the data that have the

same meaning or pattern together and group the codes into themes related to the research topic. The last step is revising and analyzing the themes to write a narrative that tells the story of the gathered data by applying Foucault's theory of power and Hall's theory of cultural identity.

## **Chapter Five Historical Background of the Palestinian Cinema**

Tracing the history of Palestinian cinema requires first defining what Palestinian cinema is, the historical and political events that Palestine has experienced, and the films that Palestinian cinema has included since its establishment to the present day. Palestinian cinema is primarily concerned with the invasion of Palestine, resistance, and self-representation, rather than being entirely produced by Palestinians (Shafik, 2003b). Moreover, Gertz and Khaleifi (2008) define it as:

"Palestinian cinema is a national cinema. Throughout its history, it has given form to a militant Palestinian nationalism, recounted Palestinian history, and sought the place and daily lives of ordinary Palestinians within that history. This delicate fabric of intertwined personal narrative and national history has been closely related to the national traumas." (Gertz and Khaleifi, 2008, p.190).

Understanding the historical development of the Palestinian cinema is vital to understanding the way films are produced as a response to social, cultural, and political conditions that Palestinians face in their everyday lives.

Palestinian cinema appeared as an extension of the political events in Palestine. This cinema reflects the realities through the characters and narratives portrayed in Palestinian films. Such events encompass vital historical events such as the 1948 Nakba, the 1967 Naksa, the Palestinian resistance movements that emerged in the 1960s, the Oslo Accords, the First Intifada, the Second Intifada, and the daily events experienced by Palestinians from the intifada to the present day, including displacement, home demolitions, and other issues.

Studying the development of the Palestinian cinema reveals how filmmakers have used cinema to resist, preserve memory, and self-represent in the absence of a country. It also helps to contextualize the fragmented and dispersed nature of Palestinian identity because of displacement, as well as the creative ways filmmakers have challenged prevailing narratives about Palestine on a regional and globally scale.

Despite the dilemma of deciding whether a film is Palestinian or not, or what Palestinian cinema is, Salim Al-Beik (2023) argued that:

"The answer to this question involves defining what Palestinian means and what the Palestinian cause encompasses. The Palestinianness of any films is their affiliation with the Palestinian idea, according to Edward Said, and their affiliation with struggle during the time of the revolution, according to Mustafa Abu Ali, and their solidarity with the Palestinian cause today, as an extension of the foundations of Palestinian cinema since the 1970s" (Al-beik, 2023, p. 20).

However, in this context, the term Palestinian cinema is used in this research to refer to films made by Palestinians with the participation of Palestinian actors, with a Palestinian context, regardless of who funded the films financially. This chapter traces briefly the history of the Palestinian cinema from its earliest representations to the contemporary days.

### **The Establishment of the Palestinian Cinema: Pre-1948 Period**

Palestinian cinema began taking shape as a form of silent cinema in 1935, started by Palestinian Ibrahim Hassan Sarhan, a self-taught filmmaker, who began the Palestinian cinematic movement. The first was a documentary film with a musical background about the visit of the King of Saudi Arabia to Palestine, depicting his journey from Jerusalem to Jaffa. The film was silent with a musical background. Later, Jamal al-Asphar, the film's cinematographer, joined Ibrahim Hassan Sirhan to become the creator of pre-1948 Palestinian cinema (Gertz and Khaliefi, 2008). In 1945, Ibrahim Hassan Sirhan and Jamal al-Asphar directed a film called *Realized Dreams* depicting the issue of orphans in Palestine. Later, Ibrahim Hassan Sirhan and Ahmed Hilmi al-Kilani, who studied film in Cairo, established the Arab Film Company production studio together (Gertz and Khaliefi, 2008).

One of the obstacles that Palestinian Cinema faced in its initial stages was the Palestinians' refusal to accept it as a new Western invention that might not be proper for their culture. Furthermore, most of the Palestinians at the time were rural, culturally homogeneous, and self-sufficient, far removed from the outside world. This represented a rejection of cinema and a lack of interest in it (Gertz and Khaleifi, 2008).

This period ended due to the Nakba that befell the Palestinians, as the founder of the Palestinian movement was displaced to Lebanon. The films of this period were lost, and no traces remain. However, Gertz and Khaliefi (2008) mentioned that these periods' films might be given to an unnamed clerk, who then transferred them to an archive, where they may still

be unearthed and undiscovered. Moreover, information about this phase was gathered from people's testimonies, newspapers, and books.

### **The Epoch of Silence: Post-Nakba Era (1948–1967)**

After the Nakba and due to the disintegration of Palestinian society, the Palestinian community was divided into three main areas, the West Bank, the 1948 lands, and the diaspora. Similarly, Palestinian cinema, which began in the 1930s, disintegrated and disappeared for nearly two decades. During this period, Ibrahim Hassan Sarhan's produced a film in 1957 and Abdullah Kawash also produced another film in 1964 (Gertz and Khaliefi, 2008). During this period, there were Palestinian efforts in Jordan and Lebanon to create a film unit that was explicitly established in 1967 as a new period of Palestinian cinema.

### **The Revolutionary Cinema (1967–1982)**

This period 1967-1982 appeared in exile, in Beirut, by Palestinian filmmakers. It focused on the Palestinian revolution. According to Gertz and Khleifi (2008), this is the third stage of Palestinian cinema, while Al-Beik (2025) argues that the 1970s period was the first stage of Palestinian cinema as a cultural and political artistic work'. Gertz and Khaleifi (2008) mentioned that this period was the era of the Palestine Liberation Organization, during which revolutionary documentaries were filmed, without touching on Palestinian narrative films by Palestinian directors.

In this period, the Palestine Film Unit (PFU), a component of the Fatah movement, was founded at the end of 1968 by Mustapha Abu Ali, Hani Jawhariya, and Sulafa Jadallah

(Shafik, 2003a). It was the first filmmaking team to operate inside a Palestinian armed group. Following the Battle of Al-Karamah, when there was a great deal of public interest in the movement, the unit began documenting and photographing the popular events of the Palestinian revolt assert that despite its diversity, revolutionary Palestinian Cinema's period, which took place in refugee camps in the late 1960s and early 1970s, aims to unite the Palestinians (Gertz and Khaleifi, 2008).

The films of this period expanded concerning armed resistance that started in exile after the defeat of Arab countries in the 1967 war. Moreover, during this era, films played a crucial role in rallying support for the Palestinian cause, uniting Palestinians, Arabs, and leftist Europeans. Additionally, these films served as a means to preserve and highlight the rich history and vibrant culture of the Palestinian people. This period ended as a consequence of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon with a loss of the Palestinian archive (Gertz and Khaleifi, 2008).

### **The Return Home (1980-1993)**

With the beginning of the 1980s, the Palestinian revolution began to gradually disappear, and consequently, the structure of Palestinian films, which had been concerned with the revolution in the previous decade, changed. This was due to the shift in the political patterns pursued by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the systematic change in its policies, beginning with the abandonment of armed struggle and moving towards political work strategies. The PLO's objectives shifted from liberating Palestine to establishing a state on the lands of 1967 (Al-Beik, 2025).

In this period, the era of Palestinian narrative cinema began with a documentary film by Michel Khleifi, who is considered the pioneer of this period (Atshan & Galor, 2022). This period extracts the Palestinian narrative from the story of the people of the land and focuses on different social, cultural, and political aspects (Gertz and Khleifi, 2008). Furthermore, the 1980s cinema was characterized by a change towards depicting the daily lives of the Palestinians. In this sense, director Michel Khleifi (2006) agrees that Palestinian films after 1980 shifted from focusing on the political side that only expresses the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), to portraying people as individuals who narrate their stories. According to the director, contemporary Palestinian cinema needed to depict the social aspect of the people, including how they interact socially and how they experience events. The director focuses on accurately portraying the Palestinian People as they are in real life by showing all aspects of the society, especially the problems that women and children face.

### **Post-Oslo Accords Period (1993–2000)**

A new Palestinian identity, Palestinian cinema was deteriorating, in keeping with the Palestinian political situation after the Oslo Accords. Films by Khalifa, Mashrawi, and Su-leiman, without incitement to rejection, are what Al-Beik (2025) calls Oslo Cinema, reflecting reality as it is. Al-Beik argues that this cinema, at this stage, is not militant, but rather, it is dominated by a colonialist character, reflecting the Palestinian condition and the misery that Palestinians experience in their daily lives. This is a reflection of the national trajectory during the period in which these films were made, from the rebellious freedom fighter to the miserable, submissive, or lost ones.

The films of this period combine reality and imagination, between documentary and narrative cinema. The films of Michel Khalifa, for example, tried to extract the dramatic side of the individual and their understanding and search for feelings, anxiety, weakness, hope, and despair. The individual story reflected the story of a group, specifically women, in addition to an effort to confront the prevailing male discourse during the recording of reality in Palestine and the dismantling and reconstruction it cinematically, so that the individual woman would be from this reality documentary and rely on it narratively. The films of Michel Khalifa, showed the oppression of women and children, focusing on the real lives of people (Al-Beik, 2025). Additionally, Alexander (2005) acknowledges that Palestinian cinema after 1993 in the period after Oslo and the establishment of the PLO is characterized by its presentation of a variety of internal issues, including women's rights, the breaking of social restrictions, domestic violence, and environmental damage. In addition to the nationalist idea of liberation, the focus was on the people of Palestine and their right to freedom.

### **Contemporary Palestinian Cinema (2000–Present)**

Palestinian cinema in the 2000s was influenced by the Second Intifada and the political transformations that Palestine witnessed. It takes a new cinematic path. Al-Beik (2025), divided this period into two stages: the first from (2000-2009), and the second from (2010-2024). The first stage of this period began with the Second Palestinian Intifada and continued through the war of genocide on the Gaza Strip, the time his book was published. According to Al-Beik, Palestinian cinema since 2000 has diversified in its styles and themes where the

fragmentation of Palestinian identity has become evident. Among the most prominent pioneers of the second stage of this period were Hani Abu-Asad, Annemarie Jacir, and Najwa Najjar.

Films from this period were initially influenced by the Second Intifada and the depiction of events and suffering experienced by the Palestinian people, such as the invasion of Jenin camp in 2002. Muhammad al-Bakri's film *Jenin Jenin* (2002) is a documentary film that depicts the invasion of the Jenin refugee camp in 2002. Similarly, *Egteyah* (2002) by the director Hassan Nizar, portrays the traumatic experiences of Palestinians in Jenin camp during the days of the invasion (Bresheeth, 2006). Moreover, *Yacub* (2011) examines how the Second Intifada divided Palestinian culture and shows the various challenges that marriage, love, identity, and spatial limitations faced in Hani Abu Asad's films *Rana's Wedding* (2002) and *Paradise Now* (2005).

In the second stage of this period, more specifically, after 2010, the Palestinians experienced three wars on the Gaza Strip, the ongoing division between Fatah and Hamas, and failed attempts at reconciliation and Palestinian unification. This was compounded by the ongoing blockade of Gaza, the marginalization of Palestinian refugees both at home and abroad, and the normalization of relations between Arab countries and the Israeli occupation. The Palestinian issue has transformed from a liberating issue into a dilemma or a tangled issue, with attempts to resolve this dilemma still being made (Al-Beik, 2025).

Palestinian cinema at this stage has developed as a result of the accompanying political and social developments within the same national context. The number of Palestinian

directors, especially females, has increased. The number of Palestinian films has also increased after 2010 due to foreign and Arab funding for Palestinian films. Films during this period have become characterized by clear political and social features. Palestinian cinema in this period is characterized by five main manifestations: the soldier, the military truck, the checkpoints, the prison, and the apartheid wall (Al-Beik, 2025).

By tracing the history of Palestinian cinema, it is seen as intimately intertwined with the Palestinian history that Palestinians experience before the Nakba until the present day. Palestine has gone through many historical stages that have contributed to shaping Palestinian identity and its development. Palestinian Cinema can be considered a tool for presenting the tragedy and oppression caused by the Israeli occupation of the Palestinians by showing the Palestinian reality and how the Israeli occupation influences and shapes Palestinian lives. Cinema is a tool for presenting culture, history, and politics, and for shaping and reflecting the Palestinian personality living under the oppression of the Israeli occupation.

## Chapter Six Discussion

In this section, the researcher presents the interpretations of the results according to the research questions using Foucault's theories of power and Hall's theory of cultural identity. The researcher presents the analysis of social aspects in *The Rana's Wedding* (2002), *Paradise Now* (2005), *Omar* (2013), *The Idol* (2015), and *Huda's Salon* (2021). All these films were produced in the post-Oslo period of Palestinian cinema. This stage was distinguished by a change from stories of resistance that were shared by many people to more personal and complex depictions of what it means to be Palestinian. The researcher analyzes the film's narrative, conversation, and characters and demonstrates how social norms and power dynamics form gender roles, norms, and behaviors. This analysis examines how power relations influence social aspect and identity as represented in Abu Asad's films, thus shedding light on the representation of social structure and and identity in Palestinian cinema.

### ***Rana's Wedding* (2002, 85 minutes)**

*Rana's Wedding* (2002) is Hani Abu Asad's first long feature film. It is characterized by its political tone. It has another name, which is *Jerusalem in another day*, (Al-Beik, 2025). The film tells the story of Rana, a young woman, whose father puts her under social pressure to choose one of two options: to choose a man to marry from a list given to her by her father, or travel with him to Egypt. Her father's condition is that the wedding has to be done before 4:00 PM, which means before he leaves for Egypt. Rana begins searching for her lover Khalil in Jerusalem and Ramallah to tell him to marry her.

The film shows the obstacles that the Israeli Occupation causes to Palestinian life, such as checkpoints, travel bans, clashes, the killing of Palestinian children, and home demolitions. The search for Rana's lover is long and faces other obstacles, including the attempt of the registrar and the villagers to convince Rana's father to marry his daughter to Khalil. Moreover, the obstacle of confiscation of the registrar's ID at an Israeli Occupation's checkpoint, where they are forced to hold the marriage ceremony. A new miserable phase appears for the Palestinian people in terms of coexistence, acceptance and normalization of the Israeli Occupation, not confronting it and being satisfied with the barriers the occupation placed (Al-Beik, 2025).

### **Social Structure: Gender Roles, Marriage, and Social Solidarity**

Palestinian society is a hybrid in the era of modernity. It is bound by customs, traditions, patriarchy, and religion. In this sense, social life, values, and relationships are traditional and linked to social expectations, customs and traditions. In this section, the researcher analyzes social structure; gender roles, marriage, and social solidarity of Palestinian society as presented in *Rana's wedding* (2002). This film was produced after the Oslo accord. It presents the new woman model that challenges social expectations and norms to achieve her goal despite the social constraints.

In *Rana's Wedding* (2002), gender roles, marriage, and social solidarity are reflected extensively in the narrative. It reflects agency, social expectations, and the development of the power dynamics that shape Palestinian society. The film depicts how gender roles are treated, challenged, and reconfirmed in the context of a high-risk and time-sensitive situation.

It portrays Rana's urgent need to marry before her father travels to Egypt at 4 p.m., where she finds herself practicing her agency over family and society's power.

### **Gender Roles, Social Solidarity, and Relations**

Gender is a socially constructed concept that determines how people should behave in different situations according to their biological sex. It also specifies whether people's behaviors are considered socially appropriate or not. Lindsey (2015) defines gender roles as "the expected attitudes and behaviors a society associates with each sex." (Lindsey, 2015, p.5). As mentioned earlier, gender roles in Palestinian society are shaped by social expectations, the authority of family, religion, and societal control through the disciplinary power imposed by these relationships. *Rana's Wedding* (2002) shows that masculinity is constructed from the social norms that shape men's personalities. The Palestinian father - from the old generation men- is depicted in the film as the one who controls women's decisions. He seems like he changes his mind only when other men in the society convince him to. In this film, Abu Asad criticizes men role in the character of Rana. He describes her as strong ambition girl that goes against the social norms towards achieving her independent agency. Rana resists the gender roles imposed on her by society as a beginning of liberating from social constraints.

The film shows that the new generation of young people, love life, resist society to get what they want, both males and females. Unlike Rana's father, the new men generation seems supportive and understanding as embedded in Khalil's character. He is considered a modern figure who behaves in contrast to Rana's father. He is patient,

friendly, and understanding. He tries to calm Rana in her stressed moments. Additionally, he accepts Rana's father's conditions without challenging the social norms, especially agreeing on the dowry and high alimony. This shows the new generation of men who are less attached to social norms and expectations. This reflects the love that Khalil brings to Rana and that he accepts all the conditions to be with her.

In this sense, Foucault (1986) assures:

“Masculine affection, the one who had been loved "gives love in return," and to such an extent that it becomes difficult to know "which of the two is the erastes"; the affection of the one who loves is returned to him by the beloved the way an image is reflected in a mirror.” (Foucault, 1986, p.225)

In *Rana's Wedding* (2002), the solidarity of Palestinian society appears in marriage rituals. The men try to convince Rana's father to accept Khalil's proposal to marry Rana. They support Khalil in his problem and stay with him until the marriage contract is conducted. Here, the collective identity of Palestinian society appears, as people try to solve problems in various ways and put themselves in the place of the person in trouble.

Similarly, all men and women participate in the funeral and support each other, considering martyrdom and loss something collectively shared among the Palestinians. In addition to participating in the wedding as part of social customs. Despite society's rejection of such a marriage, everyone witnessed Rana and Khalil's wedding. The film shows the Palestinian society's ties among individuals. This reflects the self through practical evolution and the creation of the individual's sense of self (Foucault, 1997).

## **Marriage, Patriarchy and Social Power**

*Rana's Wedding* (2002) illustrates the power of social expectations about marriage. It shows that marriage must correspond to specific societal standards and norms such as the timing of marriage, the age of the bride, the way of choosing a partner, and the commitment to preserving the family's honor through disciplinary power that regulates people's behavior and relationships.

This demonstrates that rushing into an unplanned marriage could indicate a potential scandal or sexual involvement before an official marriage in society. This reflects the way society treats and judges individuals. Moreover, since this action is happening against the norms and traditions that society expects, it is expected for people to start thinking that there is something mysterious about the event and start to think, analyze, and create unreal scenarios to make things look logical to them. In this sense, Foucault (1978) assures that discipline assesses individuals in truth by measuring their actions with precision. The penalties imposed are integrated into the individual's knowledge cycle. This means that people of the society get their knowledge about things from the social norms. Meaning that people expect everyone one to do things according to the social expectations. This is visible in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2002, 01:13:01) between two women in the wedding proposal:

THE FIRST WOMAN: May God pass this quickly.

THE SECOND WOMAN: It is a scandal.

It also appears in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2002, 01:14:20) between Rana and her grandmother:

GRANDMOTHER: darling, why do you want to marry this person? Why him in particular?

RANA: I love him

GRANDMOTHER: that is a good reason. But why the rush? Do you want to tell me something?

RANA: It is now or never

GRANDMOTHER: It is a matter of love. Listen dear, if something happens, and you are afraid of the consequences, we can take care of it. If there are any problems, we can solve them.

This conversation indicates the grandmother's suspicions that Rana was involved in a sexual relationship with Khalil, which reflects society's rejection of a girl making love before marriage and choosing her husband. Moreover, it is considered unacceptable and goes against preserving the honor of the whole society. It demonstrates the power of societal norms surrounding women's sexuality and honor, which are embedded in society's collective consciousness. It shows that society sees marriage only as a legal institution and separates the emotional bonds that may exist between the two individuals. Despite this social norm, Foucault (1986) argues that marriage is considered an affection bond rather than a legal

structure. This is obvious through the characters of Rana and Khalil in which they build their life on love and affection.

The film also sheds light upon family and societal expectations towards the groom and the conditions that are required to accept him. This is visible from the perspective that society creates the reality of marital relationships. In this sense, Foucault (1995) assures that power creates the reality in which all the knowledge belongs to this power production. The Palestinian society create the knowledge for individuals to follow in their everyday life, decisions, choices, and behaviors. This appears in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2002, 00:46:13) between Rana and the Registrar:

RANA: my father gave me a list of the men who asked for my hand. He said if you want to marry, he must be one of those on the list.

THE REGISTRAR: They are all respectable: a lawyer, an engineer, a doctor. And businessman.

RANA: I do not want any of them

THE REGISTRAR: Do you think you made a good choice with Khalil?

RANA: Khalil is a good man he is right. He understands me and what is up with me when I am angry.

THE REGISTRAR: But your father is worried about your future. Maybe Khalil isn't the right choice.

RANA: Khalil is fine.

THE REGISTRAR: Tell me what does he do?

RANA: Theatre director.

THE REGISTRAR: My god.

RANA: Very talented. Even during his studies, he got a lot of prizes and awards.

THE REGISTRAR: Really! Bravo. Nice (in a ridiculous manner).

It is clearly shown that the conditions and the characteristics of the groom are a representation of the whole community, not only one individual. In this sense, this reflects that a man who has an educational certificate in medicine, law, engineering, or business is more respectable than one who got it in other fields such as theatre. This obviously shows how people care about the prestige brought by education and occupational status and judge people accordingly in society. In this sense, the examination method that integrates hierarchical oversight and standardized assessment ensures the significant disciplinary roles of allocation and categorization, which pertain to the modality of power relevant to individual differences (Foucault, 1995). This means that people in Palestinian society keep watching, judging and analyzing others' actions to make sure that it coincides with the social norms and expectations.

The patriarchal power is deeply evident in *Rana's Wedding* (2002) from beginning to end. It is represented in the imposition of Rana's father. Where he controls his daughter's

decision to marry. He challenged her by giving her a specific short of time to prepare for her affairs; otherwise, this marriage would not happen. His control over the timing and conditions of his daughter's marriage demonstrates how patriarchal power functions to regulate women's lives and not giving them the freedom of choice.

In *Rana's Wedding* (2002), Rana's father tries to impose his control over Rana in every situation, in an attempt to prevent this marriage from happening. To do so, he gave her a list of names of grooms from whom she had to choose one; otherwise, she would travel with him and leave her lover and homeland, which Rana completely rejected. This event demonstrates her father's expectations and control over her life decisions. Here, the power of fatherhood appears in controlling the children and exercising this authority over them. In this sense, Foucault (1978) argues that power is practiced from numerous sources and is constantly shaped by unequal and shifting relationships within society. This is visible in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2002, 00.03.13) between Rana and her father:

RANA'S DAD: My daughter. I still think you're too young to marry. But, if you must, choose a groom from this list. All of them have a good job and come from a good family. you have until Tuesday to decide or come to Egypt with me and continue studying there. Don't forget Tuesday at four.

On the other hand, as embodied at the beginning of the film, Rana has lost her mother when she was young, this influenced her relationship with her father. Despite that her father seems to control her decisions, this may come from the perspective that her father wants the best for her and afraid for her because she is still young. However, he influenced Rana to

become a confident girl. This is evident in her behaviors to resist to gaining and achieving her dreams.

### **Marriage Proposal and Social Power**

Abu Asad shows the Palestinian wedding rituals in *Rana's Wedding* (2002). It starts with a proposal of marriage where the groom asks for the bride's hand from her father. If the father did not accept the groom for his daughter without convincing reasons, then the registrar has the right to marry them. This shows the legal authority that can be applied to familial institutional law. This is visible in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2002, 00:29:59) between Ramsey, Rana and Khalil:

Ramsey: The lawyer says you cannot marry without parental consent under 21. The registrar has to try to convince the father if your father's refusal of the marriage is not accepted, marriage rites will take place. This is done if the legal execution for stubbing the marriage is denied.

In addition, the film reflects the official marriage proposal. It shows that it is customary for the registrar to instruct the bride's father -as her guardian- on the words to repeat them after him. When finished, the groom repeats the words accepting everything that was said. The dowry and alimony are agreed upon in the same session. In the film, Rana's father ask for high alimony. This explains his fear for his daughter from the future repercussions, especially since he considers her too young for marriage, and thus he preserves his daughter's rights and ensures that the husband respects his daughter and does not abandon her. In this

sense, Foucault (1986) acknowledges that historically, in some cases, a father commonly bestowed his daughter in marriage in his capacity as a formal guardian.

The final rituals of the marriage are also shown, as people gather in the bride's house while she is wearing a white outfit. The women sing Palestinian folk songs, dance, and encourage others to come down to the square and participate in the dance. The women are in one hall and the men are in another hall, separated from each other. This shows that Palestinian society is conservative and has its norms when it comes to the intermingling of men and women.

### **The Israeli Occupation Power, Palestinian Identity, and Marriage**

In *Rana's Wedding* (2002), personal decisions like love and marriage, take place in the context of political Israeli Occupation and limited freedom. In the film, the Israeli Occupation power structure is portrayed as overt military force and pervasive and subtle controls over time, space, and movement, which all penetrate the most private facets of Palestinian existence.

*Rana's Wedding* (2002) reveals the power and authority of the Israeli Occupation to control the Palestinian society directly and indirectly. For example, the it controls Palestinians through military forces, checkpoints, house demolitions. It also put restrictions on time, space, and mobility.as a result, Palestinians' most crucial decisions like marriage and love in linked and influenced by the Israeli Occupation Power where it limited the freedom of Palestinians. So marriage in *Rana's Wedding* (2002) is kind of resistance against

the Israeli Occupation as it takes place and sets on the checkpoints in spite of the Israeli Occupation.

This intersection of marriage and cultural identity reveals how identity is actively constructed through negotiation and defiance. This analysis examines how *Rana's Wedding* (2002) portrays cultural identity as something that is continuously forged through the struggle to exist, belong, and love under occupation. Based on Stuart Hall's theory of cultural identity, this analysis views identity as a process composed of history, culture, and power and considered not something inherent.

Despite the difficult circumstances that delayed and caused tension in the marriage in the film, the marriage eventually takes place despite all the circumstances. The role of the Israeli Occupation in obstructing the marriage is evident through practicing disciplinary power and surveillance over Palestinians. The Israeli Occupation set checkpoints to separate the Palestinian regions, which obstruct movement and travel. In the film, this role was evident in the difficulty of Rana's travel to reach Khalil, as the temporary barriers between Jerusalem and Ramallah are widespread, in addition to the main checkpoint between the cities that the Israeli Occupation deliberately closes.

The plot of the marriage happens due to the Israeli occupation, as the soldiers do not allow the registrar to reach Jerusalem. The soldiers confiscated his identity ended up delaying the marriage. Such practices are evident that the Israeli Occupation also practices bio-politic over Palestinians using checkpoints that create problems in movements. In this sense, Foucault (2003) acknowledges that bio-politics deals with the population as a political and

power issue. This is evident in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2002, 01:16:57) between the registrar, Rana, and Khalil:

The registrar: They took my ID card. Now I am stuck. I have to wait.

*Rana's Wedding* (2002) Palestinian cultural identity is incomplete and constantly changing as Palestine lives under Israeli occupation and colonialism. In this context, Palestinian identity in *Rana's Wedding* (2002) is shaped by the collective identity of Palestinians in resisting the Israeli occupation and refusing to submit to it. In this sense, Hall (1989) argues that:

‘Perhaps, instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished historical fact, which the new cinematic discourses then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a ‘production’, which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation. But this view problematizes the very authority and authenticity to which the term, ‘cultural identity’, lays claim.’ (Hall, 1989, p. 68).

This appears in Rana's resistance against the soldiers when she tried to cross a closed checkpoint, where she was insulted, thus resisted the Israeli soldiers with her naked hands. In addition to the scene of the Israeli occupation soldiers sniping a child at the checkpoint. It also appears that the wedding was held despite the obstacles and checkpoints caused by the Israeli occupation, which make marriage difficult. In this sense, Foucault (1997) asserts that resistance is an aboriginal fact in the power relations world. This means that resistance comes against power regimes and shape the cultural identity of the resister alike.

The film shows that the Israeli Occupation divided Palestine into three main areas which is obvious in shaping and constructing the cultural identity. Besides, the strict measures taken by the Israeli Occupation against Jerusalemites who try to live in the West Bank for three years, where they are subjected to losing their ID card and being prevented from entering Jerusalem. It also illustrates the strict procedures taken by the Israeli occupation against people of Gaza when applying for permission to enter Jerusalem. This leads to family disintegration where they are not allowed to live together. In this sense, power relation controls people's desires, forces, and movements (Foucault, 1980). This appears in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2002, 00:09:51) between Rana and her aunt when Rana asks her about Khalil:

AUNT: He was supposed to come because his mother was supposed to come from Gaza too, but she did not get permission.

Since Palestinians share the same history, colonial aggression, and culture, their collective cultural identity also appears in the collective suffering of the Palestinians when the Israeli occupation demolishes the homes of Palestinians in Jerusalem to oppress them and replace them with settlers. This shows that all Palestinians share the same destiny. Thus, the same resistance action is taken. In this sense, the film shows Palestinian resilience in the face of Israeli power. This appears in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2002, 00:56:37) between Rana and Mary:

RANA: They are demolishing a house on the day I want to build one.

MARRY: Do not worry, we will rebuild it tomorrow.

This emphasizes that Palestinians shape the identity by the shared collective events they witness. They create knowledge about the environment they live in through the daily events they observe. Their identity emerges and is shaped by their feeling and sharing of sorrows and joys of other Palestinians, as well as their awareness of the environment represented by the Israeli Occupation and its efforts in the region.

While Rana's Wedding (2002) presents a clear illustration of the societal and political powers over the Palestinian society using surveillance, social norms, and political restrictions that shape Palestinian identity, *Paradise Now* (2005) focuses mainly on the resistance theme and the effect of the Israeli occupation on Palestinian society in shaping the Palestinian identity

***Paradise Now (2005, 90 minutes)***

*Paradise Now* (2005) revolves around two friends, Khaled and Said. They plan to carry out a martyrdom operation in Tel Aviv. The plan initially fails and is exposed ended up with one of them carrying out the operation alone. The film was shot in Nablus during the Second Intifada, but for security reasons, the filming was moved to Nazareth. According to Al-Beik, (2025), the parties that funded the film were Dutch, German, and French.

*Paradise Now* (2005) focuses on the human and social aspects represented by collaboration, resistance, and the obstacles that Palestinians encounter by the Israeli occupation. It also shows the suffering of Palestinians due to checkpoints and closures and their dream of liberating the country. Additionally, The film discusses two different narratives: the first is the narrative of resistance and the necessity of liberating Palestine from

the Israeli occupation; the second is the narrative of coexistence or finding a means other than armed resistance.

*Paradise Now* (2005) justifies young people's desire to carry out martyrdom operations not for psychological reasons, but rather for external reasons related to power such as the occupation, poverty, unemployment. It also sheds light on the problems the occupation cause to the Palestinians, such as forcing them to collaborate with the Israeli occupation. Additionally, *Paradise Now* (2005) won numerous awards, participated in numerous festivals, and was nominated for an Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film in 2006 (Al-Beik, 2025).

### **Social Structure (Gender Roles and Marriage, and Social Solidarity)**

In *Paradise Now* (2005), gender roles, marriage, and social solidarity are reflected extensively in the narrative. It reflects how the Israeli Occupation influences the social roles for men and women by applying different forms of Power; bio-power, disciplinary power, and even the old form of power (sovereignty). As a result of this shift, the identity of Palestinians in the films became revolutionary where young generations hold the idea of resistance deeply in their hearts by refusing the current reality that Palestinians face.

### **Israeli Power, Social Power, and Gender Roles**

Gender roles in *Paradise Now* (2005) are influenced by two main powers; the Israeli occupation and social norms. The Israeli Occupation exploited social norms to destroy and control society ties through the practice of subjugation the Palestinians. In this sense,

*Paradise Now* (2005) deals with the idea of family honor. It depicts the way Said's father left his family holding a socially unacceptable reputation. Said feels shame about his father's collaboration with the Israeli Occupation and the way people see him and his family. This leads to proving to himself and the society that he is a good man who will change the bad reputation caused by his father.

This analysis shows the traditional model of those who became marginalized by society for doing things that goes against social expectations and norms. In this sense, Foucault (2002) points out that historically, restrictions were typically imposed on individuals who were marginalized within their families, social groups, or local communities deviated from societal norms. They became marginalized due to their conduct, disorder, or irregular lifestyle. This is evident in how gender roles are linked to honor within society and family. The society rejects Said's whole family because his father betrayed his society and work with the Israeli Occupation. This reflects the social expectations and cultural identity that Palestinians hold and shape during. It shows that Palestinians cultural identity is linked to resisting the Israeli Occupation and never collaborate with it. In this sense, Palestinian society expects Palestinians to keep maintaining the social structure that tie Palestinians together by disciplinary power represented in social norms and identity.

Palestinian youth suffer from the Israeli Occupation's measures represented by the checkpoints and pressures that they experience in refugee camps. The film shows the feeling of helplessness and psychological exhaustion among youth. In addition, the emptiness feeling represented by the lack of means of entertainment and self-release. The characters of Khalid and Said appear diving into work, family, and armed struggle work. Suha's character, for

example, expects that the lives of young people, since they enjoy greater freedom than women in Palestinian society, are happy and spend their time entertaining and watching films. This represents the females' expectations about males' norms in general. As mentioned earlier, normality judges can be found everywhere. Wherever an individual is, his body, gestures, behavior, abilities, and success are subject to normality (Foucault, 1997). This is apparent in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2005, 00:20:19) between Suha and Said:

SUHA: What do you do with your free time?

SAID: Nothing. I do not know. What do you mean?

SUHA: Do you go to cafés?

SAID: Sometimes, to smoke a water pipe.

SUHA: What about sports or reading? Do you go to the movies?

SAID: No. There is no cinema in Nablus anyway.

SUHA: I know.

Moreover, this conversation demonstrates the Palestinian involvement in the resistance movement and the absence of any elements of enjoyment in Palestinian society, a society steeped in poverty and misery during the period represented by the film and its characters. This film represents the period following the Second Intifada, when checkpoints and closures were a hallmark of this period. In addition, space and time were limited due to regulating Palestinian movements using the checkpoints, as Al-Beik (2025) noted. Al-Beik also pointed

out that the Second Intifada raised the profile of the Palestinian resistance in all its forms and characteristics. This period demonstrates the deterioration of the Palestinian struggle after the massacres, invasions, and the disappointment that followed, despite all the sacrifices made by the Palestinian people to change the reality.

Moreover, the male characters appear to ignore emotional stability and marriage, even though they are at the expected age for marriage in society. The film shows that they do not initiate love and avoid their true feelings towards such relationships. Foucault (2003) acknowledges that the individual influence of power dynamics includes the desire to educate, shape behavior, and cultivate self-awareness and identities. This indicates resistance fighters' commitment to resistance work, where they do not have the choice to live normal lives and follow their desires. This is evident in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2005, 00:06:45) between Said and Khalid:

KHALID: I think she likes you.

SAID: Stop it.

KHALID: Lucky man. She's Abu Azzam's daughter. All right, I will stop.

In *Paradise Now* (2005), Abu Asad focuses on the role of the Israeli Occupation in shaping Palestinian society and identity. Abu Asad depicts the direct and indirect influence of the Israeli occupation on gender roles. This is evident through the thinking, narrative, and actions of the characters. Abu Asad portrays the masculinity in Khalid and Said through their

actions and thoughts that shaped their gender identity. This appears through social norms and social and political expectations of both genders.

*Paradise Now* (2005) gives ideas about the social role of women in Palestinian society by shaping the main character, Suha, and secondary characters, namely the mother of Khalid and Said. This is evident in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2005, 00:24:46) between Khalid and his guest:

THE GUEST: Say, why does your father limp?

KHALID: During the first Intifada, Israeli soldiers broke into our house. They let him choose which leg he wanted to keep. He chose the right. I would have let them break both rather than be so humiliated.

The above conversation shows how the Israeli occupation influences Palestinian men and women using bio-power by taking control over Palestinians by depriving them of their strength and weakening them physically. Consequently, this influences the social role of men, which is to support their families and fulfill their duties towards them. This makes men and women unable to perform their expected roles in society, and thus the woman has recourse to playing the man's role to support and raise the family financially. In other words, women whose providers or spouse are affected physically hold great responsibility and become stronger and more confident.

Similarly, the Israeli occupation exercises all forms of power over Palestinians even though the sovereignty power, not only over life but also over the health, body, and social

being. This happens by killing and inflicting pain that leads to an individual's disability, which in turn regulates the function physically and socially and limits their agency. Moreover, this act may influence the individual's capacity to engage in society and work. As mentioned earlier, Foucault (2003) argues that sovereignty power exercises the right to make life and to let die over individuals. In this sense, the Israeli Occupation practices sovereignty power to prevent Palestinians from resisting and spread terror in the hearts of who tries to resist.

In addition, the film indicates that Said's family is influenced by the Israeli occupation, which forced Said's father to collaborate with the Israeli occupation. This is visible to have resulted from the bad economic situation. This in turn led to the killing of Said's father. Moreover, this event influences the role of the mother and children. In this sense, the film presents the mother as the one who does all the work to meet the needs of her family, in addition to the fact that Said works for a small wage to help his mother, despite his complete rejection of the policy of working in the West Bank. This appears in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2005, 00:15:30) between Said and his mother:

SAID: I got a work permit for Israel. I am going to Tel Aviv tomorrow.

SAID'S MOTHER: When did you get it?

SAID: Today.

SAID'S MOTHER: Congratulations. That is wonderful, my son. Have you told Abu Salim?

SAID: No, not yet.

SAID'S MOTHER: You should. You are lucky he gave you a job.

SAID: And he is lucky to have such cheap labor.

The previous conversation indicates the difficulty of marital life under the Israeli occupation. It appears that these difficulties cause the weakness of social and marital relations. This happens because of the fall of economic life and the limitation of the family's support to the man as a result of the Israeli Occupation. This in turn leads to total dependence on the man. Such difficulties come from the fact that the Israeli occupation controls all Palestinians and takes control over their bodies. In this sense, Foucault (2003) assures that power approaches fundamentally focus on the individual body. They involved all devices used to verify the spatial arrangement of individual bodies such as alignment and surveillance. Besides the organization of a comprehensive field of visibility surrounding those individuals. In this sense, Israeli weakening the ability of Palestinians to live a good live driving them to resist as they have nothing to lose.

*Paradise Now* (2005) focuses on Suha's role, her independence, and the direct influence of the Israeli occupation on her; her father was martyred and she found herself alone and independent. She rejects armed resistance due to the bitterness she experienced in losing her father who was killed by the Israeli Occupation after being a resistance fighter. As mentioned earlier, power controls and shapes individuals and who they are (Foucault, 1980). This is evident in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2005, 00:22:09) between Suha and Said:

SAID: Is it true that you are Abu Azzam's daughter? They say he was a hero. You must be very proud of him.

SUHA: I'd rather he were still alive than be proud of him.

SAID: Thanks to him and his fight, our cause is still alive today.

SUHA: There are always other ways to keep the cause alive.

This conversation also indicates the identity construction in two characters. The first is Suha, who lives in the diaspora and lost her father after being killed by the Israeli occupation. What makes her despise armed struggle is that she was forced to live without a father in the diaspora which shape her identity this way. On the other hand, Said, as a resistance fighter, holding the ideology of resistance and live in Palestine hold the collective cultural identity towards resisting the Israeli Occupation. This identity constructed from the daily life events that he faces, his father's disability that the Israeli Occupation did, and the Israeli Occupation that keeps confiscate lands and kill leaders and children. Said believes that armed struggle is the only way to get rid of the Israeli Occupation while Suha believes in diplomacy alone.

### **Israeli Power and the Palestinian Identity**

Palestinian national identity is developed in *Paradise Now (2005)* in the Israeli checkpoints, armed struggle, and resistance against the Israeli occupation. The film also shows how social expectations shape national identity as well as resistance as part of the identity of refugees in Palestinian camps.

*Paradise Now* (2005) primarily focuses on the power dynamics of the Israeli occupation and the Palestinian resistance. It shows the Israeli occupation's power against Palestinians using their authority, control, and economic restrictions. Such differences in the balance of power create a dilemma. This dilemma drives the main characters, Khalid and Said, to consider martyrdom operations as a way to regain agency and a response to Israeli forces' killings of Palestinian children, civilians, and resistance leaders. In this sense, Foucault (1997) argues that resistance stays superior to the powers of the process where power dynamics are forces to change simultaneously with the resistance. This is apparent in the conversation (Abu Asad, 2005, 01:10:50) between Khalid and Suha:

KHALID: In this life, we are dead anyway. One only chooses bitterness when the alternative is even bitterness.

SUHA: And what about us? The ones who remain? Will we win that way? Don't you see that what you are doing is destroying us? In addition, that you give the Israeli Occupation an excuse to carry on?

KHALID: So with no excuse, will the Israeli Occupation stop?

SUHA: Perhaps. We have to turn it into a moral war.

KHALID: How, if the Israeli Occupation has no morals?

At the same time, the film portrays the moral norms that Palestinian fighters have in the battle, where they do not kill children in contrast to the Israeli forces. Besides, they choose their targets carefully by determining those who are involved directly in murdering

Palestinians. This is visible in the scenes of Said's refusal to enter the bus because there is a little girl inside, while entering the other bus at the end of the film, which holds only Israeli soldiers. In this sense, Foucault (1995) assures that power evokes reality and domains of objects, besides rituals of truth concerning individuals and knowledge.

Abu Asad portrays Palestinians as having limited power in contrast to the Israeli power. It shows the main characters sacrificing themselves in favor of reviving the Palestinian cause knowing that armed struggle is the only way to free their country. The film shows the influence of the Israeli occupation as a powerful force on Palestinians' resistance against this power as intertwined powers that create the resistance ideology. As mentioned earlier, resistance exists where power is (Foucault, 1978). This is visible in the conversation (Abu Asad, 2005, 00:22:25) between Suha and Said:

SUHA: There are always other ways to keep the Palestinian cause alive.

SAID: That is not for us to decide. The Israeli occupation defines the resistance.

SUHA: Resistance can take on many forms. But we must accept that we have no military might to find alternatives.

SAID: And we pay the price for our grandparents' defeat!

The film depicts the difference in ideologies between Palestinians living in the homeland, especially in refugee camps, and those who live in the diaspora. It appears that Palestinians living under Israeli occupation prefer armed struggle, while those outside look at the humanitarian side and try to find less bloody ways to resist. This indicates the dominant

discourse that separates Palestine away of its historical and political context. In this sense, Foucault (1991) argues that shaping the body creates knowledge about the individual, while learning distinctive procedures leads to certain behaviors and the development of skills. This is evident in the difference between the characters of Khalid and Said on the one hand and Suha on the other as she came from different background and place.

*Paradise Now* (2005) portrays part of the Palestinian resistance ideology and choice that deals with accepting a one-state solution and living peacefully with Israelis. Despite that, the majority of Palestinians do not accept this solution. The film shows that the Israeli Occupation also refuses it and wants only a Jewish state with no Palestinians. This appear in a statement by Khalid in the film:

"We are to either accept the occupation forever or disappear. We have tried with all possible means to end the occupation with political and peaceful means. Despite it all, the Israeli Occupation continues to build settlements, confiscate land, Judaize Jerusalem, and carry out ethnic cleansing. They use their war machine and their political and economic might to force us to accept their solution: That we accept either inferiority or be killed." (Abu Asad, 2005, 00:29:22)

This conversation shows the Israeli Occupation controls Palestinians and forces them to waive their right. However, this leads Palestinians to resist the Israeli occupation or subjugate to its power. On the other hand, Israelis live a good life and want Palestinians to have a miserable life. In this sense, Foucault (1997) asserts:

"Those who try to control, determine, and limit the freedom of others are themselves free individuals who have at their disposal certain instruments they can use to govern others. Thus, the basis for all this is freedom, the relationship of the self to itself and the relationship to the other. Whereas, if you try to analyze power not on the basis of freedom, strategies, and governmentality, but on the basis of the political institution, you can only conceive of the subject as a subject of law. One then has a subject who has or does not have rights, who has had these rights either granted or removed by the institution of political society; and all this brings us back to a legal concept of the subject." (Foucault, 1997, p.300)

The film shows the difficulties of mobility and traveling ban that Palestinians face due to the Israeli permanent and temporary checkpoints and barriers. Consequently, People have to walk long distances to get out of the checkpoints. This may be dangerous and cause injury or killing by the Israeli forces' fire. Besides, this turns the West Bank into a prison where mobility becomes more complicated. As mentioned earlier, power relations control the individual and force them to act the way it orders (Foucault, 1995). It is noticeable in those statements:

SUHA: Nablus became a prison (Abu Asad, 2005, 01:07:11).

SAID: Life here is like life imprisonment (Abu Asad, 2005, 01:16:10).

## **Social Power and Palestinian Identity**

*Paradise Now* (2005) exposes national pride and appreciation for the martyrs. This is visible through commemorating their memory by carrying out martyrdom operations to complete their struggle against the Israeli occupation. This is recognizable by the frequent talk about the martyr leaders and the reminder to follow up on their struggles. People expect the families of the martyrs to feel proud of their heroic work, while Suha's character, for example, appears to dislike national work, and thus people feel surprised when they know that she is not proud of her father's heroism.

Society expects people to unite and stand together without submitting to the Israeli occupation and its methods of forcing people to collaborate with it. This is clear in the restaurant in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2005, 00:10:26) between Khalid, the restaurant owner, and a customer:

CUSTOMER: We should just kill them. Drag them through the streets by their hair and tear them apart.

RESTAURANT OWNER: Who are you talking about?

CUSTOMER: The collaborators.

RESTAURANT OWNER: Sure.

CUSTOMER: And their families, neighbors, and those who lend them money.

KHALID: So you would kill everyone. What do their friends and family have to do with it?

This conversation shows the power of the society in determining the social structure and order to maintain the unity of social and national identity. People refuse the existence of collaborators in the society, reject them, and take real action against them such as killing them and denying them out of the society.

In the same context, the film shows people judging others based on their family's reputation, especially the family of the collaborators. This creates a feeling of weakness for family members and thus, a challenge to overcome such a reputation by doing heroic work. As mentioned earlier, the action of judging has expanded strictly to where the normalizing power has spread. Besides, we live in a society where individuals always judge normality (Foucault, 1995). This appears in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2005, 00:03:33) between Said, Khalid, and a customer:

The customer: It is crooked! Just like your father!

*Paradise Now* (2005) portrays social solidarity as represented in resistance and social norms. It shows how resistance and social expectations shape the solidarity within Palestinian society. For instance, martyrdom represents a collective struggle related to social duty toward society. *Paradise Now* (2005) shows that Palestinian society considers the action of freedom fighters as an extension and continuation of the idea of armed resistance. This idea is adopted by society and thus becomes part of the social norms. Besides, armed struggle is reinforced by social expectations of society's unity. This is visible in the film through the feeling of

responsibility towards the homeland and the hope of liberating it. This responsibility comes as a result of society's impact on the individual's behavior, which eventually turns into a belief that calls for social solidarity. This appears as a power relation mechanism toward people's knowledge. As mentioned before, power relations influence all machines used to verify the spatial arrangement of individual bodies (Foucault, 2003).

In *Paradise Now* (2005) Palestinian society expects Palestinians not to become inferior to the Israeli occupation and not to collaborate with it. This in turn supports the idea of social unity in Palestinian society and its belief in the necessity of standing together. Similarly, social unity appears in freedom fighters' responsibility for taking care of the families of martyrs as part of the extension of armed struggle and national solidarity. In this sense, people have much respect for the martyrs and their families and their appreciation for the sacrifices made by these martyrs considering the personal sacrifice as a collective one. From this perspective, Foucault (1982) argues that power dynamics are deeply embedded in the social nexus, rather than being reconstructed above society. This is apparent in Abu Karem's conversation (Abu Asad, 2005, 00:37:14) with Khalid and Said:

ABU KAREM: You are our pride and joy. Your families are our families. We will protect them.

Since the emergence of fixed military checkpoints after 1993 (Habbas, 2022), the Israeli occupation has been closing Palestinian regions frequently according to political circumstances and Palestinian military operations against the Israeli occupation. The Israeli occupation considers this as a way to overcome the Palestinian resistance. According to

Foucault (2001), power breaks down any resistance that it faces. Moreover, because of the checkpoint closure, a new phenomenon emerged where Palestinians allow those who are stuck due to this closure to sleep at their homes. It is straightforward in the film in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2005, 00:14:40) between Said and his mother:

SAID: Jamal's staying overnight, Mother. They closed the road to Sabastia.

SAID'S MOTHER: He is always welcome here.

It also appears in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2005, 00:16:43) between Khalid's father, Khalid, and his friend:

KHALID'S FRIEND: But I would like to stay the night. They closed the roads to Sabastia.

KHALID'S FATHER: You are always welcome here.

KHALID: What is this? I already said you could stay.

These conversations also show the social solidarity among Palestinians. It confirms the increases social solidarity as a way of resistance, maintaining national unity, and a development part in national identity among Palestinians as a result of the Israeli Occupation.

After explaining the portrayal of power dynamics in *Paradise Now* (2005), where they intertwine to shape Palestinian society, the researcher goes deep into analyzing *Omar* (2013), where power relations represented in Israeli Occupation, social power, and patriarchy

intertwine in the narrative and characters. These powers are visible in marriage, gender roles, social solidarity, and influence identity.

***Omar (2013, 98 minutes)***

*Omar* (2013) portrays the dreams of Palestinian youth for freedom, dignity, love, and building a family under the constraints of Israeli occupation and the challenges they face along the way. It sheds light on the harsh realities experienced not only by resistance fighters but by all Palestinians. The story follows Omar and Nadia, two young Palestinians trying to build a life together while the Israeli occupation works to obstruct them in every aspect.

*Omar* (2013) highlights themes of betrayal among friends, the role of the Israeli Occupation in crushing their dreams and homeland, and the deep sense of loss felt by Palestinians. Additionally, it emphasizes the impact of physical barriers like walls and checkpoints that divide the West Bank and the interior, as well as the identity issues that arise from this fragmentation. *Omar* (2013) was nominated for an Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film in 2014 (Al-Beik, 2025).

**Social Structure (Gender Roles, Marriage, and Social Solidarity)**

In the context of Palestinian cinema, social structure (gender roles, marriage, and social solidarity) play a huge role in forming the narrative and characters of the films. The roles of gender are supported through social and cultural norms and the institutions of society that control the way people should conduct themselves. In this sense, Foucault theories on power and knowledge provide insight into how power institutions, for instance, family and society,

control the whole society's mind and create a body of knowledge through discourse. Foucault (1978) asserts, "Power is not an institution, nor a structure, nor a possession. It is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society" (Foucault, 1978, p.93).

### **Gender Roles, Marriage, and the Israeli Occupation**

Hani Abu Asad portrays gender roles in *Omar* (2013) through the lens that reflects the Israeli Occupation, Social power, and Patriarchy. Abu Asad shows the influence of these dynamics on Palestinian society in refugee camp. In this sense, the Palestinian male, embodied in the role of the freedom fighter, believes that one of his priorities is to preserve his honor in its true and moral sense. This means liberating the land from the Israeli occupation, in addition to protecting the females of his family. In this sense, Foucault (1980) argues that power affects individuals and shapes who they are. Besides, people cannot be separated from the power that controls them. Through this dynamic, the Israeli forces are embodied directly and influence the role of the Palestinian man in protecting his country through armed resistance. This appears in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2013, 00:13:04) between, Omar, Amjad, and Tarek:

TAREK: Why tonight?

OMAR: Every day we wait is another day of occupation.

While the female role in terms of resistance is embodied in the female's imagination. Nadia embodied the role of the female in her discussion with Omar, who dreamed of

liberating her lover from prison through armed resistance and carrying weapons in the conversation (Abu Asad, 2013, 00:38:29):

OMAR: What did you do while I was gone?

NADIA: Nothing. I kept dreaming I would learn to shoot and rescue you.

This conversation indicates that women do not participate in armed struggle at the time that the film represents. It shows that Palestine as patriarchal society controls gender roles and grant men the right to resist the Israeli Occupation. So Abu Asad criticizes the Palestinians society for the inequality between men and women.

As for the influence of the Israeli Occupation on the stereotypical portrayal of females, Abu Asad depicts the issue of collaboration with the Israeli occupation and the Palestinian man's threat to the honor of the females, in exchange for collaboration with the Israeli occupation. In this portrayal, Palestinian society appears as a patriarchal society in which men try to maintain the female's reputation and honor by various means. In this sense, the Israeli Occupation as subjugation system uses surveillance methods to control gender roles by taking benefits of the social norms of society.

*Omar* (2013) shows that the Israeli Occupation forces Palestinians to collaborate with it to control the relationship between men and women. Furthermore, the Israeli Occupation uses this technique as a weapon to control the Palestinian's behaviors towards the resistance works. It also shows the Israeli occupation's exploitation of the structure of Palestinian society and the social norms represented by female honor to stop the Palestinian resistance.

In short, it shows how the Israeli occupation uses social norms in favor of controlling the Palestinian man, restricting his role by forcing him to focus only on his personal life and destroy his role as a freedom fighter.

*Omar* (2013) reveals the intertwining of political life in marriage and the inability to separate. Abu Asad shows that the Israeli occupation, as a powerful institution, strongly influences people's decision to marry. This appears in the representation of the Israeli checkpoints and the Apartheid wall, which works as a prison to separate Palestinians who live in the West Bank from those who live in the 1948 lands. It also appears in Israeli actions to limit the freedom of movement for Palestinians. Consequently, these geo-political divisions make it difficult for the Palestinians to reach their fiancées and loved ones. Thus, having different identities and difficulty in arranging marriages due to the division of Palestinian cities and regions.

The film shows the risks that expose Palestinian youths to danger, such as the surveillance and shooting of those who pass the Apartheid wall and repeated arrests. In this sense, Foucault (1995) acknowledges that the influence of surveillance is lasting even if it is not continuous. This appears in the scenes of Omar crossing the wall to reach his beloved where Israeli soldiers stop and humiliate him in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2013, 00:10:29) between Omar and one of the soldiers:

THE SOLDIER: where are you going?

OMAR: Work.

THE SOLDIER: Where have you been?

OMAR: The casino.

THE SOLDIER: We have a clown here. Show Your ID. Where have you been?

OMAR: My girlfriend's.

THE SOLDIER: Ah, lover boy

Abu Asad touches on another difficulty with marriage due to the Israeli occupation, which is the Israeli occupation's surveillance of the Palestinians by employing spies among friends. This in turn makes the individuals constantly cautious and regulate their actions for fear of the consequences that may result.

*Omar* (2013) shows the role of the spy in destroying relationships that were about to reach marriage by spreading fear and doubt in the souls of lovers, exposing young people to imprisonment, thus reducing the possibility of their marriage at the expected social age. Additionally, pushing young people to collaborate with the Israeli occupation has a sequence of ruining their reputation in society, thus rejecting the person who collaborates with the Israeli occupation. In this sense, those who collaborate with the Israeli occupation are doing abnormal things according to society's norms and are excluded from their society. According to Foucault (1995), the constant separation between what is considered normal and abnormal that everyone experiences reflects our modern times using binary labels and exclusion on various issues. This appears in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2013, 01:06:08) between Nadia and Omar after spreading the news about Omar's collaboration with Israel:

NADIA: Please, I cannot be seen with you.

In addition, in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2013,01:08:56) between Omar and Amjad's sisters:

AMJAD'S SISTER: Omar, please do not come here anymore.

In an attempt to escape from the current political condition, settle down, and search for safety, Abu Asad shows that youth dreams of leaving the country to search for stability and avoid the political and social issues that they, as Palestinians, witness. As mentioned earlier, power relations control people's movements, desires, bodies, and forces (Foucault, 1980). This appears in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2013, 00:45:44) between Nadia and Omar:

NADIA: I dream of leaving this place.

In another context, Abu Asad shows that marriage and resistance do not meet. In the film, the Palestinian freedom fighter appears wanted by the Israeli occupation, thus he lacks the stability required for marriage. This ends up in the failure of marriage plans due to the interference of the Israeli occupation and the continuous arrests of Palestinians. Despite this, Abu Asad shows Palestinians hope to seek stability despite the surrounding obstacles and difficult circumstances. It appears that the Palestinians know that the Israeli occupation is not permanent and that one day they will be free from all restrictions. In this sense, Weber (1980) argues that power is the opportunity for individuals in social relations to achieve their dreams and will, especially as opposed to the resistance of others.

Similarly, Abu Asad shows Omar in a groom's formal suit in the shop immediately after the shooting operation. This is an evident way to show Palestinians hope for liberation, building families, and establishing a stable life. This is visible in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2013, 00:17:46) between Omar and the seller woman when Omar wore a new formal suit:

OMAR: Does it fit well?

### **Gender Roles, Marriage, and Social Power**

In connection with the power of Palestinian society, Abu Asad shows its control of gender roles by surveillance and social expectations. Social expectations are the behavior that society expects from individuals based on several standards set by society. The film shows that social expectations influence individuals' decisions, making it difficult for individuals to do the thing they want without thinking about their consequences. Foucault (1995) asserts that power produces reality, and all individual knowledge belongs to this production of power. In *Omar*, society's power is represented in the social expectations regards women. It expects a woman to get married, give birth to children, hold responsibility for raising them, and give up their dreams. In *Omar* (2013), Nadia finds herself alone, struggling with life to raise her children while sacrificing her dreams concerning studying and working. This appears in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2013, 01:28:23) between Nadia and Omar:

OMAR: Did you continue your studies?

NADIA: I did, but when the kids came, I changed to studying housewifery. I have the best grades in this subject. I will pick it back up when they are older.

According to Wodak (1997), gender identities are the result of a variety of processes and behaviors in everyday life that reflect and maintain gendered power dynamics. As for Nadia, when she was school-age, she was ambitious about studying and working, as she was doing them at the same time. This behavior shows that society expects women to be in limited roles at home, school, or work, while it is hard to do all simultaneously. On the other hand, the man is expected to work and be absent for long periods of the day to secure a living for his family, and thus it remains the responsibility of the woman to take care of the home and children.

On the other hand, men are expected to carry family obligations and financial commitments when their parents are away, incapable, or dead. In this sense, social expectations besides family duty create huge stress on men's shoulders. For instance, men have to work hard to prepare themselves to get married, build a house, save money for the dowry, and feed their families and take care of them. According to *Omar* (2013), society seems to portray a specific image of gender roles to balance the relationship between men and women in everyday life. Besides, Abu Asad touches on the economic difficulties in Palestinian society that drive men to accept collaboration with the Israeli Occupation as a source of income to pay for life expenses.

Abu Asad shows a social issue concerning unmarried women as a burden on their families. This is visible in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2013, 00:04:39) between Amjad and his friends complaining about his condition:

AMJAD: I have seven sisters, and not one of them is married. I have to feed them all. They are nice, God bless them. But not one of them is pretty.

In this point, Abu Asad touches on the standards of societal pressure and judgments in Amjad's words, by mocking women's beauty and categorizing the standards of beauty for females in society. It has shown that society views a woman whom it classifies as socially unacceptable based on her appearance, besides limiting her place at home and reduces her chance of getting married. In this context, society judges and decides the fate of the socially unacceptable woman as she lacks beauty, so for them, no one will accept her as a wife, and therefore the family must do its role to protect and feed her.

In the context of emotional and physical pain, Foucault (1995) asserts that power relations control the body and force it to act the way it orders. In this sense, Abu Asad shows that men are expected to act strong, minimize, or hide their feelings. That is seen when men in the film try to act strong and show masculinity as a reflection of social expectations about their gender. This can be seen in Omar's character in more than one scene. It appears when he tries to hide his physical pain caused by the Israeli military's torture. He avoids direct answers when asked about such pain using metaphor phrases such as "I fell off a bike" (Abu Asad, 2013, 00: 13.23), or direct answers without explanation such as in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2013, 00:37:56) between Nadia and Omar:

NADIA: Does it hurt?

OMAR: no!

On the other hand, using humor as a tool to avoid expressing pain such as in the conversation (Abu Asad, 2013, 00:48:18) between Omar and his sister:

OMAR'S SISTER: What did they feed you in jail?

OMAR: Stuffed chicken, stuffed squash, pizza (Ironically).

It also appears at Tarek's funeral where Omar shows solid signs of sadness and keeps his feelings inside his heart, while Amjad could not hide his feelings and thus cries. This is visible in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2013, 01:22:21) between Amjad and Omar:

OMAR: why are you crying?

AMJAD: because you are not

This scene shows the fragile personality of Amjad who in a previous scene tried to show his strength by telling lies and exaggerating his heroism in violent actions in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2013, 00:05:57) between him and Omar:

AMJAD: I hit the first one in the stomach, the second in the head with my elbow, and the third I punched in the face! His teeth tore open my knuckles!

OMAR: The gashes were so deep you could have planted onions in them (Ironically).

In this sense, Amjad tries to feel his masculine power through exaggeration and bravado in storytelling to show his friend that he is a man capable of defending himself and others. This shows that society expects men to be physically and emotionally strong so the whole society can rely on them, thus, the whole society would be classified as united and strong. This supports Foucault's idea regarding the power relations that are represented in society, which controls and judges the actions of others to make them appear and act in a way that it wants (Foucault, 1995). In this sense, Amjad try to behave in a way that his society respects so he can feel himself as a masculine man.

Abu Asad portrays Palestinian women as curious women who gather information and gossip about other people through surveillance mechanisms. This characterization is portrayed in Amjad's sisters and girls at school conversations. This is visible in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2013, 00:40:20) between Amjad's sisters and Omer:

AMJAD'S SISTERS: When will you choose a bride?

OMAR: After your wedding.

This discourse shows a specific age at which the society expects men to be ready for marriage. Besides, society expect a man who has work and is ready financially to be ready for marriage. In the same context, girls appear to care too much about men's news and hurry to spread rumors and gossip. Besides, monitoring what people do and analyzing everything around them. This is seen in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2013, 00:53:12) between Nadia and Omar:

NADIA: Amina is spreading rumors that you are a traitor. Many girls believe her. They say it must be true. Why else would you be out of the prison already?

Abu Asad shows that making love openly is something taboo in society through the actions of Nadia and Omar. It is not allowed for a girl to love and go out with a lover. Foucault (1980) acknowledges that the individual is a product of power relations as it controls his desires, body, forces, and movements. This is shown when Omar and Nadia keep turning around frequently to check whether anyone has seen them together. In addition, they meet in secret places, such as Nadia's house when no one is there, behind the fences on the way to the school, and inside the alley. Similarly, when Tarek felt that his friends were looking directly at his sister with looks of admiration, he left the house and took his friends with him to protect his sister from the clear looks of affection by his friends.

As for the love relationship and the woman's role in supporting her lover, Abu Asad shows the women's curiosity and desire to know everything that is going on with their lovers by insisting on knowing. While men try not to go into details to protect their lovers. This appears in different conversations (Abu Asad, 2013, 00:38:45) between Omar and Nadia, one of them is:

NADIA: Were you behind the Huwara operation?

OMAR: Let us not talk about it.

NADIA: It is better for you not to know.

NADIA: Don't you trust me?

OMAR: Nadia, it is for your safety.

This shows the Palestinian woman's loyalty, risking safety, and demonstrating a commitment to a love relationship despite external challenges. These challenges include obstacles of the Israeli occupation, family, and financial problems. Moreover, they contribute to creating distances between lovers, thus dallying proposing marriage. This appears in the following statements:

NADIA: I am ready to live with you anywhere (Abu Asad, 2013, 00:45:57).

NADIA: I am risking my life for you. I am ready to wait for you forever (Abu Asad, 2013, 01:06:48).

On the other hand, Abu Asad portrays Men's loyalty to personal sacrifices for love and commitment as a way of proving masculinity. This appears in Omar's insisting and repeating his statement about marrying Nadia by asking Tarek in those conversations:

I want to marry Nadia (Abu Asad, 2013, 00:43:14).

Whatever it costs me, I want to marry Nadia (Abu Asad, 2013, 00:43:47).

I want to marry her (Abu Asad, 2013, 00:43:23).

After that, I want to marry Nadia (Abu Asad, 2013, 00:55:13).

Abu Asad reveals that the expectations of society and family are involved greatly in marriage plans. Society expects a young man who works and is financially stable to marry once he meets these conditions. As mentioned earlier, such power produces knowledge that

becomes the reality of this power production (Foucault, 1995). This is noticeable in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2013, 00:21:57) between Omar and Tariq, where Amjad intervenes to talk:

OMAR: I am thinking about settling down.

AMJAD: Where did you get the money?

OMAR: I have been saving up to build a house.

This conversation reveals one of the conditions for marriage in Palestinian society represented in financial sufficiency and stability. The film shows the difficulty of economic life in Palestine where young people suffer from a lack of work and the high cost of living and marriage, which influence their ability to marry.

A critical evaluation of the family of the bride's role reveals that the family expects its daughter to have a husband who can support her and has good morals and reputation in society. From Foucault's perspective, this expectation uncovers the disciplinary power that monitors people's behaviors to judge and act in a way that controls their desires. In this sense, Foucault (1995) argues:

“In appearance, the disciplines constitute nothing more than an infra-law.

They seem to extend the general forms defined by law to the infinitesimal level of individual lives, or they appear as methods of training that enable individuals to become integrated into these general demands.” (Foucault, 1995, p.222)

This is obvious in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2013, 01:19:21) between Nadia's father and Omar regarding Amjad's marriage proposal to Nadia:

NADIA'S FATHER: Well, is he ready? Does he have enough money for a house and to support a family?

However, the girl's opinion about marriage and choosing a life partner is completely different. Abu Asad shows that girls are ready to live with the husband they choose under any circumstances and in any place. This appears through a conversation (Abu Asad, 2013, 00:45:57) between Omar and Nadia:

NADIA: I am ready to live with you anywhere. Even on Mars.

OMAR: Mars is too far. Let us stay here.

NADIA: It does not matter where. I just want to be with you.

### **Gender Roles, Marriage, and Patriarchy**

Patriarchy in *Omar* (2013) appears through Tarek's character in male's authority over females to push silence and force actions. As Nadia's brother, he believes that Nadia's place is just at home and school and that he has the right to silence her whenever he wants if he feels that she wants to shift from family norms and resist her brother's authority. In this sense, Foucault (1978) argues that resistance always exists where power stands, and this resistance is never disconnected from power. Family Power and resistance appear in a

conversation (Abu Asad, 2013, 00:03:18) between Nadia and Tarek in the presence of Amjad and Omar:

NADIA: I want to come.

TAREK: Where to? You talk too much. Go inside.

NADIA: You talk too much (repeating Tarek's words).

TAREK: Go Inside, I said!

The issue of honor appeared in the film with its realistic reflection of how society and family view such issues and their consequences. Social and familial expectations represented the expected behavior of a brother who considers himself the protector of his sister and tries hard to protect her, preserve her honor, and prevent anyone from harming or exploiting her sexually, mentally, and physically. For instance, when Tarek learned that his sister was pregnant by his friend in an extramarital relationship. Tarek without logical thinking proceeded to kill him and acknowledged it. This shows the violent reaction to personal and familial betrayal.

On the other hand, Omar's opinion was completely different. Although he knew that his beloved had betrayed him, he did not stop defending her and covering up her act; knowing that society would not have mercy on her, so he suggested asking for her hand in marriage from Amjad to prevent the killing. This appears in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2013, 01:16:47) between Omar and Tarek:

OMAR: The only way is to let her marry him.

TAREK: I will kill you!

The conversation above shows the contradiction in Palestinian society in dealing with honor issues. This behavior shows the trend that shapes Palestinian society as a conservative society that maintains values and morals. From Foucault's point of view, disciplined society decides what a person should and should not do, and therefore all actions are subject to this institution. McHoul and Grace (2015) assert that power is disciplinary as it tries to rule men and women using diverse techniques. In this sense, the film shows that when doing something taboo, the family as part of the society, decides to eliminate it. This appears as a lesson to those who try to do something outside the framework of society. Thus, preserving the values that constitute society. Moreover, from a masculine perspective, preserving girls' honor in society is the male's responsibility, considering that the female is weak and exposed to danger, thus not having the power to maintain herself alone due to her dependence on males.

*Omar* (2013) represents patriarchy through the actions of the characters. It indicates the traditional form of family and society and its expectations. Besides, showing the interference of parents and brothers in women's decisions regarding marriage.

Abu Asad shows the traditions of formally asking the bride's father for the woman's hand in *Omar* (2013). It is evident that Amjad's family is not present, thus Omar contributes to being the agent for Amjad's family. The film reveals that in Palestinian society, marriage requires asking the people of the society about the groom's reputation and whether he is

financially, self-sufficient, and ready for marriage or not. It is apparent as part of norms in Palestinian society. In other words, Foucault (1995) argues:

“The judges of normality are present everywhere. We are in the society of the teacher-judge, the doctor-judge, the educator-judge, the 'social worker'-judge; it is on them that the universal reign of the normative is based; and each individual, wherever he may find himself, subjects to it his body, his gestures, his behavior, his aptitudes, his achievements.” (Foucault, 1995, p.304)

This statement confirms that Palestinian society is judgmental and follows social norms in every aspect of life. Here, marriage is supposed to happen according to specific conditions and circumstances regarding the groom. The groom is under examination to see if he fits marriage requirements and conditions that the society sets.

Abu Asad points out the importance of the brother's role in accepting the groom for his sister first. Subsequently, the father asks the bride about her approval or not. The paternal standards appear clearly in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2013, 01:20:14) between Nadia's father and Nadia:

NADIA'S FATHER: What do you say, my dear?

NADIA: It is your decision.

In this situation, the father appears responsible for deciding on his daughter's marriage. Besides that, the girl relies on her father, considering him her representative who knows what suits her. Therefore, she appears subjugated and gives her father the right to act and agree on

her behalf. Examining this scene thoroughly shows that the family applies the power of discipline over girls, which influences their choices. In this sense, Foucault (1995) acknowledges that the power of discipline makes individuals both objects and devices of its exercise. In this sense, this also reflects Palestinians society as a patriarchal society that does not give girls much freedom in making decisions.

Abu Asad shows that marriage indicates a reward for proving masculinity. It is clear in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2013, 00:55:13) between Omar and Tarek:

TAREK: And after, I want to marry Nadia.

OMAR: Sure, but she has to agree. My family does, too. I do not think there will be objections. You have proven yourself as a man.

In the case of honor issues in Palestinian society, Abu Asad shows that this issue is considered a crime and may end in murder or marriage to prevent scandal. In this sense, Foucault (2001) points out that crime is an injury to society, a source of trouble, a disturbance for the entire community, and it has nothing to do with sin or transgression. Here comes the role of societal and familial power as mentioned earlier in which it creates the reality and thus determines the fate of the marriage to prevent scandals. It is evident in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2013, 01:16:49) between Omar and Tariq:

OMAR: The only way is to let her marry him.

TAREK: I will kill you!

## **Power Relations and Social Solidarity**

Social solidarity is the ties that unite individuals by shared identifying and specific norms and values or by participating in some shared benefits (Komter, 2005). In the context of *Omar* (2013), social solidarity representation intertwines with power relations in Palestinian society. Abu Asad shows social solidarity through power relations and collective resistance in *Omar* (2013). Resistance against the Israeli occupation appears as a part of everyday struggle in Palestinian society. Abu Asad shows social solidarity in all generations who are aware of the challenges caused by the Israeli occupation. Social solidarity as a collective resistance is demonstrated through the children's participation and awareness of the danger posed by the Israeli occupation. Besides, the children's role in informing people about the presence of Israeli Special Forces in order to warn the risk imposed on Palestinian youths. This is visible in an interruption of Omar and his friend's conversation in the restaurant (Abu Asad, 2013, 00:22:05) where a child shouts:

A CHILD: Undercover Agents!

The film also shows the role of Children in resisting the Israeli occupation in the scene of throwing stones at the Israeli Undercover Agents' vehicles to prevent them from reaching and catching wanted Palestinians. Moreover, social solidarity is the link that unites people, thus it is a disciplinary power that works as a foundation for social norms. As mentioned earlier, discipline forms individuals by working as a particular strategy of power that treats them both as subjects to be controlled and as mechanisms for carrying out control (Foucault,

1995). This makes people more tightly connected with each other by holding a disciplined attitude towards their behaviors.

Another manifestation of social solidarity is evident in protecting wanted Palestinians. After escaping from the Undercover Agents, Omar tried to enter a Palestinian house without asking the owner's permission. In this situation, social solidarity appears when the family members of the house tightly close the doors after Omar enters and prevent the undercover agents from entering. Besides, they help guide Omar to the other way out and pray for him. This shows the collective resistance against the Israeli occupation, where the Palestinians challenge the Israeli power relations that control the whole society.

Similarly, social unity also appears through the awareness of the youth and their strength in trying to resist and plan for liberation. Besides, their frustration about the situation created by the Israeli occupation which divided Palestinian society. Moreover, at the end of the film, social solidarity appears in the silent scene of the old man who helps Omar climb the Apartheid Wall. This scene shows the weakness caused by the Israeli occupation of the youth; while in contrast, solidarity and strength take root in the elderly.

Abu Asad presents the influence of the Israeli occupation forces on social solidarity through the checkpoints that separate the geographical borders. The policy of checkpoints result in dividing the Palestinian society, thus changing its social structure. Besides, Abu Asad illustrates betrayal and loyalty as ways to strengthen or weaken social unity. This appears in the influence of the relationships in the film and the impact of power dynamics such as political and social power. Yet, this is promoted by the society's rejection of the

collaborator with the Israeli occupation who does abnormal actions against his society's orders. As mentioned earlier, this is considered a crime from a social perspective where punishment is necessary.

### **The Israeli Occupation Power and Palestinian Identity**

*Omar* (2013) represents the national identity embodied in resistance, Israeli occupation, political parties, and Palestinians' hope for freedom. Abu Asad depicts the role of the Palestinians in defending their land through armed resistance to target the Israeli Occupation. The Israeli Occupation and its practices towards the Palestinians shape the Palestinian national identity through the way it drives people to resist and hold solidarity.

Abu Asad portrays the Israeli occupation as a significant system for shaping the Palestinian national identity in *Omar* (2013). It shows the interaction between Palestinians and the Israeli authorities represented by prisons, checkpoints, physical abuses, torture of prisoners, and monitoring of Palestinians. All these events make people aware of the Israeli occupation power and its dynamics that aim to restrict Palestinian movements, actions, and freedom.

The Israeli Occupation influences and develops the identity of Palestinians by making them more cautious, aware, and observant of their actions, thus understanding reality and themselves. Omar, for example, when he was captured, uttered words that made the Israeli occupation have evidence of his guilt, as he was recorded in prison by his unintentional confession. Consequently, this influences his entire life and drives him to collaborate with the Israeli occupation, and thus influences his national identity. Omar became a traitor after

doing the operation because of his friend who was also a traitor. Whatever he does, he can't change this sense. So he hold different identities, he was a freedom fighter, a traitor, and a lover depending on the situation and time he was in. As mentioned earlier, power relations control an individual's desires, body, and movements (Foucault, 1980). This is evident in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2013, 00:31:19) between Omar and the investigator who pretended to be a Palestinian prisoner in prison:

OMAR: I will never confess.

THE INVESTIGATOR: Good. Good.

SPEECH AUDIO RECORDING: I will never confess.

THE INVESTIGATOR: That is a confession, as far as our judges are concerned.

Abu Asad illustrates the Palestinian resistance factions and their collective actions as part of the Palestinian collective identity. These factions appear in specific places, including prisons and the characteristics of people's affiliation with factions. Besides in armed resistance and planning for resistance operations by Omar and his friends. In addition, the participation of members of these factions in the funerals of martyrs, using faction flags that shape their identity.

Resistance and national identity appear clearly through the desire of Omar and his friends to resist and liberate their country. They show a sense of responsibility towards the homeland. Moreover, Abu Asad shows that the path to becoming a freedom fighter needs great sacrifices that may contribute greatly to improving people's lives. Therefore, people

who choose to become freedom fighters expect many radical changes that may influence them, their family, and their fate in life. Tariq, for example, ended up being wanted by the Israeli occupation and thus killed. In this sense, Foucault (2003) argues:

"Beneath that great absolute power, beneath the dramatic and somber absolute power that was the power of sovereignty, and which consisted in the power to take life, we now have the emergence, with this technology of biopower, of this technology of power over "the" population as such, over men insofar as they are living beings. It is continuous, scientific, and it is the power to make live. Sovereignty took life and let live. And now we have the emergence of a power that I would call the power of regularization, and it, in contrast, consists in making live and letting die." (Foucault, 2003, p.247)

Abu Asad shows that the characters have multiple identities and act differently in different situations. For example, Abu Asad portrays the young characters as fighters in battle and in places where they plan their resistance operations. As mentioned earlier, resistance exists where power is (Foucault, 1978). In return, they have to hide their national and resistance identities to continue their paths and avoid arresting. Besides, they pretend to live a normal life among their families at home and in prison so that their secret work is not revealed. Meanwhile, the film shows that characters like Omar and Amjad live in a state of love, admiration, weakness, and strength simultaneously.

Through analyzing *Omar* (2013), power relations represented in the Israeli occupation, social norms, family, patriarchy, and resistance have shaped Palestinian society and identity.

These powers are visible in marriage, gender roles, social solidarity, and national identity. The researcher now shifts focus to *The Idol* (2015) and present the theme of social power, which appears more complicated in the representation of gender roles. It reveals how social power such as gender norms and social expectations shape the characters' experiences of such powers. Besides, it gives a deep analysis of other social aspects in Palestinian society such as marriage, social solidarity, and national identity represented in *The Idol* (2015).

### ***The Idol* (2015, 100 minutes)**

*The Idol* (2015) tells the story of Palestinian singer Mohammed Assaf, who won the title of Arab Idol in 2013 and became a national singer. It highlights his humble beginnings, the hardships of life in Gaza, and his sister's illness. It also focuses on the challenges he faced in reaching Egypt to audition for the show.

### **Social Structure (Gender Roles, Marriage, and Social Solidarity)**

Gender roles and marriage in *The Idol* (2015) appear clearly in the characters of Noor and Mohammad and their parents. It shows how family and society deal with and interact with such characters. It portrays the roles of young boys and girls in society affected by the control of parents and social expectations, which in turn shapes the characters of the film. Such powers result in creating resistance against society and its power.

### **Social Power, Patriarchy, and Gender Roles**

*The Idol* (2015) characterizes the Palestinian society in Gaza and its power to control gender roles through social expectations and surveillance. This is evident through the

character of Noor and the way society reacts and expects gender behaviors. The film reveals that society and families expect girls to play with girls of the same age. However, the film shows Noor playing with the boys, which is against the expectations. As mentioned earlier, power creates existence and all knowledge belongs to this realization of power (Foucault, 1995). This is visible in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2015, 00:03:41) between Noor and her mother after she plays in the street with boys:

MOTHER: When will you behave like a girl your age? Tell me.

NOOR: If I cannot participate in anything, I will never be like other girls.

The conversation above also shows the resistance against restrictions on participation in playing due to gender. Noor justifies her behavior by criticizing society's norms towards gender. She plays with boys knowing that she will not have this opportunity if she is a girl, so she shifts roles by wearing boys' clothes and playing with boys to achieve her dreams. In this way, she resists the social power. As mentioned earlier, there is no power relationship without resilience. The resistance is very reliable and effective as it is built where power relations are practiced (Foucault, 1980).

Additionally, the conversation indicates the confident girls in Gaza have, as they are aware of social norms and try to resist it. However, it also shows parental power and decisions as part of a society based on people's judgment. It appears that there is a standard role for females to behave. It also shows that people watch each other and use surveillance techniques to judge and control the way people behave. In the same context, the film illustrates parental

control in refusing to give personal space for their kids to practice their hobbies. Foucault (1997) argues:

"Power is mobilized; it makes itself everywhere present and visible; it invents new mechanisms; it separates, it immobilizes, it partitions; it constructs for a time what is both a counter-city and the perfect society; it imposes an ideal functioning, but one that is reduced." (Foucault, 1997, p.205)

This is evident in the conversation (Abu Asad, 2015, 00:19:06) between Mohammad, Noor, and their parents:

THE MOTHER: I am against you singing at weddings. What will they say?

THE FATHER: Me too. I think we should only play on big stages.

This conversation shows also the social expectations towards job titles. This also indicates that the society is conservative and refuses jobs that go against the Islamic Sharia, such as singing at weddings, which goes against religious and social beliefs. The mother reflects the social expectations while the father wants better opportunities for his sons and daughters. Moreover, parental power appears as part of surveillance toward children without hurting them, whereas Foucault (1995) argues that surveillance techniques use optics and mechanics to control the body without using excessive force or violence. The power is subtle and tangible, making it less corporal in nature.

The film depicts the restrictions that society places on female's behaviors and where they must be. In contrast, it allows males to do such behaviors. For example, it is acceptable

for Mohammad and his friends to practice their hobbies of music and singing in public, while it refuses to have Noor in the same place. In this sense, gender roles are cultural products that exist in the societal power. As mentioned earlier, Foucault (1980) confirms that individuals are products of power relations where power controls their bodies, desires, and movements. This is visible in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2015, 00:19:41) between Noor, Mohammad, and the employer of the band.

THE EMPLOYER: Is she a girl?

NOOR: No one sees that.

THE EMPLOYER: I see. It is bad enough with children, now even girls.

In this conversation, the society, customs, and traditions reject the presence of a girl in a musical band. Which reflects the way people think in the society. In the same context, the film shows that girls have to behave and wear in a specific manner. In this case, asking about Noor's gender represents the way society thinks about gender based on clothes and behavior. It indicates that people judge Noor for the way she wears. This is evident in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2015, 00:09:15) between Noor, her friends, and the buyer:

THE BUYER: Are you a girl or a boy?

NOOR: Girl.

Noor's role represents resistance against the patriarchal society through her rejection of gender roles. She acts according to what she deems appropriate and does not allow society

to restrict her freedom. On the contrary, she behaves naturally, allowing her to do whatever she wants, away from the irrational judgments of society. For example, she fights a man to get her money back despite that she puts herself in danger and a socially unacceptable position. This kind of situation is visible as a clear way to resist the hegemonic power and overlap relationships. Accordingly, Foucault (1997) argues:

"We are in this struggle, and the continuation of this situation can influence the behavior or non-behavior of the other. So we are not trapped. We are always in this kind of situation. It means that we always have possibilities, there are always possibilities of changing the situation." (Foucault, 1997, p.167)

The film shows that society respects women and rejects any attempt to harass them. It shows that male is obliged to take care of females and never fail them. It is a way to reflect one's self-ethos towards others from Foucault's perspective. Foucault (1997) argues a power relation that exists when the individual exercises his power as it has to be exercised; concurrently this individual exercises his power over himself. Thus regulates one's power over others. It is evident in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2015, 00:11:55) between Noor, Mohammad, and his friends:

NOOR: You have to fight me, and not blame me, you coward!

Mohammad: Am I a coward, little boy? You should be home.

NOOR: Am I, little boy?

MOHAMMAD: Yeah.

MOHAMMAD'S FRIEND: She is your sister and you should respect her. Do not worry, Noor. I will talk to him. Right?

This conversation also represents the way society looks at girls who play outside the home, recognizing their roles only at home and calling them boys.

### **Social Power, Marriage, and Social Solidarity**

The film shows that marriage in Gaza is a great responsibility with a kind of harmony between husband and wife. It represents husband and wife respecting each other's decisions and consulting each other on crucial decisions concerning their children. As the researcher mentioned previously, the mother in the film represents social expectations and makes her decisions based on the point of view of society. Abu Asad represents the mother in the film with fear of social reaction of her daughter's illness. It shows that no one would accept her daughter's for marriage in the future because of her serious illness. This indicates the social beliefs about the conditions of marriage, which is that the wife should be healthy. In this sense, Foucault (2003) asserts:

"Illness as phenomena affecting a population. Death was no longer something that suddenly swooped down on life—as in an epidemic. Death was now something permanent, something that slips into life, perpetually gnaws at it, diminishes it and weakens it." (Foucault, 2003, 244)

Similarly, the reflection of the mother in the film seems to be based on the belief that she knows that the disease will take over her daughter's body, which will prevent her from pursuing the social role represented to her.

The film shows that marriage restricts a woman's place in the home. Her responsibility is to do the housework and clean it, thus reflecting the stereotypical image of women in society. In this sense, Foucault (1986) asserts:

"Marriage contracts bring the husband and the wife into a system of duties or obligations that are not equal, certainly, but are shared. And this sharing occurs not in the name of the respect due to the family, which each of the two marriage partners represents, as it were, in the state of marriage, but on behalf of the couple, its stability and its internal regulation." (Foucault, 1986, p.76)

This appears in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2015, 00: 23:12) between Noor and her mother:

NOOR'S MOTHER: You will never get married.

NOOR: Better! I would rather clean my kidney (do Kidney Dialysis) than clean the house!

In the same context, the film shows that marriage interferes with work, so girls may refuse to get married to fulfil their dreams by refusing social norms regarding marriage. In this sense, Foucault (1986) discusses that the Epicureans believed that no one was obligated to marry unless there were circumstances that made such a union acceptable. For the Stoics,

only specific conditions might relieve a duty from which one could not in theory escape. This indicates that individuals have the right to choose either to marry or not based on their desires or circumstances. This is obvious in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2015, 00:24:48) between Mohammad and Noor:

MOHAMMAD: You really do not want to get married!

NOOR: It will not help our progress.

As for the marriage rituals, the film shows wedding celebrations for men. Where there is a live band singing at the party, and the singer is on the stage. Men appear in the middle of the hall or the street where the party is located, dancing and celebrating. While women sit in the back, motionless, just watching the celebrations and talking to each other. This shows gender separation in society that is caused by gendered social norms and the way males and females are forced to behave in intermingling gathering. In this sense, Foucault (1986) assures that marriage developed into more general practice, public institution, and private mode of reality, improving the obligation force between marital partners and isolating them in social relations.

*The Idol* (2015) shows social solidarity through people's actions represented in participating in weddings, attending funerals and condolences, and supporting each other on their bad days. Social and family solidarity indicates the role of Mohammad after his sister, Noor, falls ill. Mohammad and his friends try to continue singing and playing music at weddings to earn money and help Noor buy a kidney. Besides working as a cleaner in a restaurant. In addition to his friends' role in working as a delivery person in areas considered

dangerous to help Noor. Moreover, Mohammad tries to help his sister by offering his kidney to transport it to Noor. As mentioned earlier, this is a way to reflect one's self-ethics towards others (Foucault, 1997). This is visible in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2015, 00:22:43) between Mohammad and his family:

MOHAMMAD: I will give her one of my kidneys.

Similarly, it appears in the role of Mohammad's friends when they try to help him escape to Egypt across the border. This is because they believe that he deserves to participate in the singing competition and that it is his real chance to achieve his goal. It also reflects their collective feeling that Mohammad's dream is their dream; therefore, it is their responsibility to arrange for his participation.

### **The Israeli Occupation Power and Marriage**

The Israeli occupation did not appear directly in the film, but its impact was very clear through showing obstacles facing families and the completion of marriage in creating and maintaining the family. Such obstacles are embedded in economic problems and poverty caused by the Israeli occupation. The film shows Gaza under siege that has intensified poverty due to the borders' closures. This can be seen as a bio-power that the Israeli Occupation use to kill Palestinians. In this sense, Pugliese (2020) argues that Foucault refers to the act of killing as it concerns exposing an individual to death through various biological techniques.

Moreover, the film shows the family's inability to provide the money needed to transplant Noor's kidney or even travel for treatment, and thus resulted in her death, the disintegration of the family, and thus the destruction of their lives after her death. Foucault (2003) assured that diseases that are not considered eradicated and difficult to treat causes frequent death as it costs money and treating them is expensive.

### **Palestinian Identity**

*The Idol* (2015) portrays Palestinian national identity represented in the Israeli checkpoints, siege, and resilience against the Israeli occupation. The film shows resistance as part of the identity of Palestinian refugees in Gaza's refugee camps.

In *The Idol* (2015), Abu Asad depicts national identity within the framework of the Israeli Occupation and the siege imposed over Gaza. The people of Gaza share the same suffering and restrictions imposed on them by the Israeli occupation. The Israeli occupation has worked to besiege Gaza and cut off the electricity to isolate it from the rest of the country as a way to limit life chances for the people of Gaza. From a bio-political perspective, Pugliese (2020) points out that Israelis targeted Gaza's infrastructure including water, electricity, hospitals, schools, and so on. In this case, the Israeli Occupation controls Gaza's population using different methods of bio-power. This is visible in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2015, 00:40:29) between Mohammad and his friends:

MOHAMMAD: How am I supposed to sing without power?

MOHAMMAD'S FRIEND: Should we call the Israeli Occupation to fix it? (Ironically)

In the same context, the Israeli Occupation controls Gaza by closing borders and isolating it from the West Bank. This is evident through the physical borders that the film shows, such as barriers and barbed wire. In addition to the travelling ban and the geopolitics that led to the isolation of Gaza from the West Bank. This is visible in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2015, 00:39:47) between Mohammad and his friend:

MOHAMMAD'S FRIEND: You have to go to Ramallah, but you are not allowed.

MOHAMMAD: I have to get out of this place before I die.

The film depicts the hope, resilience, and resistance that exists among Palestinians despite the wars and disabilities caused by the Israeli occupation of the Palestinians in Gaza. It features the diverse talents of Gaza and the people influenced by the wars who adapt to life despite the great difficulties. Besides, the film portrays Mohammad as the hero who will present the Palestinian issue to the public and share his story as a Palestinian. This appears in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2015, 01:18:36) between Mohammad and a TV interviewer:

THE INTERVIEWER: Can your voice resolve an issue that has not been resolved even by armed and political intervention?

MOHAMMAD: I just want my voice and that of my people to be heard.

In this sense, singing national songs is portrayed as a way to resist and raise the voice of the oppressed. As mentioned earlier, resistance is found where power is. This appears in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2015, 00:55:35) between Mohammad and Amal:

Mohammad: Our voice needs to be heard. No one knows that we are refugees and forbidden to return home.

This conversation shows the marginalized Palestinian refugees and their identity in refugee camps in Gaza. They have a collective memory of the Nakba and the consequences of the Israeli occupation in isolating Gaza from the world. It represents the importance of showing up and raising the name of the homeland abroad. Besides, living in wars restricts life and makes it harder.

The film implicitly depicts the power struggle, which directly influences the actions of individuals. As mentioned earlier, power affects individuals and controls their actions (Foucault, 1980). The film portrays power is in the hands of Islamic groups and thus it restricts the freedom of individuals in society by controlling the actions and hobbies of the people. It illustrates the religious laws that are embedded directly through customs and Norms. Thus, applying such laws appears through surveillance to maintain the stability of society by not allowing people to practice their hobbies. Such practices include the principle that Foucault (1997) called for to care for the self through practical evolution and the creation of the individual's sense of self. This happens by accepting responsibility taking care and enabling the self to occupy its rightful place in society, which implies ethical commitment to others. This appears in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2015, 00:52:43) between Mohammad and his old friend:

MOHAMMAD'S OLD FRIEND: Mohammad, I do this for your own good. I will never let you participate. These programs distract us from our main objective in life!

While *The Idol* (2015) presents a clear illustration of the societal and political powers over the Palestinian society using surveillance, social norms, and political restrictions, the researcher goes deep into *Huda's Salon* (2021), which presents a broader examination of power relations in general and social, familial, and Israeli power's control over Palestinian society in particular. *Huda's Salon* (2021) emphasizes Israeli power's role in deconstructing Palestinian society. The next section focuses on the power dynamics that control gender roles, marriage, national identity, and social solidarity in Palestinian society in *Huda's Salon* (2021).

### ***Huda's Salon (2021, 90 minutes)***

*Huda's Salon* (2021) tells the story of Huda, who owns a beauty salon in Bethlehem. She faces personal crises tied to her family situation after being abandoned by her husband and children. As a result, she ended up working for the Israeli intelligence services. The film explores how Israeli intelligence exploits Palestinian women through the beauty salon, where Huda photographs them in compromising situations and then attempts to blackmail them into actions that go against their values.

### **Social Structure (Gender Roles, Marriage, and Social Solidarity)**

In *Huda's Salon* (2021), Abu Asad portrays the representation of gender roles in Palestinian society by highlighting a problem that Palestinian women face because of the Israeli occupation which takes benefits of their gender roles and norms. It is visible that Palestinian society hides and avoids revealing such problems regarding honor. Abu Asad

illustrates the Israeli Occupation, social expectations, and national parties' impact on gender role representation.

### **Social Power and Gender Roles**

*Huda's Salon* (2021) sheds light on women's issues in Palestinian society and their expected gender roles. It focuses on the power of society in defining these roles. The film focuses primarily on honor issues and the issues that follow them, which affect females, society, and male's masculinity. For example, Palestinian society is visible to be a society based on customs and traditions. It shows a woman who deviates from the norm and engages in extramarital relationships in society as influencing society as a whole and leading to other social problems that, in the society's perspective, must be eliminated to prevent the destruction of society. In this sense, Foucault (1976) argues that the disciplines of the body and the restrictions of the population included the two poles around which the institution of power over life prevailed. This is straightforward in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2021, 00:34:25) between Hasan and Huda:

HASAN: Having women with issues like this among us is catastrophic.

This conversation exposes another issue facing girls in Palestine, which is the issue of collaborating with the Israeli occupation. This issue contributes to destroying the structure of Palestinian society and the structure of resistance factions. Moreover, The film shows the mission of the male resistance fighters in particular to get rid of anyone who collaborates with the Israeli occupation, including men and women. In this case, the power of society

appears against the forces and resistance that affect its structure. In this sense, as mentioned earlier, power demolishes any resistance that it encounters (Foucault, 2001).

The film shows masculinity in Palestinian society through the husband's bad treatment of his wife and the lack of understanding, which in turn pushes her to search for alternatives such as resort to trying to divorce. However, the film indicates that society does not allow women to ask for divorce easily. This comes from the masculine norm of controlling women and their decisions. In this sense, the body is involved in power relations and domination (Foucault, 1995). This is evident in Huda and Hasan's conversation (Abu Asad, 2021, 00:37:36):

HUDA: Do you know my husband?

HASAN: I have not had the honor.

HUDA: Try living with him one day and get back to me.

HASAN: There are a thousand ways to leave him on good terms. Then remarry on good terms.

HUDA: Oh. Really? Do you think you are living in Sweden?

On the other hand, a man easily abandons his wife if she falls ill, which can lead to divorce and abandonment of responsibility towards her. This is visible in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2021, 00:36:38) between two women in the hospital:

WOMAN 1: She has breast cancer and she will not tell her husband.

WOMAN 2: Poor girl. Why?

WOMAN 1: She is afraid he will divorce her.

Similarly, the film represent women who are financially sufficient as confident and strong unlike unemployed woman who is dependent on her husband. Moreover, the film represents Society's rejection of divorced women and those women who have extramarital affairs. This indicates that such women exhibit abnormal behaviors according to the norms of society. This happens by punishing these women to deprive their children for fear that they will fall into the same mistakes. This contributes to the disintegration of the family and society. In this sense, power instruments are organized around the abnormal individual, aimed at labeling and transforming him, consisting of both normal and abnormal elements from which they are indirectly derived (Foucault, 1995).

In addition, the children pay with their good lives for the bad reputation of a family member. This results in the threat of honor that drives women to remain silent and not reveal due to their fear of social expectations and judgment. Moreover, the film shows the role of males, especially family members, in getting rid of the bad reputation and shame that women bring. This happens through males' power to kill women due to marital and national betrayal.

Moreover, the film shows Society's preference for males over females which appears in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2021, 00:36:15) between a woman and a doctor in the hospital:

THE DOCTOR: Congrats. She is going to have a girl.

THE WOMAN: Oh, God. Her fourth girl. Are you sure, it is a girl?

THE DOCTOR: Only God can be sure.

This preference comes from society's norm that the male is the support for the family, as he supports the father and helps him when he grows old. Besides supporting and protecting his sisters in a patriarchal society. In addition, males carry the family's name, while females leave the family upon marriage. In addition, there is nothing wrong with a man in Palestinian society, which in turn prefers males to females. In this context, shame is associated with females, and in this case, it cannot be erased, while it is not associated with men and is not considered shameful at all. In this sense, Foucault (1995) argues that power relations affect the body, invest, mark, train, torture, and force it to perform tasks, perform rituals, and give off signals.

### **The Israeli Occupation Power and Gender Roles**

Abu Asad depicts the Israeli occupation's control over gender roles in Palestinian society. This appears in exploiting Palestinian beliefs, customs, and traditions for the Israeli occupation's benefit. The Israeli occupation controls the bodies of Palestinian men and women and shows its ability to control their behaviors based on it. It exploits women's bodies through issues of honor, threats, and spreading fear in the hearts of women and men alike. As mentioned before, the individual is seen as a product of power relations where it controls his desires, body, forces, and movements (Foucault, 1980).

Similarly, the Israeli occupation controls Palestinians by using honor crimes to force them to collaborate with the Israeli occupation. This leads to threatening scandals to convince them to hand over resistance fighters or information about them. As mentioned earlier, power

breaks down any resistance that it faces (Foucault, 2001). Moreover, the film shows that such issues may lead to killing by society or committing suicide to prevent the hard life that collaborators would have. This eventually is considered part of the society's power. This is visible in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2021, 01:05:25) between Hasan and Huda:

HUDA: If you do not kill her, the Israeli Secret Service will.

HASAN: No, Safaa committed suicide.

The film focuses on one method that the Israeli Occupation uses to persuade Palestinians to collaborate with the Israeli occupation which is beauty salons using surveillance. According to The Palestinian Information Center (2017), Israeli Secret Services recruited collaborators by luring them through moral scandals executed inside hairdresser salons. This appears in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2021, 00:57:02) between Yousef and his family members:

YOUSEF'S BROTHER: Did you hear about the scandal at Huda's salon?

YOUSEF: Oh, right. I heard about it yesterday. Her exposure led to at least a thousand traitors.

Similarly, it appears in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2021, 00:15:08) between Huda and Reem:

HUDA: the photo is my guarantee that you will not snitch on me.

In this sense, Foucault (1995) asserts:

"The techniques of surveillance, the 'physics' of power, the hold over the body, operate according to the laws of optics and mechanics, according to a whole play of spaces, lines, screens, beams, degrees and without recourse, in principle at least, to excess, force or violence. It is a power that seems all the less 'corporal' in that it is more subtly 'physical'." (Foucault, 1995, p.177).

The film indicates that the Israeli occupation forces Palestinian young males to resist. This is apparent through the liberation movements that monitor Palestinian society to prevent any collaboration between Palestinians and the Israeli occupation. They appear as protectors of Palestine through resistance and surveillance. They act as an independent authority, separate from the local authorities, to resist the Israeli occupation and protect society. As mentioned earlier, resistance exists wherever power exists (Foucault, 1978).

Social solidarity is partially absent in *Huda's Salon* (2021), where individualism dominates Palestinian cities. Abu Asad depicts nuclear families without any connection to extended families. In the scene of the invitation of Yousef's family, the weak ties between the wife and the husband's family are evident. It represents the social problems and gaps between the wife and the mother-in-law. The behaviors of Yousef's family appear to be normal from the perspective of his family, while Reem sees them as abnormal.

Similarly, the film shows the mother-in-law's control over the life of the son and his wife, which indicates weak social relations and a lack of respect for privacy. Thus, the individuals resort to avoiding quarrels and preferring solitude. Foucault (1995) acknowledges that the family is the privileged place of evolution for the disciplinary inquiry of the normal

and the abnormal. This is apparent in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2021, 01:02:03) between Reem and Yousef:

REEM: This is your grandma's house. I cannot move a chair without your mom's permission.

Moreover, social solidarity appears in the scene of Reem's friend consoling her. It shows the inability of girls to practice their agency, but rather society's control over their behaviors. This is evident through the friend's fear that someone would know that she met Reem after the scandal. This confirms individualism in society and the fear of social reaction. It reflects the weakness of girls in Palestinian society and their subjugation to social power. Foucault (1995) assumes that disciplinary power forces those under its control to be constantly visible, referring to those individuals who are disciplined and must be observed. Their visibility guarantees the power's hold over them, providing control through continuous surveillance. This is visible in the conversation (Abu Asad, 2021, 00:44:17) between Reem and her friend:

REEM'S FRIEND: Do not tell anyone at home that I know. If they find out, I will be implicated with you, Reem. I am sorry, Reem. I am sorry. I cannot help. I am sorry.

### **Marriage and Patriarchy**

In *Huda's Salon* (2021), Abu Asad portrays marriage embodied throughout the dynamics of Patriarchy. Abu Asad represents marriage in Palestinian society full of challenges, obstacles, comparisons, and judgments. In addition to the dominant male role of

controlling women and preventing them from becoming independent. The husband appears to control his wife and her life. He wants to shape her, as he desires. This shows the right of men in a patriarchal society to dominate women. As mentioned earlier, power relations control the individual's desires, body, forces, and movements (Foucault, 1980). This appears in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2021, 00:05:26) between Reem and Huda, where it shows that the husband does not want the woman to leave the house, nor to work, which indicates the traditional gender role of women in raising children and giving up everything else.

REEM: When Lina is a little older, I might open my own salon.

HUDA: Really? Would your husband agree to that?

REEM: Who cares? He wants me to stay home, but it is not up to him.

This conversation also shows the agency that women try to get by resisting the masculine society they live in. Although males control women's fates and dreams, women try to achieve and make their own decisions by having their own work. This shows that worker women have more freedom than unemployed. As mentioned earlier, resistance appears where power is (Foucault, 1978). Additionally, Reem's Husband believes that he has the right to silence his wife whenever he wants if he feels that she wants to shift from the traditions of marriage and the relationships that follow. This appears in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2021, 01:02:07) between Reem and Yousef:

YOUSEF: Reem, you are going too far. You had better hold that tongue of yours.

REEM: I swear, Yousef, one more word and I am leaving this house.

In the same context, it appears in a previously mentioned conversation (Abu Asad, 2021, 00:36:15) that a woman's role is only to give birth and that society does not care about her health. In addition to neglecting her when she is sick, which could lead to abandoning her. The conversation also shows the lack of awareness and interest in women's health. It assumes that Palestinian society loves fertility and continues to get children until it has a male child. In this sense, Foucault (1995) discusses that the individual is meticulously constructed within the social order, obeying a comprehensive methodology of forces and bodies.

The film shows that the traditional role of marriage in terms of providing for the needs of the husband and children is no longer sufficient. Although women provide what they can to suit their husband's needs, men insist on showing shortcomings in their roles as wives. This in turn weakens family and marital ties. As a result, it drives the wives to feel alienated from their husbands due to their lack of interest and their accusation of neglect. Such actions may not meet social expectations of marriage, where the husband uses this technique to punish his wife and ensure his authority over her. In this sense, Foucault (1995) asserts that the power to punish is not diverse from that of fixing or educating.

On the other hand, as mentioned earlier, the man contributes to weakening the woman's personality, independence, and work outside the home. At the same time, he appears selfish and tries to impose his authority as a man on the woman, weakening her, and expecting the woman to respect him and provide him with everything without expecting anything in return. This is visible through a conversation (Abu Asad, 2021, 01:00:56) between Reem and Yousef:

REEM: I went above and beyond for them. What else do you want from me?

YOUSEF: Reem, this is my family. Not guests from Mexico.

REEM: Should I put on a show for them? There is no pleasing your mother. I can never do anything right.

YOUSEF: Reem, please.

REEM: So it is all my fault? I have been cooking all day and you make out that I'm lazy. Why did you call me an infidel?

YOUSEF: Darling, that was a joke.

REEM: To make you less pouty. I know you too well, you meant it. When have you ever come home and found no food on the table? Or a house that was not clean?

YOUSEF: As if this is just about cooking and cleaning. You've never said one nice thing to me.

REEM: As if you're such a Romeo.

### **The Israeli Occupation Power and Identity**

*Huda's Salon* (2013) represents the national identity embodied in resistance, Israeli occupation, and political parties. Abu Asad depicts the role of the Palestinians in defending their land by maintaining Palestinian society from the Israeli occupation's dynamics. The film depicts life in the West Bank, and Bethlehem in particular. It illustrates the difficulties of

movement, the checkpoints and permits required for the city's residents to leave, and the travel ban. In addition to the problems, women face in Bethlehem city due to the Israeli occupation and the danger they face. As mentioned earlier, the body is involved in politics, where power relations have a primary effect on it. They can invest in the body, affect it, instruct it, torture it, and push it to do tasks, perform rituals, and so on (Foucault, 1995). This is obvious in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2021, 00:51:02) between Reem and her mother:

REEM'S MOTHER: What are you babbling about? You cannot even travel! Your brother-in-law is in jail. As a relative, you are banned from travel. You would need a permit from the Secret Service.

This shows the influence of the Israeli occupation in controlling the moves of the Palestinians by making them rely on the Israeli Occupation and obliging them to get permission for all their decisions and movements.

The film illustrates the essence of the Palestinian resistance and the political parties. It shows that resistance factions monitor people to know their next steps regarding national identity. This comes from the standpoint of preserving the Palestinian cause. However, the Israeli occupation tries to recruit agents in the West Bank, who in turn leave the Palestinian cause aside and collaborate with the Israeli occupation against their people. Here comes the role of the resistance fighters to determine the destiny of the real enemies of the Palestinians, which are the collaborators. In this sense, Foucault (1995) argues:

"The first sign of rebellion, which is not in principle different from civil war; of a power that had to demonstrate not why it enforced its laws, but who

were its enemies, and .what unleashing of force threatened them; of a power which, in the absence of continual supervision, sought a renewal of its effect in the spectacle of its individual manifestations; of a power that was recharged in the ritual display of its reality as 'super-power'." (Foucault, 1995, p.57)

Similarly, the role of the Palestinian resistance fighters in preserving society is visible in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2021, 00:57:21) between Huda and Hasan:

HASAN: Every traitor will be exposed, eventually.

The film reveals the role of the Israeli occupation in creating revenge ideology in the souls of the Palestinians. The Israeli occupation tries to discourage them, eliminate the idea of resistance, and frighten future generations of Palestinians by practicing killing over them. However, the film shows the opposite effect of what the Israeli occupation expects. It is visible that new generations follow the resistance as a form of revenge for their family and friends who were killed by the Israeli occupation for their resistance work. Thus, this leads to the forming of a national identity for the Palestinians that calls for resistance and armed struggle to reclaim the Palestinian land and agency. As mentioned earlier, power is always faced by resistance (Foucault, 1978). This appears in a conversation (Abu Asad, 2021, 00:45:51) between Huda and Hasan:

HUDA: Why did you join the resistance? Your secret is safe with me. You know I am headed for the grave. I just want to hear your story first.

HASAN: Why are you so curious?

HUDA: I would like to know the story of the last person I will see. I will tell you what you want to know if you tell me what lives inside you.

HASAN: When I was 11, I had a friend called Muhanad. I tried to persuade him to throw rocks at an army patrol jeep. He was afraid at first. I accused him of being a coward. He wanted to prove me wrong so he came with me. There, I tried to persuade him to throw the rock. A really big one. He refused, so I did it myself. The soldiers chased us. Muhanad managed to escape. But they caught me. I swore to them that it was not me. One soldier slapped me so hard, I got dizzy. Then he asked, "Who did it then?" I was so afraid; I told him it was Muhanad. They forced me to take them to his house. When we got there, they shot him in front of his parents.

Following the investigation of power dynamics in *Huda's Salon* (2021), which represents the way the Israeli occupation and social power interfere with all aspects of Palestinian social life such as marriage and gender roles, the next section shows the results of this thesis.

## Chapter Seven Results

This chapter illustrates the findings of the analysis of five Palestinian films directed by Hani Abu Asad, which are *Rana's Wedding* (2002), *Paradise Now* (2005), *Omar* (2013), *The Idol* (2015), and *Huda's Salon* (2021). The analysis takes place using the lens of Foucault's theory of power and Hall's theory of cultural identity, focusing on how Abu Asad's films reflect social structure (gender roles, marriage, and social solidarity) and identity within Palestinian society. In this chapter, the researcher provides the key findings of analyzing the mentioned films using Foucault's theories of power and Hall's theory of cultural identity by showing how power dynamics are embodied in the narratives shape Palestinian social aspects.

Through tracing studies related to Palestinian cinema, the researcher notices that the main theme that previous studies focus on is the Israeli occupation struggle with less attention to Palestinian national identity, gender roles, and social solidarity in Palestinian society. However, much attention has been given to marriage analysis in Palestinian cinema studies. This attention comes mainly from the importance of the *Wedding in Galilee* (1987), a spark for a new wave of film genre that focuses on social life representations. The research seeks to present the gap in understanding social life in Palestinian cinema not only as reflections of life but to show how discourse and narrative shape national identity, gender roles, social solidarity, and marriage in Palestinian society. In addition, this chapter seeks to provide the findings of analyzing power dynamics based on Foucault's theory of power relations such as

social, familial, and political powers besides investigating its influence on individuals' talk, behaviors, and thoughts in Abu Asad's films as part of the Palestinian cinema.

### **Social Structure: Gender Roles, Marriage, and social solidarity**

Throughout analyzing Abu Asad's films and going thoroughly over gender roles in Palestinian society, results show that gender roles in Palestinian society are associated with the Israeli Occupation, social expectations, and family dynamics. It shows that gender roles are based on this foundation as such dynamics intertwine, shape, and are affected by these powers. This will be illustrated in the following paragraphs.

#### **Gender Roles and the Israeli Occupation Power**

The results of analyzing Abu Asad's films show that the Israeli occupation had a great impact on controlling gender roles in Palestinian society. The policies and violations of the Israeli occupation do not differentiate between men, women, or children, but rather affect all segments of Palestinian society. Abu Asad's films portray Palestinian men as freedom fighters who defend their country and maintain the honor of Palestinian women. This affects women's role, where they do not participate in freedom operations; instead, they are limited to doing housework, preparing meals and coffee for their families, and raising their children. However, Abu Asad shows the woman who resists the Israeli army using her hands in *Rana's Wedding* (2002).

The results also show that Israeli occupation influences the relationship between men and women in their roles in Palestinian society through imprisonment, freedom work,

collaboration with the Israeli occupation, injuries, and disabilities resulting from Israeli occupation's fires. This influences women's role and drives them to find alternatives and work outside the home, so they can meet the financial needs of their families. On the other hand, these violations limit the physical and financial abilities of men in doing their familial and societal roles besides affecting their abilities to engage in society and work.

Abu Asad illustrates the issue of collaboration with the Israeli occupation, connecting this topic with difficult economic conditions, exploitation of honor issues, creating problems between men and women, and weakening the resistance, especially in refugee camps. This appears in the honor issue created by the Israeli occupation to overcome the Palestinian resistance, in exchange for not exposing scandals, which leads to society's rejection of the collaborators, and thus killing them. In addition to monitoring resistance fighters, their relationships, and their movements. Moreover, Israeli occupation exploits any relationship relating to the resistance fighters in the Israeli occupation's favor. Additionally, the Israeli occupation takes benefit of social norms to control the Palestinian men and women.

### **Gender Roles and Social Power**

The analysis of Abu Asad's films shows the influence of social power and expectations on gender roles in Palestinian society. Where the behaviors and thoughts of Palestinians have been connected with social expectations through monitoring and discrimination between dealing with and thinking about men and women.

The results show that Abu Asad portrays that Palestinian society expects women to marry, have children, raise them, and abandon their dreams. It also rejects any attempt by

women to resist it, be independent, or try to exercise their agency over themselves. Thus, society will not support them in achieving their dreams and limiting them to one role. Additionally, Palestinian Society expects girls to act and dress in a specific manner like girls their age and commit to their gender identity. Moreover, Palestinian Society restricts girls and does not allow them to exercise freedom of choice and live freely. Abu Asad's films portray various characteristics of Palestinian women. For instance, he shows talkative women who are interested in transmitting news about people in society and gossiping. He also illustrates mothers who spend their lives working at home to raise their children. Besides, portraying independent women with strange thoughts that do not conform to the mainstream of Palestinian society's trends.

Palestinian society as Abu Asad depicts prefers men to women. It shows people's happiness when male babies are born while rejecting female babies. Moreover, men appear to have more freedom than women do. They have the freedom to be away from home for long hours, unlike women. As for the role of men, men bear great responsibility; they support their families and have family and financial obligations. Besides, they are forced to accept work for a low wage to meet the family's needs, in addition to diving into armed struggle.

The results also show that Palestinian society is judgmental, especially when it comes to beauty standards. Society categorizes women based on their appearance, so society has the right to decide whether a girl is acceptable for marriage or not.

Society expects men to be solid, hide their feelings, and show masculinity toward protecting women in a patriarchal society. Moreover, men are portrayed as being patient over

life's difficulties and trying to find freedom in every aspect of life. Abu Asad's films show various characteristics of men. For instance, the supportive and loyal masculine men who are considered modern figures such as Omar in *Omar* (2013), Mohammad's father in *The Idol* (2015), and Khalil in *Rana's Wedding* (2002). On the other hand, Abu Asad portrays the patriarchal man who behaves traditionally and controls his partner, sons, or daughters such as Rana's father in *Rana's Wedding* (2002), Yousef in *Huda's Salon* (2021), and Tarek in *Omar* (2013).

### **Patriarchy and Gender Roles**

Abu Asad represents family power in controlling gender roles and family members' decisions, especially in their behaviors, practicing hobbies, and choosing a career. The results show that family decisions are linked to social expectations. In this sense, girls, who live in patriarchal families such as Nadia in *Omar* (2013), appear weak and cowardly when it comes to making their own decisions. On the other hand, women who live lonely and lose their providers are independent such as Suha in *Paradise Now* (2005), Rana in *Rana's Wedding* (2002), and Said's mother in *Paradise Now* (2005). Besides, women's weaknesses and strengths depend on different factors. For example, the place in which women are raised influences their strengths. For instance, the women in Gaza, Jerusalem, and the diaspora are highly confident and resist the patriarchal society. While women who live in refugee camps appear less confident and weak when it comes to patriarchal families. It also shows that worker women are confident, while some unemployed are subjugated and face difficult life.

Abu Asad portrays the family refusing the resistance of their daughters and trying to weaken this strength to avoid any attempt to abandon customs and traditions. Moreover, males have the authority to kill women if they are involved in honor issues and collaboration with the Israeli occupation.

## **Marriage**

Throughout analyzing Abu Asad's films and investigating marriage themes in Palestinian society, the results show that marriage in Palestinian society has connections to the Israeli occupation, social power, and patriarchal dynamics. The section below describes these dynamics and their relation to marriage in Palestinian society as illustrated in Abu Asad's films.

## **Marriage and the Israeli Occupation**

Abu Asad depicts Palestinian youth who suffer from instability in all aspects of life and seek, despite the obstacles, to find stability, by liberating their country and getting married as a plan after liberation. The results show that the Israeli occupation is one of the most important factors impediments to marriage in Palestinian society.

The Israeli occupation is considered an obstacle to marriage by spreading unemployment, poverty, and difficult economic problems. In addition to the Israeli barriers between Palestinian cities, whether fixed or temporary barriers or the apartheid barrier. This led to geographical division and separation of Palestinian cities from each other, which formed three main regions: the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and the 1948 lands. These divisions

influence the choice of a husband or wife due to permit problems and limiting movement between cities. Thus choosing a life partner from the same region and depriving lovers of marriage if they were from different regions separated by the wall and barriers. In addition, the danger of moving between regions, as Palestinian youth resort to jumping over the apartheid wall and exposing themselves to danger, arrest, and murder.

On the other hand, the results show that the Israeli occupation separates lovers by spreading rumors, forcing Palestinians to collaborate with them and threatening them with honor issues. Moreover, the long years of imprisonment make marriage impossible. In addition, Abu Asad shows that resistance, stability, and marriage do not meet. Additionally, young people dream of leaving the country in search of political and social stability away from the Israeli occupation.

### **Social Power and Marriage**

Palestinian society interferes and sets special conditions for marriage. This appears in people's behaviors and comments on events related to marriage in Abu Asad's films. Society expects men to be financially independent and have jobs through which they can support their families. In addition to a certain age for marriage and the way they choose their partners. Moreover, the man must have a good reputation. Besides, people criticize men who have reached the expected age and financial status suitable for marriage without getting married. This appears in their repeated questions about men's marriage plans without limits.

In addition, people in Abu Asad's films judge men who want to get married based on their university degree or the type of work they do. Society appears to be traditional and

respects people who have university degrees in certain specializations as a kind of prestige while rejecting other specializations as being out of the ordinary. In Abu Asad's films, society rejects love openly and considers marriage a legal contract. It separates the emotional bond between the sexes. In contrast, Abu Asad shows women's conviction in his films to choose love without material conditions. He depicts a girl's desire to live with the one she loves under any circumstances. In contrast, the problem of the mother-in-law's control over her son and his wife's life appears as part of the social forces that destroy marital relations.

Palestinian society is conservative when it comes to marriage rituals. Abu Asad's films show women separated from men at wedding parties. The ceremonies happen in different halls. However, if the wedding is mixed, men sit in the front and women are in the back. While men sing and dance in the middle and women just watch the event.

### **Patriarchy and Marriage**

Abu Asad portrays Palestinian society as patriarchal, with the father and brother primarily interfering in the girl's marriage decision. Regarding marriage proposals, Abu Asad depicts common traditional marriage rituals in Palestinian society in his films. Starting with the young man asking the girl's father for her hand in marriage. The brother decides whether to accept or reject him before the girl's opinion. In addition, the father and brother ask people about the reputation of the man, to make sure that he is good and deserves the girl. In addition to the societal conditions mentioned above. After that, the father asks the girl about her acceptance or rejection. Abu Asad's films show the different opinions of girls on the subject. He depicted the girl who brings the groom to her father and forces her father to

accept the groom as a husband to herself, as Rana in *Rana's Wedding* (2002). He also depicted the girl who relies on her father and leaves the decision in his hands, like Rania in *Omar* (2013). Abu Asad portrays that consent to marriage may be sufficient to prove masculinity.

Palestinian society as a conservative society rejects extramarital relationships. In this case, Abu Asad's films show that the girl's family takes measures to prevent scandal such as murder or marriage. In the marital relationship, Abu Asad represents a type of masculine man who tries to prove that the traditional requirements of marriage are no longer sufficient. The man tries to make his wife feel inadequate in the marriage showing the husband's control over his wife by subjecting her to his authority, preventing her from acting freely, treating her badly, and neglecting her needs. Thus, pushing her to abandon the marriage, like the character of Youssef and Huda's ex-husband in *Huda's Salon* (2021).

Abu Asad shows masculinity in the difficulty of divorce in Palestinian society in case the woman has requested it. While the opposite is true, if the man is the one who tried to separate from his wife. He shows that the man easily abandons the woman if she is sick because she will become a burden on him. While women have to stick to marriage whatever the circumstances.

### **Social Solidarity**

Through analyzing Abu Asad's films and understanding the theme of social solidarity in Palestinian society, the results show that social solidarity in Palestinian society is

connected to collective resistance and social power. The section below describes how these relationships shape social solidarity in Palestinian society as illustrated in Abu Asad's films.

### **Social Solidarity and National Identity**

Abu Asad illustrates social solidarity as awareness of collective resistance. He shows Children, youth, women, and the elderly participate in resistance in all its forms. The young child resists with stones and awareness of the Israeli occupation's operations. Children, women and men participate in protecting wanted Palestinians. Youth resist with armed struggle and awareness of their strengths to fight the Israeli occupation. The elderly help maintain hope in Palestinian youth's hearts. Moreover, Palestinian factions and society resist by rejecting, ostracizing, and killing those who collaborate with the Israeli occupation. Palestinian society considers resistance as an extension of solidarity.

Abu Asad depicts loyalty and betrayal as the basis for destroying and building social unity and identity. He shows martyrdom a collective struggle and responsibility towards society. In addition to supporting resilience and not submitting to the Israeli occupation. Social unity appears in the fighter's responsibility to care for the families of the martyrs out of appreciation as a reward to the martyr's sacrifices. Moreover, social solidarity appears among people during closures caused by the Israeli army, helping each other, especially Palestinians, who come from distant regions and are being held up at the checkpoints. In addition to solidarity in joys and sorrows, solving people's problems in society, and consoling each other when a martyr falls.

## **National Identity**

The results of analyzing Abu Asad's films show that national identity in Palestinian society is connected to the Israeli occupation, resistance, and social power. The section below describes how these relationships shape national identity in Palestinian society as shown in Abu Asad's films.

### **National Identity and the Israeli Occupation**

Abu Asad's films show the influence of the Israeli occupation on shaping the Palestinian national identity. Through the actions of the Israeli occupation, Palestinians were able to be more cautious when doing anything, in addition to understanding the reality around them. The Palestinian factions and their resistance to the occupation appear as part of the collective revolutionary identity of the Palestinian people to liberate their country.

The diversity of the identities of Palestinian youth also appears in Abu Asad's films, as they are fighters in battle, living life, feelings love, weakness, and strength at the same time. The mission of the fighter appears to monitor the Palestinian people, investigate any change or suspicions regarding collaboration with the Israeli occupation, and impose the national identity on the people to get rid of those who collaborate with the Israeli occupation.

As for martyrdom operations, society considers them a way to restore the agency of Palestinians and a reaction to the killing of Palestinians, in addition to creating a revenge ideology as a response to the crimes of the Israeli occupation. Moreover, martyrdom operations are considered a sacrifice to liberate the country.

In addition, the films show the morals of the Palestinian fighter who refuses to kill Israeli children as the Israeli occupation does to the Palestinians. Besides, Abu Asad's films show the influence of the Israeli occupation in creating obstacles on the movement of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Moreover, Palestinians encounter permanent and temporary checkpoints that affect their lives and identity. This influences the lives of Palestinians who may face killing or injury because of these checkpoints.

Abu Asad films present people in Gaza that suffer in particular from the siege imposed on them by the Israeli occupation; where almost all people live a similar life and events characterized by the closure of crossings and injuries and disabilities as a result of wars. In addition to the separation of Gaza from the West Bank and the denial of visiting, working, movement, and medical permits for them. Besides, the existence of a mutual identity reflects the collective memory of the Nakba, which people experienced in 1948, showing that its influence remains to this day.

### **Social Power and Palestinian Identity**

Since society considers martyrdom as part of Palestinian identity, people in society expect that martyrdom creates feelings of pride for the martyr's family and society. However, Abu Asad's films show the bitterness that the martyrs' families suffer because of the loss. In addition, society expects people to unite against those who collaborate with the Israeli occupation and their families and kick them out of society. Besides, People judge the family of those who collaborate with the Israeli occupation while their reputation remains bad because of the betrayal of one of their family members.

Abu Asad's films show different Palestinian beliefs and factions to which people belong. The films show more than one face of Palestinian society; some of whom want peace without fighting, some of whom adopt armed struggle, and some of whom want a two-state solution and coexistence with the Israeli occupation.

Abu Asad's films reflect laws that control Palestinian society, especially in Gaza, which is the Islamic law that is reflected through people's actions. While the West Bank is governed by social power and social expectations.

The results of the analysis of social life in Abu Asad's films show that the Israeli occupation, social expectations, and patriarchy play a major role in shaping all aspects of Palestinian social life, such as interference in marriage, social roles, shaping the Palestinian national identity, and increasing social solidarity. In addition, Palestinian society is dominated by resistance against the Israeli occupation in various areas of Palestine, represented in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the 1948 lands.

## Chapter Eight Conclusion

This study was conducted to investigate the reflections of Palestinian social structure in Palestinian cinema, specifically to focus on gender roles, marriage, national identity, and social solidarity. Using a Foucault's theory of power and Hall's theory of cultural identity by applying power dynamic theories to the narrative of the films to reveal the impact of these relations in the portrayal of Palestinian social life. The chosen films *Rana's Wedding* (2002), *Paradise Now* (2005), *Omar* (2013), *The Idol* (2015), and *Huda's Salon* (2021), were analyzed to understand how power relations shape, construct, influence, develop, and reinforce the aspects of social life within Palestinian society. The analysis show that Palestinian cinema provided an in-depth portrayal of social-political issues, performing as a mirror of the visible and hidden issues that Palestinians face in their everyday life struggles.

The findings of this study highlight how Palestinian cinema became a medium to document Israeli aggression on every aspect of Palestinian life. It also show the power of patriarchy and society in determining the fate of Palestinians. For instance, gender roles' representation in the examined films reflects the Israeli occupation power. Israeli occupation influences men's behaviors and forces them to join freedom work and resist to free their country. Moreover, it influences women by affecting men physically, thus changing women's roles to fit the new dilemma and do men's roles. In addition, it influences marriage within Palestinian society, as it divides Palestine into closed areas, sets checkpoints, and prevents Palestinians from moving. This creates obstacles for Palestinians and thus, prevents marriage from occurring. Similarly, it is the Palestinian identity, as Palestinians live similar lives

within the power of the Israeli Occupation, thus, influencing their collective and national identity. Moreover, it influences social solidarity, through resistance, sharing people's joys and sorrows, and supporting each other when Palestinians are martyred.

On the other hand, social expectations and patriarchy influence gender roles, as Palestinians resist the restrictions opposing them. Besides, limiting their roles to specific areas in order to maintain the social order, customs, and society's construction. Additionally, the interference of these powers in marriage, as Palestinians have to commit to social and familial expectations. Moreover, social solidarity and national identity are influenced by these powers. However, this influence intertwines with the power of the Israeli occupation, as society expects Palestinians to resist the Israeli forces together with all possible means and stand with each other to maintain their national identity. All of these portrayals agree with Foucault's concept of power relations, implying that Palestinian cinema not only reflects social aspects but also reshapes them.

The major limitation of this study is the difficulty in finding sources of Abu Asad's films. Moreover, one of the most important limitations lies in the fact that film subtitles are not available for all films. In addition, some subtitles were found in different languages. To solve these obstacles, the researchers wrote the subtitles for the missing ones manually. Besides, translating subtitles that are found in different languages into English.

Further studies should be more specific to the representation of Palestinian society in Palestinian cinema to specific periods of time and genres. Comparative studies between films with other national cinemas that witnessed or were influenced by colonization such as Algeria

and Ireland could be conducted. This could reveal common themes and strategies used by the colonizer and the colonized to resist and dominate in the colonized countries. Besides, more studies concerning the influence of the Israeli occupation in changing Palestinian culture and social issues represented in Palestinian cinema could be conducted. Additionally, future studies could investigate and compare Palestinian society represented in Palestinian cinema with Palestinian society in Reality. Finally, other studies could investigate the influence of external funds on the narrative of Palestinian films, to figure out whether films with external funds present a Palestinian narrative or present a narrative that serves the corporate-funded internet.

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## الملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى دراسة انعكاس الجوانب الاجتماعية الفلسطينية؛ والبنية الاجتماعية (الأدوار الجندرية والزواج)، والتضامن الاجتماعي والعائلي، وتشكل الهوية الوطنية في خمسة من أفلام هاني أبو أسعد؛ القدس في يوم آخر (عرس رنا) (2002)، الجنة الآن (2005)، عمر (2013)، يا طير الطائر (2015)، وصالون هدى (2021). أجريت هذه الدراسة في عامي 2024-2025. تستخدم هذه الدراسة منهج البحث النوعي من خلال تحليل الأفلام المذكورة باستخدام أسلوب التحليل الموضوعي. علاوة على ذلك، يستخدم هذا البحث نظرية فوكو للسلطة لفحص كيفية تأثير علاقات القوة؛ قوة السيادة، والسلطة التأديبية، والسلطة الحيوية، على الحياة الاجتماعية الفلسطينية وتشكيلها. كما يستخدم الباحث نظرية هول للهوية الثقافية للتحقيق في كيفية تأثير الاحتلال الإسرائيلي على الهوية الفلسطينية. تشير النتائج إلى أن أبو أسعد يعرض تأثير قوة الاحتلال الإسرائيلي، والتوقعات الاجتماعية، والأسرة، والنظام الأبوي، والمقاومة الجماعية في تشكيل الجوانب الاجتماعية والهوية الفلسطينية في أفلامه. تتشابه هذه الديناميكيات في المجتمع؛ الاحتلال الإسرائيلي والتوقعات الاجتماعية هي المواضيع السائدة في الأفلام وتشكل الأدوار الجندرية والزواج والهوية الوطنية. إلى جانب ذلك، تخلق روابط بين الفلسطينيين تعزز التضامن الاجتماعي من خلال المقاومة المسلحة والوحدة الجماعية. من ناحية أخرى، يلعب النظام الأبوي دوراً كبيراً في تشكيل الزواج والأدوار الجندرية. يقترح الباحث عمل أبحاث مستقبلية في دراسة الأفلام الفلسطينية في أوقات وأنواع محددة، إلى جانب إجراء دراسات مقارنة بين الأفلام ودور السينما الوطنية الأخرى. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، من الممكن أن تحلل الدراسات القضايا الثقافية والاجتماعية الممثلة في الأفلام الفلسطينية. علاوة على ذلك، مقارنة المجتمع الفلسطيني في الواقع بتمثيله في الأفلام الفلسطينية. بالإضافة إلى البحث في تأثير التمويل الخارجي على سرد الأفلام الفلسطينية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الحياة الاجتماعية الفلسطينية، السلطة، الهوية الثقافية، هاني أبو أسعد، السينما الفلسطينية، هول، فوكو.