Jordanian Cinema and Gender Regimes: Representations and Audience Reception

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the reception of gender regime representations in selected contemporary Jordanian films among a Jordanian audience. The study adopts an audience reception theoretical framework that is mainly influenced by Janet Staiger's theorization of audiences and their film reception, which is based on the audience, text, context nexus. Moreover, the gender theoretical framework of this research is inspired by multiple intersecting concepts, mainly Judith Butler's conception of gender as a social construct and performative act, R.W. Connell's theorization of gender regimes and gender roles as social practices, and the notions of femininity and masculinity which are crucial to underpin the understanding of gendered social expectations important in gender regimes. The study is also influenced by research exploring film, gender, society, and media in Jordan and the Arab world.

Utilizing a qualitative methodology focusing on the empirical study of film audience reception, my fieldwork in Jordan in 2019 involved organising three screenings for each of the three selected Jordanian films followed by focus groups with a group of Jordanian women and men in higher education. Follow-up interviews and a Facebook poll on reception of Jordanian films were also included in the qualitative analysis. A thematic analysis of the fieldwork data, managed and coded on NVivo qualitative data analysis software, was conducted to arrive at the findings of this study.

Major findings indicate that the audience participating in the current study tend to have different perspectives regarding Jordanian films; while at times they seem to be reinforcing the gender regime that endorses a patriarchal social structure at other instances it can be read that some audience members attempt to subvert gender norms that create this regime. Through tensions, transformations, critiques, and contrasting understandings in the focus group discussions and follow-up interviews, a context of change appears to be evoked by the audience responses to the conservative representations of Jordan society in the films, specifically with regards to gender regimes in the Jordanian context.

Dedication

To my dear parents, Nayel and Nusairah.

To Sarah as well.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Background, Research Questions, and Contribution

Cinema is a form of mass communication that has "helped to shape the way we live… The content of film can both "reflect" and "shape" society" (Jowett & Linton, 1980, p. 67). Thus, film has become "an overarching social text" that the audience use "to evaluate their lives" (Danesi, 2019, p. 256). To investigate films and their representations of society, audience reception offers a window into understanding films and what audiences interpret them to reveal about certain social issues, such as gender regimes in a specific society. According to Austin (2002, p.1), writing at the turn of the millennium, "contemporary film viewers remain relatively under-examined." However, the field of audience reception has been increasingly under attention in film, media, and cultural studies in recent years. Many scholars have discussed the importance of audience reception studies (Austin, 2002; Fiske, 1992, 2011; Jensen and Rosengren, 1990; Livingstone, 1993, 1998, 1998, 2003, 2004, 2012; Livingston and Das, 2013; Morley, 1980, 2006; Staiger, 1992, 1992, 2000, 2005). This field has undergone many developments; the different paradigms include Effects model, Uses and Gratification model, Literary Criticism, Cultural Studies paradigm (Hall's Encoding/Decoding model), and Reception Analysis paradigm. The current thesis adopts Janet Staiger's (1992; 2000; 2005) approach to audience reception, which assumes that a film's meaning comes from the audience, text and context functioning together, as discussed further in the following chapter.

Gender constitutes a significant part of today's societies (Nayak and Kehily, 2013). It can be understood as a social construct, performed by social subjects through gendered social practices, which inform and are informed by the overall gender regime of a society (Alsop, Fitzsimons and Lennon, 2002; Butler, 1988, 1999; Marecek, Crawford and Popp, 2004; Wes and Zimmerman, 1987; Connell, 1987, 2005). Gender regimes are part of the society, they are the current situation of gender relations in specific social institutions; however, they differ from one society to another (Connell, 1987; Walby, 2020; Moghadam, 2020). The gender regimes of a certain society are usually reflected in its media, including films (Hofstede et al., 2010); thus, it is crucial to study gender issues and their reception in order to explore such representations in Jordanian films.

Cinematic productions in Jordan increased in size throughout the years, yet Jordanian cinema has been relatively rarely explored in existing scholarship. Although it is seemingly in its

nascent stage, having only begun internationally recognised[1] and somewhat consistent feature length fiction film productions since 2007 with the release of *Captain Abu Raed*, Jordanian cinema had its first films as early as the 1950s, as discussed below. The gap between the first cinematic productions and the contemporary ones is mostly due to the absence of funding and distribution for film projects in the country, deeming Jordanian cinema as a cinema under construction not yet reaching its full potential (Potter, 2015). Shafik (2007) notes that historically, due to European colonization, Arab countries and films were mainly concerned with the idea of independence, with national filmmaking being led by state investments in cinema (Potter, 2015). However, unlike many Arab countries, in Jordan significant state funding for film was absent until the 2000s (Potter, 2015). The leap forward of Jordanian cinematic production in recent years is due to the need for the development of different economic sectors rather than depending on tourism and government work (Potter, 2015)[2].

This thesis aims at investigating the reception of gender regime representations in selected contemporary Jordanian films among a Jordanian audience. Through the current study an interpretation of Jordanian films by an active audience is offered, particularly from a gender regimes standpoint, exploring notions about the audience perceptions of gender regimes in the Jordanian society. More specifically, this study is guided by the following research questions:

1- How does a particular Jordanian audience respond to representations of gender regimes in Jordanian cinema? And what socio-cultural factors inform this reception?
2- What does this audience reception of Jordanian films suggest about perceptions of the situation of Jordanian gender regimes?

To answer the research questions this study adopts an empirical audience reception theoretical framework that is mainly influenced by Janet Staiger's theorization of audiences and their reception of films, which considers the audience an active component of film meaning-making process and is based on the audience, text, context nexus. Staiger's (1992; 2000; 2005) approach to audience reception assumes that text, audience, and context are major players in the process of reception and that the film does not have an inherent meaning but rather its meaning is generated through the relationship between the three. Fisk (1992; 2011) and Livingstone and Das (2013) draw from Staiger's work and they argue that media messages are

[1] Please refer to Chapter 4, Film Sample subsection for further information about the film festivals *Captain Abu Raed* participated in and the awards it received. None of the films made before this one has a record of participating in international film festivals.
[2] Please refer to Chapter 4 for further details on Jordanian cinema and its development

not fixed, but rather have multiple meanings inferred through the audience reception. In this sense, the current study considers audience reception to be a product of the relationship between the text, audience, and context, where the self-identity (context) of the audience member (reader/spectator) affects how they look at a film (text).

Moreover, the gender regimes theoretical framework is inspired by multiple intersecting concepts, namely Judith Butler's (1988; 1993; 1999) conception of gender as a social construct and performative act, R.W. Connell's (1987; 2005) theorization of gender regimes as the current situation of gender relations in a given institution and gender roles as social practices, and the concepts of femininity and masculinity which are crucial to underpin the understanding of gendered social expectations important in the social gender regime. The theoretical framework also consults Walby's (2020) and Moghadam's (2020) suggestions for variations of gender regimes. Moghadam's (2020) is of particular relevance to this study as it investigates possibilities of different gender regimes in the Middle East and North Africa; she also provides a classification of Jordan as a neopatriarchal gender regime, which is explored further in the analysis chapters.

Gender related issues provoke much debate in research on Jordanian gender and media studies (see Al-Budour and Al-Kharouf, 2006; Shtaiwi, 2003; Al-Mahadin, 2003; Mahadeen, 2013, 2016, 2017; Zaideh, 2018). Of particular relevance is Al-Mahadin's (2003) study of gender stereotypes in Jordanian caricatures with special attention to female representations. Mahadeen (2013; 2016; 2017) also reveals relevant data through her discussions of masculinity, female sexuality, and other gender related issues specific to the Jordanian society. Gender also appears as a significant issue discussed in academic research concerning Arab media (Kaye-Essien and Ismail, 2018; Al Rawi and Jbar, 2017; Rahbani, 2010) and Arab films (Shafik, 2007; Addoum, 2006; Khoury, 2005; Ateya, 2014; Eynde, 2014; Dinia and Kenza, 2016)[3]. The current thesis adds to these debates and makes a significant contribution to the scholarly understanding of gender in Jordanian society through an audience reception methodology that allows exploring such issues in Jordanian films.

The current study is an example of field-based qualitative empirical audience reception research. Utilizing a qualitative research methodology focusing on the empirical study of film audience reception, I conducted a fieldwork study that took place in Jordan in 2019 with a group of Jordanian participants who watched a selection of Jordanian films –which addressed gender

[3] A full presentation of gender regimes in Arab and Jordanian media and film is presented in Chapter 3

roles and regimes– and discussed them in focus groups. In depth follow-up interviews were also conducted to further investigate the topic of this study. Moreover, a Facebook poll was created asking Jordanians about watching Jordanian films, which proved significant to understanding audience reception of Jordanian films. An in depth thematic analysis of the fieldwork data, managed on NVivo qualitative data analysis software, was also conducted to arrive at the findings of this study[4].

The current research is a timely study as it focuses on an underrepresented cinema and audience in academia, the Jordanian cinema and audience; only few scholarly studies examine those. The current study seeks to provide an initial analysis of gender regime representations in Jordanian films, as well as an understanding of the reception of such representations among a group of educated Jordanians[5]. It simultaneously enquires about the factors that inform this particular audience's reception of gender regime representations (such as tribe, religion, and family); in addition to contributing to scholarly knowledge in the field of film studies, mainly focusing on Jordanian cinema, audience reception studies, and gender regimes studies. Given that Jordanian cinema is relatively in its nascent stage, the current study undertakes the challenging task of laying ground work for future research in the field. The study also contributes to the gender discourse in Jordan and its relation to other Arab contexts through the lens of cinema. By focusing on gender discourses in Jordanian cinema and among a Jordanian audience significant findings regarding gender regimes are revealed in this study, which suggests further questioning and research in the field of gender in the Jordanian context and in relation to cinema.

Major findings of the current study indicate that Jordanian audiences tend to have different perspectives regarding Jordanian films; while at times they seem to be reinforcing the gender regime that endorses a patriarchal social structure at other instances it can be read that some audience members attempt to subvert gender norms that create this regime. The findings also suggest that through tensions, transformations, critiques, and contrasting understandings in the focus group discussions and follow-up interviews, a context of change appears to be evoked by the audience responses to Jordanian films, specifically with regards to gender regimes in the Jordanian context. There are strong views as to how gender regimes are perceived in Jordanian films and beyond. How this group of participants appears to simultaneously challenge and

[4] As presented in Chapter 4: Research Methodology
[5] A rationale and justification for the choice of the study participants can be found in Chapter 4: Research Methodology

reinforce prevalent gender regime representations in Jordanian cinema is also discussed in depth in the fieldwork findings chapter[6].

1.2 Personal Motivations and Thesis Development

Why Jordanian films? As a Jordanian I was surprised when I first learned Jordan produced films, I had never heard of a Jordanian film before. When I watched my first Jordanian film, *Captain Abu Raed* (Amin Matalqa, 2007), I was intrigued to write an essay for an MA film analysis class, analysing the film from a Marxist point of view. Although this was years ago my passion for studying Jordanian films kept growing, I felt a deep sense of responsibility to represent such Jordanian cultural products in academia. I also felt a deep sense of distress towards the situation of Jordanian films especially in Jordan, where no one I know, at least, knows that they exist. This made me wonder why Jordanian films are not popular especially among Jordanian audiences, although from what I have seen they offer good potential. After a little more investigation and conversations with Jordanian film directors and critics, I found that there are structural issues where Jordanian films are not financially supported and the film industry is not a main concern for the Jordanian government or even the private sector. I felt that Jordanian cinema needs more support and decided to dedicate a PhD to studying Jordanian cinema in depth. Although the current study does not investigate the Jordanian film industry, it offers a window into a sample of films and their reception by a Jordanian audience, especially pertaining to gender regimes; this could assist other researchers looking to study Jordanian cinema.

Throughout the process of writing this research it was very difficult to find scholarly research discussing Jordanian cinema, which made me want to study this cinema even more and unravel more about it. My interest in gender in the Jordanian context comes from a deeply profound place. As a Jordanian female, living in what I, and others, consider a patriarchal society, it was important to me to study the implications of patriarchy in my subject of interest, i.e., Jordanian films. Thus, the personal motive to write this research in such an intersectional way came from a sincere sense of curiosity and responsibility towards Jordanian films and gender issues in the Jordanian society. After I began my PhD journey and while I was developing my proposal, an audience reception approach was suggested by my supervisors. This made the study more cohesive and made more sense in researching this understudied

[6] Chapters 5 and 6 provide full analyses for the study findings whether in terms of representations of gender regimes in Jordanian films or the audience reception of gender regime representations in Jordanian films.

cinema. Audiences are the heart of cinema; by focusing on audience reception, gender issues and Jordanian films came together in a more comprehensive way.

This thesis began as a research project looking into the reception of gender role representations in Jordanian cinema. However, throughout the years and specifically after the pilot study[7] and the fieldwork in Jordan I recognised that the research scope is larger than the concept of gender roles. The concept of gender regimes, suggested by one of my supervisors, became the focus of the study after a close analysis of audience responses to gender in Jordanian films, gathered throughout the fieldwork. The focus group discussions after film screenings and follow-up interviews were minimally guided; the questions were framed to allow the audience maximum freedom in discussing gender in the Jordanian films and the audience chose to reflect upon society and gender regimes within. The audience found close proximity between the Jordanian films they watched and the Jordanian society they live in. This made me rethink the presentation and framing of this thesis. Due to this, the thesis became more concerned with looking at gender regimes, their representation in Jordanian films, and their reception among the group of participants involved in this study. After the analysis of the fieldwork data and arriving to themes that were later developed into findings discussed in Chapter 6, with the guidance of my supervisors and other colleagues in the school it became evident that a chapter discussing representations of gender regimes in the selected Jordanian films needs to appear in the thesis to guide the analysis of audience responses and provide a contextualization of the films chosen for this study.

1.3 Limitations of the Study

There are some limitations I recognise in this study, namely related to the fieldwork. The present research is not an ethnography; however, as explained in the methodology chapter, I utilise ethnographic procedures such as focus groups and interviews. Therefore, although I carefully tried not to influence participants, I do recognise that power differential and influences could affect the audience reception; and this is a recognised limitation of this study. As I am a UK based PhD researcher, which is highly regarded in Jordan, this may cause influences due to power differentials especially for participants who were undergraduate students. Another limitation is that the focus group moderator (myself) is a female: while moderating focus groups

[7] The pilot study took place around a year and half into my PhD programme. It helped me test my abilities as a focus group moderator, and helped in testing the research tools employed, i.e. FG guides, consent forms, participant information sheets. It also helped me in testing my NVivo abilities and the use of thematic analysis to analyse my fieldwork data. The results of my pilot assisted me in modify my initial approach and expanding the possibilities of this study.

of all-male participants my position as a female might have influenced their responses in terms of trying to be politically correct as not to be considered sexist. In an attempt to overcome this limitation throughout these focus groups and the interviews with male participants I asked the participants not to consider my position as a female and to express their genuine opinions. I also recognise that the setting of a focus group is 'unnatural' for watching films; attempting to naturalize the setting I provided snacks and coffee to participants during the film screenings to help them feel more at ease. Moreover, the study is limited to three Jordanian films and 48 Jordanian participants which is a recognized limitation for the generalizability of this study. Thus, the current research is not generalizable to the Jordanian population and does not aim at generalising the findings as it only depicts the responses of the limited number of participants. Where any sense of generalizability could be inferred it is not intentional as the study does not intend to arrive at generalizations about the Jordanian society, what is discussed in the findings chapters is limited to the perceptions of the sample participating in this study.

1.4 The Thesis Structure

This thesis comprises of seven chapters: Chapter 1. Introduction, Chapter 2. Theoretical Framework and Literature review, Chapter 3. Jordanian Cinema in Context, Chapter 4. Research Methodology, Chapter 5. Jordanian Cinema and Representations of Gender Regimes, Chapter 6. Audience Reception of Gender Regime Representations in Jordanian cinema, and Chapter 7. Conclusions.

Chapter 2 introduces the theoretical framework this study adopts while also providing a literature review of previous literature on the topic of the study. It begins with outlining the audience reception framework which focuses on Janet Staiger's theorization of audience reception, where the process of reception involves an active audience examining films through the lens of their context (Staiger, 1992; 2000; 2005). Here literature concerning the empirical study of audience reception is also presented. Moreover, citing major gender theorists such as Judith Butler and R. W. Connell the second part of the chapter outlines the gender regimes theoretical framework, discussing gender as a performed social construct, gender regimes as the current situation of gender relations in a given institution, gender roles as social practices, and presenting what the literature suggests are traditionally encoded feminine and masculine personality traits. This chapter is crucial for the discussion of gender regimes reception and representations in Jordanian films.

Chapter 3 situates the current study in the context needed for understanding the thesis. The context Jordanian cinema and audiences exist within is presented, by discussing main aspects leading to the gender regime of the Jordanian society such as: Jordanian state formation and tribal connections, social change in Jordanian society especially in terms of education, the family institution and patriarchal structure of the Jordanian society, and a special focus on violence in the Jordanian family institution, as such issues are represented in the films and the audience responses. The chapter also reviews literature concerning gender in Jordanian and Arab media and films, in order to situate the current study within this literature.

Chapter 4 outlines the methodological considerations adopted to complete this study and discusses the pilot study conducted at the outset of this research. How this study was conducted using a qualitative field-based approach is explained, where the film corpus and why it has been chosen is outlined, the study participants and a rationale for their choice is explained, and the use of focus groups, in depth follow-up interviews, and a Facebook poll to gather data for this research are all outlined. Moreover, the use of NVivo qualitative data analysis software to work with and organize the data is also explained in this chapter. Finally, the chapter outlines the thematic analysis process that was conducted to analyse the data gathered for the current study.

Chapter 5 begins with introducing the background of Jordanian cinema, how it developed and its current situation, to then move into a specific analysis of representations of gender regimes in three Jordanian films selected for this study; *Captain Abu Raed* (Amin Matalqa, 2007), *When Monaliza Smiled* (Fadi Haddad, 2012), and *Lissa Aisha* (Asma Bseiso, 2016). The main focal points of this film analysis of representations of gender regimes in the Jordanian family institution include analysing representations of marriage, family structure and gender relations, gender roles and the division of labour in the family, domestic violence, sexuality, and femininity and masculinity. Through analysing such representations in the film corpus, this chapter provides the context necessary for the analysis of the audience reception of gender regimes representations in the selected Jordanian films.

Chapter 6 is concerned with presenting and discussing the findings of the fieldwork of the current study. The findings are discussed in themes arrived at through the thematic analysis process conducted in the process of analysing the fieldwork data. One of the main findings is that the audience reception revealed that Jordanian films are rich with references to gender regimes in the Jordanian society. The main focal points/themes of the audience reception analysis include the reception of marriage representations, the reception of representations of gender roles, power relations, and patriarchal structure in the Jordanian family institution, the

reception of domestic violence representations, the reception of sexuality representations, and the reception of femininity and masculinity representations. These themes encompass the audience reception of gender regimes representations in the Jordanian films chosen for the current study. This reception analysis shows that in the process of film meaning-making the confluence between the audience, text and context proves significant to understand to audience responses to film.

The final chapter brings together the thesis and reiterates the main findings and reflects upon them to finally arrive to concluding this study and its contribution to knowledge, while also suggesting recommendations for further research on Jordanian films, audience reception, and gender regimes.

1.5 Conclusion

As discussed in this chapter through a qualitative field-based approach, this thesis is concerned with exploring and investigating a particular Jordanian audience reception of gender regime representations in three Jordanian films. The thesis witnessed many developments throughout the years and eventually this product, I believe, accurately represents the issues under study. The following chapter brings forward the theoretical framework and literature review that guide the current study and enable its conclusions. As discussed earlier the chapter discusses both audience reception and gender regimes from various theoretical standpoints, and reviews related literature.

Chapter 2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review: Audience Reception and Gender Regimes

2.0 Introduction

This study explores audience reception of gender regime representations in selected Jordanian films. Thus, the theoretical framework and literature review focus on offering an understanding of both audience reception and gender regimes. The audience reception theoretical framework is mainly influenced by Janet Staiger's theorization of audiences and their reception of cinema based on the audience, text, and context nexus. Moreover, the gender theoretical framework is inspired by multiple intersecting concepts: mainly Judith Butler's conception of gender as a social construct and performative act, R.W. Connell's theorization of gender regimes and gender roles as social practices, and the concepts of femininity and masculinity, which are crucial to underpin the understanding of gendered social expectations important in any gender regime. The chapter is divided into two sections Audience Reception (2.1) and Gender Regimes (2.2); each section is divided into relevant subsections informing the discussions presented in the analysis chapters of the current study[8].

2.1 Audience Reception

The field of audience reception has been increasingly under attention in film, media, and cultural studies in recent years. Many scholars have discussed the importance of audience reception studies (Austin, 2002; Fiske, 1992, 2011; Jensen and Rosengren, 1990; Livingstone, 1993, 1998, 1998 2003, 2004, 2012; Livingston and Das, 2013; Morley, 1980, 2006; Staiger, 1992, 1992, 2000, 2005). This field has undergone many developments; some of the different paradigms that appeared are Effects model, Uses and Gratification model, Literary Criticism, Cultural Studies, and Reception Analysis. These are discussed respectively in the next paragraphs, followed by a close examination of Janet Staiger's theorization of audience reception in section 2.1.1 and a review of empirical literature in section 2.1.2, which are crucial to the current study's understanding and adoption of notions regarding audience reception.

The Effects model was introduced by media scholars aiming to answer the question, what do media texts do to people? (Cohen, 1980; Roe, 1985; Jensen & Rosengren, 1990). Its roots are in the 1920s American film research (Lowery & DeFleur, 1988). It suggests that

[8] These are Chapters 5 and 6

mass media have great effects on audiences, treating the audience as passive consumers directly affected by powerful media messages (Jensen & Rosengren, 1990). This approach can be considered the beginning of mass-communication research concerning audiences (McQuail, 1987; Jensen & Rosengren, 1990). Different scholars in the field have argued the strength of the effects of mass media on individuals; the notions varied from a passive audience accepting powerful media messages to an active audience using media contents in specific ways (Klapper, 1960; Levy & Windahl, 1985; Jensen & Rosengren, 1990).

Moreover, different types of research in the field discuss the effects of media in various ways; for example, experimental studies, more than surveying, treat the audience as a passive mass directly and strongly affected by media messages (Jensen & Rosengren, 1990). However, experimental effects research has undergone some developments "drawing on a combination of the strong demands inherent in the experimental design and developed versions of classic psychological, social psychological and sociological theories and models" (Jensen & Rosengren, 1990, p. 209). These developments have caused a revival in research concerning the effects of mass media on individual consumers. The effects model led to questions regarding the passivity of audiences, which the uses and gratification model refused and developed further.

Uses and Gratification (U&G) model in its turn asks the question, what do individuals do with media, rather than what do media do to individuals; thus, moving from the passive audience to the active audience paradigm (Moores, 1993). Here, the importance lies in how media audiences use media texts "to satisfy their needs and achieve their goals" (Katz et al., 1974 p. 21). This research approach began two decades after the beginning of effects research as an attempt to find out what gratification listeners of radio daytime serials and quiz programmes received by listening to these shows (Herzog, 1942, 1944; Jensen & Rosengren, 1990). Similar to effects research, U&G developed through stages. Jensen and Rosengren (1990, p. 210) state that the development happened in four stages: "moving from prima-facie descriptions, to typological efforts building on systematic operationalisations of central variables, to efforts at explanation, to systematic theory building." For theory building and testing purposes, U&G researchers used social psychological approaches, specifically the expectancy-value approach, which relates behaviour to individuals' expectations and beliefs or values (Palmgreen & Rayburn, 1985; Babrow, 1989). However, as the field developed, different effects and U&G scholars called for merging the two approaches under the name "uses and effects research" because of the proximity of their forms of enquiry, "which grew

out of the humanistic tradition in the area" (Jensen and Rosengren, 1990 p. 211). Literary criticism as well tended towards looking at the effects of literary texts on the audience/reader.

Traditionally, the interpretation of aesthetic and intellectual experiences of texts has formed an essential ground for literary criticism; social and cultural life was shaped through the rules of interpretation set by literary criticism scholars (Jensen & Rosengren, 1990). However, literature was redefined as the modern social order developed and became "a form of communication addressing readers primarily as private individuals in a sphere of leisure" (Jensen & Rosengren, 1990 p. 211). Thus, the purpose of literary criticism was somewhat reconsidered (Williams, 1977; Eagleton, 1983), and there became "an emphasis on attempts at demonstrating that, and explaining how, literature, as mastered by specific historical authors, may give rise to aesthetic experiences supposed to transcend historical time and place" (Jensen & Rosengren, 1990 p. 211). This entailed an educated audience/reader learning appropriate responses to literary texts; hence, "learning the effects of literary communication" (Jensen & Rosengren, 1990 p. 211). Although few empirical literary studies took place (e.g. Richards, 1929; Hansson, 1985; Purves, 1971), resembling effects research, the empirical study of audiences was not a main concern for literary criticism scholars and notions of the effects of literary texts on readers were taken for granted (Jensen and Rosengren, 1990).

In this respect, Jensen and Rosengren (1990) claim three different notions of audience research in literary studies. First, analysing the role of the reader, which descends from reception aesthetics introduced by West German scholars focusing on the circumstances leading to the understanding of literary texts and the transformation of literary themes (Iser, 1970; Jauss, 1970; Holub, 1984). Second, reader-response theory (Fish, 1980; Suleiman and Crosman, 1980; Tompkins, 1980), which emphasised the text-reader interaction manifested in different literary approaches. Finally, the growth in psychological and sociological literary reception studies in Europe and the US. The majority of literary criticism studies tended towards focusing on the structural characteristics of the literary text and messages. Thus, similar to effects research, the bulk of literary criticism asks the question "what the structure of literary texts may do to readers, rather than what readers may do with literature" (Jensen & Rosengren, 1990 p. 212).

Moving from making critical assumptions of audience response to a more empirical study of audiences, cultural studies approach involved studying actual active audiences. The cultural studies approach to audience reception is characterised with insistence to look at audiences as active members interacting with media texts within their particular context,

underlining “a holistic perspective on social life, while recognizing the scope for intervention by individuals and the role of meaning for orienting social action” (Jensen & Rosengren 1990, p. 212). This research tradition proposes that media processes should be studied and understood as aspects of everyday life practices, where practices are defined as meaningful social activities (Williams, 1977). Moreover, for cultural studies the core of media research is located ‘outside the media’ and embedded in audiences as well as social and cultural practices (Jensen & Rosengren, 1990). Members of the Media Group at Birmingham University’s Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) including Stuart Hall and David Morley contributed widely to the cultural studies approach to audience research, specifically Hall’s encoding/decoding model (Livingstone, 2013).

Hall (1980) presents the encoding/decoding model for the study of audiences, which involves an active audience and claims meaning is encoded by producers of media products and decoded by the audience (Hall, 1980). Thus, he introduces three types of audience reception: dominant (where the audience decodes the message as encoded), negotiated (where the audience takes both the dominant and oppositional positions), and oppositional (where the audience challenges and opposes the encoded message) (Hall, 1980). While the dominant reception is claimed to be preferred by encoders, negotiated seems to be the position mostly adopted by spectators in different studies (Austin, 2002). Hall’s work within the CCCS is significant to audience reception studies, as it is among the first traditions to advocate treating the audience as active members in the process of reception (Livingstone, 2012). In this respect, the cultural studies tradition aided in reconsidering cultural products as processes of meaning production, rather than as canonical works. It also helped in shaping the idea that popular culture, like high culture, is a worthy discourse and social resource, and raising both theoretical and political matters concerning the audience (Jensen & Rosengren, 1990).

Jensen and Rosengren (1990, p. 213) further discuss this issue by stating, “Theoretically, the relative power of different cultural practices in the social production of meaning is at stake. Politically, the question is whether this form of semiotic resistance is evidence of a long-term tendency towards social change, which might imply new political strategies”. Many audience reception scholars investigated the resistance of audiences towards mass media’s construction of reality, with Morley (1980) leading this investigation (Ang, 1982; Morley, 1986; Radway, 1991; Fiske, 1987; Jensen & Rosengren, 1990). Moreover, the British Cultural Studies led by the CCCS dominated the field; however, similar attempts at defining cultural studies were established mostly by independent efforts in other

European countries. Approximating to literary criticism, cultural studies "pays special attention to the genre in question, its implied reader positions and associated social uses" (Jensen & Rosengren, 1990, p. 217). However, it focuses upon popular culture as well as high culture, unlike literary criticism which specifically focuses upon high culture products.

Media messages in cultural studies are considered 'generically structured discourses' that are relevant for different audiences having diverse cultural and social backgrounds (Jensen & Rosengren, 1990, 217). Although this research tradition calls for active audiences, the examination of empirical audiences appears only in few studies (e.g. Morley, 1980; Radway, 1991); rather, most studies in the field treated the audience as analytical constructs validating their analysis through references to the social and historical context of media discourses (Jensen & Rosengren, 1990). In addition, cultural studies scholars identified the concept of interpretive communities where it is believed specific groups of audiences share interpretive strategies when tackling a media text; thus, interpretation of texts would be similar for individuals belonging to the same interpretive community (Fish, 1980; Lindlof, 1988; Jensen, 1990; Jensen & Rosengren, 1990). This tradition seeks to "combine a text-centred perspective with a social-systematic conception of reception" (Jensen & Rosengren, 1990, p. 217). Whilst the current tradition did not focus entirely on the empirical study of audiences, reception analysis paradigm played a great role in the spread of the qualitative empirical audience reception research.

Reception analysis, stems from cultural studies, specifically, works by Morley (1980), Ang (1982), and Radway (1991). A main concern in reception analysis is the qualitative empirical study of audiences seeking to incorporate both humanistic and social-scientific approaches to reception (Jensen, 1986; Jensen & Rosengren, 1990). Moreover, unveiling the theoretical traditions reception analysis builds on, Jensen and Rosengren (1990, p. 213) declare:

> In broad theoretical terms, the tradition builds on a variety of theoretical frameworks ranging from symbolic interactionism to psychoanalysis. More specifically, it has one of its roots in the two traditions of reception aesthetics and reader-response theories, another in the U&G research which some current reception analysts helped found.

Thus, reception analysis can be considered the latest development in audience research traditions of that time (Jensen & Rosengren, 1990). This tradition takes its modes of enquiry and theories from both the humanities and social sciences; however, it questions and departs

from some of the concepts it considers limiting in both disciplines. On the one hand, it questioned the validity of using interpretive content analysis to study mass media's content uses and effects employed in the humanities (Jensen & Rosengren, 1990). On the other hand, reception analysis criticised some of the methodologies used in empirical social sciences research debating the nature and purpose of media research (Rosengren, 1989; Jensen and Rosengren, 1990). In this respect, in reception analysis the process of reception is a significant concern, and the audience is the main point of contact where a concept of importance is "audience-cum-content analysis" and the nature of research is both qualitative and empirical (Jensen & Rosengren, 1990, p. 214).

Similar to cultural studies, reception analysis identifies the audience as meaning making agents and media messages as 'generically coded discourses' (Jensen & Rosengren, 1990, 212). Moreover, adhering to U&G model, "reception analysis conceives of recipients as active individuals who can do a variety of things with media in terms of consumption, decoding and social uses" (Jensen & Rosengren, 1990, pp. 217-218). Thus, in one way or another, it asks the question what people do with media, rather than what media does to people. However, according to Jensen & Rosengren (1990, p. 218) reception analysis, unlike the previous traditions, insists that research in the field should:

> include a comparative empirical analysis of media discourses – content structures with the structure of audience responses regarding content. The results of this analysis are then interpreted with reference to the surrounding socio-cultural system, which, again, is conceptualized as a historical configuration of social practices, context of use, and interpretive communities.

Thus, the concept of the nexus between audience-text-context is significant in reception research, and the question central to reception analysis (to be answered empirically) is, how do specific audiences produce different social meanings from a media text? (Jensen & Rosengren, 1990). This tradition is important as it partially speaks to Janet Staiger's (1992; 2000; 2005) approach to audience reception, which assumes that a film's meaning comes from the audience, text, and context interchangeably, as discussed further in the following section.

2.1.1 Janet Staiger's theorization of audience reception

The current study is particularly influenced by Janet Staiger's theorisation of audience reception. Her books *Interpreting Films* (1992), *Perverse Spectators* (2000), and *Media Reception Studies* (2005) offer a comprehensive and insightful overview of the history of film and television audience-centred studies as well as how audience reception can be theoretically approached based on post-structuralism, new historicism, and cultural studies. However, going beyond Cultural Studies and Hall's (1980) Encoding/Decoding model, her approach to audience reception assumes that a film or media product does not have immanent meaning; rather meaning comes from the confluence between the audience, text, and context. She also argues that variations in audience interpretations are not idiosyncratic but are due to complex cultural, social, political, and economic conditions as well as constructed identities such as gender, class, and nationality (Staiger, 1992). Staiger mainly focuses on American/ Hollywood cinema and American audience reception, usually from a historical perspective. Some scholars have been influenced by Staiger (Austin, 2002; Fiske, 2011; Livingstone and Das, 2013). Particularly, in a theoretical article reviewing developments in audience reception research, Sonia Livingstone and Ranjana Das (2013) argue that in the process of reception the active audience is a very significant component; their reactions to and reception of a cultural product such as film create a meaning for it.

In her book *Interpreting Films* (1992), Staiger uses the term 'reception studies' to refer to the approach through which she theoretically treats audience reception; not only to link it to reader-response criticism, reception aesthetic, and reception theory, but also to disengage it from some features of these reception traditions. 'Reception studies' according to Staiger (1992, p. 8) investigates "interactions between real readers and texts, actual spectators and films;" thus, the film spectator is actively engaging in the reception process. In her own words, "reception studies is engaged in understanding the relations between readers/viewers and texts/films" (Staiger, 1992, p. 8). This somewhat speaks to reception aesthetic theorist Robert Holub's (1984, p. xii) statement, "reception theory refers throughout to a general shift in concern from the author and the work to the text and the reader." Understanding how texts and artworks are consumed is a main concern in Staiger's 'reception studies' as it could assist in gaining more knowledge to act upon political situations in order to change, where possible, cultural products' consumption. However, as she states: "at a less grandiose and more politically neutral level… reception studies has implications for many of the typical areas of research in art and textual

studies;" (Staiger, 1992, p. 11) and while the concept has connections to other types of media, Staiger, in her book, focuses on American films.

Staiger (1992, p. 12) argues that although post-structuralism, new historicism and cultural studies claim that "audience response cannot be derived through examination, exclusively, of texts," work done on film audiences and reception of her period has relied heavily on the researcher's interpretation or textual analysis of films, and conclusions regarding audience reception are inferred according to this textual analysis. To answer the current study's research questions, although I provide an analysis of gender regime representations in Jordanian films[9], I move away from relying exclusively on this textual analysis and rather focus on analysing actual audience reception of such representations in films[10]. Thus, the film analysis in this study serves to provide a background against which the audience reception can be interpreted. This ensures that the audience is treated as an active component in the reception process who could have varying interpretations of the films; as Staiger puts it: "scholars may get further in analyses once they stop assuming that individuals have one, logical relation to the movies" (Staiger, 1992, p. 12).

The examination of audiences, according to Staiger, has assumed homogeneity among audience members and uniformity in responses, where audiences and experiences are universalised, as they are divided into categories such as "women," "blacks," or "Jewish immigrants." She proposes that a multiple intersection of variables should be adopted recognising that each audience member is "a complex and contradictory construction of such self-identities as gender, sexual preference, class, race, and ethnicity. The pertinence of each self-identity might at times dominate the others, perhaps overdetermine or contradict as well." (Staiger, 1992, p. 13). Another issue in treating audience members is the notion of the 'free' reader which Staiger resists; she explains this further stating:

> To think any reader or group of readers can do anything – accept, negotiate, resist – is to lose the very real power of the contributions of cultural and structural Marxisms to understanding constructed economic, political, social, and psychological identities such as gender, sexual preference, class, ethnicity, and race (1992, p. 13).

Staiger critiques the text-activated and reader-activated traditions of audience reception, such as the British Cultural Studies approach where audience responses are classified as dominant,

[9] Please refer to Chapter 5 for an analysis of gender regime representations in Jordanian films
[10] For the audience reception of gender regime representations in Jordanian films please consult Chapter 6

negotiated, or oppositional[11]. Departing from Hall's theory of Encoding/Decoding, Staiger (1992, p. 48) claims that readers or audiences do not simply decode hegemonic texts, rather they are "complex historical individuals capable of acting within contradictions of their own construction as selves and reading selves. Readers are developed historically." Moreover, stressing the contextuality of audiences and interpretation she continues "the interpretive event occurs at the intersection of multiple determinations" (Staiger, 1992, p. 48). She believes that in the process of reception the context of the reader is as important as the reader and the text themselves, and this context lies in the construction of self-identity as explained earlier.

Her own approach to audience reception assumes that text, audience, and context are major players in the process of reception and that meaning is generated through the relationship between the three. In this sense, the current study considers audience reception to be a product of the relationship between the text, audience, and context, where the self-identity (context) of the audience member (reader/spectator) affects how they look at a film (text). Whereas Staiger might take this notion to further philosophical and historical consideration, I stop at giving voice to audience members and providing their interpretation of the text while showcasing the factors that affect their reception, such as gender, age, and religion among other variables, as these could be the contextual elements that determine Jordanian audience members' reception of Jordanian films. Thus, audiences in the present study, as Staiger suggests, are not treated as homogenous but rather as a group of autonomous individuals who could share historical and contextual elements that influence their reception.

Although the issues of depending on textual analysis, assuming the homogeneity of audience members, and the lack of empirical audience research characterise the approach of classical film theories (where the formal construction of the film and the film itself are areas of concern rather than the audience), Sergei Eisenstein and his contemporary Hugo Munsterberg gave some attention to the audience. Eisenstein's Formalist theory focused on how the work of art could invest in "the audience's psyche, in particular class context," (Staiger, 1992, p. 53) emphasising class context as an early attempt to consider the possibility of the variability of audience members' responses. Likewise, Munsterberg, an American psychologist and critic, focused on how meaning can be created for films through the imagination of the audience members and their "earlier experiences" (Staiger, 1992, p. 56). These attempts to identify the role of audience in film interpretation treat the audience as active members in the process of understanding film. Moreover, Staiger critiques generalising the spectator/audience member

[11] For a further explanation of theses classification please consult Hall (1980)

into an idealised subject lacking connection to cultural, sexual, political, and cognitive differences, among others. She states: "such versions of idealised readers fall into the fallacy of assuming meaning resides in the text rather than the relations of spectators and films across history and differences" (Staiger, 1992, p. 138). This idealisation of spectators could provide some limits to reception considerations; "while making generalisations is important in historical and critical work, these must not too readily yoke any features to particular constructed categories of the human person" (Staiger, 1992, p. 138). In what follows, I discuss more of Staiger's concepts with respect to audience and media reception in her other books.

In *Perverse Spectators* (2000), Staiger presents a collection of essays as a continuation to the research she undertook in *Interpreting Films* (1992), where she continues to discuss that contextual factors, including social formations and constructed identities, affect audience reception of film and television more than textual factors. Although she takes a historical materialist approach to audience reception by looking at historical reception of media texts, which is beyond what this study is trying to offer[12], her insights and theoretical considerations are very useful for the present study. Moreover, movie going and the experience of watching movies are important concepts to understand the reception of these movies. Discussing Hollywood films, she argues that speculation about movie going has paved the way for research surrounding the reception of movies, but that we should move beyond "conceptual restrictions underpinning these speculations to create more complex descriptions of film reception" (Staiger, 2000, p. 12). Thus, as important as movie going is, it is now time to give more attention to the actual reception of audiences. In relation to my own study, movie going is not a concept of importance; I move beyond this to discussing the actual responses of audiences watching the films in a contained space and time within the parameters of the fieldwork construction[13]. In this way, I provide complex descriptions of film reception, rather than focusing on any other consideration regarding watching a film (such as the place of cinema-going in everyday life).

Staiger's approach to reception, as discussed earlier, goes beyond cultural studies' categorisation of audience responses as preferred, negotiated, or oppositional (Hall, 1980). In turn, in Staiger's (2000, p. 24) words, her approach seeks to

> describe the process and phenomena in more specific details. It might, for instance, consider whether the spectator is reading for a plot or watching favorite stars; whether

[12] What this study is trying to offer is the current reception of Jordanian films by empirically studying the reception of a group of Jordanian women and men in higher education watching their national films.
[13] As discussed in Chapter 4: Research Methodology

> verisimilitude matters or what counts as verisimilitude; whether costume and visual display provide clues to a lesbian or gay subtext; how ethnicity and race might produce "oppositional" gazes or "call-and-response" behavior in a theatre.

This proposes that audience members look at different aspects of the film and each could have a different viewpoint depending on their context. As she suggests, spectators appear to be more perverse in their operation the more she studies them. By using the term perverse and perversity Staiger connotes "turning away from dominant notions of "right" or "good" … perversion can imply a wilful turning away from the norm; it may also suggest an inability to do otherwise" (2000, p. 2), assuming spectators could have different reactions to films and do not have to follow the norms or fall under the categorisation of preferred, negotiated, or oppositional readers. She further explains: "by choosing the term "perversity," I wish to highlight the wilfulness of the spectator while also avoiding the implicit, but false, conjunction that doing something different is necessarily politically progressive" (2000, p. 32).

Staiger claims that in her book with David Bordwell and Kirstin Thompson *The Classical Hollywood Cinema* (1985) they "placed too much emphasis on texts creating affects," (2000, p.30) as they did not understand how perverse spectators could be. She disagrees with positions taken by Bordwell, and argues that while clarifying interpretive events, the context is more important than textual features. The context does not only involve "the sense data of the film," (2000, p. 30) but also the spectators' interpretative strategies. There are factors that influence these strategies, Staiger clarifies this saying: "whether I am thinking of myself as a professor or a woman or a neo-Marxist or an American influences what happens while I watch a movie" (2000, p. 31). Therefore, the present study focuses on the context of the audience members and their interpretive strategies, by discussing the variables that affect their reception of the films, such as gender, age, religion, and tribal affiliation, among others.

In Chapter Two of *Perverse Spectators*, Staiger provides a chart which is especially made for the knowledgeable and cooperative viewer; where the spectator is assumed to be interested in logic, thoughtfulness, cohesion, and narrative climax. In the chart she attempts to "characterise possible interpretative acts" (2000, p. 3). Figure 2-1 in Staiger's book (2000, pp. 34-35) entitled "Viewers' Presumed Normative Reception Activities for a Chronological/Narrative Film" is a useful guide for understanding audience reception of films; as stated earlier however, it assumes a viewer who is cooperative and knowledgeable and moves away from perversity. Her purpose for presenting this chart is to help "consider the ideology imbedded in the "normative" presumptions" (2000, p. 31).

Although this chart provides richer strategies for understanding how spectators receive films, which are more developed than cultural studies characterisation of their responses as negotiated, preferred and resistant readings, it falls short for some reasons Staiger explains. The spectator in the normative description is conceived of as ideal, which does not account for the diversity of viewers. She claims, "a character might do certain acts, but a viewer may associate those acts with any one of the attributes of the character's identity," (2000, p. 39) such as gender, age, and race/ethnicity among others. Another issue she draws attention to is that the chart, as mentioned earlier, is constructed for the cooperative and knowledgeable viewer. She claims that this issue is the most relevant cause for the failure of the normative description. This description does not account for perverse spectators, those who do not necessarily follow the norm of interpretation created by academic scholars. Staiger states that viewers "project their personal, sometimes marginalized, identities into the sense data … [and] not all viewers have the same taste preference" (2000, p. 37). Consequently, to conceive of viewers as cooperative and knowledgeable could be considered a passive treatment of the audience rather than active and interactive.

According to Staiger, some reception scholars might seek to create boundaries for spectators' reception experiences such as considering "what the text does to the audience [as] determinant," (2000, 44) the stylistic practices of the text, or the viewing context. Although the latter is argued to improve the likelihood of a wide range of audience experiences or readings, these boundaries do not account for perversity of audience responses. In addition, she claims them to be unnecessary and unproductive when trying to explain the relationship between the audience and the text as they prevent researchers from accounting for a wide variety of factors affecting the reception process. Instead of these boundaries, she focuses on historical time periods of film production and audience identities to account for the contextual factors that affect audience responses. However, she states "the boundaries of audience identity or historical time period are inadequate as dividing lines unilaterally to carve up film history and create a general theory of audience reception" (2000, p. 50). The current study does not set boundaries for audience responses, it rather focuses on audience self-identities, such gender, class, and age among others, to take the responses to a deeper contextual level and to account for the possible factors that could affect these responses, treating audience reception through the triad of

audience, text and context while being very careful not to assume homogeneity among audience members[14] or universalize audience responses.

Another boundary scholars have set for audience reception, is considering "the film-viewing event as the end of the reception process" (Staiger, 2000, p. 52). Staiger considers 'postmovie' talk by audience members to be a very important part of the reception process that helps in the analysis of the personal, cultural, and ideological effects of watching a film. As a supplement for the 'Normative Reception' chart discussed above, Staiger provides another chart entitled "Beyond Presumed Normative Reception Activities during the Event" (2000, p. 52). The first half of this chart is a list of the possible feature that could affect audience activities while watching a film. The second half, however, focuses on what happens with spectators after watching a film, as an attempt at breaking the boundary discussed above. This chart is provided below in Figure 1. Staiger's chart "Beyond Presumed Normative Reception Activities during the Event."

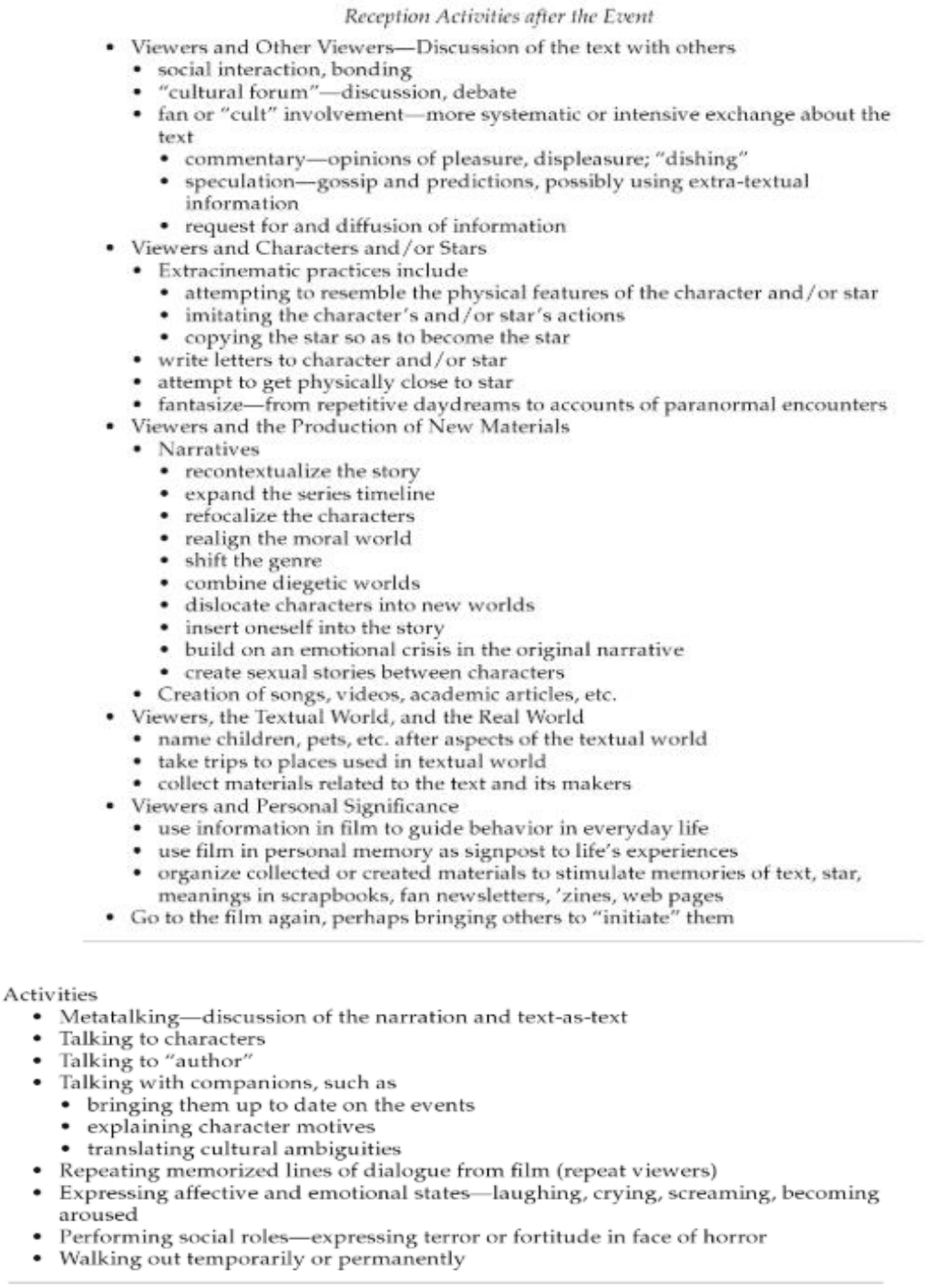
FIG. 3-1. *Beyond* Presumed Normative Reception Activities
(terminology based on film and television viewing,
but applicable to other types of texts)

Physical and Expressive Activities during the Event

Extent of this will depend on contextual factors such as

- Site of event: four-wall theater, exploitation house, drive-in, party, bar viewing night, home
- Genre of the text
- Social mix/dynamics: all-male stag party; adolescent males in a group with women; broadly viewed social ritual (such as televised wedding or funeral); date

[14] See Staiger (2000, p. 55), where she states: "Ethnic and gender practices should be tracked for patterns but not unreasonably homogenized."



Reception Activities after the Event

- Viewers and Other Viewers—Discussion of the text with others
  - social interaction, bonding
  - "cultural forum"—discussion, debate
  - fan or "cult" involvement—more systematic or intensive exchange about the text
    - commentary—opinions of pleasure, displeasure; "dishing"
    - speculation—gossip and predictions, possibly using extra-textual information
    - request for and diffusion of information
- Viewers and Characters and/or Stars
  - Extracinematic practices include
    - attempting to resemble the physical features of the character and/or star
    - imitating the character's and/or star's actions
    - copying the star so as to become the star
  - write letters to character and/or star
  - attempt to get physically close to star
  - fantasize—from repetitive daydreams to accounts of paranormal encounters
- Viewers and the Production of New Materials
  - Narratives
    - recontextualize the story
    - expand the series timeline
    - refocalize the characters
    - realign the moral world
    - shift the genre
    - combine diegetic worlds
    - dislocate characters into new worlds
    - insert oneself into the story
    - build on an emotional crisis in the original narrative
    - create sexual stories between characters
  - Creation of songs, videos, academic articles, etc.
- Viewers, the Textual World, and the Real World
  - name children, pets, etc. after aspects of the textual world
  - take trips to places used in textual world
  - collect materials related to the text and its makers
- Viewers and Personal Significance
  - use information in film to guide behavior in everyday life
  - use film in personal memory as signpost to life's experiences
  - organize collected or created materials to stimulate memories of text, star, meanings in scrapbooks, fan newsletters, 'zines, web pages
- Go to the film again, perhaps bringing others to "initiate" them

Activities

- Metatalking—discussion of the narration and text-as-text
- Talking to characters
- Talking to "author"
- Talking with companions, such as
  - bringing them up to date on the events
  - explaining character motives
  - translating cultural ambiguities
- Repeating memorized lines of dialogue from film (repeat viewers)
- Expressing affective and emotional states—laughing, crying, screaming, becoming aroused
- Performing social roles—expressing terror or fortitude in face of horror
- Walking out temporarily or permanently

Figure 1. Staiger's chart "Beyond Presumed Normative Reception Activities during the Event."

The chart in Figure 1 is a useful guide to the present study. While the analysis of audience reception might refer to some activities during the film viewing event Staiger refers to in the chart, such as social mix and expressing affective and emotional states[15], the second half of the

[15] Which are noted through watching the videos I filmed for participant's focus groups, as discussed in Chapter 4: Research Methodology

chart proves to be more relevant to the current study. The reception activities after watching the film are significant to this study, as the main method of data collection is focus groups after film screenings[16]. Though in this chart the reception activities after the event seem to refer to activities in the long term (not in a focus group discussion right after watching the film), some features of the chart are useful to understand the reception of the films in this study. This includes discussion of the text with others, including commentary and speculation, which in Figure 1 Staiger refers to as "cultural forum".

In *Media Reception Studies* (2005), Staiger discusses, among other issues, methodologies of audience reception research, including ethnography and auto-ethnography. Ethnography has been widely used and praised in studying audience reception and meaning-making processes, through participant observation and interviews among other methods (Staiger, 2005). However, this methodology of researching reception does come with some limitations. As Staiger argues, one of the issues of using ethnography in investigating audiences is "the power differential between ethnographers and their subjects and more specific matters such as leading audiences and interviewees toward answers that the interviewers desire" (2005, p. 14). The present study is not an ethnography; however, as explained in the methodology chapter I utilise some ethnographic procedures within the broader focus group methodology-where I do a level of participant observations within the focus group context as well as follow-up individual interviews. Therefore, although I carefully tried not to influence participants, I recognise that power differential and influences could affect audience reception; this is a recognised limitation of this study.

In conclusion, Staiger argues for focusing more on the audience and the variations of reception between spectators. She hinges these variations of reception on sociocultural, political, and economic aspects of human life, as well as audience members' constructed identities, such as gender, race/ethnicity, class, and nationality (Staiger, 1992). Similarly, Austin (2002) gives more attention to the audience. He argues that the interaction between text, audience, and context generates meaning from film. Accordingly, "viewers are conceived of as social subjects, and film consumption is understood as a social event, shaped by a range of local and variable factors, and anchored in the context of historically specific conditions" (Austin, 2002, p. 13). In this respect, the relationship between the three (audience, text, and context) produces the meaning articulated by the audience. Moreover, drawing from Staiger's (1992) work, Livingstone and Das (2013) argue a fundamental idea in reception studies; that media

[16] Please see Chapter 4: Research Methodology for the data collection methods

messages are not fixed or 'pre-given', rather they are interpreted and constructed by the audience. Likewise, Fiske (2011, 1992) argues the importance of the audience and that meaning emerges from the interaction between the interpretive audience and the polysemic text within a specific context, stressing that texts have multiple meanings to different audiences in specific social contexts. In relation to the present study, the previous observations are useful as they draw more attention to the ways in which audiences shall be treated and resonate with ideas central to this study, as explained earlier. The theoretical framework this study adopts assumes that the process of reception and meaning construction from a specific media text is found through the relationship between the audience, text, and context and that texts do not have inherent meanings. Since this study investigates the reception of Jordanian cinema, especially with respect to representations of society's gender regimes, it involves an active Jordanian audience, where the relationship between the audience, text, and context formulates the meaning of the films generally and in relation to representations of gender regimes.

2.1.2 Empirical audience reception literature

Traditionally audience reception studies have been mostly approached through the textual study of audiences rather than empirically. Ien Ang rightfully notes: "the ordinary viewers' perspective is almost always ignored" in many studies of film and media textual analysis, where academics speak for the audience "from a position of distance" (1991, p. 2). This thesis deals directly with an actual active audience and their reception of Jordanian films. Many recent studies have been involved in the empirical study of audiences of media products including film (e.g. Anaz, 2014, Belle, 2018, Gregoli, 2011). In this section, I provide a review of several studies concerned with empirical audience reception of media in general and film studies in specific as well as how some have helped shape this thesis. Although some of these studies are not directly relevant to my own, they provide insights on the different approaches to study audience reception empirically. However, as noticed below, studies of Jordanian films' reception are lacking in this review, as to my knowledge no such studies exist to date.

I begin by reviewing two of the most prominent and widely cited reception studies, David Morley's *The Nationwide Audience* (1980) and Ien Ang's *Watching Dallas* (1982). These studies are historically important as early attempts at breaking with the passive audience approach and the textual treatment of audience reception, which dominated western audience reception studies for a long time. I then provide a review of more recent and contemporary works involved in the empirical study of audiences.

Morley's *The Nationwide Audience* project is considered as one of the influential and leading empirical studies in audience reception research (Sujeong, 2004). In this study, Morley adopts Hall's (1980) encoding/decoding model to study British audiences watching the BBC1 TV programme *Nationwide*. Here, Morley engages with the question of what people do with media rather than the "Effects" model's question of what media do to people. He uses an empirical approach to the study of audiences employing group interviews as a main data collection method with the use of open-ended discussions, rather than a pre-determined interview guide (Morley, 1980). Morley analysed his interviews through three levels. He first attempted to "establish the visible particularities in the lexical repertoires of the different groups;" (Morley and Brunsdon, 1999 p.156) accordingly, he investigated how the same term functions differently in different groups. The second level of analysis identifies "patterns of argumentation and the manner of referring to evidence or of formulating viewpoints which different groups predominantly employ;" (Morley and Brunsdon, 1999 p.156) here, he attempts to establish how different groups formulate central topic areas which he identified in his analysis of the programme and their different definitions of these central topics. Finally, the third level concerns "the underlying cognitive or ideological premises which structure the argument and its logic;" (Morley and Brunsdon, 1999 p.156) by doing so, Morley aims to find the implicit assumptions of a particular point of view.

His findings include the classification of audience responses as dominant, negotiated, and oppositional readings of the programme, following Hall's encoding/decoding model; 12 groups had dominant readings, 8 groups adopted a negotiated reading, and 6 groups adopted oppositional readings (Morley, 1980). A weakness in Morley's research, as he claims, is the absence of the gender differential decoding, meaning how women and men within the family formulated different opinions regarding the subject of study; thus, his treatment of groups was homogenous. However, he claims this is due to scarce time and resources available. Another limitation of this study is the choice of the method of analysis which renders the analysis more descriptive. In the current research, thematic analysis of the data is employed, which could in fact limit the research in terms of providing descriptive analysis. However, I move from Hall's concept of encoding/decoding, which assumes a message is inscribed by the media producers and decoded by the audience, to Janet Staiger's assumption that the text has no inherent meaning and meaning is produced through the nexus of text, audience, and context. Thus, I

place emphasis on the audience and their understandings rather than the media text, which proves to provide rich data concerning the context of the spectators; the Jordanian society[17].

Apart from Morley's *Nationwide* study, one of the most important early pieces of scholarship on empirical audience reception is Ang's *Watching Dallas* (1982), originally written in Dutch and translated to English in 1985. I place Ang's work in this section as it is a major study that contributed to understanding audiences and their reception empirically, as well as for her use of Hall's encoding/decoding model similar to Morley. In her study, Ang (1982;1985) utilizes an empirical approach to the study of audience reception of the American soap opera, *Dallas*, the phenomenon of *Dallas* as she refers to it, in order to determine the factors that make the serial pleasurable or not for audiences, relating pleasure to ideology (Ang, 1985; 2007).

To conduct her empirical study, she posted an advertisement in a Dutch women's magazine called *Viva,* where she asked audiences to answer the question why they like or dislike watching *Dallas*. She used a combination of ethnographic methods and textual analysis to collect and analyse the letters. She received 42 letters back, 39 from women and 3 from men (Ang, 1985; 2007). This could imply that *Dallas* is more popular among women; however, as she posted her question in a women's magazine the previous assumption could not be validated. Ang analysed these letters to determine how pleasure and ideology play a role in watching popular culture. Her use of a popular culture text allowed the escape from using only high culture texts prevalent in academic studies of her time. Livingstone and Das (2013, p. 7) articulate the findings of Ang's study as such, "she employs Raymond Williams's concept of the "structure of feeling" to reveal that it is the "tragic structure feeling," rather than the likeness to their own humdrum lives, that provides the emotional realism that viewers discuss finding in the program." Although the scope of Ang's research is far from the present study's considerations, it is worth examining as she constructs an early attempt to studying audiences empirically.

In recent years, many scholars have paid attention to the importance of treating audiences as active members in the process of reception and studying the relationship between actual viewers and media texts (Staiger, 2005). Media and online spectatorship is a growing research field where researchers attempt to understand viewers' and online users' reception processes of different types of media, including TV shows and dramas, online interactive dramas, and popular internet websites. For example, Alvarez (2017) qualitatively investigates

[17] As seen in Chapter 6 analysing audience reception

online audience reception, focusing on audiences' perspectives of images of death and dying on a popular online platform. Lee and Park (2012) also provide an empirical audience reception study of gender representations in a Korean television program using focus groups to collect data[18].

Another area of research that interestingly dealt with reception is the study of transnational audiences; where the study of media or film reception takes under consideration audiences from different nationalities and compares their reactions. For example, Bore (2012) studied audience reception of comedy in two British and Norwegian comedy shows looking at how British and Norwegian audiences perceive comedy in a transnational context[19]. Specific studies concerning film audience reception have also successfully used empirical approaches to understand audience reactions and meaning-making process while watching films. A notable and relevant study to the current thesis is Gregoli's (2011) work on the reception of two Brazilian films among Brazilian and non-Brazilian audiences, where she uses focus groups as a main data collection method[20]. In what follows, I provide a detailed review of some of the previously mentioned studies in the three areas; *Media audience reception* (Alvares, 2017; Lee & Park, 2012), *Transnational audience reception* (Bore, 2011), and *Film audience reception* (Gregoli, 2011).

Media audience reception

In a study concerning online audience reception, Alvarez's article "Online spectatorship of death and dying: Pleasure, purpose and community in BestGore.com" (2017) examines viewers' reactions to real images of people dying or in agony due to serious injury on an internet 'shock site' called BestGore.com. Using a qualitative grounded theory approach, he analyses 35 photographs, 8 videos, and 600 comments generated by users of the website in order to answer the research question, "What apparent pleasures and purposes, if any, do BestGore users experience upon witnessing lives end, and how might these vary by the type of death depicted?" (Alvarez, 2017, p. 7) The use of the methodological approach of grounded theory allowed him

[18] These studies are examined further in the next section. For further studies on audience reception of different media types please see: Hardy, Hight & Michelle 2011; Heiselberg 2018; Hübinette 2012; Johanssen 2018; Marôpo 2014; Schrøder 2019; and Boyle 2014

[19] This study is explained further in this section under the subheading *Transnational audience reception.* For further articles on transnational audience reception please see: Athique 2014; Barker & Mathijs 2012; and Gregoli 2011

[20] Explained further below under the subheading *Film audience reception.* For further studies concerning film audience reception please see: Anaz 2014; Belle 2018; Bhattacharya Chairs 2004; Burke 2012; Englehart 2003; Hollinshead 2011; Krämer 2011; Navitski 2017; Rauch 2018; Redfern 2012; Smets, Mutlu & Winkel 2019; Turner 2017; Treveri-Gennari, O'Rawe & Hipkins 2019; Waldron & Murray 2014.

to depart from defining categories prior to analysis, rather categories emerged from the data in an organic manner. His findings suggest that humour, detective mind-set, and scientific gaze are the purposes for watching the contents of this website, though humour seems to be the most apparent pleasure and the level of humour depends on the mode of death. The lack of depth in the findings is a limitation of this study, for this Alvarez (2017) suggests focus group or individual interviews should be conducted with BestGore users to gain a deeper understanding of the pleasures gained from following such a website. As suggested by Alvarez I do use focus groups and follow-up interviews to gain a deeper understanding of audience responses. Moreover, this study intersects with my own in terms of allowing categories and codes to emerge organically from the data, rather than having pre-set codes. This allows for arriving to themes dependant on the reception of the study participants, treating them as active audiences in the process of analysing their reception.

Media is inclusive of not only online media, but also of television programs. The study "'We need a committee for men's rights': reactions of male and female viewers to reverse gender discrimination in Korean comedy" by Lee & Park (2012) is an interesting example of audience reception of a Korean television program. In their study they explore the ideological implications of a very popular comedy sketch, Nambowon, 'The Committee for Men's Rights', which appears in a Korean TV comedy show called 'Gag Concert'. They treat the program as part of Korean television programs that portray gender differences and the rising social status of women, not as an idiosyncratic text (Lee & Park, 2012, p. 354). Particularly, their study attempts to understand what the reasons are behind audiences' enjoyment of the show, and, similar to the current study, they investigate both female and male reception of gender portrayals of the sketch. In terms of methodology, they conducted a qualitative study that included three focus groups and five in-depth interviews with participants from the researchers' social networks. One focus group comprised of all women, one of all men, and the third had three men and a woman. They separated the groups by gender as they believed this way participants would feel more comfortable discussing sensitive issues about gender. This also helped them to determine the differences between female and male reactions to the gender discourse portrayed in the sketch. Although the third group included one woman, they claim as the group comprised of close friends, they openly discussed their views (Lee & Park, 2012). This methodology is very useful, and it intersects with the methodology used in the current study, as it could help in determining if gender plays a role in the audience reception of Jordanian films.

Lee & Park (2012) examine three areas when analysing the data: realism, offensiveness and perception of gender relations. Although their findings suggest that participants were not offended by the show, some ideological implications of Nambowon, specifically in relation to gender were found. These include empowering, affirming, and celebrating the rising power of women in Korea. However, they also include a "false impression" regarding the unfair treatment of men due to this rising status of women. Additionally, they indicate, participants' reception of the sketch was in conjunction with and in relation to other media empowering women and commending their rising social power. This was particularly apparent when participants discussed the changing gender roles and power dynamics in their society. In spite of this, they state: "Neither male nor female participants claimed that gender inequality is a thing of the past. They acknowledged that women still experience a variety of disadvantages in social life… However, participants considered gender relations as fairly equal because both male and female participants saw their own privileges and disadvantages in different areas of their life" (Lee & Park, 2012, p. 368).

Their study does not come without limitations. One of the most important is that the moderator decided to initiate conversation regarding Nambowon without showing an episode or an excerpt from one; this made it difficult for participants to refer to specific examples of the show although she chose people who had watched it earlier. In the present study, to eliminate such a limitation, I first screen the film to my participants then I discuss it with them[21]. Another limitation is the fact that the moderator was female, which had some advantages but also some disadvantages. In the focus group with all males, they asked the moderator if what they said was politically incorrect or gender biased, they also stressed several times that they were not sexists. This intersects with the present research: I am a woman and I conducted three all-male focus groups which could impose an effect on their responses; however, it gave me an insight into how the group dynamic might have been affected by the presence of a female in an all-male group.

Transnational audience reception

In audience reception research, focus group interviews have been widely used (e.g. Bore, 2012; Lunt & Livingstone, 1996; Morley, 1980). Through utilising focus groups to conduct her audience reception research, Bore (2011), in the article entitled "Transnational TV Comedy Audiences", addresses the relationship between nationality and humour among

[21] As presented in Chapter 4: Research Methodology

transnational audiences of the TV shows The Office (British) and Nissene på Låven (Norwegian). She specifically looks at the constraints and pleasures related to watching translated TV comedy, how transnational viewers made sense of these texts, and how notions of nationality were constructed by participants while watching TV comedy. She conducted thirteen focus groups with British audiences and twelve with Norwegian audiences. Although, as she claims, there is a tendency in transnational audience studies to explore the reception of imported programs, her study moves from this conventionality to studying audience reception of their national TV comedy and comedy outside that sphere.

Her findings suggest that subtitling in TV comedies could be a constraint to transnational audiences and their engagement with the text. She also indicates that both British and Norwegian participants questioned the extent to which transnational audiences would make sense of a nationally specific media text, by discussing the national specificity of the sitcom produced in their own country (Bore, 2011, p. 366). Bore's study is limited due to the artificiality of watching the TV comedy in the unnatural setting of focus groups. Despite this limitation her research still sheds light on the transnational reception of comedy. The present study shares this limitation, as film screenings occur within a focus group setting. Although I recognise this as a limitation, as an attempt to naturalise the setting I provided snacks and coffee to participants during the screenings to help them feel more at ease. Another limitation in Bore's research is using her own English subtitles of the Norwegian show, which she describes as inexperienced and not as effective as professional subtitles of comedy programs; however, she reflects on the effect of this issue in her discussion mentioning that British audiences might have not understood the jokes due to her translation.

Film audience reception

Studies on the reception of transnational audiences have not only been in relation to TV shows, empirical film studies concerning the audience have also discussed this issue. Although Gregoli's (2011) article "Transnational Reception of City of God and Elite Squad" is a study that involves transnational audiences, I situate it under this section as it is a valuable empirical film audience reception research. Gregoli (2011) examines the reception of two Brazilian films, *City of God* (Cidade de Deus, 2002) and *Elite Squad* (Tropa de Elite, 2007), among both Brazilian and non-Brazilian audiences. She stresses the lack of empirical studies investigating the relationship between Brazilian cinema and audiences, even though studies of spectatorship of Brazilian television and media exist. Through investigating Brazilian and non-Brazilian

audiences' reception of class, gender, race, and cultural identity in film, her study attempts to fill the gap of the lack of empirical film reception studies in the Brazilian context.

To conduct her study, Gregoli collected responses to a qualitative questionnaire designed for the films, from 238 participants from three distinct groups: Brazilian favela (slums) inhabitants, Brazilian middle class people, and foreigners. Before handing the questionnaire to participants she screened the films to groups of participants; in Brazil, for the Brazilian groups (six screenings, four for middle class and two for favelas), and at Sheffield University, United Kingdom, for the foreigner groups (seven screenings, four for *Elite Squad* and three for *City of God*). She analyses three aspects of each film: the general reaction to the films, reaction to characters, and perceptions of gender, particularly masculinity. The term reaction is used in this study to stress the active role of the audience in the meaning-making process, as well as to refer to the variety of audience responses. While most of the participants for this study are well-educated adults, two groups were seventh-graders (the favela groups). This poses a limitation in the study as the level of education of the latter groups could influence "the sophistication of their responses." Conversely, Gregoli (2011, p. 354) claims: their participation "provided fresh and insightful contributions to the study."

Gregoli's findings suggest the following: in relation to the general reaction to the films "the relationship between respondents' daily reality and the movie was evident in their responses," (2011, p. 355) especially in the case of the favela respondents who made comparisons between different favelas. She importantly notes: "It appears that it is precisely the actual cultural and symbolical environment of respondents that offers the framework within which their interpretation of the film is constructed" (p. 355). This suggests that the context of the audience and their constructed identities, as discussed earlier in section 2.1.1, affect their meaning-making and interpretation of the film. Moreover, concerning reaction to characters, she proposes that the same film and characters produce different and sometimes contradictory reactions. This is due to her conclusion that reception among different individuals in different groups appears to reveal more about the spectator's reality rather than the film story. In some instances, it seems as if, for participants, the reality presented in the films is relevant and authentic. Therefore, the use of film discussions can illuminate the understanding of audience reception and can emphasise the importance of the relation between the text, audience, and context in the process of meaning-making (Staiger, 1992; 2000; 2005). In relation to masculinity in the films, Gregoli (2011, p. 365) states:

> The underlying premise for this chapter is Judith Butler's seminal conceptualisation of gender as "ritual social drama," i.e. repeatedly reenacted and reexperienced acts with a socially-established set of meanings. Incidentally, it is interesting to find Butler's ideas in regard to the performative character of gender embryonic in a number of audience responses.

These findings are particularly interesting, especially in relation to the audience reception analysis presented in Chapter 6 of the current study, which explores the reception of gender regime representations in selected Jordanian films. Staiger's theorisation of audience reception as a process that involves an active audience interacting with the film and interpreting it from their own context/background is crucial to underpin the current thesis. Moreover, the methodology of focus groups widely used by researchers in the field, as discussed above, is also important for my own approach in this study. The following section provides an understanding of gender regimes that influences the current study's reception analysis.

2.2 Gender Regimes

The current study takes the stance that gender is a social construct, performed by social subjects through gendered social practices, which inform and are informed by the overall gender regime of a society. This section of the chapter discusses four main aspects: theories and notions concerning gender as a performed social construct, gender roles as social practices, the notion of gender regimes and their role in the gender order of a society, and notions of femininity and masculinity. This is in order to provide a theoretical conception to analyse representations of gender in the selected Jordanian films and their reception by a group of educated Jordanian youth. Major theoretical conceptions of gender such as those of Judith Butler, Simone de Beauvoir, and R. W. Connell among others, are discussed in order to construct a framework through which this study examines gender. The chapter section is divided into four subsections; Gender: A performed social construct (2.2.1), Gender roles as social practices (2.2.2), Gender regimes (2.2.3), and Femininity and masculinity: Traditional traits (2.2.4).

2.2.1 Gender: A performed social construct

Simone de Beauvoir's (1973, p. 301) famous declaration, "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman," assumes that gender is a social construct that is deeply entrenched in human societies. Similarly, Judith Butler (1988, p. 519) refers to gender as "an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts." Their

statements about gender suggest that it is inherently constructed by the society within which it exists and that it is a repeated performed act. Many gender scholars agree with de Beauvoir and Butler on the notion of gender as a social construct (Alsop, Fitzsimons and Lennon, 2002; Marecek, Crawford and Popp, 2004; Wes and Zimmerman, 1987; Connell, 1987, 2005).

Social constructionism is a theory that has been discussed and defined by many scholars as a theory that is concerned with how meaning is created (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Burr, 1995; Hacking, 1999). According to Hacking (1999, p.6), a social construct can be defined through the following statement: "X need not have existed, or need not be at all as it is. X, or X as it is at present, is not determined by the nature of things; it is not inevitable." This suggests that a social construct is generated by society, it can change and take different forms at different times and in different societies; the key term here appears to be "the nature of things" as culture usually presents constructed identities, such as gender, as 'natural'. In the previous statement if X is gender, then gender exists as it is, not 'naturally', but through how societies have created meaning and practice for it. Femininity and masculinity then could be understood as social concepts formulated and reformulated differently or similarly in different societies at different times; they are thus changing and adaptable concepts.

In her pioneering work *Gender Trouble,* Butler (1999, pp. 9-10) takes the idea of social construction to a deeper level, arguing that gender is a performance of the construct, entailing that you are what you do. Butler's ideas of performativity are influenced by Derrida and Foucault among other philosophers and speak to Wes and Zimmerman's "Doing Gender" (1987, p.126), where they define gender as "an emergent feature of social situations: both as an outcome of and a rationale for various social arrangements and as a means of legitimating one of the most fundamental divisions of society." Moreover, gender according to Marecek et. al. (2004) is a term used to differentiate between the biological sex and the socialized aspects of masculinity and femininity. According to these scholars, gender is something that is done and enacted within society. Furthermore, de Beauvoir's (1973) perception of gender as a social and cultural construct has proved very influential in feminist discourse, yet her distinction between sex as a bodily identity existing 'before' gender and gender identity as a construct is challenged by Butler (1993). This position is presented in her book *Bodies that Matter*. She states that sex is not "a bodily given on which the construct of gender is artificially imposed," it is in fact – like gender—a "cultural norm," which "governs the materialization of bodies" (1993, pp.2-3). For Butler, moving beyond de Beauvoir, sex is an "ideal construct" which is achieved, like gender, through the "reiteration of norms" (1993, p.2). Butler (1999) opposes the distinction

between sex and gender as natural vs. socially constructed. In fact, she claims both are actually social constructions dependent on each other. She also includes sexual desire in this discussion as also a socially constructed aspect of identity. In other words, for Butler (1999) sex is as socially constructed as gender; it is reconfigured and given a binary status in culture as male and female although biologically there can be more sexes as a percentage of humans have mixed chromosomal and bodily features that do not allow their identification as male or female. Thus, Butler argues that both gender and sex are social categories that are naturalised in societies. Sex as a category whether configured as natural or culturally constructed is irrelevant to the current study. The current study concerns the social construction of gender and the categorical distinction of human traits as feminine or masculine. Through the consideration of gender as a social construct the films and audience responses to them are subject to scrutiny to determine whether they attempt to subvert gender constructions/norms or reinforce them.

Butler argues that gender is a performative act "a stylised repetition of acts"; through repeated acts and behaviours gender becomes internalised by subjects. The way gender is repeatedly performed is regulated by culture, by the regime. Compulsory heterosexuality becomes the norm in order to regulate the process of reproduction; thus, gender, sexual desire, and sex become intertwined to produce a heterosexual matrix through which gender is regulated. Sex, gender and sexuality become part of culture, while sex is determined by biology, gender and sexuality are determined by the culture in which this biological sex exists which makes sex part of the cultural construction of gender. A certain sex, has a certain gender, and a certain sexual desire, which are all regulated by the cultural understanding of sex. And this sex, which has a certain gender and a certain sexual desire, must adhere to social notions of behaviour linked to gender and sex. If gender is binary, then feminine and masculine gender roles and social expectations must be enforced through the stylised repetition of acts that constitute gender. When gender is considered an internal identity separate from cultural configurations then the role of culture and power structures that regulate gender can seem to be irrelevant (Butler, 1999). However, it is the cultural power structure and gender regimes that regulate gender behaviour through enforcing a gender binary and that puts the feminine in one category and the masculine in another separating the roles of males and females in society. Thus, sex becomes the founding subject through which gender roles are separated and enforced.

This resonates with Butler's (1999, p.33) concept of gender performativity; she claims: "gender proves to be performative— that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing." This entails that individuals are direct actors in the social

construction of gender through their repeated gender practices that become naturalised. Performativity for Butler (1993, p.2) "must be understood not as a singular or deliberate "act," but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names." In other words, this means performativity is the repetition of an act that normalises its existence. Although Butler argues the social constructed-ness of gender to dismantle and trouble the idea of heterosexuality, the use value of her theory to the current research resides in its explanation of gender as a performance that is repeated throughout history and societies which make it seem 'natural' to one's sex to have certain gendered personality traits that could seem fixed; though they are culturally constructed repetitious acts that can be changed and are different in different societies and historical periods. The current study also conceives of gender representations in film as an agent potentially reinforcing or subverting the gender constructs of a given society.

Connell (1987; 2005, p.71) also supports the previously discussed trend of thought, claiming: "gender is a way in which social practice is ordered," and that it is a social construct performed in social situations and this performance becomes thought of as 'natural' when it gets repeated and reinstated by the gender practices of a society. To assume gender is a social construct helps in separating the biological sex from the social practice of one's gender, as Connell (2005, p.71) states "gender exists precisely to the extent that biology does not determine the social," which opposes Butler's claim of sex and gender both being socially constructed. To further explicate this concept Connell recognises gender as a historically specific social structure (Maharaj, 1995).

The concept of gender as a performative act emphasises its social constructed-ness, which could liberate both men and women from the restrictions of believing in the naturalness of gender practices and roles and their presumed link to one's biological sex (Beauvoir, 1973; Connell, 2005). Thus, if gender is socially constructed then femininity and masculinity are also constructed and the traits that are believed to be 'natural' for men and women could be challenged and subverted. By conducting an audience reception study, the current research is trying to give an understanding of how gender is performed and represented in Jordanian cinema and how a group of educated Jordanians tend to conceive of gender as it is performed on or off screen within their society. The following sections discuss, gender roles, gender regimes and femininity and masculinity respectively, which can help in analysing and understanding film spectators' conceptions of gendered social practices and their reception of gender regimes represented in Jordanian film.

2.2.2 Gender roles as social practices

Several scholars argue that gender roles are socially constructed (Alsop, Fitzsimons, and Lennon, 2002; Beauvoir, 1978; Butler, 1999, Connell, 2005), but what are gender roles and are they social practices? According to Connell (2005, p. 72), "Social practice is creative and inventive, but not inchoate. It responds to particular situations and is generated within definite structures of social relations." Thus, social practice is the enactment of the socially constructed structure. In this sense, gender roles as social practices are the act of performing one's gender in a socially appropriate way, which is in line with Judith Butler's conception of gender as a performative act. Gender roles stem from learned gendered behaviours that are acquired through the process of gender socialization, which refers to the process through which individuals learn the appropriate behaviour linked to their gender, typically at an early childhood age (Stockard, 1999; Butler, 1999).

Gender roles can be defined as "patterns of behavior, attitudes, and personality attributes that are traditionally considered in a particular culture to be feminine or masculine" (Alters and Schiff, 2009, p.143). As can be seen in the discussion of gender thus far and the discussion of gender regimes in the next subsection, there is a power structure that underlies gender roles, where, traditionally, man dominates and woman conforms to his dominance (Beauvoir, 1978; Butler, 1999; Bourdieu, 2001; Connell, 1987, 2005, 2012; Moghadam, 2020; Walby, 2020). Moreover, that gender roles could differ between cultures proves it is a socio-cultural construct, constructed and practiced differently in different societies and their cultural products. According to Hofstede et. al. (2010, p.138):

> A society's gender role pattern is daily reflected in its media, including TV programs, motion pictures, children's books, newspapers, and women's journals. Gender role–confirming behavior is a criterion for mental health. Gender roles are part and parcel of every society.

Films in the current study, hence, are considered bearers of gender role representations, and studying such representations could reflect ideas about the society local to the film representation and the gender regimes of this society.

Gender roles are considered social issues that provoke much debate in research on Jordanian gender-related studies (see Al-Budour and Al-Kharouf, 2006; Shtaiwi, 2003; Al-

Mahadin, 2003)[22]. However, men have been neglected as an object of investigation in Jordanian gender studies, which tend to focus solely on women-related issues (Roald, 2009; Btoush, 2008; Al-Saleem, 2009). In fact, according to Nayak and Kehily (2013), the field of gender research has historically focused largely on women issues and recently on issues facing men; however, according to them a holistic approach to the study of gender is only found in few studies. They argue that through their own ethnographic observations they found that "one of the primary means through which young men and women define themselves is through and against one another and alongside imaginary notions of masculinity and femininity" (Nayak and Kehily, 2013, p. 4). Thus, the study of both men and women is significant to the field of gender studies, and the current thesis attempts to incorporate a discussion that treats both simultaneously.

2.2.3 Gender regimes

Gender regimes is a concept that entails "the state of play in gender relations in a given institution" (Connell, 1987, p. 200). This concept stems from sociological attempts to explain how gender works in society and in different social institutions. Moreover, gender regimes according to Williams (2002, p.32) provide "a framework to identify gender meanings that are attached to specific locations;" these locations have their unique cultural formations and changes that necessitate a specific way of configuring the gender regime (Walby, 2020; Moghadam, 2020). Therefore, gender regimes are understood as specific to the local culture and society under study; in the case of the current study this means the Jordanian society and gender regimes within, which are given particular attention in the next chapter. Here, I introduce gender regimes theoretical framework mainly through the works of Connell (1987; 2005; 2012), Walby (2020), and Moghadam (2020). The latter provides a theoretical model of varieties of gender regimes focused upon the Middle East and North Africa region, which is of special relevance to the current study. I begin with theoretical underpinnings of the concept through Connell's (1987; 2005; 2012) theorization of gender regimes and Bourdieu's (2001) concept of masculine domination.

The family, the state and the street are major institutions where gender regimes are at play, and their relation to each other creates the gender order of a society (Connell, 1987; 2012). Family, built on marriage, is a crucial institution in most global societies, especially in the

[22] Please refer to Chapter 3 for a detailed discussion of gender in the Jordanian context

Middle East[23] where it is considered the basic unit of society (Moghadam, 2004, 2020; Sharabi, 1988; Guzzi, 2012; Connell, 1987) [24]. Connell (1987, p. 202) states:

> Conservative ideology speaks of the family as the 'foundation of society' and traditional sociology has often seen it as the simplest of institutions, the building block of more elaborate structures. Far from being the basis of society, the family is one of its most complex products. There is nothing simple about it.

This institution has complex gender relations that are not always fixed or controlled, and its structure is the "centrepiece of the sociological analysis of sex roles" (Connell, 1987, p. 200). The family as Connell (1987, p. 199) claims is perceived by the social sciences "as the bearer of gender and sexuality." Therefore, it is an important foundation in the analysis of film representations of gender and gender regimes in the current research.

Patriarchy is defined as "a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women" (Walby, 1990, p.20). Through patriarchy masculine domination is empowered. Bourdieu (2001) explains masculine domination as the primacy and control of men over women that is socially endorsed, accepted, and empowered by the patriarchal society. This masculine domination grants men political, economic, social, and familial power, which frames women as dependant and weak and puts them in such positions. The persistence of this concept is a result of social reproduction through three main institutions, in Bourdieu's (2001, p.81) view, the family, the church (or more broadly religious institutions), and the educational system. Bourdieu (2001, p.81) states:

> The family undoubtedly played the most important part in the reproduction of masculine domination and the masculine vision; it is here that early experience of the sexual division of labour and the legitimate representation of that division, guaranteed by law and inscribed in language, imposes itself.

This assertion of the family as the main reproducer of male dominance also appears in Connell's (1987) work where they discuss that men have more power and dominance in the family in

[23] Explored further in Chapter 3.

[24] A focal point in the current study is the family institution. This is perceived as an important institution through the analysis of the audience reception to the selected Jordanian films provided later in Chapter 6. Family is also conceived of as the basis of society in the Middle East and North Africa which requires a focus on this institution when discussing gender regimes in this region, as explained later in this section through the work of Moghadam (2020). The current situation of gender relations in the family institution constitutes a major part of the films and audience reception analyses in Chapters 5 and 6 respectively.

most patriarchal societies; it is usually the husband's power that defines the wife's place and role. The patriarchal pattern in a society grants men more power in all sorts of institutions; "with young people subordinated to old and women subordinated to men." This patriarchal pattern "reappears in a long series of sociological researches on families in different countries, together with the ideologies of masculine authority that support it" (Connell, 1987, p. 205; Bourdieu, 2001). The power relations between men and women in patriarchal societies indicate an imbalanced power structure, where the man is on top of the power pyramid[25]. Family power structure is usually conventional, where power is defined as "influence in decision-making" (Connell, 1987, p. 205).

Moreover, according to Moghadam (2004, p.138) the wife usually "plays the affective, "expressive" role of nurturance and support, and it is the husband who plays the "instrumental" role of earning the family's keep and maintaining discipline." The power given to men by the patriarchal social structure grants them the ability to act as the discipliners of the family, where force is seen as an important factor in the discipline process, usually indicating the prominence of domestic violence in such families (Connell, 1987). Power relations are also seen in the marital sexual relationship, where "the sexual act is itself conceived in terms of the principle of male primacy… the sexual act itself is seen by men as a form of domination" (Bourdieu, 2001, pp.18-20), and it is usually the husband who takes the initiative in defining the parameters of sexual practice (Connell, 1987).

The division of labour in the family context is emphasised in different studies (e.g. Connell, 1987; Nordenmark, 2013; Torabi, 2020). This division is usually traditional where women are more likely to participate in the unpaid household labour than men, and this is the case in both Europe -even in more egalitarian gender regimes- and the Middle East (Torabi, 2020; Nordenmark, 2013; Moghadam, 2003). Bourdieu (2001, p.9) also argues that the social order endorses masculine domination where there is a "sexual division of labour" and each sex is assigned activities that are strictly distributed; studying Berber gender regimes in North Africa he states: "it is the structure of space, with the opposition between the place of assembly or the market, reserved for men, and the house, reserved for women…" This division could fall under the gender regime of the family institution[26]. According to Connell (1987), the division

[25] Jordanian and Middle Eastern family power structures, power relations, and gender regimes are explored further in Chapter 3.

[26] In his work Bourdieu (2001) bases his discussions of gender and masculine domination on the Kabyle society of Algeria, which is considered a patriarchal society. Please refer to his book *Masculine Domination* (2001) for further information.

of labour is characterised by having two main types, domestic and public. The former is defined as unpaid work commonly performed by women, while the latter is paid work typically performed by men; this structure usually takes different forms in different class settings and different gender regimes (Connell, 1987; Nordenmark, 2013). Moreover, childrearing is 'normally' done by the mother, which entails the domesticity of women's roles, and accordingly, "femininity is constructed in a way that defines the work of caring for other family members as womanly" (Connell, 1987, p. 223). On the larger level of the family, Connell (1987, p. 204) found "housework to be done by girls about twice as often as by boys." This also entails the domestic burden women carry, even as girls, and it "reflect[s] ideas about 'a woman's place'" (Connell, 1987, p. 204). Connell (1987, p. 203) states: "the division of tasks is not absolute, and does change with time." However, the move of women into the labour force and public sphere, mainly in the late 20th century in Jordan and elsewhere, has affected the situation of women; rather than having the housework redistributed between women and men, it was redistributed among women in the family[27] (Torabi, 2020; Nordenmark. 2013; Connell, 1987).

In traditionally patriarchal families the strictness of the division of labour could occasionally limit "the patriarch's ability to exercise power, since women monopolize certain kinds of skill and knowledge" (Connell, 1987, p. 208). For example, in Morocco, where there is a sharp division of labour, although patriarchal domination is immense, due to the segregation of women and men's daily life routines, patriarchal power is difficult to sustain (Connell, 1987). These contradictions could lead to a potential for change in the gender regimes of the family institution, where power is redistributed in a roughly more equal treatment of women and men in the family. Moreover, in some cases "some families show a pattern of eroded patriarchy, where a claim to authority is made by the husband but is not successful– where wives control the household in reality" (Connell, 1987, p.206). This eroded patriarchy challenges the conventions of traditional patriarchy, where male authority is challenged, and a context of change erupts to the surface. However, the power of the husband is not only based in the family; "domestic patriarchy is dependent on support from its environment" (Connell, 1987, p. 206). The patriarchal society at large, which includes the state and street institutions discussed below, creates this patriarchal domestic power structure, which deems the masculine as dominant and the feminine as subordinate (Bourdieu, 2001).

[27] As discussed in the contextualization of gender regimes in Jordan in Chapter 3. This was also suggested by some participants in their reception of gender regimes in Jordanian films, presented in Chapter 6.

The state, according to Connell (1987, p. 210) is a patriarchal institution that is "deeply implicated in the social relations of gender." State policies are a product of a masculinity context that idealise toughness and force; "the state both institutionalizes hegemonic masculinity and expends great energy in controlling it" (214). The state manages and regulates social institutions such as the marriage institution; it also constructs and defines social categories such as 'wife', 'husband', 'mother', etc… Moreover, the family and civil laws set by states regulate the family and gender relations within (Connell, 1987; Moghadam, 2020); the state influences and regulates the social gender regimes. Discussing neopatriarchal gender regimes –which characterises the Jordanian gender regime, as discussed later in this section– Moghadam (2020, p.470) explains:

> The modernizing neopatriarchal state introduces policies for women's social and spatial presence—public education, employment in the government sector, the vote— but retains patriarchal family laws that bind women and girls to the family and to protection (or control) by male kin.

Thus, the hegemonic masculinity the patriarchal (and neopatriarchal) state exerts, creates a pattern of masculinity that affects domestic life (Connell, 1987; Moghadam, 2020). However, "local gender regimes capture meaningful differences in ways communities organize gender relations" (Williams, 2002, p.32); therefore, changes in gender regimes take different forms in different social structures (see Walby, 2020; Moghadam, 2020).

The street is a social setting that is not usually perceived as an institution; however, it carries its social relations and by extension has its own gender relations and regimes as well. Gender practices are seen in streets: for example, most of the time women push their children around in strollers in the street, it is usually women who work in street prostitution, and most shopping is done by women. Truck and bus drivers are more often men rather than women, most vehicle and street repairs are done by men, and most crime and policing are also done by men; this indicates a certain gender regime and gendered division of labour even in the street setting[28]. Moreover, women's reputation and gossip are usually linked to actions done in the street; most harassment as well, especially verbal, is linked to the street. Connell (1987, p. 220) asserts:

[28] Such presence of women and men in the street is seen in Jordanian films, as presented in Chapter 5 in the analysis of gender regime representations in Jordanian films.

> The street is the setting for much intimidation of women, from low-level harassment like wolf-whistling to physical manhandling and rape. Since it is not always predictable when the escalation will stop, in many parts of the city women rarely walk, especially after dark. The street then is a zone of occupation by men. Concentrations of young adult men are the most intimidating and dangerous.

Thus, although Connell's research was conducted in 1987 and in certain societies the number of female drivers and police officer may have increased, the street can be considered a public space and a social institution with complex gender relations and male domination (See Bourdieu, 2001). There are certain manners the street regulates on people; and thus, gender is also regulated by the street. The structure of gender relations and power relations linked to the family and the state are similar to that of the street, where patriarchal conventions and masculine power dominate.

The relationships between gender regimes of the family, the state, the street, and any other social institution are complementary[29]. Together these regimes constitute a gender order that a society follows even in daily life actions; this order becomes a standard by which society constructs gender and gender practices, acceptable or unacceptable. The gender order is made and remade throughout history. It takes different shapes in different social gender regimes and its major use is regulating gendered definitions and practices that a society constructs for both men and women. Differences in gender regimes in different societies are due to gender regimes being "rooted in local culture and values" (Williams, 2002, p.32). Moreover, gender regimes are empowered through different institutional dimensions. While Connell discusses the family, the state, and the street as the main domains where gender relations are at play, other researchers suggest varieties of gender regimes that can expand the concept to encompass different cultural formations and contemporary changes (Walby, 2020; Moghadam, 2020).

Different gender regimes are believed to exist in different parts of the world (Walby, 2020; Moghadam, 2020; Connell, 1987, 2002, 2005, 2012). In Sylvia Walby's (2020) work on 'variations of gender regimes', discussing gender regimes in Europe and North America she deploys two different regimes, domestic and public; the latter being neoliberal or social democratic. Walby (2004; 2009; 2020) departs from Connell's (1987; 2002; 2005; 2012) focus on the family institution in the gender regime, focusing rather on the state and state regulations.

[29] See Walby (2020) and Moghadam (2020) below for other social institutions such as civil society and economy etc…

She defines a gender regime as a set of interconnected institutions and gendered social relations that construct a system, which takes into account four domains: economy, polity, civil society, and violence. According to her "the differentiation of the varieties of gender regimes varies by institutional domain" (Walby, 2020, p. 420). Each of these domains carries specific features that distinguish the gender regime. Walby (2020, p.420) stress "In contemporary society, the economy is constituted by both capital (a form of property) and labour…", while polity "includes not only the state but also other entities that govern, including organized religions." As for civil society "it includes the associations and projects creating and transforming meaning, including political projects, intimacy and sexuality, and education and knowledge" (Walby, 2020, p.420). Moreover, violence is defined in terms of institutions that regulate, produce, and use harmful physical contact; "relations and practices of violence that may be interpersonal, interstate, or intergroup are interconnected and form a single institutionalized domain of violence" (Walby, 2020, p.422). The two gender regimes and a description of their respective institutional domains are presented in Walby's article (2020, p.421) in Table 1 "Varieties of gender regimes", here, it is provided in Figure 2. Walby's "Varieties of gender regimes". Her table outlines the different practices in each gender regimes in relation to the four domains.

Table 1. Varieties of gender regimes

Institutional domain	Variety of gender regime			
	Domestic	Public		
	Excluded from the public	All Segregated but not excluded	Neoliberal Unequal, thin democracy	Social democratic Less unequal, deeper democracy
Economy (domestic, state, market, capital)	Women's livelihood structured under domestic relations in the home	Women's livelihood from free wage labor	Little regulation of working conditions	Regulation by polity for equality and balanced use of time
Polity (national state, local state, polity organized religion)	No democratic participation	Some democratic participation	Thin democracy: suffrage	Deeper democracy: presence and breadth
Civil society (sexuality and intimacy, projects and movements, education)	Confined to domestic	Not domesticated	Unequal; commercialized; thin	Reciprocal; mutual; thick
Violence (interpersonal, intergroup, state-individual, interstate)	Violence by domestic perpetrators unregulated by state	State claims a monopoly of legitimate violence	High levels of violence, though criminalized; security state	Violence criminalized by state and welfare to support victims; welfare state

Figure 2. Walby's "Varieties of gender regimes"

In the domestic gender regimes presented above "care work is part of the economy," (Walby, 2020, p. 240) where women's economic roles are domesticated. In polity, women do

not have democratic participation, and according to Walby (2020, p.420) such polity is considered 'premodern'. The characterization of the domestic gender regime in relation to civil society assumes that sexuality and intimacy, political projects, and education and knowledge are confined to the domestic sphere. Moreover, violence is conceived of as being perpetrated domestically and is not regulated by the state; Walby (2020, p.422) asserts: "states are not yet modern if the criminalization of domestic violence and rape in marriage is incomplete."

In the public gender regimes, the four domains (economy, polity, civil society, and violence) are characterised differently in neoliberal and social democratic forms. In the economy "the neoliberal form is little regulated for equality and is unequal, while the social democratic form is regulated for equality and a balanced life" (Walby, 2020, p.420). As for polity, the neoliberal democracy is thin and shallow[30], while the social democratic regime has a "deeper democracy involving presence and some breadth" (Walby, 2020, p.420). In addition, the civil society in neoliberal gender regimes is unequal and commercialised, while in the social democratic it is less unequal and more mutual. According to Walby (2020, pp.420-22), "in relation to intimacy and sexuality, for example, this means neoliberal is associated with the commercialization of sexuality in pornography and the sex trade, while social democratic is mutualist and does involve monetary exchange." Finally, in terms of violence the neoliberal type of regime focusses on "interventions against gender-based violence" through criminalising the perpetrator, whereas "provision of welfare and specialist support to the victim and aiding their resilience to repeat victimization" is the focus of the social democratic (Walby, 2020, p. 422). According to Walby's (2020) presentation of the different gender regimes, the public social democratic regime is the most progressive, while the domestic is characterised as premodern.

In her work, Walby (2020) acknowledges the efforts of other researchers who called for more varieties of gender regimes. These include 'conservative' which links both the domestic and public regimes; new varieties of public gender regimes; and adding to the division of the domestic regimes (Shire and Nemoto, 2020; Moghadam, 2020; Kocabicak, 2020; Lombardo and Alonso, 2020; Hearn et al., 2020). Of special relevance to the current study is Moghadam's (2020) proposal which calls for extending the public gender regime model by replacing the

[30] Walby (2020, p.420) defines ten points that make variations in the depth of democracy: "no hereditary or unelected positions; no colonies; no governance powers held by an additional nondemocratic polity, for example, religion; universal suffrage; elections and free association; low cost of electioneering; proportional representation; quotas for underrepresented groups; proportionate representation in parliament; and a wide range of institutions governed by the democratic polity… The depth of democracy varies by regime of inequality, so can be different for gender, class, and ethnicity."

categories of neoliberal and social democratic with conservative-corporatist and neopatriarchal to encompass developments in the Middle East and North Africa, while centralising the concept of family (Walby, 2020).

Moghadam (2020, p.470) applies Walby's (2020) gender regimes model to the case of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA henceforth), specifically in Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia where "changes in institutional domains that constituted the prevailing gender regime became evident at the [20th] century's end." She suggests a new variety of gender regimes that is specific to the MENA region and its cultural formations and 21st century changes. While she classified Morocco and Tunisia as the most progressive conservative-corporatist gender regime and Algeria as a hybrid form, Jordan was classified belonging to the least progressive neopatriarchal gender regime, although it witnessed changes in a similar way as the aforementioned countries to varying degrees[31]. Neopatriarchy is defined by Sharabi (1988, p.3) as a modernized form of patriarchy that exist in both "macrostructures (society, the state, the economy) and… microstructures (the family or the individual personality)." The neopatriarchal social structure "is neither modern nor traditional" (Sharabi, 1988, p.4) but a combination of both. Sharabi (1988, p.8) explains this further by declaring:

> whatever the outward ("modern") forms—material, legal, aesthetic—of the contemporary neopatriarchal family and society, their internal structures remain rooted in the patriarchal values and social relations of kinship, clan, and religious and ethnic groups. In a peculiar duality, the modern and the patriarchal coexist in contradictory union.

Thus, a neopatriarchal gender regime, such as Jordan in Moghadam's (2020) classification, may have an outward modern look but the internal social structure remains patriarchal where male dominance prevails in the family, state, economy, and civil society. Moghadam (2020, pp. 471-2) claims in the 21st century women in the MENA region have gained more political representation, increase in educational attainment and in some cases exceeding male counterparts in tertiary enrolment, and "changes in attitudes and values toward women's equality". However, most women are still financially dependent on fathers or husbands, their economic activity is low, and women and men remain unequal. This calls for a variety of gender

[31] Social and political changes in Jordan are discussed in the next chapter, Chapter 3

regimes that ensures the developments occurring in the region that are different to Walby's (2020) model for Europe and North America.

Moghadam's (2020) approach conceives of gender regimes in MENA as neopatriarchal, conservative-corporatist, and a hybrid form. In these gender regimes, family is an important institution that plays an integral role in her categorization. While Walby's (2020) four domains are economy, polity, civil society, and violence, Moghadam's (2020) approach removes violence and adds family as the fourth domain. This is due to her assertion that family is the foundation of society, especially in the MENA region. Figure 3. Moghadam's "Varieties and features of gender regimes in the Middle East and North Africa" below details how each gender regime works within the four domains mentioned above.

Whereas Walby's model puts emphasis on the economy as a driver for change in gender regimes, the state (polity) and the family in most MENA countries remain the prevalent powers that regulates gender relation. Moreover, the civil society, especially feminist organisations, student groups, human rights organizations, and trade unions seem to play an integral role in the process of gender regime change. According to Moghadam (2020, p.475), "women's entry into professional fields has been a key marker of the gender regime transition;" while in this quotation she is discussing the Maghreb, throughout her article she suggests the same is applicable to the MENA region in general.

Table 2. Varieties and features of gender regimes in the Middle East and North Africa

Institutional dimension	Neopatriarchal	Conservative-corporatist	Hybrid
Economy	Rentier; resource-based; corporatist	Diversified or diversifying	Rentier or diversifying
Polity	Authoritarian (republic or monarchy); high military spending	Multi-party	Multi-party but with dominant party and authoritarian features
Civil society	Restricted and repressed	Open; presence of social movement organizations (trade unions, feminist, human rights)	Restricted but room for maneuver for NGOs and CSOs (feminist, trade unions, human rights)
Family	Patriarchal family laws intact; limited female autonomy, mobility, labor-force participation	Adoption of gender-egalitarian legislation (e.g., nationality laws, violence against women laws, family law reform); family: constitutional "basis of society;" dual-earner family emerging slowly	Conservative family laws; continued discriminatory legislation; limited female employment
Country examples	Gulf monarchies; Jordan; Egypt; Iran; Iraq; Libya; Syria; Yemen	Morocco; Tunisia; Turkey	Algeria; Lebanon

Figure 3. Moghadam's "Varieties and features of gender regimes in the Middle East and North Africa"

Figure 3. above indicates how each gender regime is affected in a certain way by the institutional dimensions. In the neopatriarchal gender regime the state is authoritarian, women's economic participation is limited, legislation on violence against women is inadequate, the work of feminist organisations is hindered by state restraints on civil society, and a conservative

family law is practiced. This is emphasised by Moghadam (2020) by explaining that although the state presents policies that advantage women's social presence, such as the right to education and to vote, it still endorses patriarchal family laws that compel women to live under male dominance and control. As suggested, in this regime the patriarchal family prevails where females have limited autonomy, mobility, and labour force participation.

The conservative-corporatist gender regime has a multi-party state and is "characterized by strong feminist movements, the visibility of women in the professions (especially the judiciary), and reformed family law." In this regime the family dimension shows progressiveness in terms of adopting gender-egalitarian legislation such as laws for violence against women. Moreover, social movement organizations, like feminist organizations and trade unions, are empowered components of the civil society. Moghadam (2020) argues that a main driver and agent of the shift from the neopatriarchal to the conservative-corporatist gender regime in the Maghreb[32] has been feminist mobilization through feminist activists and social movement organization.

The hybrid form, as the name suggests, is a combination of the progressive conservative-corporatist regime and the less progressive neopatriarchal regime. This regime retains a limited female economic participation, has conservative family laws that still require reform, and the state has authoritarian features. However, unlike the neopatriarchal there is room for manoeuvre for civil society's social movement organizations.

The regimes mentioned here are crucial to identify and highlight a variety from Walby's model which is specific to the MENA region and its socio-political and cultural formations. The varieties here show the potential for progressive gender regimes in the MENA to appear following the Moroccan and Tunisian models characterised as conservative-corporatist. As mentioned earlier, Moghadam (2020) classifies Jordan as a neopatriarchal gender regime; her approach seems suitable for an investigation of Jordanian gender regimes through the analysis of audience reception and gender regime representations in Jordanian films[33]. To understand gender as a social construct, gender roles as social practices, and gender regimes, it is important to give an understanding of the crucial gendered practices expected by females and males in a

[32] The Maghreb is part of North Africa which includes Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia

[33] Please refer to chapters 5 and 6 for a full analysis of gender regime representations in Jordanian films, and their reception among a group of Jordanians, respectively. The analysis indicates a close proximity to Moghadam's classification of Jordan as a neopatriarchal gender regime.

specific gender regime. Thus, the next section embarks on a discussion of femininity and masculinity, focusing on what research suggests as traditional traits.

2.2.4 Femininity and masculinity: Traditional traits

In the current study the terms male and female refer to the biological distinction, while feminine and masculine refer to the socio-culturally determined roles (Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 2010). Connell (2005, p.68) argues that both concepts are relational; "'masculinity' does not exist except in contrast with 'femininity '." Evident from the argument presented in this chapter gender is assumed to be a social construct constituted by reiterative gender practices; again Connell (2005, pp. 68-72) makes this idea clear by stating "in speaking of masculinity at all [and for this matter femininity as well], then, we are 'doing gender' in a culturally specific way… when we speak of masculinity and femininity we are naming configurations of gender practice." This means femininity and masculinity could be defined as the act of doing one's gender, the performance of being a woman or being a man as Butler (1999) stresses. This performance conforms to socio-cultural conventions of gender practice. In a more straightforward sense of defining the concepts, femininity and masculinity are "culturally desirable traits for males and females." (Hoffman and Borders, 2001, p. 40) However, in practice individuals could possess a mix of these traits in varying situations whether they identify as woman or man; individuals can also supress some of their "assigned" gender traits in an attempt to be gender appropriate (Hoffman and Borders, 2001, p. 40).

Based on the work of several scholars (Al-Mahadin, 2003; Bem, 1985; England, Descartes and Collier-Meek, 2011; Hoffman and Borders, 2001; Hoffman, Hattie and Borders, 2005; Hofstede and Arrindell, 1998; Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 2010) the current study identifies traditional feminine and masculine personality traits that are believed to govern gender roles in many societies across the globe. These are provided in Table 1 presented below. Many of the studies mentioned above stress the widespread nature of traditionally gendered personality traits; thus, this study locates some of the most recurrent traits and investigates their representation in Jordanian films and such representations' reception among a group of Jordanian university students.

While this study explores gender regimes in films, femininity and masculinity are aspects the spectators have been asked to discuss in focus groups, as gender relations have a direct link to socially expected gendered behaviours and attitudes. The spectators' identification of the masculinity and femininity of the films' characters were targeted by asking them to

identify what it means to be a woman or a man in the films or what makes a man masculine and a woman feminine from their perspective. The analysis in this study extends from inspecting feminine and masculine representations in Jordanian films, to understanding if the traits mentioned in Table 1 correspond to what spectators believed regarding being feminine or masculine. The traits provided in the table will guide analysing and discussing film representations and spectators' responses, which could ultimately provide insights about what it means to be a woman or a man in Jordanian films and society. Moreover, several studies have used different Western theoretical models to identify the extent to which Jordanian individuals identify as masculine or feminine or to study gender and gender roles in the Jordanian context (Al-Zein and Al-Khawaldeh, 2015; Bataineh, 2014; Rayyan, 2016; Sarhan, Istaiteyeh and Alrawabdeh, 2015), which validates the current study's use and adaptation of dominant femininity and masculinity traits to the study of Jordanian films and society.

Feminine Traits	**Masculine Traits**
Shows Emotion	Unemotional
Affectionate	Factual
Fearful	Inspires Fear
Dependant	Independent
Physically Weak	Physically Strong
Tentative	Assertive
Sensitive	Adventurous
Helpful	Provider
Asks for Advice or Help	Gives Advice
Troublesome	Problem Solver
Gets Rescued	Performs Rescue
Submissive	Leader
Victim	Brave
Nurturing	Gives Guidance
Tends to Physical Appearance	Tends to Achievement
Ashamed	Proud
Gentle/ Caring	Aggressive
Dominate Private Sphere/ Family Oriented	Dominate Public Sphere/ Achievement Oriented
Inferior	Superior

Modest	Ambitious
Concerned with Quality of Life	Concerned with Material Success
Tender	Tough
Needs Protection	Protector
Sexual Object	Sexual Subject

Table 1. Traditionally Assigned Feminine and Masculine Personality Traits

As mentioned earlier, many studies have informed this table; it has been put together through the examination of different studies and their identification of traditional masculine and feminine traits that seem to be shared within different societies (Al-Mahadin, 2003; Bem, 1985; England, Descartes and Collier-Meek, 2011; Hoffman and Borders, 2001; Hoffman, Hattie and Borders, 2005; Hofstede and Arrindell, 1998; Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 2010). However, Sandra Bem (1985, p. 222) states, "human behaviors and personality should no longer be linked with gender, and society should stop projecting gender into situations irrelevant to genitalia." A man can have both feminine and masculine traits, and a woman can have both as well –which classifies them as androgynous according to Bem. As humans we tend to separate and differentiate between men and women by examining their behaviour, which we tend to classify as either feminine or masculine; where, in practice, these are shared human traits and behaviours. This particular view, however, is not the lens the current study utilises to analyse film representations and participant responses, it instead uses the traits mentioned in the table above to understand how this group of participants believe a man or a woman should behave in society and if their responses conform/correspond to what research suggests are stereotypical feminine and masculine traits. Another layer of analysis aligns with Hoffman and Borders (2001, p. 44) who argue for "the need to allow individuals their own personal definitions of masculinity and femininity." In the current study, participants are given space to define masculinity and femininity on their own terms; however, participants' definitions are compared to the traits provided to test their conformity to what is believed to be traditional.

2.3 Conclusion

This chapter introduced the theoretical framework of the current study, combined with a literature review of relevant research studies. The chapter began with the concept of audience reception, how this field developed and how Janet Staiger, in particular, theorised the concept. Her theorization of film reception as a process that involves as an active audience creating

meaning for film through their context is crucial for the current study's investigation of audience reception of gender regime representations of Jordanian film. The chapter then introduced a review of relevant literature concerning audience reception of film and media products. The studies reviewed here are key in terms of situating the current research in the context of audience reception studies; the methodologies used and the way in which audience reception was treated in these studies also influenced the way in which I worked on the topic.

The chapter then provided an understanding of gender and the theoretical lens through which my research is looking at it. This involves the conception of gender as a social construct and gender roles as social practices, which underpins my understanding of the concept 'gender' throughout this study. It also dives deep into gender regimes and how such systems govern the construction of gender in societies. Finally, the chapter discussed femininity and masculinity as important concepts in gender studies and introduced a table of "Traditionally Assigned Feminine and Masculine Personality Traits". This table is significant for analysing the complexities of gender regime representations in the films and in audience responses.

The theoretical framework and literature review provided in this chapter are implemented and emphasised throughout this thesis and particularly in the analysis chapters (5 and 6). The following chapter provides the context of this study, in which Jordanian society and its gender regimes are introduced to situate the current thesis and guide the understanding of Jordanian society provided throughout.

Chapter 3. Jordanian Cinema in Context: Jordanian Society, Gender Regimes, and Gender Representations in Arab Media and Cinema

3.0 Introduction

Carolyn Korsmeyer (2004, p.116) observes that art works "provide a means by which we can understand our own historical times, our values, our social identities;" part of those values and social identities are linked to a society's gender regimes. As such, manifestations of gender and gender regimes can be seen represented in art works such as films. The aim of this chapter is to introduce the sociocultural and gender contexts in which Jordanian cinema and audiences exist; thus, providing the context needed for the analysis of representations of gender regimes in Jordanian films and their reception by the study participants. This chapter is divided into two sections; section 3.1 provides an overview of the contemporary Jordanian society and gender regimes, while section 3.2 examines gender representations in Jordanian and Arab media and cinema.

3.1 Gender Regimes in Contemporary Jordanian Society

As discussed in the previous chapter the concept 'gender regimes' is defined as the situation of gender relations in a given institution (Connell, 1987; Moghadam, 2020; Walby, 2020). This section of the chapter presents the current situation of gender relations and gender related issues mainly in the Jordanian family institution[34], which guides the analysis of gender regime representations in Jordanian cinema and the reception of such representations among an educated Jordanian audience. The section provides important background information about Jordanian society that sets the context for the study of Jordanian cinema and audiences. It begins by giving a brief history of contemporary Jordan in terms of state formation and tribal identification (section 3.1.1), and an overview of social change with a special lens into educational developments in the Jordanian society (section 3.1.2). It then discusses the Jordanian family institution and the patriarchal social structure (section 3.1.3), and finally it reviews violence in the Jordanian family institution and related implications (section 3.1.4).

[34] As this institution was focused upon by the study participants in their reception of gender regimes in Jordanian films.

3.1.1 State formation and tribal identification

For four centuries, until the early 20th century, Jordan was part of the Ottoman Empire. The aftermath of World War I and the Great Arab Revolt (1916) resulted in the end of the Empire and its control over the Middle East. In 1921, Prince Abdullah son of Sheriff Hussein bin Ali, the former rulers of the Hijaz[35], became the ruler of Jordan in agreement with the British[36]. When Prince Abdullah arrived at Jordan he identified with and supported the existing tribal hierarchy, thus, he gained the support of Jordanian tribes (Wilson, 1990). Jordan at that time was named the Emirate of East Jordan or the Hashemite Emirate of Trans-Jordan, and until today the Hashemite dynasty are the monarchs of the country which has been officially named the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. As a result of Jordan being a transit area, many people who used to pass through it to and from the Arabian Peninsula settled in it; this created diversity in the Jordanian population. Arabs constitute 98% of the population, whereas the 2% minorities are Circassians, Chechens, Kurds, and Armenians. Arabic is the official language in Jordan, while English is widely used in the country. Moreover, Muslims constitute 94% of the population while Christians are 6% (Gharaybeh, 2014; Alfawaz et al., 2012; Maggiolini, 2011)[37].

Jordan gained its independence from the British Mandate[38] in 1946. After that the Jordanian society experienced social developments due to factors including: the union between Jordan and the West Bank in 1950, significant educational developments in the country observed through the establishment of schools and universities, and the effect of globalisation on Jordanian society. Jordanian society is diverse; however, it is characterised by being part of the Arab Islamic world due to the shared religious and historical background. Although there

[35] The western part of what is currently known as Saudi Arabia

[36] After the First World War Britain and France had economic and political interests in the Middle East. Thus, the principal of the mandate was introduced, where "an advanced state was to tutor another, less advanced state in the complexities of democratic self-government until the latter was ready to rule itself" (Wilson 1990, p. 40). The idea of the mandate allowed Britain and France to divide the Middle East amongst themselves. By doing this the British did not honour their promise to Sheriff Hussein and Prince Abdullah of creating a unified Arab Kingdom ruled by the Hashemites and in control of most of the modern Middle East. Rather the British decided to honour the agreement they made with France in the 1916 Sykes-Picot agreement, which entitled Britain to take over Palestine, Jordan and Iraq, while France was given Syria and Lebanon (Wilson 1990; Mahafdha 1973). The British then granted Prince Abdullah the area east of the Jordan River, and it was then named the Hashemite Emirate of Trans-Jordan and ruled by the prince. The country was under the British mandate since its establishment (1921) until its independence (1946) (Wilson 1990).

[37] The current study's sample of fieldwork participants is constituted of 90.2% Muslims and 9.8% Christians.

[38] The British intervention in Jordan entailed helping the people to form a government and a defence system (an army), as well as constructing a taxation system to improve the economy in order for Jordanians to be able to build infrastructure, such as roads, hospitals and schools. However, as mentioned in the previous footnote, they had their own interests in the area. Their intervention did not influence the Jordanian culture, as it was mainly political and economic. Although Jordan declared its independence form the mandate in 1946, Britain was still in control of the Jordanian army forces until 1956, when all forms of formal intervention ended (Mahafdha 1973).

are religious, ethnic, and cultural differences in the society, it is often constructed as one unit. This is a result of factors such as intermarriage between different social groups, religious coexistence and tolerance, and the general political orientation of the Jordanian government which is keen to achieve national unity built around notions of a collective social structure (Gharaybeh, 2014; Alfawaz et al., 2012).

Jordanian society is perceived as a patriarchy. Patriarchy as a concept is defined along the lines of a hierarchal system through which men are privileged with dominance and control over women and children in the family, the state, and other social life aspects; it is referred to as "the systematic organization of male hegemony and female subservience" (Daoud, 2018, p.35). In the Jordanian context patriarchy is seen clearly in the gender regime that endorses an unequal treatment between women and men. For example, in terms of legislation one of the prevalent issues is about granting nationality to children, where Jordanian women married to non-Jordanian men cannot pass their citizenship to their children while Jordanian men married to non-Jordanian women can. Another example of the prevalence of patriarchy as a social system in Jordan is the unequal political participation of women, where powerful political positions are distributed mostly between men (Daoud, 2018). According to Moghadam (2020) this is due to a neopatriarchal gender regime that endorses an authoritarian state, where women's economic participation is limited, civil society organizations are restricted, and patriarchal family laws prevail.

Jordanian society is also characterised as tribal. Tribalism remains a prevailing pattern in Jordanian society, although it is more apparent in rural areas rather than urban ones (Alfawaz et al., 2012). According to Sweis (2011), "there are conservative tribes who are the backbone of the regime, the Islamic Action Front — the biggest opposition party — and a general patriarchal society the government finds difficult to go against and can't afford to lose." This indicates tribalism, religion and patriarchy go hand in hand in Jordan and that gender regimes in the society are indeed controlled by patriarchal sociocultural confines. Similarly, according to Pettygrove (2006), three factors govern the construction of gender in Jordan: family, tribalism, and religion. She states, "the tribal and religious social structures—and the gender roles they endorse—have remained largely unchanged in spite of the advances in the area of gender issues over the past decade" (Pettygrove 2006, p. 4).

Tribalism is argued as causing the continuation of patriarchal social values which endorse inequality between men and women (Sonbol, 2003). At the same time, while some might link religion to some tribal social practices which cause challenges to women entering

the public sphere due to negative implications of bringing shame to the family/tribe by freely mixing with men, these practices "are in opposition of the dictates of Islam" which entail fairness and justice among people regardless of gender (Abu-Rabia-Queder, 2007, p.76; Koburtay, Syed and Haloub, 2020). However, through their patriarchal interpretations of religion, Islam in this case, tribal traditions and beliefs endorse a patriarchal social structure and restrict women and their valuable participation in public life (Koburtay, Syed and Haloub, 2020). Such relations between tribalism, religion and patriarchy in the Jordanian society indicate the structure of gender regimes in Jordan and support ideas of masculine domination (Connell, 1987; Bourdieu, 2001; Moghadam, 2020).

3.1.2 Social change: A special lens into educational developments

Social change occurred in Jordanian society around the middle of the twentieth century due to urbanization, developments in education, and internal migration from rural to urban areas. Ever since the establishment of contemporary Jordan (1921), urban centres were established in the country such as Amman (the capital city), Irbid, Zarqa, Mafraq and Aqaba among others. These cities were the focus of rural to urban migration as they provided new educational and employment opportunities and better infrastructure (Mahafdha, 1973; Alfawaz et al., 2012). Today 42% of the population live in Jordan's capital city, Amman (Population – Department of Statistics, 2020). Moreover, Jordan is characterised by being a young country, where almost 70% of the population is under 30 years-old (United Nations - About Jordan, 2020).

Education in Jordanian society is one of the fields that has undergone important changes in modern times. In the 1960s, 70s and 80s, school education became available to most Jordanians and universities were established in the country (Mahafdha, 1973; Alfawaz et al., 2012). Further, the rate of literacy increased from 32.4% in 1961 to 86.9% in 1999 (Al-Khaldi, 2006); today school education is compulsory for 10 years for the ages 6-15 and the literacy rate in the country is around 98% (Jordan Education and Literacy, 2020). In 1962 Jordan established its first university, The University of Jordan, and ever since 26 additional public (government owned) and private universities were established. Interestingly, female student enrolment in higher education exceeds that of males with a percentage of 37.37 and 31.51 respectively, in the year 2018[39] (Jordan | UNESCO UIS, 2020). According to Jansen (2006, p.480):

[39] This justifies why most of my fieldwork participants are females as provided in Chapter 4: Research Methodology.

> A male professor offered an explanation for this gender difference, 'Unlike boys, they don't want to do many things outside the house. They sit inside and have nothing else to do than study'. The reasons for the academic superiority of girls are probably more complex, but there is certainly a link with local gender notions. Studying hard provides girls with an opportunity to conform to gender expectations while, at the same time, finding their own freedom and recognition therein. Observations in family surroundings showed that girls, from an early age, are trained in obedience, restricted movement, patience and diligence; behaviour which they can later apply in their studies. Teachers said that girls are more likely to respond to school authority and discipline than boys; and they appreciate that girls are cooperative, attentive and communicative. Education also gives girls an acceptable 'space of freedom' while conforming to gender norms.

This indicates that the reasons for the females' higher percentage of education could be a result of their gendered upbringing and the Jordanian socio-cultural gender norms; in this sense educational success is not necessarily removed from patriarchal social expectations. Jansen (2006, p.487) adds, "the Jordanian case shows that, while great progress has been made towards gender equality in higher education, this does not automatically lead to an enhanced position for women as workers, citizens and family members." This entails a gap between Jordanian women's positions in education institutions and their positions in the public sphere of the state through employment and citizenship as well as the private sphere of the family institution, indicating an imbalance in the gender regime of the Jordanian society.

Since the 1950s the status of women in the society has been changing; women are not only confined to the home anymore, their role as active members of society increased. From the 1950s to the 90s family structure gradually changed in the society from being mostly characterised by having extended families into nuclear families[40]. This happened due to young men and women's desire to become educated and work in jobs other than the traditional farming and grazing sheep family businesses. Further, education made it possible for women to leave the home and become active agents of social advancement in the country. This is due to the increase of education and employment chances available to women, as well as some laws that

[40] Extended families include the mother, father, their unmarried sons and daughters, their married sons and their families, and their divorced daughters who all live in the same house and the oldest male is the patriarch of the family and the one in control of all other members; it was one of the most prominent family structures spread in the Jordanian society for a long time. Nuclear families include the mother, father, and unmarried sons and daughters, when any of their children gets married, they live independently with their own families; today this structure is the most prominent in the society (Alfawaz et al. 2012)

the government legislated to empower women and enhance their role in society (Alfawaz et al., 2012).

Women's organizations and centres in Jordan play a major role in supporting women and improving their position in society. The first official organization Jordanian Women's Union (JWU) was established in 1945 to advocate for women's and children's rights, increase women's political awareness and alleviate poverty (Hamdar, 2000). Other organizations were established in in the 1970s, such as The Business and Professional Women's Club (in 1976); however, the 1990s was a time where many centres launched: The Jordanian National Committee for Women (in 1992), Jordanian National Forum for Women (in 1995), Princess Basma's Women's Resource Centre (in 1996), The Sisterhood Is Global Institute/Jordan (in 1998) (Hamdar, 2000). These have a shared concern for women's development in all sectors; they contributed to positively changing the status of women in the country by raising more awareness regarding gender issues in society, improving the situation of women in urban and rural Jordan, and pressuring the Jordanian legislative body to change some gender discriminatory laws (Hamdar, 2000, Jordanian Women's Union, 2020). However, as discussed earlier in this chapter, although women's university education rates exceed those of men, women's labour force participation and their political participation remain limited; for example, only 23% of the labour force in Jordan in 2009 were women, and the share of women in the Jordanian parliament is only 12% (Al-Adwan, 2012; Turquet et al., 2011). Although social and educational developments have occurred in the country, gender issues and the gender regime are still challenging; thus, it is important to explore these in order to understand the socio-cultural context of Jordanian cinema and audiences' treatment of gender regimes.

3.1.3 Jordanian family institution and patriarchal social structure

Jordanian society is characterised by strong familial relations due to the system of values and social standards which are based on tribal, religious, and family ideals, where there exists a patriarchal power structure and a neopatriarchal gender regime that places the father on top of the family power pyramid as the patriarch responsible for and in control of the family (Al-Badayneh, 2012; Connell, 1987; Moghadam, 2020). According to Al-Badayneh (2012, p. 270):

> The patriarchal structure and lifestyle of the Jordanian family is also affected by major social values such as mutual support, mutual responsibility, family cohesion and solidarity, harmony among family members, and family privacy. Therefore, the family is expected to provide support and security at times of personal, spousal, family, and

social distress. It is part of its collective identity, identification and responsibility; the pride for all and shame on all.

The father is the authority figure in the Jordanian family institution and the one responsible for taking crucial family decisions, and men have power, privilege, and control over women (Al-Badayneh, 2012). Power within the neopatriarchal gender regime of the family institution is usually defined within the parameters of decision-making and male dominance (Connell, 1987; Bourdieu, 2001; Moghadam, 2004, 2020); this indicates the power structure of the Jordanian family where the patriarch is the major influencer in the family decision-making process and the one in control. However, according to Alfawaz et al. (2012) today the husband/father's authority over his wife and children can be described as democratic, as they have more independence and freedom to discuss some family matters, such as marriage. It is interesting to note that marriage of sons and daughters used to be the sole decision of the father rather than the person involved; this has been gradually changing although the father's opinion is still one of the most important in the family regarding all matters (Alfawaz et al., 2012). Although Alfawaz et al. (2012) paint a positive picture of the Jordanian patriarchy, this is just one perspective. There are still ongoing gender issues in the Jordanian society that stem from the patriarchal gender regime of the family institution, as explained throughout this section. According to Adely (2016) marriage in Middle Eastern societies is usually arranged between families rather than being the product of the individual's autonomous choice and the basis of choice is more related to the idea of compatibility rather than love. Marriage, thus, is significant in terms of continuing the social order.

Marriage is very significant in Islam and is highly encouraged for all people, especially youth (Abdul-Rauf, 1995). The importance of marriage according to Abdul-Rauf (1995), in his book *Marriage in Islam,* stems from factors including, procreation, the fulfilment of sexual urges, the joy of being with a spouse, and the social importance of marriage. In Islam sexual activity out of wedlock is forbidden and considered a sin, thus, in order to be able to procreate and to experience sexual activity one must get married (Abdul-Rauf, 1995). Moreover, Abdul-Rauf (1995) normatively claims that the social importance of marriage stems from its ability to shape a person's sense of responsibility, as the institution of marriage has its challenges and requires adjustment to the spouse's personality, which helps in increasing the person's understanding and tolerance. As the Jordanian society has a 94% Muslim population, the cultural importance of marriage in the society arguably stems from its importance in Islam. Further, in Jordan there is no civil marriage, all marriages must be accomplished in accordance

with the husband's religious tradition as does the treatment of divorce cases (David, 2018); hence, marriage is conceived of as a patriarchal institution. The patriarchal nature of this institution in the Jordanian society grants men more privilege, dominance, and control over women, which is reflected in the society's gender regime and state regulation of marriage and family laws which usually privilege men (Moghadam, 2020).

In Jordan the legal age of marriage is 18; however, the median age of first marriage increased in the country in recent years. While it was 25 for males in 2010 it increased to 27 in 2016 and it increased from 20 to 22 for females in the same years (Sieverding, Berri and Abdulrahim, 2018). Insufficient income among youth as well as education have been cited as the main reasons for the delay of marriage[41]; now that university enrolment is higher youth are becoming more concerned with fulfilling their educational and career paths before marriage (Sieverding, Berri and Abdulrahim, 2018; Salem, 2014)[42]. Moreover, according to Sieverding, Berri and Abdulrahim (2018) there is a small increase in the percentage of women aged 45-59 who have never entered a marriage, whereas this is very uncommon among men of the same age. Further, in terms of the education gap between married couples, in many Arab societies it is believed that the husband's education should be equivalent to or higher than the wife's (Salem, 2014). However, in Jordanian society this gap is narrow, and it is interesting to note that Jordanian wives with secondary and post-secondary education usually have higher rates of education than their husbands and this has become more common over time (Salem, 2014). This could be due to the higher rate of university educated women than men in Jordan (Al-Adwan, 2012).

Jordanian youth's attitudes towards marriage have changed to become less connected to traditions common in Jordanian society (Al-matalka, 2016). In his study of the subject Al-matalka (2016) distributed a questionnaire to 1882 male (45.32%) and female (54.68%) Jordanian youth from all Jordanian regions (north, central, and south). Contrary to Adely's (2016) claim of the importance of compatibility over love in choosing a marriage partner in the Middle East, Al-matalka (2016) found that the choice of a partner because of love ranked first among his Jordanian participants; while choice of a partner who is free from social traditions

[41] Some of the social challenges in Jordan include low incomes and the increase of poverty, the increase of unemployment among youth, and the lenient social attitudes towards corruption (Alfawaz et al. 2012). The rate of unemployment in Jordan jumped from 12.2% in 2010 to 19.0% by the end of 2019, and most of the unemployed are from the age group 15-24 (Department of Statistics 2020; Alfawaz et al. 2012).

[42] The number of enrolled students in Jordanian universities reached approximately 236,000 female and male students in 2017; this has increased from 28,439 students in 1987 and 103,092 in 1999 (Brief on Higher Education Sector in Jordan 2017; Jansen 2006).

and customs ranked second, and choice of a partner who is religious ranked third among the statistically significant choices. He also found that Jordanian youth prefer to choose their own partners rather than their parents choosing for them; however, they did not encourage love affairs between partners before marriage. The study also found youth's refusal of the idea of parents forcing their daughters into marrying someone they choose (Al-matalka, 2016). This indicates that Jordanian youth are changing their views towards traditional ways of choosing a partner for marriage[43]. Al-matalka claims that this change in attitudes did not come out of the blue, but rather because of the increase of university education and jobs where males and females can find potential partners. Additionally, this may be due to globalisation[44], increased awareness of other cultures, and the opportunities of knowledge brought by the internet, which made youth review and reconsider the system of marriage in society and weigh the pros and cons (Al-matalka, 2016).

In the same study the researcher found that some Jordanian youth prefer early marriage as it could protect them from sinning by becoming sexually active out of wedlock, while another group supported the delay of the age of marriage as it could ensure a better choice of partner (Al-matalka, 2016). This fluctuation in opinions and the delay of marriage, as Al-matlaka claims, is due to the increased rate of unemployment in the country as well as the low wages that do not secure a good life for a family; thus, although there is a desire for early marriage there is reluctance. Besides, the majority of participants in this study prefer having no age difference between partners, as they believe the age gap could result in incompatibility between partners (Al-matalka, 2016). Moreover, Jordanian youth in this study do not accept polygamy[45], except in the case of infertility of the wife, which shows the patriarchal nature of the society and the gender regime. The results of the study also show that youth do not believe that marriage restricts freedom, and they acknowledge the importance of marriage by stating they would not wish to remain unmarried; this is especially so for sexual satisfaction rather than the sacredness of marriage (Al-matalka, 2016). Finally, Al-matalka (2016) claims that there are no statistically significant differences in his study between Jordanian youth attitudes towards marriage according to gender, level of education, income and place of residence; and that youths' outlook

[43] The attitudes of a group of educated Jordanians towards issues such as marriage are a key plank of my fieldwork findings as discussed in Chapter 6.
[44] Forms of globalisation include: globalised media, Television, Social Media, the internet etc…
[45] The legality polygamy in Jordan is due to religious/Islamic influence, where in certain situations, a man can be married to up to four wives at the same time; however, this is only applicable to men.

on marriage has changed from the past traditional ways of thinking; the latter is also emphasized in the current study's fieldwork findings provided in Chapter Six.

Fear of spinsterhood can be perceived as a crucial matter in the Jordanian society; thus, many Jordanian women are pushed to get married at a certain age[46] without having enough time to get to know their marriage partner (Al-matalka, 2016; Alfawaz et al., 2012; David, 2018). This can lead to many problems within the marriage, including sometimes abuse towards the wife and children; this can lead to divorce which is a spreading issue in the Jordanian society (Alfawaz et al., 2012). While in the year 2000 divorce cases in Jordan were 8241, in 2010 there were 15707 cases, and in 2018 it increased to 20279 (Department of Statistics, 2018). Although there is an increase in the number of divorce cases in Jordan, David (2018) claims that in Jordanian culture and society divorced women are stigmatised and usually blamed for the divorce; this usually causes challenges to women wanting to file for divorce rather than the legal system being the problem. Divorced women are usually preyed upon by their male colleagues at work and are usually stigmatized as immoral women by society especially if they choose to live independently with their children rather than going back to live with their parents. Legally women in Jordan can request divorce under certain circumstances but by doing this they could lose the financial rights granted to divorced women by their ex-husbands and it is thought to be a lengthy and challenging process (David, 2018). Besides, social stigma and shame are challenging reasons that could prevent women from exercising their legal rights of divorce.

Family institutions built on marriage are among the most important units in societies around the world, and they are especially so in Middle Eastern societies (Moghadam, 2004; Al-matalka, 2016). According to Al-Badayneh (2012, pp.270-71), "the Jordanian society has conservative attitudes toward gender roles within the social culture, the behavior of men and women is strictly defined and formed on the basics of social system." Roles within marriage in the patriarchal Jordanian culture are based on traditional social values; among the main traditional roles a wife has to perform is taking care of the house including cooking and cleaning, as well as caregiving in the form of taking care of and supporting her husband and nurturing/childrearing her children; and among the main traditional roles for a husband is providing for the family and maintaining discipline (Al-matalka, 2016; Jalal and Gabel, 2014; Al-Badayneh, 2012; Moghadam, 2004). This suggests that, although educational, social, political and cultural advancements occurred in the country for both women and men, gender

[46] Usually in their 20s

roles within Jordanian society remain mostly controlled by what is deemed suitable through the patriarchal familial, tribal and religious structures. Issues addressed here and in the other sections of this chapter will constitute major parts of the discussion of the current study's film and audience reception analysis chapters[47].

3.1.4 Violence in the Jordanian family institution

As pointed out earlier, there is a patriarchal hierarchical structure in the Jordanian family where the husband remains at the top of the power pyramid and the authority figure in the family; the one who controls the rest of the members including the wife (Al-Badayneh, 2012; Moghadam, 2004). Women in the Jordanian society are always expected to conform to social and gender norms; Abbas (2015) found that respectability and propriety of women in Jordan are largely connected to veiling. Women in Abbas's study understand "satr" (concealment) as central to social respectability, which informs their dress choices. Moreover, unveiled women sometimes experience issues of social judgement within Jordanian society relating to their respectability and decency, which affect their reputation. Abbas (2015) finally argues that women's practices and decisions regarding the veil seem to be primarily structured by the social norms, male gaze and male sensibilities. As mentioned earlier, women are usually viewed as the preservers of the family honour and reputation and they do so by following social norms and traditions (Al-Badayneh, 2012). In accordance with the previous, it could be said that women's dress, especially the veil, can be perceived as a central part of the Jordanian gender regime and such centrality could be a result of male dominance and male gaze (Moghadam, 2020; Bourdieu, 2001; Abbas, 2015).

As Al-Badayneh (2012, p.270) claims "from the early moment of birth, the son is taught the masculine roles and role expectations (i.e., to maintain family's honor, stability, and reputation) … Females are taught to be polite, passive, and docile." Moreover, "while men are considered strong, independent, impassionate and aggressive, women, on the other hand, are considered weak, submissive, passionate and peaceful" (Al-Badayneh, 2012, p. 270). These two statements which are clearly paramount to gender regimes in Jordan, indicate how challenging gender ideals are for Jordanians who are expected to comply with these characteristics and roles in order to be respected in society. This poses challenges to the freedom of individuals and their outlook on society and life.

[47] Chapter 5 deals with analysing representations of gender regimes in Jordanian films, while Chapter 6 analyses the audience reception of such representations.

Besides, women in Jordanian families are expected to fulfil the role of preserving the family's honour and reputation by following social and gender norms; if they deviate from the socially prescribed behaviours for women, they could expect physical punishment as well as social stigmatization and shaming (Al-Badayneh, 2012). Moghadam (2004, p.141) states, "in the context of classical patriarchy, women are considered a form of property (Hirschon, 1984). Their honor – and, by extension, the honor of their family – depends in great measure on their virginity and good conduct." This is consistent with the situation in Jordan where an unmarried woman's virginity and sexual inactivity (as well as a woman's sexual inactivity out of wedlock regardless of virginity) is very important for her family's honour and reputation, although it is a taboo to discuss sexuality at all.

According to Mahadeen (2013, p. 82) "there is a direct link between virginity (or honour in a broader definition) and a woman's social value." A woman's virginity and sexual inactivity out of wedlock is seen as a social necessity for the formulation of morals in the society, thus, it gains great social importance and value. Virginity in this context is technical in terms of reducing the concept to the existence of an intact hymen to prove the virginity of the woman. Moreover, there is a crucial link in the Jordanian society between sexual behaviour and morality (Mahadeen, 2013), which deems sexuality a social matter rather than a personal matter. Further, "men strictly regulate females' behaviour and sexuality and men are responsible for imposing control to protect the family's dignity and reputation" (Al-Badayneh, 2012, p. 270). The previous suggests the patriarchal nature of the Jordanian society and shows masculine domination over women and their virginity (and their sexuality by extension), as well as the importance of the concept of virginity in the Jordanian society and how it could have negative effects on women and their image in society as well as their self-image.

While men are not judged for entering relationships with women, women are highly judged by society for the same reason and they sometimes have to face severe consequences, like the issue of honour crimes where a woman is killed by her family (usually males in her family) because of bringing shame to the family by dating a man (Alfawaz et al., 2012). According to Eisner and Ghuniem (2013), in a study conducted with 856 Jordanian ninth grade students 40% of boys and 20% of girls believe that killing a woman who has dishonoured her family is morally right and justifiable. Male Muslim adolescents from traditional breadwinner families with low levels of education and patriarchal world views are the main supporters of honour killing. However, a substantial number of minorities of female adolescents, non-Muslim adolescents, and adolescents from more educated backgrounds consider killing in the name of

honour morally right as well. According to this study, there is a society-wide support for the tradition of honour killing. Attitudes in support of honour killing are part of a broader system of beliefs about patriarchal authority and dominance, as well as assumptions regarding female chastity and virginity (Eisner and Ghuneim, 2013).

In Arab societies in general violence against women and children could be seen as a way of exerting control and practicing masculine power as a form of discipline and is accepted by many society members as the right way (Al-Badayneh, 2012). In the Jordanian family "men enjoy greater power, privilege, and control of women and children and consequently have the right to punish them for misbehaviour" (Al-Badayneh, 2012, p.370). This social belief is one of the reasons behind many violence cases within families. Moreover, in Jordan domestic violence is considered a familial and personal matter rather than a social and legal issue, and there is no specific law in the penal code that criminalises domestic violence per se (Al-Badayneh, 2012; Oweis, Gharaibeh, Al-Natour and Froelicher, 2009; David, 2018).

Family reputation is very important in the Jordanian society and disclosing violence to relatives, friends or the local community could stigmatise the family and damage its image and dignity (Al-Badayneh, 2012). Besides, in society there is "a tendency to blame the victim for abuse, and a lesser tendency to blame the abuse on the husband, marital problems, as well as familial and societal conditions … The acceptance of violence is not restricted to men; women also accepted and justified violence against them by men" (Al-Badayneh, 2012, p. 271). Another study also found similar findings where there was a strong tendency among Jordanian women to accept that women should be beaten by males in their family as a form of discipline (Haj-Yahia, 2002). This as well as the previous could lead many women to hide their issues with abuse instead of seeking help from Family Protection Units. This issue is discussed in Chapter Five, in relation to the domestic violence represented in *Captain Abu Raed* (2007), one of the films in this study. Family violence is an issue that exists in Jordanian society; it usually affects women and children, and this crime is usually performed by husbands, fathers, and brothers. As Al-Badayneh (2012) claims the father abuses everyone, the mother abuses the children and male children abuse female children. Domestic violence is sometimes seen as beneficial to discipline and control family members; thus, it is perceived that women should not seek government agencies' help and this creates many issues for them including the continued abuse by their abuser (Al-Badayneh, 2012).

Contemporary social issues in Jordan have been given more attention after the outbreak of the Arab Spring (2010), where the government promised political and social reforms after

widespread demands in the country (Sweis, 2011). However, a struggle for women's rights in Jordan is still a challenge the Jordanian government and society have not yet overcome (Jabiri, 2016; Alfawaz et al., 2012; Sweis, 2011). In 2012, a group of Jordanian men and women protested in the streets of Amman to abolish Article 308 of the Jordanian Penal Code, which enabled male rapists to escape legal prosecution by marrying their victims for a period of at least three to five years (The New Arab, 2016). This law was believed to protect female victims of rape from social stigma related to family honor and shame (Husseini, 2015). However, according to 70.8% of Jordanians[48], Article 308 should have been completely abrogated from the Penal Code (Alghad Newspaper, 2015). The efforts of Jordanian society, particularly activists of human and women rights, resulted in the amendment of Article 308 in 2016, which entailed that rapists could marry their victims in the case where they are 15-18 years old, which results in escaping legal prosecution (Idaibes, 2016). Yet, activists still called for its abolition due to the obvious negative effects the amendment could have on girls of the age group 15-18 (Idaibes, 2016). In 2017, the Jordanian government's legislative body finally completely fulfilled the demands of Jordanians and abolished the article from the Penal Code (Husseini, 2017). Hence, this suggests that to some extent Jordanians are being heard by their government and Jordan could soon be ready to move forward on issues relating to human rights, women rights, and gender equality. Although Article 308 is beyond the scope of this study, discussing it indicates that Jordanian society appears to be ready for change regarding gender issues and gender regimes and the government is gradually changing in accordance with societal demands. The contextualization of gender regimes provided in this section of the chapter will be reflected upon in the analysis chapters of this thesis (Chapters Five and Six). The following section contextualises gender representations seen in Jordanian and Arab media and cinema.

3.2 Gender in Jordanian and Arab media and cinema

Media can play a significant role in society by influencing public opinion and circulating information, whether by reinforcing conservative ideology or more progressive ones. Although media can reflect prevailing social patterns, values, and gender regimes "they can still participate in positive change, in addition to their role in rejecting or fostering gender stereotypes" (Zaideh, 2018, p. 4). This section discusses gender representations in Jordanian

[48] This is according to a study conducted by the Jordanian Women's Union, where they distributed a survey to a sample of 850 Jordanian males and female. The response rate was 90.7%; where males were 49.8% and females were 50.2%. The sample answered a question regarding having a campaign to call for the abrogation of Article 308 from the Penal Code as follows; 70.8% agreed, 13.5% disagreed, and 15.7% answered they do not know (Alghad Newspaper, 2015).

and Arab film and media by reflecting upon some academic studies in the field. The section begins by reviewing Jordanian media and its gender portrayals (3.2.1), to then move into a wider discussion of such portrayals in Arab media and cinema (3.2.2).

3.2.1 Gender in Jordanian media

The issue of Article 308 mentioned earlier in this chapter indicates that media can both reinforce and challenge gender regimes. Jordanian media outlets have their role in presenting gender related issues and influencing public opinion to eventually help in the process of change, similar to what happened in the example mentioned earlier. However, in the academic context Jordanian media and gender are not very widely discussed in relation to each other. Specifically, studies on film are scarce and do not directly concern the gender aspect[49]; however, there are some studies that examine gender in Jordanian media (Zaideh, 2018; Mahadeen, 2017, 2016, 2013; Al-Mahadin, 2003). Such studies range from representations of gender stereotypes to gendered participation in Jordanian media. This section discusses gender representations, the context of masculinity, the discourse of virginity, and gender stereotypes in relation to their representation in Jordanian media.

In a study concerning gender portrayals in Jordanian media, Sawsan Zaideh (2018) found that there is a gender imbalance in media content at all levels, in the public and private sectors' online, broadcast and print media. In her examination of such media types for a period of 5 consecutive days, men's appearance reached 91%, while women's appearance did not exceed 9%; and the appearance of women as experts was 16% while as officials it was even lower with a percentage of 5%. It was also evident from the study sample that women's participation as journalists and media producers was significantly lower than men's, with a percentage of 27% and 73% respectively. This, as well as the lack of gender appropriate training for journalists, could explain the scarcity of women's appearance in media content. Male dominance is clear in this case, where men dominate the media products and the production, indicating the level of masculine dominance in the Jordanian gender regime.

Moreover, examples of gender stereotypes were easy to find, where most cooking, household, children and family care, and beauty programs on TV and radio broadcasts, targeted women audiences exclusively. Gender stereotypes were also seen in daily newspapers, where a male journalist "described advocacies of women's rights as "mannish"," (Zaideh, 2018, p. 6)

[49] Studies on Jordanian films are provided in Chapter 5: Jordanian cinema and gender regime representations. They mainly discuss the development of Jordanian cinema and related aspects.

and this kind of gender stereotyping was not exclusive to male journalists, women journalists also spread and reinforced such stereotypes. Further to this, gender sensitive language was lacking in the study sample. For example, instead of using the term "survivors" when depicting women who were subjects of violence, the term "victims" was widely used even by "female experts and specialists whom the report was quoted from" (Zaideh, 2018, p. 7). This indicates a general lack of language sensitivity and awareness when discussing gender issue in Jordan. Finally, Zaideh (2018, p. 36) relates the imbalance in gender portrayals in Jordanian media to the "disinterest in gender related issues for reasons related to editorial policies and other factors linked to experience and professionalism on the part of the journalists themselves." This in turn suggests a general lack of gender awareness among Jordanian journalists and media producers.

Gender and language in media are also a question Mahadeen (2016) looks into in an Arabic language setting. She argues old gender-specific words in Arabic should be appropriated and remodelled to ensure these concepts remain rooted in and relevant to Arab sociocultural life. For example, she discusses that the concept of gender when translated to Arabic as *al-naw' al-ijtima'i* (social kind), reflects deeper conceptual problems and obscures its meaning for non-academics (Mehrez, 2007, quoted in Mahadeen, 2016). Mahadeen continues her argument by specifying the term masculinity, arguing that Arabizing the term continues to pose challenges. She considers different translations of the term in different Arabic dialects. Mahadeen examines the concept of masculinity and its Arabic translation through analysing the concept as it appears in Arabic media. She reviewed a Saudi Arabian comic web series *The School of Masculinity Science (Mardrasat 'ulum al-marjala),* and a Jordanian Series *The Way Things Are (Hal al-dunya).* Here she analysed the performance of masculinity as presented in one episode of each series. She noted that there are hegemonic and non-hegemonic forms of masculinity. Mahadeen comes across two translations of masculinity in Arabic, *rujula* and *marjala.* She argues that the translation *marjala* is more suitable than *rujula*, as it expresses diverse masculinities. Moreover, she contends that the flexibility, authenticity, and wide circulation of the term *marjala* should allow for its integration into academic Arabic and for a smoother transmission of the concept outside academia. This term which indicates diverse masculinities does not appear in Jordanian media, rendering masculinity and its representations to a rigid conception of what it is to be a man.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, virginity is an important concept in Jordanian society. In her study concerning the virginity discourse in Jordanian media, Mahadeen (2013) examines how media play a role in circulating religious and medical conceptions regarding

women's virginity. She also argues that although there are negative connotations concerning women's virginity and that the media discourse supports patriarchal ideology, it is still important for Jordanian media to stimulate discussions about sexuality and virginity to play a role in the 'de-tabooisation' of female virginity. Such media discussions according to Mahadeen (2013) represent a significant change, since female virginity is a taboo topic in Jordan.

Discussing news reports about honour crimes in Jordan and how these are represented in media and perceived by audiences, Mahadeen tells the story of a woman who was killed along with her male companion after her brother found them in an "inappropriate situation." While it is unclear what the inappropriate situation was, the news reports say that the woman was given a post-mortem autopsy where her 'hymen status report' confirms her virginity. The confirmation of virginity was important to highlight the 'innocence' of the female victim; thus, she can be considered worthy of the readers' sympathy. Mahadeen argues media discussions (in Jordanian newspapers and news websites of the years 2008-2011) support and enable conservative ideology and patriarchal control over women and their sexuality. As she (2013, p. 83) states, "by not challenging the underlying license to control women's sexuality, these medical reports merely perpetuate the link between sexual behaviour and morality."[50] This indicates the conservative sense in discussing gender related issues in Jordanian media. "The media portray medical and religious authorities as experts capable of and supposed to use their knowledge to diagnose and define virginity"; thus, defining the terms of gender and sexuality and how they are supposed to be portrayed in Jordanian media in a conservative manner. Notably all the examples Mahadeen mentions of doctors and religious clerics who discuss women's virginity in Jordanian media are men, indicating the patriarchal belief that men are the ones in control of women's bodies. However, the mere discussion of virginity in media is seen as a step forward, as such a taboo is a sensitive subject to tackle in public life. Such discussions can be seen as attempts towards demystifying women's sexuality, which reveals a significant change in gender representations in Jordanian media, while simultaneously respecting the conservative character of the Jordanian society and its gender regime.

Representations of gender issues in Jordanian media often conform to social standards/norms and reinforce the gender regime of society. The issue of virginity is usually depicted in media through discussions of honour crimes, which are usually justified if the murdered unmarried female was not a virgin. The honour of a family is directly connected to

[50] The medical reports Mahadeen refers to in this quote are what she calls "the hymen status report"; this a medical examination that checks the "virginity" status of the female victim of an honour crime, by examining if her hymen is intact or not.

women's hymens, and the media reinforces this ideology. In one of her studies, Mahadeen (2017) discusses two cases of murder, the first for a female who was killed in a bus station by a stranger, and the second are multiple cases of so-called honour crimes. In the first instance the murdered was considered a martyr and the discourse of media representations were sympathetic towards the case, while in cases of honour crimes the focus was on the victims being virgins or not. This representation amplifies social judgment towards the victims and justifies the crime to a certain extent; it also implies violence within the family is somewhat accepted whereas violence by strangers is condemned. Such issues in Jordanian media show their role in spreading and reinforcing negative gender representations.

Gender representations in Jordanian media are not far from stereotypes. In research concerning gender representations and stereotypes in cartoons, Salam Al-Mahadin (2003) investigates such issues in the cartoons of Imad Hajjaj, a prominent Jordanian caricaturist, who publishes in well-read Jordanian newspapers. She sheds light on the ways in which gender stereotypes are part of such media content. According to her, in Jordan "women continue to be oppressed and produced by media representations… women are still objectified and denigrated, always presented along two rigid dichotomies: the traditional conformist role of the mother/housewife and the immoral single working woman" (Al-Mahadin, 2003, p. 132). Although women in Jordan have succeeded in penetrating all sorts of educational and work fields, Jordanian media representations of femininity remain confined to the wider patriarchal discourse dominating society. This representation paints a dichotomous picture of women falling in the parameters of wife-mother/whore, especially in Hajjaj's cartoons (Al-Mahadin, 2003, p.135).

The mother/wife in the cartoons is always depicted as an overweight, underprivileged, undereducated, and unpleasant woman wearing a veil, while all the other women represented are perceived as working women who do not wear the veil; "they hold very trivial posts, dress in skimpy clothes, are fully made up, possess very low intelligence, and are mainly "used" with the clear intent of objectifying them. They are the passive (and mostly glad) recipients of sleazy, sex-laden, and lewd comments" (Al-Mahadin, 2003, pp. 139-40). While Abu-Mahjoub, the main character in all of Hajjaj's cartoons is never depicted as attracted to his wife in any way, he drools over the other females; "they become a material extension of his dichotomising consciousness that treats Umm-Mahjoub [his wife] as the mother and all the others as whores" (Al-Mahadin, 2003, p. 140). Such representations of male and female characters indicate the extent to which gender stereotypes persist in Jordanian media, and the highly sexualised or

completely desexualised presence of women. However, like other Jordanian media producers and social subjects "Hajjaj… remains in possession of a certain consciousness produced by the social context in which he operates" (Al-Mahadin, 2003, p. 135). Thus, his representations of gender and the stereotypical images he produces are not completely divorced from the Jordanian social context and gender regime; they may indeed be considered illustrations of it.

Women in such media exist in the binary opposition of highly sexualised young women or completely desexualised wives and mothers, giving the impression that a married man's sexualisation of women, who are not his wife, is rather justified because of the lack of intimacy between the couple as well as the attractiveness of the women he encounters outside his home. Both representations indicate a patriarchal ideology and paint a negative image of Jordanian women which media contributes to reinforcing; while these images could represent the reality of some members of society there is an exclusion of all other diverse female entities existing in society. The cartoons "set forth a normalised and essentialised standard of morality and feminine subjectivity … Not only other women, but invariably men, too, redeem their knowledge of femininity and its normative practices from media texts." (Al-Mahadin, 2003, p. 148) This influences and reflects how women and femininity are perceived in Jordanian society and shows Jordanian women's need to struggle against the patriarchal discourse which defines the parameters of femininity and morality. Whether the images in the cartoons reflect the actual views of media producer or not, and whether such representations are meant to reinforce or challenge gender stereotypes is unclear; it is clear however, that such media representations contribute to oppressing Jordanian women and reinforcing negative gender stereotypes.

As Al-Mahadin (2003, p.143) states: "reality produces texts, but texts in turn determine how we view that reality." As noted from the discussion in this section, while playing an important role in influencing public opinion and spreading knowledge to people, Jordanian media tends to spread stereotypical images of women and men confined by the patriarchal parameters of the Jordanian society. The media's rendition of both masculinity and femininity seems to assume limited meanings excluding the idea of diverse masculinities and femininities. Moreover, men's participation in Jordanian media clearly exceeds women's whether in the production and dissemination workforce or the power of representation, which suggest an imbalanced gender regime.

3.2.2 Gender in Arab media and cinema

It is not a surprise that most research relating to gender in Arab media and cinema focuses on women and their representations, as they are the weaker link in the gender regime. Thus, most of what is discussed here targets women. However, there are some instances where general gender issues and masculinity representations are discussed especially in relation to Arab cinema. This section begins with media representations of gender and then discusses cinema representations of such issues in the Arab context.

Arab media

Although Arab media usually portrays in gender in a stereotypical sense, there have been some attempts by different Arab media outlets to play a role in empowering Arab women by giving them the chance to be seen as able as men to investigate, discuss, report and present different issues. The number of women working in different Arab media has increased, but this did not necessarily lead to having an influence over content. Although Arab women may have more presence in the media nowadays, due to the absence of highly placed female executives in most Arab media, women still lack significant roles (Kaye-Essien and Ismail, 2018; Rahbani, 2010). Moreover, representations in media still lack focus on women's abilities and professional growth. Their presence in media materials is usually confined to stereotypical roles. Although nowadays many Arab TV stations and programs target female audiences, they usually cover stereotypical issues such as fashion, cooking, diets etc. with some rare exceptions of discussing women's roles in politics, business and society (Kaye-Essien and Ismail, 2018; Rahbani, 2010). Moreover, women's beauty and appearance are emphasised in Arab media, participating in "the [global] women dilemma of beauty before brains" which indicates the objectification of women by media outlets and that "the way a woman looks is far more important than what she has to say" (Rahbani, 2010, p. 4). This can indicate the patriarchal social structure of Arab societies.

Arab women are stereotyped in both Western and Middle Eastern media. Representations usually show women as sex objects, which has been critically noted. This criticism in the Arab world has translated into a call for "new images of women as mothers, wives, and active members of society" (Rahbani, 2010, p. 9). In an attempt to respond to such criticism, some Arab media developed what they thought is a more positive representation of women by focusing on housewives, with "too little attention given to women as workers or political leaders" (Rahbani, 2010, p.10). The stereotypes were still present, but they took a

different form. Although there are some changes in the images of women in Arab media where there are some attempts to show their professional side rather than only their role as housewives, these are not enough to represent the reality of Arab women and there are constant calls to change stereotypical representations (Al Rawi and Jbar, 2017).

Similar to the case of Jordanian media discussed earlier (Zaideh, 2018), evidence shows that women's appearance as experts and political leaders in Arab media tends to be rare, while most of the time they appear as victims in different stories. Moreover, even in stories that profoundly affect women, like gender-based violence, the male voice prevails (Rahbani, 2010). This shows that the Arab media world, which the Jordanian media is part of, is dominated by men, and that representations of women are not quite representative of the reality of Arab women who have excelled in all sorts of professions.

Advertisements are key indicators of gender norms, expectations, and gender regime structures in any given culture (Al Rawi and Jbar, 2017). Women's appearance in advertisements on Arab TV channels differ among different Arab countries reflecting the cultural differences between different Arab regions. For example, while on Saudi Arabian TV stations women shown on advertisements must be veiled, there is a limited amount of diversity in TV commercials of other Gulf countries with stylish, yet conservative women clothing seen on the screen. On the contrary in more modern and liberal Middle Eastern countries different images of women appear. Lebanese TV stations for example tend to show "sexy, erotic" female figures in the majority of their advertisements, and in Egyptian media advertisements rarely represent veiled women and usually opt for unveiled women although it is estimated that 80% of Egyptian women wear the veil (Rahbani, 2010, p. 15). Still most of these advertisements either objectify women and intensify the male gaze or depict women in stereotypical homebound traditional roles (Al Rawi and Jbar, 2017). Such representations do not serve a good purpose for Arab women and usually categorizes them according to their appearance; a woman's dress in such adverts is another layer of stereotyping where women in adds targeting the family or the home are usually veiled, while other types of adverts show unveiled women. This indicates a stereotypical gaze and misconception where it is suggested that veiled women occupy the private sphere of the home, while unveiled women occupy the public sphere, which is not representative of the reality of Arab women (Rahbani, 2010). Gender sensitivity and diverse representations of women in Arab media is still lacking; although there are few attempts here and there this is not enough to eliminate stereotypical images confining women's portrayals in the media.

The type of advertisements that show women as main characters take a different shape than those showing men in the front line. While beauty, fashion, home, and cooking adverts etc. tend to present women, men are usually seen in adverts for banks, real estate, vacation rentals, technology, cars etc., showing rationalism and money matters as masculine (Al Rawi and Jbar, 2017). In adverts showing both women and men, women were usually complementary characters and followers to men. Moreover, it is noted that like women, men are used as sex objects in Arab media adverts, indicating the use of sexual references to sell products for both women and men. However, women are the ones shown as 'perfect' housewives and mothers who happily cook, clean, and take care of their husbands and children. These stereotypical representations make it seem 'natural' for women to conform to such social roles and gender regimes and put more pressure on men to follow the 'masculine' representations that entail strength, attractiveness, and domination etc. This suggests that TV commercials in Arab media tend to reinforce traditional social roles for women and men and preserve the patriarchal structure of masculine and cultural hegemony (Al Rawi and Jbar, 2017).

Arab Cinema

Since the beginning of the 21st century, Arab films have been gaining more attention in English speaking countries through their wider and more frequent appearance in local and international film festivals (Khoury, 2005). Some Arab films from Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria among others found a space to discuss gender regimes and patriarchal oppression, where such aspects were at times linked to social and national post-colonial liberation (Dinia and Kenza, 2016; Oumlil, 2016; Stockdale, 2015; Ateya, 2014; Shafik, 2007; Addoum, 2006; Khoury, 2005). Arab cinema, hence, tends to focus on forms of social, cultural, and political awareness and plays a role in social transformation. According to Khoury (2005, p. 15): "through its rich and dialectically charged stories and its amalgamation of cultural references, artifices and practices, New Arab cinema forges an intertextuality which links the past, the present and the possibility of social and political change."[51] It is also evident that Arab cinema is moving "in the direction of a confluence between social and cultural transformation… accentuating cinematic cultural practice as

[51] According to Khoury (2005 p.1) "New Arab Cinema is an emerging movement, which denotes the protracted development of an indigenous film practice; it informs and is informed by complex cultural continuities, interruptions and transformations. This movement inherits in various ways aspects of the rich legacy of Egyptian Arab cinema, which, despite its recent difficulties continues to be among the most popular indigenous cinemas in the world today. Furthermore, New Arab Cinema explores preoccupations that are of major relevance to different Muslim and non-Muslim post-colonial societies and cultural practices."

political practice," (Khoury, 2005, p.18) which allows audiences to rethink cultural issues such as those linked to gender.

However, Arab cinema tends to "reinforce and validate women's position in Arab culture – submissive to the patriarchal and state order," (Addoum, 2006, p.56) which could rarely be seen as a representation provided to question and challenge such negative positions. The representation of 'independent' women is often negatively portrayed, usually within the confines of seducing and manipulating men (e.g. the female character Firdauss in the Egyptian film *Abi Faouq al Shaggara* 1969). Such a woman is usually represented as a "threat to patriarchal family structure, to masculine accomplishments, and perhaps more significantly, to the homo-social relationships between men," and she must be controlled to reinforce patriarchal dominance and authority (Addoum, 2006, p.56). Deviant femininity in Egyptian films is usually represented in negative terms, where usually female characters depicted as 'independent' eventually become criminals of varying degrees at times thieves (e.g. *Khalty Faransa* 2004) and at others murderers (e.g. *Raya wa Sekina* 1953). The role of the female in Arab cinema must remain within the conventional social confines of the 'good' mother/wife/daughter to be represented as morally acceptable, otherwise she is stigmatized as a morally deviant woman and this is present regardless of film genre. However, there are Arab films, specifically Egyptian, Moroccan, Saudi Arabian, and Palestinian that tend to empower women and represent them differently on screen, as discussed below.

It is valuable to study women's presence and representations in cinema; "because it evokes several images of a social and cultural discourse and sheds light on gender and family relations as well. It is also being used to trace the history of the female identity, how it has changed and how it continues to change" (Ateya, 2014, p. 62). In Arab cinema and media representations of women have tended to be biased towards a traditional image and role of female characters; women are usually depicted as mothers and wives neglecting their role in society as lawyers, researchers, physicians etc. It is also rare to see women and men represented as equals or in an equal manner (Obediet, 2002, quoted in Ateya, 2014).

In her study of portrayals of women empowerment in Egyptian films from 2001-2011, Ateya (2014) found that, compared to previous studies of the subject, women have gained more positive representations in Egyptian cinema. Their images seem to be more powerful, able to solve problems and more independent; and representations of female characters' job status,

level of education, social class, and character traits seem to be more positive than ever[52]. However, there still exist negative portrayals in terms of age, relationship status and background, where young, married, and urban women and their issues are given more attention at the expense of elderly, single and rural women. Specifically, the overrepresentation of married women reinforces "the sexist idea that women's value and aspirations are achieved through marriage" (Ateya, 2014, p. 76). Ateya (2014) suggests that more positive female portrayals and women empowerment in recent Egyptian films could be due to the increased presence of female filmmakers who produce quality films. Still, Egyptian filmmakers need more positive representations of women to reflect the effective roles women play in society and their economic and political potentials; this is necessary as Egyptian films, with their long history since 1917 and the cinema's dominant position as the first Arab nation to produce films (Shafik, 2007), do not only reach Egyptian audiences but are widely popular among audiences across the Arab world (Ateya, 2014).

Women in Arab cinema tend to be represented as victims of patriarchal social injustice. For example, Dinia and Kenza (2016, p.48) suggest that in both Tunisian and Moroccan films women tend to be characterized as submissive to male dominance, thereby portrayed as "victims of the patriarchal system."[53] The issue of virginity is brought to the surface in Moroccan films, where women are depicted as the embodiment of the family honour and reputation by preserving their virginity until marriage. Women are unequal to men in this regard, where "sexual behaviors outside of wedlock and extramarital sex, while prohibited religiously to all, are culturally only permitted to men" (Dinia and Kenza, 2016, p.50). Interestingly, Dinia and Kenza (2016) suggest that while women in Moroccan films are portrayed as victims needing to preserve family honour and reputation, they are actually aware of their oppression and they usually attempt to overcome it. This suggests the films' attempts to question, challenge, and expose the oppressiveness of patriarchal systems, by their portrayal of aware female characters.

In Moroccan cinema there seems to be an attempt to humanize female characters and construct a feeling of empathy towards them and their struggles in the global patriarchal system. Moreover, it is suggested that there is a departure from orientalist and colonial representations

[52] Examples of Egyptian films Ateya (2014) studied include: *Asmaa* (Amr Salama 2011), *678* (Mohamed Diab 2010), *Ehky ya Shahrazad* (Yousry Nasrallah 2009), *Wahed-Sefr* (Kamla Abu-Zikri 2009), and *El-Na'ama wa El-Tawoos* (Mohamed Abou-Seif 2002).

[53] Dinia and Kenza (2016) base their discussion and analysis of women and patriarchy on five films: *Amours Voilées* (Aziz Salmy 2008), *Number One* (Zakia Tahiri 2009), *Les Oubliés de L'histoire* (Hassan Benjelloun 2010), *Agadir Bombay* (Myriam Bakhir's 2011), and *La Source des Femmes* (Radu Mihăileanu 2012).

of women as belly dancers, exotic seductive characters and veiled victims needing saving; rather the Moroccan films in Dinia and Kenza's (2016) study construct women "as in control of their destinies and able to create change in their lives. In each film, the plot starts with a portrayal of oppression but further develops to allow for women to transcend their oppressive circumstances and break free" (Dinia and Kenza, 2016, p. 55). Women in the films empowered themselves and they could serve as hope and inspiration for those audience members who identify with their struggles.

Patriarchal hegemony over women and women empowerment is discussed in other Arab cinemas. For example, in the Saudi Arabian film *Wadjda* (Haifa Al Mansour, 2012) a coming-of-age story brings forwards the struggles of girls and women in the patriarchal Saudi Arabian society. Women's lack of mobility and weak positions are clear themes in this film. The dominant position of men and their infliction of emotional pain on women is also presented in this film through the story of a woman whose husband decides to marry another woman. Regardless of religious implications[54], this action results at moments in turning Wadjda and her mother against each other and at other times it brings them together in solidarity with each other. The Saudi female director, Haifa Al Mansour, tends to expose the negative effects of patriarchal dominance in the Saudi Arabian society while simultaneously empowering female characters. The main character, Wadjda, eventually achieves what she wants, and the film "presents its characters as diverse and multidimensional, all the while bringing up many issues for further exploration regarding women's roles in Saudi Arabia" (Stockdale, 2015, p.105). After *Wadja* (2012) Al Mansour made three films *Mary Shelley* (2017), *Nappily Ever After* (2018), and *The Perfect Candidate* (2019), which were all "centred on women who challenge society's expectations" (La Caze, 2020 p.157). Such attempts to bring forward issues regarding the position of Saudi women in Saudi Arabian films demonstrates a change in discourse in Arab films, where representations of women's everyday struggles are at the forefront of the film industry.

With regards to Palestinian cinema, Oumlil (2016) discusses this cinema paying particular attention to the treatment of gender in Annemarie Jacir's film *Salt of This Sea* (2008); the first feature length fiction film made by a female Palestinian director. In this film Jacir challenges "the dominant construction of Arab and Muslim women as passive victims in need of saving" (Oumlil, 2016, p. 591). She does this by representing a "strong-minded heroine"

[54] Polygamy is allowed in Islam for men, where a man can be married to up to 4 wives at the same time under certain circumstances; however, it is culturally acceptable in Saudi Arabia regardless of whether circumstances permit or not.

(Oumlil, 2016, p. 591). The main character, Soraya, in Jacir's film is depicted as a saviour, an image that counters representations of Arab women as weak victims in need of male saviours; she instead saves her male companion more than once throughout the film. Such a representation of a strong Palestinian female challenges patriarchal systems and empowers Palestinian women – and Arab women by extension - and gives them agency. Moreover, according to Oumlil (2016, p. 592) this film "not only reverses well-known gender roles, but it also does not engage in objectifying the main female character." Interpretations of the film also claim that use of camera angles, shots and movements eliminate a male gaze. Soraya, in the film, is not objectified or sexualized, she is complicated, and unpredictable among other characteristics that strengthen a representation of an Arab-Palestinian woman (Oumlil, 2016). The attempt to empower female characters in contemporary Arab films, (Palestinian, Saudi Arabian, Moroccan, and Egyptian films etc… as discussed above) seems to have stemmed from the efforts of Arab filmmakers, females and otherwise, to give more positive and powerful depictions of Arab women with agency, Arab women who resemble those who fight and battle patriarchal notions prevalent in global and Middle Eastern societies: representations that counter stereotypical portrayals of Arab women who lack agency.

As discussed in this chapter, Egyptian and other Arab cinemas are influential regarding representations of women and femininity (Ateya, 2014; Dinia and Kenza, 2016). On the other hand, representations of masculinities in Arab cinema tend to emphasize hegemonic ideals; although "masculine identities are also subject to change, for example through mediated images of men and masculinities promoting certain types of men as hegemonic, portraying others as marginalized or subversive" (Eynde, 2014, p.261). In this sense it is significant to allude to the representations of men and masculinities in Egyptian cinema, as "Egypt's film industry has shaped popular conceptions of Arab men and masculinity across the Arab world" (Eynde, 2014, p.261). Additionally, the depiction of Arab men as violent and oppressive towards women in media and films is challenged in some contemporary Arab films that represent Arab masculinity as departing from the stereotypical images of manhood as inherently violent. This is represented in a Palestinian film discussed below.

Representations of masculinity have changed form at different times of Egyptian film productions, entailing the pluralistic use of the term. In the 1950s and 1960s Egyptian cinematic portrayals of masculinity tended towards the idealisation of "men who respect women and do not abuse patriarchal notions of gender difference – often abusing religion and tradition in the process – in order to curb women's freedom of movement" (Eynde, 2014, p.262). Other

masculine representations included the images of the ma'allim, who "were depicted as brutes and in need of a proper 'education' in order to become valued citizens and be part of a well-oiled and functioning society" (Eynde, 2014, p.262). However, after the 1967 war[55], "the myths of modernity were exposed and the messages of social progress espoused by the media's intentional 'development realism' were no longer welcomed, nor desired;" (Abu-Lughod, 2005, p.81, quoted in Eynde, 2014) which resulted in representations of defeated and flawed male and female film characters who lacked direction and were depicted as people at loss.

In the 1970s masculinity in Egyptian films entailed the ability to provide; "films from this period offered insights into the destruction rather than construction of the male as a national subject, as father, husband, soldier or worker" (Eynde, 2014, p.263)[56]. The 1980s and 90s brought more realistic images of men and women rather than the idealised representations of the 50s and 60s; films mostly represented masculinity in terms of family men providing for their families. The most recent representations of masculinity in Egyptian films are "witnessing a return to patriarchal domination; a paternalist ideal is reinstituted as a way of creating order in the country's chaos" (Eynde, 2014, p.264). Images of controlling patriarchs and misogynists are resurfacing in recent Egyptian films, and violence and emphasis on the muscular body are part of the performance of masculinity in these films. In all its periods Egyptian cinema was never reluctant to represent masculinities in patriarchal terms; however, there were instances in all the periods of filmmaking, and especially in recent years, to represent positive images of men and their masculinities, men who are respectable members of society "portraying respect and love for women without being controlling or paternalist" (Eynde, 2014, p. 266).

Hegemonic masculinity remains a concern in Arab cinema. In an article by Abir Hamdar (2004) she discusses the Egyptian film *Arak El-Balah* (Radwan El-Kashef, 1998). The film portrays stepping into manhood and the difficulties a male character from rural Egypt faces in defining his masculine identity. The film tends to show strong and capable female characters

[55] Also called the 1967 Arab-Israeli War or Six-Day War, had two parties Arabs (Egypt, Jordan, Syria and minor involvements from Iraq and Lebanon) and Israelis, it resulted in the defeat of Arabs and the loss of huge parts of Palestine (the West Bank which was part of Jordan at the time, and Gaza Strip which was part of Egypt at the time), the Egyptian Sinai Peninsula, and the Syrian Golan Heights (Mutawi 2002).

[56] Some of the films Eynde (2014) refers to in his discussion of masculinity in Egyptian films include: *Al-Limbi* (Wa'il Ihsan 2002), *Imra'a wa Imra'a* (Nidal Hamza 1995), *Imra'a Sayyi'at as-Suma'a* (Henry Barakat 1973), *Hikmitak Ya Rab* (Husam al-Din Mustafa 1976), *Allah Ma'na* (Ahmad Badrakhan 1955), *Al-Karnak* (Ali Badrakhan 1975), *Nur 'Ayni* (Wa'il Ihsan 2010), *Dammī wa-Dumū'ī wa-Ibtisāmatī* (Husayn Kamal 1973), *'Afwan Ayyūhā al-Qānūn* (Inas al-Daghaydi 1985), *Ughniyya 'Alā al-Mamarr* (Ali Abd alKhaliq 1972), *as-Sifīra 'Azīza* (Tolba Radwan 1961), *Taymūr wa-Shafīqa* (Ahmad Mar'I 2007), *Sawwāq al-Utūbīs* ('Atif al-Tayyib 1982), *ash-Shayṭān Ya'iẓ* (Ashraf Fahmi 1981), *al-Ḥarāfīsh* (Niyazi Mustafa 1986), *al-Makhṭūfa* (Sharif Yahya 1987), *al-Ma'allima* (Hasan Rida 1958), *al-Futuwwa*, (Salah Abu Sayf 1957), *Shabāb Imra'a* (Salah Abu Sayf 1956), and *Ibrāhīm al-Abyaḍ* (Marwan Hamid 2009).

who still endorse a patriarchal structure of male dominance by ensuring enforcement of traditions. In a society where "there is no concept of manhood without machismo," where there is a "necessity to conform to the parameters of male ideals and to situate oneself within an image of machismo is very much part and parcel of becoming a man," (Hamdar, 2004, 115) the main character struggles to conform to the image and role prescribed for him. This film's major discourse, according to Hamdar (2004, p.117), is concerned with "the rhetoric of masculine dominancy and its collapse." Through this discourse women's influence in "undermining and fostering a man's sense of himself [… and] the construction of male identities" (p.117) are made clear. Hamdar's study shows that masculinity in the Egyptian film is constructed and reconstructed through women's agency; it is however, reinforced by male violence at times and is portrayed as a hegemonic form of masculinity.

On the other hand, in the Palestinian Film *Salt of This Sea* (Annemarie Jacir 2008), discussed earlier, masculinity representations tend to depart from traditional hegemonic patriarchal depictions that entail the image of Arab, and Palestinian, men as violent. Jacir attempts to paint a different masculinity that challenges "the notion of an inherently violent Palestinian man" (Oumlil, 2016, p. 593). Her lead male character, Emad, is a gentleman who is concerned with accompanying the main character, Soraya, on her quest to regain her grandfather's house and legacy in Palestine. He is clam and understanding, and his portrayal as gentle and caring carries connotations that enable the deconstruction of stereotypes "in order to offer alternative portrayals of Palestinian identity" (Oumlil, 2016, p. 594). Here Jacir is redefining the parameters of Palestinian masculinity, where she departs from that prevalent negative representation of Arab and Palestinian men in Western media and films as violent and oppressive. Such attempt plays a role in challenging stereotypes by showing a different side of the story.

Hegemonic and subordinate masculinities are usually represented in Arab cinema, especially when the father-son hierarchal relationship is represented on the screen (Stollery, 2001). Gender relations, patriarchal power, and masculine representations clearly occupied filmmaking in Egypt, Palestine, and elsewhere in the Arab world. Arab cinema is influenced by the current state of affairs in the Arab world; although each Arab state has its own autonomous culture, Arab cultures intersect in many aspects especially in terms of gender issues and the patriarchal power structure. Such issues are reflected in many films from different Arab countries including Jordan. As noted from this section, both femininity and masculinity in Arab cinema have taken different forms at different times, with older films being more traditional in

their representations while more contemporary films have tended towards representing a changing image of women and men. Women tend to be more empowered in contemporary films and men tend to be less consumed with stereotypical patriarchal roles and they at times challenge traditional patriarchal social notions, just like female characters do in some films. A context of change regarding gender portrayals can be read through skimming the past and present of Arab cinema, an issue that will be explored further with regards to Jordanian cinema in Chapters 5 and 6.

3.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has discussed many aspects that set the context of this study. I began by introducing an overview of the contemporary Jordanian society and gender regimes within to provide an understanding that aids the analysis in Chapters 5 and 6. The chapter extended to present and examine gender representations in Jordanian and Arab media and cinema, to set the background needed to understand the context of gender representations in Jordanian films presented later in this thesis. To study gender regime representations in Jordanian cinema and their reception among a group of Jordanians, the following chapter presents the methodology I followed to answer the questions of the current study.

Chapter 4. Research Methodology

4.1 The Study Design

This thesis is a qualitative audience reception field-based study concerned with exploring the reception of Jordanian films in terms of their representations of gender regimes, within the films' national context. As this study is concerned with exploring "what the behavioural or verbal expressions of the audience mean in context," (Lindlof, 1991, p.25) a qualitative approach is a necessity for answering the questions of the study[57]. Here, I do not adopt a specialized type of qualitative research (See Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2016) such as ethnography or grounded theory like several audience reception studies (e.g. Ang, 1982; Morley, 1980; Radway, 1991). Rather, I make use of a generalized qualitative approach to inquiry while borrowing one or more procedures from the different specialized types (see Yin, 2016, p.66).

This chapter presents an overview of how the current study was conducted; each of the five sections details how this research was completed. The film sample used for this study consists of three contemporary Jordanian films discussed further in section 4.2. In addition, in order to test the methodology of the current of study I conducted a pilot study with three Jordanian students at Newcastle University; further information about the pilot and how it helped focus this study are provided in section 4.3. The fieldwork study took place in Jordan with 41 Jordanian female and male participants in higher education; setting and sampling considerations and their respective rationales are presented in section 4.4. Moreover, the data collection instruments used for this research are focus groups, follow-up interviews, and field notes. An additional data collection instrument was the use of a Facebook poll to gather information about watching Jordanian films among Jordanians. These instruments and their use in this research are explained in section 4.5. The data analysis procedures included the use of NVivo qualitative data analysis software, through which I managed my project and coded my data. The procedures also included the use of the thematic analysis technique informed by Attride-Stirling's (2001) thematic networks approach to qualitative data analysis. In addition, the analysis was informed by further analytical explorations of the collected data to account for nuances in the responses of audience members. This is explained in detail in section 4.6 of this chapter. The final section 4.7 presents concluding remarks.

[57] Please refer to the introduction chapter for the questions and significance of this study.

4.2 Film Sample/ Corpus

The film corpus of the current study is purposively selected[58] to explore gender regime representations and their reception among the study sample. The criteria for choosing the films included the film being of feature length (fiction or documentary), due to the confines of fieldwork timeframe and film accessibility[59] this genre was more convenient to include in the current study than short films for example. Another criterion was local, regional, and international exposure and recognition, where films have been screened whether in film festivals or cinema theatres. Thus, three films were chosen in order to have manageable data while maintaining triangulation[60]. The films are *Captain Abu Raed* (Amin Matalqa[61], 2007), *When Monaliza Smiled* (Fadi Haddad[62], 2012), and *Lissa Aisha* (Asma Bsieso[63], 2016). These films entail significant, yet subtle, emphasis on gender regimes in the Jordanian society; gender relations, gender roles, gendered social expectations, and the patriarchal social structure all appear to form part of the representations of women and men and their stories in these films. *Captain Abu Raed* is a drama feature length fiction film directed by Amin Matalqa in 2007; this film revived the cinema scene in Jordan after many years of absence in national film production[64]. According to Teller (2015), "As well as winning several international awards, *Captain Abu Raed* marked Jordan's emergence as a contemporary filmmaking nation." The film was the first from Jordan to be submitted to the Academy Award's Best Foreign Language Film category. It participated in film festivals around the world and won several awards at Sundance Film Festival, the Newport Beach Film Festival, and the Dubai International Film Festival, among others (Parnell, 2017; Tesdell, 2008). The film generated a gross of $80,851 in box office revenues worldwide (*Captain Abu Raed* - Box Office Mojo, no date). The film is significant to the current study as it marks the beginning of contemporary filmmaking in Jordan, and it depicts representations of the Jordanian society and the gender regimes within.

When Monaliza Smiled is a romantic comedy feature length fiction film directed by Fadi Haddad in 2012. It was supported financially by the Royal Film Commission in Jordan[65]. The

[58] For purposive sampling, see Flick, 2014
[59] Film accessibility is a crucial aspect for choosing the current films as most Jordanian films are not readily available online.
[60] For the importance of triangulation in research please consult Yin, 2016, p. 87.
[61] Male Director
[62] Male Director
[63] Female Director
[64] Please refer to Chapter 5 for further information about the development of Jordanian cinema.
[65] For more information about the Royal Film Commission, please refer to Chapter 5

film was released theatrically in Jordan in 2012; as this was a small market, box office admissions to the film were around 3000 (Bharadwaj, 2012). The film was screened internationally at several film festivals around the world, such as Dubai International Film Festival in the UAE, Malmo Arab Film Festival in Sweden, and Arab Women's Film Festival in Netherlands among others. The film was chosen for this study as it subtly, and perhaps normatively, depicts power differentials in gender relations and reveals a patriarchal social structure through a love story between the lead female and male characters.

Lissa Aisha is a documentary film directed by Asma Bsieso in 2016. The film premiered in Jordan during the third edition of the Sheffield Film Days in Amman (Britishcouncil.jo, 2016), it also participated in Malmo Arab Film Festival in Sweden and won the Best Documentary award (Jordan Times, 2016). By following the life of a Jordanian young woman from 2010 to 2014 this film denotes gender regimes at play in a contemporary Jordanian woman's daily life. The film is significant in terms of representing a true story the audience can reflect upon, especially with regards to gender regimes.

4.3 Pilot Study

In June 2018 I conducted my pilot study with three Jordanian male students at Newcastle University. Focus groups are believed to be one of the more 'natural' occurring data collection methods, as they "mirror the kinds of conversations participants might have in their daily lives" (Hollander, 2004, p. 607). This method is also argued to have minimal influence from the researcher as "the participants control the discussion" (Hollander, 2004, p. 607). In addition, Hollander (2004, p.607) suggests that another advantage of using focus groups to collect research data is that they "elicit stories and in-depth explanations of people's thoughts and experiences."[66] Thus, I organized and conducted two focus groups with the same students and the sessions took place at a meeting room at the Old Library Building in Newcastle University. In the first session I screened *Lissa Aisha* (Asma Bsieso, 2016), and in the second I screened *Captain Abu Raed* (Amin Matalqa, 2007). After each screening we had an engaged discussion about the film. Each participant was provided with a participant information sheet and a consent form before each session. They all gave consent to use videotaping; they seemed to be very comfortable speaking in the presence of the camera, which assured me this may not be a problem in the fieldwork.

[66] More on focus groups and their use in this research in section 4.5 of this chapter.

I had an interview guide prepared for each session. In the first session I felt I had influenced some parts of the discussion by asking too many questions I had prepared. Thus, in the second session I aimed at a less structured focus group, where I asked only a few broad questions to steer the discussion within the parameters of the study purpose: gender representations in the films. A times in the pilot sessions I felt I was stating my opinion and actively participating in the discussions, which may have influenced the conversations. I learned that as a researcher I would have to withdraw from the discussion and assume the role of the moderator. To overcome this issue in the fieldwork I made sure my interference was solely for moderating purposes; I found a balance between asking questions and withdrawing from asking whenever the conversation was flowing. From this pilot I also learned that I should not strictly stick to one strategy or the other, I should remain open to sudden changes and I would have to learn how to bring the flow of the conversation back on track whenever needed without controlling/influencing the conversation.

Through the pilot experience I learned to make sure I play the moderator role without influencing opinions by asking questions that steered the discussion in a certain way. Instead in the fieldwork my involvement in the discussion was mainly asking the questions in my focus group guide[67], making sure to ask for clarifications and elaborations where needed, asking other participants what they thought about a certain issue raised in the discussion, and making sure the discussion did not stray far away from the topic under study. The pilot was a necessary exercise before the actual fieldwork. It also tested the validity of my research questions and helped focus the study.

4.4 Site and Sample

The setting and sample of this research were purposively selected[68] to answer the questions vital to this study[69]. The fieldwork site was the University of Jordan (UJ), centrally located in Amman, the capital city of Jordan. This higher education institute is a public university in Jordan with the largest body of students across universities in the country; it attracts students from diverse social, religious, and regional backgrounds in Jordan (The University of Jordan, 2017). According to the website of the Ministry of Higher Education in Jordan, only 10 public and 19 private universities exist in the country; the largest of which is the University of Jordan (Mohe.gov.jo, 2017). This University has a diverse body of students

[67] Provided in Appendix 1
[68] For purposive sampling, see Flick, 2014.
[69] Please refer to Chapter 1 for the specific research questions

and staff[70]. This was vital to the purpose of this research, as different audience backgrounds enriched conversations regarding the reception of gender regime representations in the selected contemporary Jordanian films.

Being an alumnus of the University of Jordan gave me the advantage of access to resources and connections, which ensured a smoother progress of the fieldwork. I made initial contact with the University of Jordan in 2018, through which the University informed me that a formal permission to conduct fieldwork was necessary. Accordingly, prior to my fieldwork I asked my supervisors in Newcastle University to ask the VC to write me a letter acknowledging I am a PhD student on a fieldwork mission, it was granted to me on March 26th, 2019. With this letter in hand on April 1st, 2019 the University of Jordan allowed me to conduct the fieldwork on its premises and with its students. I had already contacted professors of my acquaintances at the University of Jordan and agreed with some of them and their students, as explained later, to have their focus group sessions once I have formal permission from the University. Thus, my focus groups took place between 2/4/2019 and 1/5/2019.

The study population consists of Jordanian women and men in higher education. This population was chosen as educated youth are agents of change in society and it is necessary to study their reception of gender representations in their national cultural products in order to present an understanding of the Jordanian gender regime as represented in Jordanian films. The choice of university students also came due to "the role of these institutions in reproducing gender roles across generations" (El Kharouf and Daoud, 2019, p.64). As this is a qualitative study, the whole population was not the target (Flick, 2014); rather a small, yet diverse, sample of students was taken through the method of snowball sampling[71]. Thus, a cross-section of both postgraduate and undergraduate students at the University of Jordan was recruited. The sample of participants is a diverse group from different educational, social, religious, and regional identities[72] as noted below. The sample size was 41 participants, with 60.9% females and 39.1% males. The variation in the percentages of females and males in this study could be due to the higher percentage of female enrolment in Jordanian higher education (Jordan | UNESCO UIS, 2020), as explained in the context chapter of this study[73].

[70] Specific data on this diversity is not readily available online.

[71] See Kumar 1999 for further information on snowball sampling

[72] An issue I am aware of is the diversity of participants who mostly come from a middle class Muslim background; however, as this is a qualitative study generalizability is not a pivotal concern, thus, the representativeness of the sample was given minimal attention.

[73] Found in Chapter 3

I had multiple plans for participants' recruitment; however, the one that proved reasonable was to contact professors I know at the University of Jordan and ask them if they would be willing to ask if their students would voluntarily agree to participate in this study. In the fieldwork preparation stage five professors agreed and some of them kindly agreed to conduct the film screening and focus group during their class time. After consulting with their students[74], most of those students voluntarily agreed to participate in the current study. In the case where professors were not able to give their class time up for the session, arrangements were made with the participants to meet either at a meeting room[75] or in a classroom[76]. Following in table format are the demographics of the 41 participants in this study; these include the focus groups[77] they attended and the pseudonyms used to ensure their anonymity throughout this research. The information in the tables below was collected through asking the participants to fill a participant information sheet at the beginning of each session[78].

4.4.1 Demographics of the study participants

The background of audience members is significant for the discussion of the study findings; thus, the following details the study participants' information. As discussed earlier, all the study participants are students at the University of Jordan. The sample consisted of 41 participants, 25 females (60.9%) and 16 males (39.1%). These participants come from different majors and educational levels; of 18 postgraduates (43.9%), 5 of them are PhD students (27.7%) while the rest are MA students (72.2%); and there are 23 undergraduate students (56.09%). Only 10 of the 41 participants (24.3%) were married with only one male among them. The ages of participants in this study ranged from 18-47 years old, with 16 of them 25 years old and over. Muslims constituted 90.2% of the study sample while Christians were 9.7%, and all the latter were females. Moreover, 43.9% of participants did not assign a tribal affiliation on their participant information sheet, while 56.1% affiliated themselves with a tribe. 70.7% of participants stated they are middle class, while 29.3% did not assign a social class. Further, 60.9% live in Amman while the rest live in other cities and rural areas. The following details the demographics of each focus group[79] separately as well as the film each group watched and the date the session took place. Focus groups 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3 have the same participants,

[74] Some of the professors kindly offered 5 marks towards the students' participation mark provided that they write a short report about the session as incentive to participate

[75] The Faculty of Educational Sciences and the Centre for Women's Studies at the University of Jordan kindly allowed me access their meeting rooms for the purposes of this research fieldwork.

[76] Kindly provided by the Faculty of Arts and Design

[77] Details about focus groups as data collection instrument are provided in the next section

[78] Please refer to Appendix 2 for a sample of the Participant Information Sheet

[79] Focus group details and why this method was chosen to collect data can be found in the next section

however, for ease of reference I separated their demographics; all other groups only attended one session[80]. Follow-up interviews'[81] demographic details are also provided at the end of this section.

Focus Group 1.1 (FG1.1) – Consisted of 10 participants: 8 females and 2 males. This group was a mix of postgraduate students (MA and PhD), enrolled at the Faculty of Educational Sciences. They watched and discussed *Lissa Aisha* on 02/04/2019. The table below shows the demographic information for this group.

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Education Level	Marital Status	Occupation	Social Class	Religion	Tribal Affiliation
LA-1F-1.1	47	Female	PhD	Married	School Principal	Unassigned	Christian	Unassigned
LA-2F-1.1	24	Female	MA	Single	Teacher	Middle Class	Muslim	Assigned
LA-3F-1.1	24	Female	MA	Single	Teacher	Unassigned	Muslim	Unassigned
LA-4F-1.1	26	Female	MA	Married	Teacher	Unassigned	Muslim	Assigned
LA-5F-1.1	30	Female	MA	Married	Teacher	Unassigned	Muslim	Unassigned
LA-6M-1.1	24	Male	MA	Single	Teacher	Middle Class	Muslim	Assigned
LA-7M-1.1	25	Male	MA	Single	Teacher	Middle Class	Muslim	Assigned
LA-8F-1.1	33	Female	MA	Single	Teacher	Middle Class	Muslim	Unassigned
LA-9F-1.1	42	Female	PhD	Married	Lecturer	Middle Class	Muslim	Unassigned
LA-10F-1.1	40	Female	PhD	Married	Lecturer	Middle Class	Christian	Assigned

Table 2: FG1.1 Lissa Aisha

Focus Group 1.2 (FG1.2) – Consisted of 8 participants: 6 females and 2 males. The participants of this group are the same as above, except for participants 5F and 10F, who were not able to attend. In this session they watched and discussed *Captain Abu Raed* on 09/04/2019. The table below shows the demographic information for this group. Although participants are the same as above, their pseudonyms are different to reflect the film and focus group they attended; however, the participant numbers are the same.

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Education Level	Marital Status	Occupation	Social Class	Religion	Tribal Affiliation
CAR-1F-1.2	47	Female	PhD	Married	School Principal	Unassigned	Christian	Unassigned
CAR-2F-1.2	24	Female	MA	Single	Teacher	Middle Class	Muslim	Assigned
CAR-3F-1.2	24	Female	MA	Single	Teacher	Unassigned	Muslim	Unassigned

[80] Participants' pseudonyms contain reference to the film ('LA' for *Lissa Aisha;* 'CAR' for *Captain Abu Raed;* and 'WMS' for *When Monaliza Smiled*) + participant number and gender initial + focus group number

[81] Details of choosing follow-up interviews as a data collection instrument are provided in the next section

CAR-4F-1.2	26	Female	MA	Married	Teacher	Unassigned	Muslim	Assigned
CAR-6M-1.2	24	Male	MA	Single	Teacher	Middle Class	Muslim	Assigned
CAR-7M-1.2	25	Male	MA	Single	Teacher	Middle Class	Muslim	Assigned
CAR-8F-1.2	33	Female	MA	Single	Teacher	Middle Class	Muslim	Unassigned
CAR-9F-1.2	42	Female	PhD	Married	Lecturer	Middle Class	Muslim	Unassigned

Table 3: FG1.2 Captain Abu Raed

Focus Group 1.3 (FG1.3) – Consisted of 7 participants: 5 females and 2 males; also same as above with different pseudonyms, excluding 1F, 8F and 10F who could not attend. They watched and discussed *When Monaliza Smiled* on 30/04/2019. Table 4 below shows the demographic information for this group.

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Education Level	Marital Status	Occupation	Social Class	Religion	Tribal Affiliation
WMS-2F-1.3	24	Female	MA	Single	Teacher	Middle Class	Muslim	Assigned
WMS-3F-1.3	24	Female	MA	Single	Teacher	Unassigned	Muslim	Unassigned
WMS-4F-1.3	26	Female	MA	Married	Teacher	Unassigned	Muslim	Assigned
WMS-5F-1.3	30	Female	MA	Married	Teacher	Unassigned	Muslim	Unassigned
WMS-6M-1.3	24	Male	MA	Single	Teacher	Middle Class	Muslim	Assigned
WMS-7M-1.3	25	Male	MA	Single	Teacher	Middle Class	Muslim	Assigned
WMS-9M-1.3	42	Female	PhD	Married	Lecturer	Middle Class	Muslim	Unassigned

Table 4: FG1.3 When Monaliza Smiled

Focus Group 2 (FG2) – Consisted of 5 male participants. All of them were undergraduate students in the medical field. They watched only one film, *Lissa Aisha* on 10/04/2019. Table 5, below, demonstrates their demographics.

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Education Level	Marital Status	Occupation	Social Class	Religion	Tribal Affiliation
LA-11M-2	19	Male	BA	Single	Student	Middle Class	Muslim	Assigned
LA-12M-2	19	Male	BA	Single	Student	Middle Class	Muslim	Assigned
LA-13M-2	18	Male	BA	Single	Student	Unassigned	Muslim	Unassigned
LA-14M-2	18	Male	BA	Single	Student	Unassigned	Muslim	Unassigned
LA-15M-2	21	Male	BA	Single	Student	Middle Class	Muslim	Unassigned

Table 5: FG2 Demographics

Focus Group 3 (FG3) – This group consisted of 4 male students from the Theatre Department. They are all undergraduate students, and one of them is completing his PhD in Criminology as well. This is the only undergraduate students' group with all members having an occupation. The film they watched was *When Monaliza Smiled* on 17/04/2019. Their demographics are presented in Table 6.

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Education Level	Marital Status	Occupation	Social Class	Religion	Tribal Affiliation
WMS-19M-3	31	Male	BA and PhD	Single	Actor/Director/Writer	Unassigned	Muslim	Assigned
WMS-20M-3	25	Male	BA	Single	Retail Business	Middle Class	Muslim	Assigned
WMS-21M-3	21	Male	BA	Married	Businessman	Middle Class	Muslim	Assigned
WMS-22M-3	25	Male	BA	Single	Businessman	Middle Class	Muslim	Assigned

Table 6: FG3 Demographics

Focus Group 4 (FG4) – This groups consisted of 10 females who watched and discussed *Lissa Aisha* on 17/04/2019. They are all undergraduate students from different disciplines. Following are their demographics.

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Education Level	Marital Status	Occupation	Social Class	Religion	Tribal Affiliation
LA-28F-4	18	Female	BA	Single	Student	Unassigned	Muslim	Unassigned
LA-29F-4	18	Female	BA	Single	Student	Unassigned	Muslim	Assigned
LA-30F-4	18	Female	BA	Single	Student	Middle Class	Muslim	Unassigned
LA-31F-4	18	Female	BA	Single	Student	Middle Class	Muslim	Unassigned
LA-32F-4	18	Female	BA	Single	Student	Unassigned	Muslim	Assigned
LA-33F-4	19	Female	BA	Single	Student	Middle Class	Muslim	Assigned
LA-34F-4	19	Female	BA	Single	Student	Middle Class	Muslim	Assigned
LA-35F-4	20	Female	BA	Single	Student	Middle Class	Muslim	Assigned
LA-36F-4	22	Female	BA	Single	Student	Middle Class	Muslim	Unassigned
LA-37F-4	20	Female	BA	Single	Student	Middle Class	Muslim	Unassigned

Table 7: FG4 Demographics

Focus Group 5 (FG5) – The group consisted of 5 male participants. They are all undergraduate students in the History Department. They watched and discussed *Captain Abu Raed* on 24/04/2019. Following are their demographics in Table 8.

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Education Level	Marital Status	Occupation	Social Class	Religion	Tribal Affiliation
CAR-23M-5	19	Male	BA	Single	Student	Unassigned	Muslim	Assigned
CAR-24M-5	21	Male	BA	Single	Student	Middle Class	Muslim	Unassigned
CAR-25M-5	24	Male	BA	Single	Customer services	Middle Class	Muslim	Assigned
CAR-26M-5	21	Male	BA	Single	Student	Middle Class	Muslim	Assigned
CAR-27M-5	20	Male	BA	Single	Student	Unassigned	Muslim	Assigned

Table 8: FG5 Demographics

Focus Group 6 (FG6) – Consisted of 4 female participants from the Centre for Women's Studies. Three of them are completing MA degrees in Women's Studies, while one of them completed her MA in Women Studies and is now completing her PhD in Education, but she insisted she joins this group because of the shared background. These women watched and discussed *When Monaliza Smiled* on 25/04/2019. WMS-38F-6 had to leave at the beginning of the discussion for an emergency. Below are their demographic information.

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Education Level	Marital Status	Occupation	Social Class	Religion	Tribal Affiliation
WMS-38F-6	38	Female	MA	Married	Dean Assistant	Middle Class	Christian	Unassigned
WMS-39F-6	29	Female	PhD	Married	Student	Middle Class	Muslim	Unassigned
WMS-40F-6	23	Female	MA	Single	Research Assistant	Middle Class	Christian	Assigned
WMS-41F-6	25	Female	MA	Single	Research Assistant	Middle Class	Muslim	Unassigned

Table 9: FG6 Demographics

Focus Group 7 (FG7) – Consisted of 4 female participants, all of which are postgraduate students at the Faculty of Educational Science. In this session 1F from FGs 1.1 and 1.2 participated as well. They watched and discussed *Captain Abu Raed* on 01/05/2019. Below are their demographics.

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Education Level	Marital Status	Occupation	Social Class	Religion	Tribal Affiliation
CAR-1F-7	47	Female	PhD	Married	School Principal	Unassigned	Christian	Unassigned
CAR-16F-7	27	Female	MA	Single	Student	Middle Class	Muslim	Unassigned
CAR-17F-7	31	Female	MA	Married	Teacher	Middle Class	Muslim	Assigned

CAR-18F-7	39	Female	MA	Married	Teacher	Middle Class	Muslim	Assigned

Table 10: FG7 Demographics

Follow-up Interview Participants[82] – The interview participants were all part of focus groups. 1F, 6M and 7M participated in FGs 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 and 7, while 39F participated in FG6. The dates of their interviews were 16/04/2019, 30/04/2019, 30/04/2019, and 23/7/2019 respectively. Their demographics are repeated below in Table 11 with all other pseudonyms presented.

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Education Level	Marital Status	Occupation	Social Class	Religion	Tribal Affiliation	Focus Groups Attended	Other Pseudonyms given to Participant
FI-1F	47	Female	PhD	Married	School Principal	Unassigned	Christian	Unassigned	FGs 1.1; 1.2; 7	LA-1F-1.1; CAR-1F-1.2; CAR-1F-7
FI-6M	24	Male	MA	Single	Teacher	Middle Class	Muslim	Assigned	FGs 1.1; 1.2; 1.3	LA-6M-1.1; CAR-6M-1.2; WMS-6M-1.3
FI-7M	25	Male	MA	Single	Teacher	Middle Class	Muslim	Assigned	FGs 1.1; 1.2; 1.3	LA-6M-1.1; CAR-6M-1.2; WMS-6M-1.3
FI-39F	29	Female	PhD	Married	Student	Middle Class	Muslim	Unassigned	FG6	WMS-39F-6

Table 11: Interview Participants Demographics

4.5 Data Collection Instruments/ Tools

Triangulation is vital to the validity of the data: "The principle pertains to the goal of seeking at least three ways of verifying or corroborating a procedure, piece of data, or finding" (Yin, 2016, p. 87). Moreover, according to Yin "over the years the main attention to triangulation has involved the triangulation among data sources (data triangulation)" (2016, p. 87). In empirical audience reception research, focus group interviews have been notably widely used (e.g. Bore, 2012; Lunt & Livingstone, 1996; Morley, 1980); however, their use is usually in conjunction with other complementary instruments of data collection, such as questionnaires and individual interviews (Hansen & Machin, 2013). Thus, I employed the triangulation of data sources, where I collected three types of data; focus group interviews (section 4.5.2), follow-up interviews for further insights (section 4.5.3), and these were accompanied by field notes that made it possible to analyse and understand certain moments in the discussions. I also employed an additional data collection instrument: a Facebook poll (section 4.5.1), in order to

[82] Pseudonyms for follow-up interview participants are as follows: FI = Follow-up Interview + participant number and gender initial

comment on watching Jordanian films among Jordanian audiences beyond the fieldwork participants. These instruments of data collection are explained further later in this section.

The ethical considerations of this research included providing each participant with a consent form before any film screening and focus group session[83]. The consent form introduced the participants to the study they were voluntarily participating in, assured them that they could choose not to resume participation at any point during the session, that recording and videotaping were contingent on their approval, and that their names will remain anonymous during all stages of conducting and writing this research. Participants were also assured that the research data is protected in accordance with Newcastle University data protection rules and that I am the only one capable of accessing the project raw data including videos and recordings. Following is a detailed account for the use of each data collection instrument.

4.5.1 Facebook poll

In order to generate responses to Jordanian films and to ascertain their popularity among Jordanian audiences, on March 5th, 2019 I created a Facebook poll on a Jordanian Facebook public group called "POLL Only". The group had 11000 members at that time; however, responses to my poll came from 156 people (67.7% females and 32.2% males). The respondents were all Jordanians. There were 67 comments in the comment section generated by 20 respondents, while the others only answered the Yes/No section of the poll. The question asked in this poll was "Have you ever watched a Jordanian film?" Although responses came from a limited number of Jordanians[84], this question gave me an idea about watching Jordanian films in the Jordanian context, which entailed Jordanian cinema is not popular among the Jordanian audiences participating in this study[85]. The following sections present the data collection instruments utilised in the field.

4.5.2 Focus groups

Focus group interviews generate rich and sensitive data on audience-media relationships and their dynamics (Hansen & Machin, 2013). They also "offer an important opportunity to explore issues relevant to the person-in-context" (Wilkinson, 1998, p.112). According to Flick (2014), a group discussion is crucial when the study concerns perceptions and attitudes regarding social topics. Since this study concerns audience responses to gender regimes

[83] Please refer to Appendix 3 for a sample of the consent form.
[84] Thus, this is not generalizable.
[85] The popularity of Jordanian cinema is emphasized further in Chapters 5 and 6.

represented in contemporary Jordanian cinema from the perspective of Jordanians in higher education, the data was primarily collected through focus group discussions. Due to the exploratory qualitative nature of this study, my approach to the focus groups was less structured with a semi-structured interview guide[86] involving open-ended questions to allow for the flow of responses with minimal influence from the researcher (see Morgan, 1997). The questions primarily aimed at exploring participants' responses to gender in the selected contemporary Jordanian films. Discussions within groups brought many perspectives into the conversation; thus, the scope of each discussion revealed participants' perceptions regarding the issue under study.

The details of conducting the focus group interviews were as follows. As the location of the field study was the University of Jordan, I requested space for conducting the focus group interviews and film screenings (e.g., a classroom with equipment to screen a film). This was not an issue; as mentioned earlier some of the professors through which the participants were recruited agreed to give their class time and space to conduct the screening and focus group discussion for their respective group. In other instances, the professors and their faculties helped in providing space, such as classrooms and meeting rooms equipped with a data projector and speakers which enabled screening the films.

According to Morgan (1997) the most suitable number of focus groups for a research project is three to five in order to reach data saturation. However, in order to ensure data triangulation and saturation three focus groups were conducted for each of the three films (Yin, 2016; Lunt & Livingstone, 1996). Moreover, according to Kubey (1996), as audience interpretations and understandings of media texts can change over time to become more elaborate, exaggerated, or muted, he explains, there should not be a delay between the film screenings and related discussions. Thus, there were nine focus groups; each film was screened at the beginning of the session followed by a focus group discussion. Although Morgan (1997, p.43) explains that the number of participants in focus groups is better at 6-10, because "below 6, it may be difficult to sustain a discussion; above 10, it may be difficult to control one," the number of participants in each group was between 4-10. Although some sessions included only four participants, I believe the intimacy of a small group allowed some participants to discuss more, and in the case of the current study it was not difficult to sustain the discussion in groups of less than six participants. The details of the composition of the focus group interviews were as follows:

[86] Kindly refer to Appendix 1 for a sample of the FG interview guide

Focus Group #	Film	Length of Session	Date of Meeting	Location of Meeting	Number of Participants	Gender of Participants	Group Activities
FG1.1	*Lissa Aisha*	4-8pm	02/04/2019	Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Jordan	Ten	Mixed	Film Screening + Discussion
FG1.2	*Captain Abu Raed*	4-8pm	09/04/2019	Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Jordan	Eight	Mixed	Film Screening + Discussion
FG1.3	*When Monaliza Smiled*	4-8pm	30/04/2019	Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Jordan	Seven	Mixed	Film Screening + Discussion
FG2	*Lissa Aisha*	12:30-3:30pm	10/04/2019	Faculty of Art and Design, University of Jordan	Five	All Males	Film Screening + Discussion
FG3	*When Monaliza Smiled*	9am-12:30pm	17/04/2019	Faculty of Art and Design, University of Jordan	Four	All Males	Film Screening + Discussion
FG4	*Lissa Aisha*	12:30-3:30pm	17/04/2019	Faculty of Art and Design, University of Jordan	Ten	All Females	Film Screening + Discussion
FG5	*Captain Abu Raed*	11am-2pm	24/04/2019	Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Jordan	Five	All Males	Film Screening + Discussion
FG6	*When Monaliza Smiled*	1:30-6:15pm	25/04/2019	Centre for Women's Studies, University of Jordan	Four	All Females	Film Screening + Discussion
FG7	*Captain Abu Raed*	4-8pm	01/05/2019	Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Jordan	Four	All Females	Film Screening + Discussion

Table 12: Details of the study's focus groups

The focus group interviews were all audio recorded using an audio recording device and videotaped using a digital camera; this was all done after receiving consent from participants. A vital aspect of focus group discussions is non-verbal interactions and communication; these can be captured using videotaping (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). Videotaping allowed more access to details of the discussion like body language and facial expressions, which were important for accurately presenting the participants' reception of gender regime representations in the films. It was also vital for the transcription phase of the data analysis procedures discussed in the following section, as it made it easier to identify speakers in the focus group discussion. One of the limitations, however, of using videotaping is that participants may feel uncomfortable disclosing their perceptions due to camera presence. However, the positioning of the camera allowed participants to feel more comfortable in the setting. Besides, as mentioned earlier, participants were assured that videotaping (and audio recordings for that matter) were solely for research purposes and that their identities shall not be disclosed in the research. Moreover, as explained earlier, I obtained consent from all participants to record and videotape the sessions. After each focus group I identified possible candidates for follow-up interviews, these are detailed below.

4.5.3 Follow-up interviews

Depending on the progress of the focus group interviews, I conducted follow-up interviews with four participants[87], asking for further information about their reception of gender regime representations in the films they watched. The use of follow-up interviews as an instrument to collect data gave participants a chance to express their opinions in more depth, as I felt some participants did not get a chance to express their full opinion through the discussion since interruptions usually occur (Morgan, 1997). Further, with the use of follow-up interviews these participants had an individual space to voice their opinions with no influence from any group members or the researcher. This also allowed for the collection of individual responses as well as collective ones. Three of the interviews took place at the office of a professor at the Faculty of Educational Sciences, while one took place while having a walk with the participant right after her focus group[88]. The consent for these interviews was recorded verbally at the

[87] Although three additional participants expressed interest to participate in follow-up interviews, they apologised last minute and could not reschedule due to their busy schedules.

[88] This participant approached me after her focus group session and had some further ideas to discuss. I asked if I could record her, and she agreed. I informed her that this was going to be used as a follow-up interview.

beginning of each[89]. Finally, I coupled focus groups and follow-up interviews with another instrument which was writing field notes; I documented these notes in a notebook during and after each session to aid the focus groups and interviews analysis.

4.6 Data Analysis Procedures

In qualitative research, data analysis decisions are a requirement that should inform, and be informed by, the rest of the study design (Maxwell, 2013). Here, I aim to explain in detail the process I followed to analyse my data, beginning with the use of NVivo software (section 4.6.1), transcription and explaining throughout the coding procedure (section 4.6.2), and thematic analysis decisions (section 4.6.3), I also add a brief section on measures I took to account for nuances in the audience responses that were not possible to capture with the data analysis software alone (section 4.6.4). Coffey and Atkinson (1996) insist that data collection and data analysis should occur simultaneously. Moreover, Maxwell (2013, p. 104) stresses this idea as well; he states: "the experienced qualitative researcher begins data analysis immediately after finishing the first interview or observation, and continues to analyze the data as long as he or she is working on the research." In light of that, my data analysis procedures were carried after the first focus group interview and continued until the final stage of my research. The following sections provide the details of my data analysis procedures.

4.6.1 NVivo qualitative data analysis software

Qualitative data analysis software are tools that could assist qualitative researchers in the data analysis procedure. Traditionally, qualitative data coding was done by hand, through the use of coloured pens to categorize the transcribed data, for example, looking for different phrases, words, and events in the interview material and colour coding them. Alternatively, researchers used (and some still do) word processors for coding data through highlighting recurrent phrases or words with different colours to create patterns of codes (Marshall & Rossman, 1990; Miles & Huberman, 1994). This task is usually time-consuming, cluttering, and vague; therefore, qualitative data analysis software could enhance the quality of research (AlYahmady & Alabri, 2013). As Bazeley and Jackson (2013, p. 2) put it, "The computer's capacity for recording, sorting, matching and linking can be harnessed by researchers to assist in answering their research questions from the data, without losing access to the source data or contexts from which the data have come." The use of qualitative data analysis software is

[89] For further details of the dates and participants of these interviews please refer to Table 11: Interview Participants Demographics in the previous section.

believed to be efficient and allow more time to focus on the meaning of the data rather than the managing of the data (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013).

To begin my data analysis process, I imported the data I collected from my fieldwork (i.e. focus group recordings and follow-up interviews) into NVivo software. This software ensured the data was managed and stored in a safe place. It also made the process of transcribing and translating the data less demanding. Likewise, it was very effective for coding, which refers to the "process of labelling and categorizing data" (Flick, 2014, p. 373). Coding and categorizing of data were developed inductively during a thematic analysis process contingent on responses from participants as discussed later in this chapter. For example, after importing the focus groups recordings and videos into the software, transcribing and translating them, I was able to group participants' responses under parent and child nodes (codes), which later aided in the coding and creating thematic networks for the thematic analysis, as discussed later in section 4.6.3. The software also made it easier to transcribe the data, as I was able to loop a certain part of the video and easily go back and forth in the video.

4.6.2 Transcription and coding

The first step in dealing with the data generated from focus group interviews, follow-up interviews, and field notes was transcription. As mentioned earlier, the data was uploaded to NVivo software to ease the transcription and coding processes. Moreover, the focus group discussions and follow-up interviews were conducted in the native language of the participants, Arabic language. Due to my fluency in both Arabic and English, I translated and transcribed the data in English for use in this research. As data analysis is an ongoing process, throughout listening to the interview materials in the transcription process I began developing tentative ideas about categorization and coding through writing notes and memos, a feature provided by NVivo software (Maxwell, 2013).

As this was my first time using NVivo software for a project, it was challenging yet especially helpful in coding, where in some instances the coding, translation, and transcription occurred simultaneously. I coded the part of the video that I wanted to translate and transcribe and was able to transcribe just that part in order to save time. The software made it easier to retrieve information, it linked the transcription to the part of the video where the words were spoken. Once the transcription and coding stages were over, I began thematically analysing the data. Following is an account of my exact thematic data analysis procedures as well as more information about coding.

4.6.3 Inductive thematic analysis and coding

Throughout the process of transcribing and translating, and coding the data collected, I began the process of data analysis. I chose to conduct an inductive thematic analysis, where the themes emerged from the data rather than being deductively identified from pre-set codes emerging from previous literature (Fereday & Muri-Cochrane, 2006). Thematic analysis is the process by which the researcher searches for and identifies themes that are important for answering the research questions, through a thorough reading and re-reading of the data, to recognize patterns and themes within the data and categorize them for analysis (Daly, Kellehear, & Gliksman, 1997; Rice & Ezzy, 1999; Fereday & Muri-Cochrane, 2006). The thematic data analysis approach in this study is informed mainly by Attride-Stirling's (2001) thematic networks approach to qualitative data. According to her (2001, p. 387), "Thematic analyses seek to unearth the themes salient in a text at different levels, and thematic networks aim to facilitate the structuring and depiction of these themes." However, thematic networks do not in themselves analyse the data (as discussed later); therefore, the data analysis process in this research involved six stages: coding the material, identifying themes, constructing thematic networks, describing and exploring the thematic networks, summarizing the thematic networks, and interpreting patterns (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

Before constructing the thematic networks, some steps were taken under consideration: coding the data and identifying the themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001, pp. 390-391). As a first step I formulated a coding framework based on recurrent issues manifested in the data. As the coding and analysis of qualitative data, especially interview transcripts, is currently "most powerfully done with the help of electronic text analysis software" (Hansen & Machin, 2013, p. 249), this step was completed with the use of NVivo qualitative data analysis software. In order to code I pulled apart the data, reading over the transcripts and assigning the participants' speech to nodes that were used to identify recurring themes, again with the help of NVivo. The nodes were reviewed then three levels of nodes were created, parent nodes, child nodes (1), and another layer of child nodes (2) that came under the first ones. Through doing this the nodes (codes) were classified into basic (child nodes 1), organizing (child nodes 2), and global themes (parent nodes) to create non-hierarchal web-like thematic networks as indicated in the following stage (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

Thematic networks are web-like networks that organize qualitative data to produce a thematic analysis through breaking up text and summarising its main themes and significant ideas (Attride-Stirling, 2001). There are three types of themes and coding strategies (stages)

literature suggests are useful for thematic analysis, as well as for creating thematic networks to assist in analysing the data (Attride-Stirling, 2001 p. 388; Kendall, 1999; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009, Simon, 2011; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Following is an explanation of the three types or stages I utilised for thematically organizing my data for analysis, relying mainly on Attride-Stirling's (2001, p. 288-289) account of thematic analysis and networks. Basic Themes: "the most basic themes or smallest units identified from the raw data that the researcher attaches to codes. These shed light on patterns, recurring words, phrases, or events that will contribute to creating organizing themes. This process is usually referred to as open coding." To do this I went over the transcribed data and created codes (nodes) for the preliminary stage of coding, which included looking at patterns in responses, interesting moments in data, and relevant discussions of gender representations in the films. Organizing Themes:

> these are categories that organize the basic themes into clusters, where similar basic themes or codes are grouped under an organizing theme. They reveal more of what is going on in the data and organize it to create global themes. Thus, a group of basic themes constitute an organizing theme, and a group of organizing themes constitute a global theme. This process is usually referred to as axial coding.

In this process I reviewed my codes (nodes) and began looking into similar themes by going back and forth reading the references (transcribed words) that were attached to these codes; I grouped similar codes under another code (node). This created two levels of nodes parent nodes (which then became child nodes 1 in the next stage) and child nodes (which then became child nodes 2 in the next stage). Global Themes:

> these themes are derived from funnelling down the organizing themes. Each set of organizing themes creates a global theme by which the researcher interprets the data and reaches suitable findings. Global themes present an argument derived from pulling apart and reconstructing the data. Thus, these themes give the researcher taxonomies of detailed information about the data to help in constructing an interpretation and presenting the results and findings of the study. This process is usually referred to as selective coding.

In this process I reviewed the organizing themes (the parent nodes in the previous stage which here became child nodes 1) and the references attached to them looking for intersections in the data. I then grouped intersecting organizing themes under a parent node which became the highest level of nodes, the global themes.

Attride-Stirling (2001, p. 289) states “each global theme is the core of a thematic network; therefore, an analysis may result in more than one thematic network.” Following is an illustration of the structure of such a thematic network:

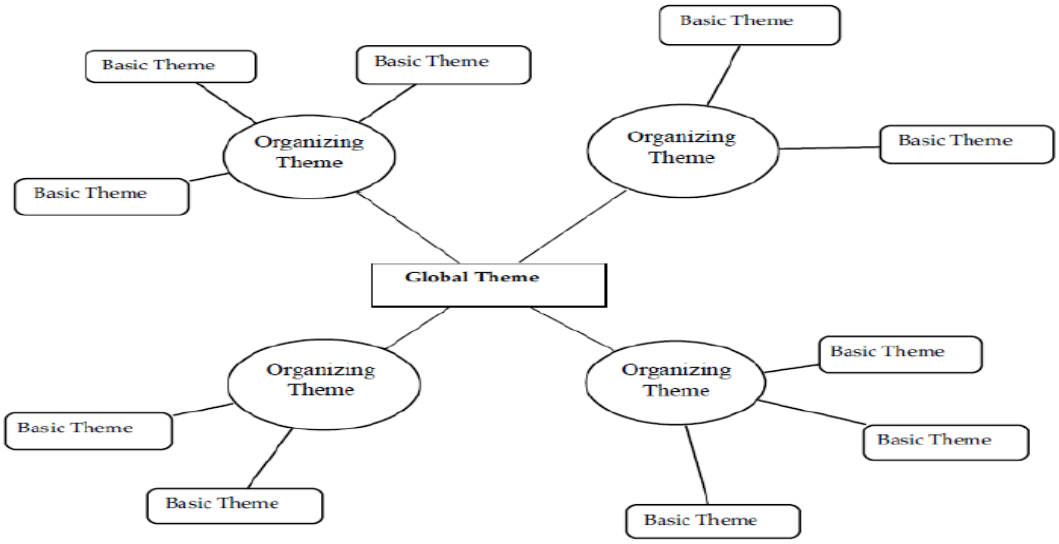


Figure 4. Structure of a thematic network (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 388)

A thematic organization of the data by creating thematic networks does not necessarily analyse the data; however, it serves as a tool to assist the researcher in interpreting the data and gives the reader a deeper understanding of this interpretation (Attride-Stirling, 2001). The following stages/steps were therefore an insurance of a fair analysis of the data.

After constructing the thematic networks, I employed the following three steps to ensure a coherent analysis of the data; describing and exploring the networks, summarizing the thematic networks, and interpreting patterns (Attride-Stirling, 2001, pp. 393-394). I began by printing the codebook from NVivo and reviewing the global themes (parent nodes) and their respective layers manually. I then started analysing the data by describing each thematic network drawing from examples of actual statements from participants, and exploring the underlying patterns beginning to emerge from the data. The next stage was summarizing the networks by presenting main themes and patterns emerging from the exploration and description stage that distinguished and characterized each network. Finally, the last stage of the thematic analysis was interpreting patterns, where I brought together the summaries of all the networks and interpreted the patterns found while comparing the data and analysing it in light of theoretical implications of previous literature concerning audience reception theory, Jordanian cinema, gender regimes theoretical framework, and literature consulted for this study. This process aided in answering the research questions and presenting the research findings and their

analyses. Figure 5 below is a sample of the thematic networks I created from my fieldwork data influenced by Attride-Stirling (2001):

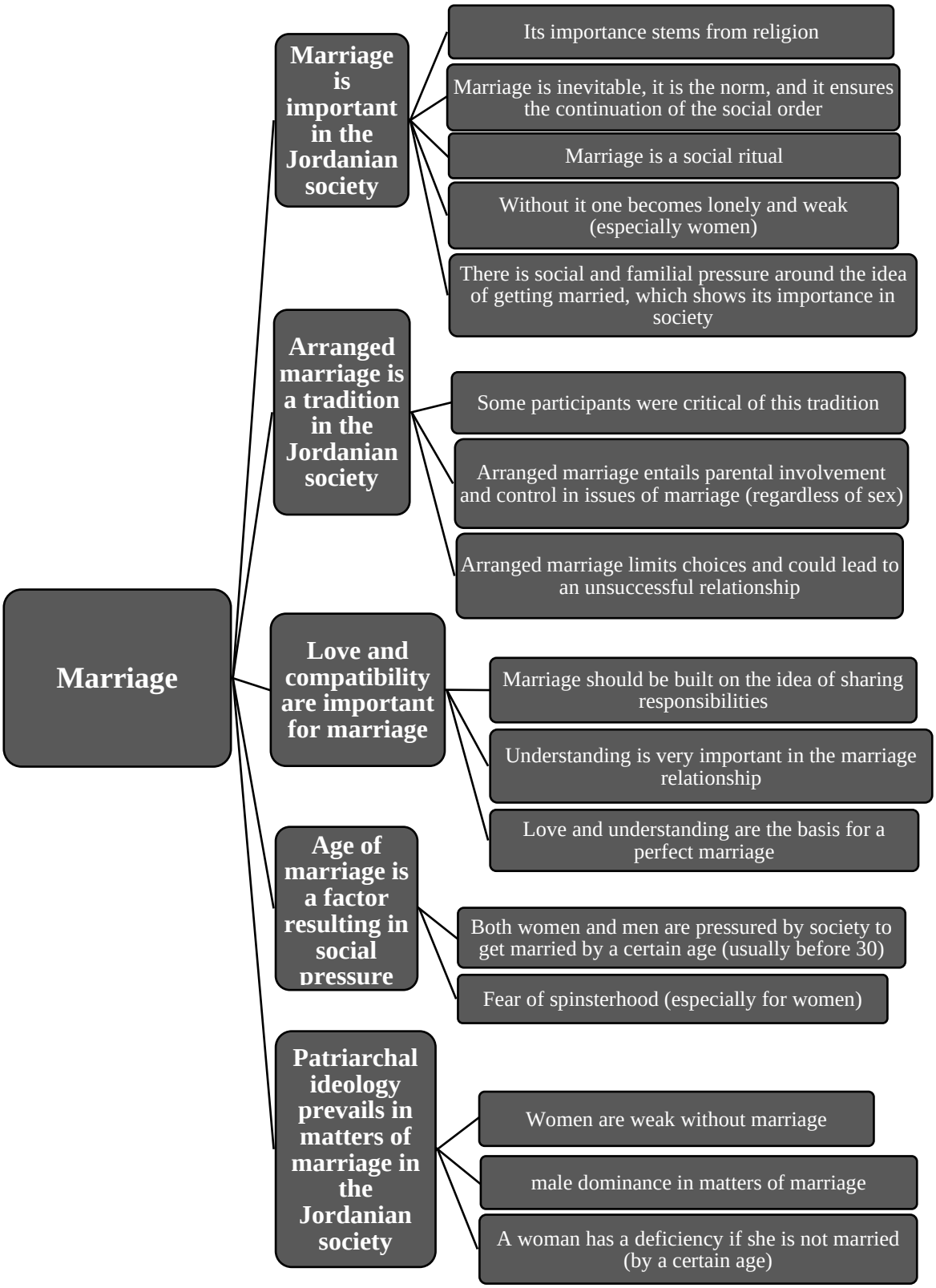


Figure 5. Data analysis thematic network (sample)

4.6.4 A note on extra measures taken to account for nuances in audience responses

In addition to manually creating thematic networks from the coded material and interpreting patterns in the themes rendered from the data, in my analysis of the data I did not strictly rely on NVivo data analysis software. Although this software is very helpful in capturing verbal language and interactions it is limited in regards to capturing the unsaid – body language, interruptions, facial expressions etc... – which may at times render descriptive results. Rather, in order to account for the sensitivity of the subject of gender in a conservative Jordanian society and the depth of audience reception I had to dive deep into the responses of the audience members. Through watching and re-watching the recorded videos of the focus groups and follow-up interviews, the process involved reading into the interactions of audience members by taking notes that account for the unsaid, the silences, interruptions, facial expressions, body language, and interactions within the conversations, which constituted a major part of the data analysis and enriched the discussion in Chapter 6. Revisiting the videos throughout the analysis and writing processes was crucial to underpin nuances in the audience responses.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter introduced the methodological framework adopted in this study, which is a qualitative field-based study with human participants. Rationales for the choice of corpus and setting and sampling are provided. In addition, how I conducted the pilot study to test my methodology and research question is also explained. The detailed demographics of the study participants are also presented in this chapter. Moreover, the chapter discussed the use of focus groups as a primary data collection method, coupled with follow-up interviews and field notes. The data analysis procedures – which included the use of NVivo data analysis software to manage the data, translation, transcription, coding, inductive thematic analysis, and measures to enhance the analysis that involved notetaking while watching the recorded data – are all presented in this chapter, along with a sample thematic network showing how the global theme ‘marriage’ came into being. The next chapters (5 and 6) present the study findings and their respective analysis.

Chapter 5. Jordanian Cinema and Representations of Gender Regimes

5.0 Introduction

This chapter is concerned with two main aspects, Jordanian cinema and representations of gender regimes in this cinema. In the first section of the chapter, I trace the development of Jordanian cinema ever since the first film made in Jordan, *Struggle in Jerash* (Sera'a fi Jerash 1957), until current times. I then move on to provide an analysis for the three films chosen for this study: *Captain Abu Raed* (Amin Matalqa, 2007), *When Monaliza Smiled* (Fadi Haddad, 2012), and *Lissa Aisha* (Asma Bsieso, 2016), informed by the gender regimes theoretical framework developed for the current study as well as the context of the study[90]. The film analysis provided in this chapter guides the analysis/interpretation of the study's fieldwork/audience reception findings.

5.1 Jordanian Cinema

The art of cinema began using primitive equipment in the 1890s almost simultaneously in France, Germany, the United States and Great Britain (Nowell-Smith, 1996). However, it was not introduced in Jordan until 1929 when the first silent cinema house was established in Amman. Five years after its establishment it was closed as sound cinema was introduced in 1934 and the first sound cinema house, Petra, was established in Amman. Until 1940 Petra was the only cinema house in Jordan; however, Emara cinema was established in that period as a summer cinema house where audiences attended film screenings on a building rooftop. The owners of this cinema then decided to build an indoor cinema that works all year-round. In 1946, two more cinema houses launched in Amman. Moreover, in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s many cinema houses appeared in Amman; however, cinema houses were not confined to Amman. In 1941, Petra cinema house was established in Irbid, it began as a summer cinema on a rooftop then it was turned into a year-round cinema, and in 1977 there were six cinemas in Irbid. Moreover, AlMafraq, AlZaraqa, AlSalt, and AlAqaba along with other Jordanian cities had established cinemas as well, and in 1980 there were around 70 commercial cinema houses around Jordan. However, cinema theatres had old equipment and while in most of the Arab world they had a system for film screenings, in Jordan films used to be screened once and if the turnover was good on the first screening the film would be screened more. There was no clear

[90] Chapters 2 and 3, respectively.

system as it depended on the owners and employees of the cinema house to decide how to screen films (Abu Ghanimeh, 1987; Hassan, 2019).

American films were the most popular at the beginning of the introduction of cinema in Jordan; these included the following genres: western films, gangster films, superhero films (Flash Gordon films, Zorro, Tarzan and Superman) as well as historical films. Moreover, Egyptian films were also very popular especially musicals, comedies and dramas. In the 1980s most film screenings were for commercial films including, Arabic films, mostly Egyptian, Indian films, Karate films, American films of various genres, Italian, French, Greek, Asian horror films, pornographic German and Danish films, Mexican films, and some Russian films distributed by well-known American companies (Abu Ghanimeh, 1987). American films shown in these cinemas used to be supplied from Palestine, who supplied their films from Syria and Lebanon; however, after the Palestinian Nakba (Israeli occupation) in 1948 Jordan began supplying films directly from Lebanon, where American film distribution companies were established. As for Arabic films they used to be supplied directly from Egypt or from Egyptian film distribution companies in Lebanon (Abu Ghanimeh, 1987). Moreover, in a study concerning cinema-going habits of Jordanian individuals, Nahar Alwikhyan (1996) found that most cinema-goers preferred American films more than any other type of films. His random sample consisted of 200 cinema-goers in 6 cinemas in Jordan for 9 days; he found that the number of men attending cinema screenings was considerably larger than that of women, 75% and 25% respectively. He claims the reason for the low representation of women in cinema houses is their social situation which affects their freedom of mobility (Alwikhyan, 1996).

It is interesting to note that at the beginning of the introduction of cinema in Jordan, and "for a long time", only males could attend, until some cinema houses decided to allocate a day for women and another for families. After some time, families and women were allocated a certain seating area, while men had another (Abu Ghanimeh, 1987). In the 1980s all forms of segregation ended in Jordanian cinemas. However, some cinemas in Jordan closed in the 1980s due to the increase of taxes on imported films and the increased arbitrary competition between cinema theatres. Moreover, with the spread of television and VCR players, people's film consumption was mostly confined to the home, something that affected the tradition of cinema going (Abu Ghanimeh, 1987).

As for the situation of Jordanian film directors, they did not, and still do not, find enough support or funding to complete their projects in Jordan (Abu Ghanimeh, 1987; Hassan, 2019). Therefore, some of them settled to work in government jobs as part of Jordanian TV where they

became producers, directors, or technicians for TV programs and news. Another group found their success as film directors outside Jordan, but many of them remained unknown locally (Abu Ghanimeh, 1987; Hassan, 2019). Moreover, female film directors faced many challenges. According to the Jordanian female director Khadija Abu Ali in an interview with Abu Ghanimeh (1987), the reasons for the small number of Jordanian and Arab female directors include the following: 1. Cinema was a new phenomenon in the Arab world and jobs in the industry were occupied by men; it was not socially acceptable for women to work in the industry; 2. Women in Jordan and the Arab world entered the workforce in a fairly recent time; in the 1950s and 1960s women were confined to certain jobs such as embroidery and sewing; 3. Although women entered the workforce it was still socially doubted they were capable of creative and leadership roles (Abu Ghanimeh, 1987). Recently female directors and filmmakers have been facing sexism issues in the male dominated industry, where sometimes they are mistakenly thought to be the make-up artists or hairdressers. It is also claimed that the challenge of the long working hours, which many Jordanian families do not accept, hinders women from continuing in the film industry (Vishwanath, 2018).

Traditions, the patriarchal social structure, gender norms, and social challenges limited women's opportunities and did not give them a chance to develop these skills; even when they rebelled against society and developed their skills their home responsibilities stood in the way of their development. However, recently women have been rising more as film directors and their contribution to the film industry in Jordan is crucial as they shed light on significant social issues and enrich the industry. Still female filmmakers and directors need more support and representation in the Jordanian film industry (Hassan, 2019).

Jordanian cinematic productions began in three stages. The first stage came into being with the Palestinian migration to Jordan in 1948, where Palestinian filmmakers attempted to create cinematic productions in Jordan. The second stage was when the Jordanian Media Ministry established the Department of Cinema and Photography in 1965, which was closed in 1970. The third stage was when the Jordanian TV was established in 1967, as well as the Jordanian Cinema Club in 1979. Jordanian TV established a department for cinema and photography, but their productions were concerned with documentary films rather than narrative films. The experience of narrative filmmaking did not lead to a development in the size or the quality of Jordanian cinema, while documentary filmmaking was more popular and gained its support from the Jordanian TV. Funding has been the main challenge facing narrative film productions until today (Abu Ghanimeh, 1987; Potter, 2015; Hassan, 2019).

Some of the most notable early Jordanian feature narrative films are; *Struggle in Jerash* (*Sera' fi Jerash*, Wasif Alsheikh Yassin 1957) which is the first ever Jordanian film; *My Beloved Country* (*Watani Habibi*, Abdullah Ka'wash 1964); *Storm on Petra* (*Asefa ala Albatra'a*, Farouq Ajrama 1965); *The Snake* (*Alafa'a*, Jalal Ta'ma 1971); *The Twelfth Son* (*Alibn Althani Ashar*, Jalal Ta'ma 1972); *An Oriental Story* (*Hekaya Sharqiya*, Najdat Anzour 1991); as well as many short films and documentaries produced either by individuals or by the Jordanian TV and the Jordanian Cinema Club (Abu Ghanimeh, 1987; Film.jo, 2020). Both *Struggle in Jerash*[91] and *My Beloved Country*[92] were screened in Jordanian cinemas. However, although audiences were excited to support their national products, they were disappointed as the films were of poor technical qualities and narrative techniques (Abu Ghanimeh, 1987). As for the rest of the previous films there is no record of cinema screenings for them. Meanwhile, there has been an undeniable wish in Jordan for films that discuss social, political, and real-life issues and situations, something Arab commercial cinema does not usually care for (Abu Ghanimeh, 1987; Hassan, 2019). Looking at some Jordanian films, especially those chosen for this study, one can see representations of social issues, including poverty, social class, child labour, gender issues and many other issues which constitute major parts of the films.

Jordanian cinema is in its nascent stage, having only begun to be internationally recognised[93] with the release of *Captain Abu Raed* in 2007. However, this cinema had its first film as early as the 1950s, as discussed above. The gap between the first cinematic productions and the contemporary ones is mostly due to the absence of funding and distribution for film projects in the country, deeming Jordanian cinema as a cinema under construction not yet reaching its full potential (Potter, 2015). Shafik (2007) notes that historically, due to European colonization, Arab countries and films were mainly concerned with the idea of independence, with national filmmaking being led by state investments in cinema (Potter, 2015).

However, unlike many Arab countries, in Jordan significant state funding for film was absent until the 2000s (Potter, 2015). The leap forward of Jordanian cinematic production in recent years is due to the need for the development of different economic sectors rather than

[91] This feature length fiction film is about a female tourist who visits Jordanian archaeological (historical) sites with a Jordanian man of her friends, in their trip they are met with a gang who try to kidnap her and a struggle between evil and good begins, it ends with good defeating the evil. The film can be considered an archive for Jordanian and Palestinian archaeological and holy places as the film focuses on showing such places, especially the first part of the film which solely focuses on the landscape of different sites.

[92] This is also a feature length fiction film which focuses on the heroism of the Arab Army (The Jordanian army) in their fight against Israeli forces within a melodramatic love story (Ministry of Culture, 2020).

[93] Please refer to Chapter 4, Film Sample subsection for further information about the film festivals *Captain Abu Raed* participated in and the awards it received. None of the films made before this one has a record of participating in international film festivals.

depending on tourism and government work (Potter, 2015)[94]. In addition, this leap was due to "the transition to digital filmmaking and modest national funding", usually provided through the Royal Film Commission (RFC) and the Red Sea Institute of Cinematic Arts, founded by the Jordanian government in 2003 and 2008 respectively (Potter, 2015, p. 31). Jordanian cinema critics and filmmakers suggest that there are many creative minds among Jordanian youth, however, they are not given a chance to explore their creativity and express it as most of the time they cannot find enough funding in Jordan and have to look for it elsewhere, usually from European countries and other Arab countries (Hassan, 2019; Abed, 2010; Ciecko, 2009; Abu Ghanimeh, 1987).

Potter (2015) discusses early attempts of Jordanian cinema as having nationalist pro-monarchy films characterised with being 'amateurish propaganda', which spoke to the Jordanian national identity at the time. He claims, "because Jordan was beginning to establish itself as not-Egypt, it is not surprising that Jordanian cinema did not take on the marks of anti-colonial discourse of Egyptian cinema, but instead tried to establish a historical archive of its own" (Potter, 2015, p. 25). This means Jordanian cinema can be considered unique to its own cultural formation and social values, representing social and cultural matters specific to Jordanian society. In today's Jordanian cinema the film scene has changed to be more concerned with people and the challenges they face in their everyday life (Potter, 2015; Hassan, 2019). Moreover, Jordan is in the first stage of becoming a known home for film production in the Arab world. This is due to many factors including the decline of Syrian drama due to the civil war, the increased governmental attention to the importance of a Jordanian film industry (Abed, 2010), as well as the increased global attention to the natural scenery in Jordan, which is why it is becoming a prominent filming location in the area (Chapman, 2012).

The RFC's establishment in 2003 revived the cinema scene in Jordan by funding many Jordanian film projects. Although only a handful of films were produced between 1950 and 2003 in Jordan (Potter, 2015), the previously mentioned institution helped shape the future of Jordanian film industry by funding many contemporary feature length narrative films, documentaries, and short films. Narrative films include *Captain Abu Raed* (Amin Matalqa 2007), *Transit Cities* (*Mudn Al-Transit*, Mohammad Hushki 2010), *The Last Friday* (*Al-Jum'a Al-Akhira*, Yahya Alabdallah 2011)), *Line of Sight* (*Ala Mad Al-Baser*, Aseel Mansour 2012),, *When Monaliza Smiled* (Fadi Haddad 2012), *May in the Summer* (Cherien Dabis 2013), *Theeb*

[94] However, the Jordanian government has not achieved this yet, as Jordanian cinema is not flourishing to the point of providing economic returns for the country.

(Naji Abu Nowar 2014), *The Curve* (Rifqi Assaf 2015), *Blessed Benefit* (Mahmoud Almassad 2016), *Sabah Al Layl* (Naji Salameh 2017), *Salma's Home* (Hanadi Elyan 2018 in post-production), and *Daughters of Abdulrahman* (Zaid Abu Hamdan 2019 in post-production) among others (Film.jo, 2020). Most of these films participated in film festivals in the Arab world and around the world and many won significant awards at international film festivals, however, their screening in Jordanian commercial cinemas is very limited[95].

Moreover, the RFC plays an important role, as well, in attracting international filmmakers to use Jordan as a filming location (Ciecko, 2009). Jordan's landscape is very appealing to international filmmakers as it ranges from forests to deserts, mountains and beaches, as well as, its appealing weather and significantly low-cost production crews (Chapman, 2012). In addition, given the status of its neighbouring countries, Jordan's appeal is connected to its liberal and safe environment. Thus, Jordan has been the setting for many Hollywood films including *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (1989), and recently *The Mummy Returns* (2001), *The Hurt Locker* (2007), *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen* (2008), *X-Men Apocalypse* (2015), *The Martian* (2015), *Aladdin* (2017), and *Star Wars: Episode IX* (2018) among many other international films (Chapman, 2012; Film.jo, 2020). Although the demand for filming locations is arguably high in Jordan, the actual Jordanian film industry has not grown significantly, with approximately one or two films produced per year since 2007.

The efforts of the RFC and independent filmmakers in Jordan resulted in reviving the cinema scene in Jordan, yet, Jordanian audiences, specifically youth, are still drawn to Hollywood and Egyptian films rather than their own national cinematic production (Ciecko, 2009). This is seen clearly by walking into any commercial cinema theatre in Jordan, as the most prominent films are either Hollywood or Egyptian films. Although few Jordanian films had the chance of screening in commercial cinemas in Jordan every few years (e.g. *When Monaliza Smiled*, *Theeb* and *Blessed Benefit*), this is not a constant case and only few films have the chance. Most Jordanian cinematic productions are screened at the RFC, Albalad Theatre, or Shoman library among other creative local venues where a limited number of audiences attend (Ciecko, 2009).

[95] In 2016, the Jordanian feature length narrative film *Theeb* (2014) directed by Naji Abu Nowar was nominated for Best Foreign Language Film award in the 88th Academy Awards. *Theeb* would have become the first Arab film to be awarded an Oscar (Safdar 2016). Unfortunately, the film was not chosen; however, this nomination marks an important moment for the developing Jordanian cinema.

In 2013 and 2014 the University of Jordan's Centre for Women's Studies launched three-day film festivals celebrating women under the titles "Arab Women Film Festival" and "Women's Film Festival", respectively (Ujnews2.ju.edu.jo, 2013; Ju.edu.jo, 2014). In both, Jordanian as well as Arab and international films were screened to audiences that included many students. Jordanian films screened included *When Monaliza Smiled* and *Captain Abu Raed* (Ujnews2.ju.edu.jo, 2013) and the documentary *The Voice of Victims of Violence* (Ju.edu.jo, 2014). These film festivals targeted issues of violence against women as well as state laws against women, such as Article 308 of the Penal Code[96]. Moreover, the student body attendance is an important aspect of these festivals, as they believe gender issues should be discussed and people should be more aware of them (Ju.edu.jo, 2014). This represents a step forward in giving Jordanian youth a chance to explore their cinematic productions representation of gender and society and support their national cinema within the context of Jordanian universities, a matter the current study delves into. In the following section I analyse and discuss gender regime representations in the three films I utilise in the current study.

5.2 Representations of Gender Regimes in the Selected Jordanian Films

Gender regimes of societies are usually reflected in different forms of media products, including films (Hofstede et. al., 2010), thus, it is crucial to study gender representations in film in order to explore gender considerations in any given society. In this section I provide a detailed analysis for the study's film corpus informed by the gender theoretical framework of the study and the context of gender in Jordanian society[97], focusing on issues that will be discussed in the following chapter concerning the findings of the current study's fieldwork. This analysis provides an insight on gender regimes and relations in the Jordanian society, as the films are understood to be a representation of this society. This section is divided into three subsections; the first subsection (5.2.1) provides plot synopsis and media reviews for each of the three films. The second (5.2.2) and third (5.2.3) subsections offer an analysis of gender representations in the family context, including analysing marriage, family structure, gender roles and division of labour in the family, domestic violence, and sexuality as they appear in the films, as well as an analysis of femininity and masculinity representations in the films, respectively.

[96] Discussed in Chapter 3
[97] Please refer to Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework, and Chapter 3: Context of the study

5.2.1 Plot synopsis and media reviews

Captain Abu Raed

Abu Raed[98] (Nadim Sawalha), the main character in Amin Matalqa's (2007) film, is a well-read and highly knowledgeable older man working as a janitor in an international airport in Amman. He tragically lost his child and wife and their loss makes him lose all his hopes and dreams in life until one day he finds a pilot's hat in a bin and wears it on his way back home. Children in his neighbourhood think he is a pilot and demand he tells them stories about his adventures while travelling around the world. He eventually surrenders to their demands and that is when his imaginary journey begins. By telling the children stories about different cultures and countries he tries to educate them while also spreading hope to change the bleak reality of poverty and violence these children experience.

Abu Raed meets a young woman in the airport, Nour (Rana Sultan), and they become friends. Nour is a pilot; she is constantly pushed by her parents and surrounding society to get married. The idea of marriage troubles her; most of her troubles come from her parents' constant efforts to marry her off to a wealthy man from a well-known family. She shares this pressure and how it is affecting her with the newly found friend, Abu Raed, who supports her and opens up to her about his own struggles in life, the death of his son and wife and their effect on him.

The storyline brings forward a family suffering from domestic violence. This family are the neighbours of Abu Raed. Although at the beginning of the film Abu Raed is indifferent about the family's issues, he eventually helps them and stands against their abusive father/husband, Abu Murad (Ghandi Saber). Murad (Hussein Al-Sous), the oldest son in the family, is constantly represented as a bleak child who does not see that life could offer hope for a better future for him and the children in his neighbourhood. Throughout the film we see this child changing due to Abu Raed and Nour's help. When Abu Raed does not find a suitable way to help this family, he asks for Nour's help, and she helps the family flee their home and provides them shelter in her parents' home. We are finally given a glimpse of hope by seeing Murad a pilot when he is older.

Media reception of *Captain Abu Raed* focused on the film's status as the first feature length Jordanian film to be made after long years of silence from the Jordanian film industry

[98] Abu in Arabic means father; a respectable way to call a married man is by calling him the father of his oldest son's name. Abu Raed means the father of Raed, and Raed would be the oldest son the man has. This indicates the patriarchal nature of the Jordanian society.

and the first to be screened in international movie theatres (Ernand, 2008; Farber, 2008; Tesdell, 2008). According to the *New York Times*, although the film's plot is predictable and Matalqa does not seem to pay much attention to complexity as much as the atmosphere, the film sheds light on the crucial issue of the domestic violence (Genzlinger, 2009). In his review of the film Ramsey Tesdell (2008) from 7iber[99] commended the film and the performance of actors; he considers it an enjoyable and solid film. However, he criticises the filmmakers' attempt to reach an Arab and a Western audience simultaneously, as he claims it did not suit either perfectly. According to him, the humour intended to make the audience laugh, was awkwardly received by the Western audience as cultural aspects of Jordanian humour may not be familiar among spectators who do not share the film's cultural background. He also stressed that the music score of the film, which was "an attempt to draw a Western audience into the film," was too dramatic especially in scenes that did not require such music; at certain points of the film "the overly sentimental music was distracting rather than captivating" (Tesdell, 2008). Farber[100] (2008) shares the concern regarding the music, although he expresses a liking to the film, the deeply moving storyline, and Matalqa's character details, he considers the music a false note as "it sounds too Western and sometimes falls into sentimentality." Conversely, Screendaily's review by Lee Marshall (2007) praises the music score in the film and how it elicits the right emotions from the audience, especially as the plot of the film takes a darker twist at the end. He also states that the film has a universal storyline that enables it to crossover to an international audience.

As *Captian Abu Raed* had its premiere at Sundance Film Festival, and was screened in the US, it received media attention in the US as well as Jordan. As noted above, the film was praised by reviewers both locally and internationally, with minor critiques at times especially with regards to the choice of music score composed for the film. However, the universal storyline, the characters' journeys, and overall presentation of the film were received positively and gave the film more of an international appeal. Surprisingly, gender issues did not appear in clearly in any reviews; it was only very briefly mentioned in some that Nour struggles due to her parents' wish to marry her off to men she does not like.

[99] A Jordanian online cultural magazine
[100] Farber wrote the review for The Hollywood Reporter.

When Monaliza Smiled

Fadi Haddad the director of *When Monaliza Smiled* (2012) depicts a feature length narrative film telling the story of Monaliza (Tahani Salim), a woman who has never smiled in her life and does not see the point in smiling. Her mother died while giving birth to her and her father died while she was still a child. She lives with her sister, Afaf (Haifa Al-Agha), in a poor Amman neighbourhood. After 10 years of waiting, she gets a job at a government institution where she meets Hamdi (Shady Khalaf), an Egyptian immigrant, who changes her life. A love story develops between Monaliza and Hamdi and that is when Monaliza smiles for the first time in her life. Meanwhile, a friendship develops between Monaliza and her neighbour, Rudaina (Suha Najjar). After Rudaina's husband mysteriously disappears, she moves to the neighbourhood where her brother, Suhail (Haidar Kfouf), lives. She lives on the memory of her husband and has been waiting for him to come back for seven years without losing hope. Suhail has an interest in marrying Monaliza; he proposes to her and while she does not intend to marry him, she does not refuse the proposal as she wants to prove a point to her sister, Afaf. Monaliza suffers from Afaf's controlling personality. Afaf is years older than Monaliza; after the death of their mother, she took care of Monaliza and raised her, and after the death of her father she became the one responsible for the household. She works as a seamstress from home and did not leave her home for 20 years. Afaf fears the idea of being alone, thus, she did not want Monaliza to get married. She overcomes this issue by the end of the film and finally approves Monaliza's marriage and walks in the street without being afraid. While the film ends on a happy note, it introduces throughout a stereotypically unhappy society that is concerned with gossip.

AlRai[101] newspaper's review of *When Monaliza Smiled* compliments the witty efforts of the director Fadi Haddad and his crew in representing a Jordanian story full of details of local places and relations between people (Alrai, 2014). The film's plot, visual storytelling elements, and its music score are highly commended in different media reviews. The film's use of locations and the visual appeal of Amman is also praised in these reviews (Alrai, 2014; Albayan, 2012; Tarawnah, 2012; Alghad, 2014; Albaladnews, 2014). Khaled Sameh (2012) considers the film's story to be simple and deep simultaneously. The film according to him exposes the difficulties different people in the Jordanian society face. He claims these difficulties and personal challenges, such as those of Nayfa, Monaliza, and Afaf in the film, are

[101] A Jordanian official newspaper

due to the conservative nature of the Jordanian society and family[102] (Sameh, 2012). As far as the story itself reviewers tend to focus on the film's attempt to shed light on the issue of spinsterhood; Afaf and Monaliza's marital status is considered a focal point in the film, especially that they have both passed the age of thirty and did not get married (Albaladnews, 2014; Albayan, 2012; Tarawnah, 2012). In a review in Albayan online newspaper[103], it is claimed that the story of the film carries importance in regards to representing shared issues in Arab families such as poverty and the delay of marriage (Albayan, 2012).

Some reviews typically focus on how Hamdi changes Monaliza's life and drives her to smile by telling her he loves her; a matter I analyse further in this chapter. Ironically, a review by Nidal Alrabadi published on a website under the name Center for Women's Equality, describes Nayfa's character as masculine with her "stubbornness, tyranny, her tough words, and heavy Jordanian accent" in contrast to the femininity of her husband's mistress[104] who is characterized as calm, tender, and beautiful (Alrabadi, 2014). This characterization falls under the stereotypical feminine traits a woman is expected to have as discussed earlier in Chapter 2 and later in this chapter in my analysis of the film. His contrast between the two characters draws the reader to empathize with Nayfa's husband and justify his action of marrying another wife.

In his review of the film Naseem Tarawnah from 7iber mentions the representation of women in the film; he specifically focuses on Monaliza's character who he describes as "a woman struggling to free herself from societal pressures, gain independence, escape an impoverished status quo, and find the kind of happiness that could finally draw a smile from her ordinarily resolute face." (Tarawnah, 2012) He also commends the director/writer Fadi Haddad's ability to represent authentic female characters. The fact that both producers of the film are female is considered an added value for female presence and empowerment in the Jordanian film industry (Rasseen, 2013), and this could have influenced Haddad's representation of female characters. Unlike other Jordanian reviews of the film, Tarawnah's review does not only praise the film, it actually criticizes the quality of the film; as he claims "While the story does manage to hold together, it is littered with conflicts that left me half expecting the film's central climax, but never finding it in the "right" place." (Tarawnah, 2012)

[102] A point I agree with in my analysis of the film presented later in this chapter.
[103] Based in Dubai, UAE.
[104] Who becomes his second wife.

Such rationality is rarely found in local reviews of the film. Although the film was received positively, it mainly appeared in local media outlets.

Lissa Aisha

This contemporary Jordanian film is a documentary directed by Asma Bsieso in 2016. The documentary follows the life of Aisha, a woman who suffers from social stigma and judgement. Aisha tells her life story to the audience, usually facing the camera and recollecting her memories also by taking the director to places including her home, school, old neighbourhood, etc... She is an abandoned child in a society that does not accept her and similar people. The filming begins in 2010 when she was a psychology student at a private university in Amman, and most of the filming occurs at that time. She speaks of the hardships she faced in life and how her divorced parents, who are both alive, healthy and well off, abandoned her and her siblings and put them in foster homes (orphanages). She lived her childhood moving through different orphanages until she was old enough to leave the system and live independently. Aisha's life took many turns, she got married at 17 to a British man in his thirties, she then got divorced and decided to get a high school diploma and study at university. With the help and emotional and financial support of a woman called Jumana she managed to become stronger and follow her dream of becoming a psychologist. Aisha tends to hide the fact that she is an abandoned child who lived her life in orphanages, as people often judge her immediately without getting to know her. By the end of the film the spectator is introduced to Aisha in 2014, who is a more confident and self-loving working woman with a changed life, style, and perspective. Aisha is a success story built through suffering and social challenges.

Although there is a notable scarcity in reviewing this film, Asma Bsieso is praised in media reviews to have the courage to shed light on the challenges faced by forgotten people in the Jordanian society (Alrai, 2016; Akhbarak, 2018), those who have suffered the atrocities of life due to being abandoned by their parents at a young age or due to their parents' death. The story of Aisha and her pain is deeply felt by the few media reviewers who discussed the documentary. Reviewers commented on the role of society to support cases such as Aisha's and to accept them as part and parcel of the society. The tone of sympathy is clear in the reviews. It is believed, however, that the positive attitude Aisha carries and her continuous smiles that show her strength as a female in the Jordanian society. Although Aisha faces social challenges, she is commended for her courage and for continuing her education and following her dreams which shows her power in challenging the situation she found herself in (Alrai, 2016; Akhbarak, 2018).

5.2.2 Representations of gender regimes of the Jordanian family institution

This subsection is concerned with key gender regime related themes the three films allude to and represent either in direct or indirect ways. The key themes analysed here are Marriage representations in the films, family structure and power relations, gender role representations and division of labour in the family, domestic violence, sexuality, and femininity and masculinity representations which are all major factors in the Jordanian family, as the films and their audience reception[105] suggest.

Marriage representations in the films

The family institution in the Jordanian society is built on marriage; thus, it is a significant social tradition that enforces and continues the social order. In *Captain Abu Raed* and *When Monaliza Smiled*, marriage is a main theme the films portray through the lead female characters Nour and Monaliza[106], as well as the marriage relationships represented in both films. *Lissa Aisha* represents marriage albeit less directly. Representations of marriage stress its importance in the Jordanian society. Three couples are represented in *Captain Abu Raed* – Abu Nour (Ali Maher)[107] and Um Nour (Lina Attel)[108], Abu Murad and Um Murad (Dina Raad-Yaghnam), and Abu Mohammad (Issa Hilal) and Um Mohammad (Sana' Laham). Through these different relationships and their cinematic portrayals, gender roles within marriage can be seen on the screen[109]. This is also presented in *When Monaliza Smiled* through Monaliza's parents' relationship which appears shortly in the establishing scene of the film, likewise through the relationship between Nayfeh and her husband, and Rudaina and her husband. The importance of marriage is observed through how characters talk about it and perceive it as a crucial matter.

From the beginning of *Captain Abu Raed* marriage is perceived as a significant societal and personal issue. Very early in the film, Nour is in a party her wealthy family threw to introduce her to potential husbands. A friend approaches her to reveal a man is looking at Nour. When they catch a glimpse of him, shown in a medium wide shot the man winks at Nour. Her friend suggests she should go talk to him, but Nour refuses and asks the friend to go instead. The

[105] Presented in Chapter 6
[106] The lead female characters in the two films, respectively.
[107] Since Nour is the only offspring in her family, her father is called Abu Nour although she is a female. In Jordanian social norms if a man only has daughters, he is called the father of the name of his oldest daughter, but once he has a son his identification automatically changes to the father of his son's name, which indicates the patriarchal ideology of the Jordanian society.
[108] The same goes for women, once a woman has a child, she is called the mother of the name of her child and if she has a son she takes the name of her son; Um in Arabic means mother.
[109] The cinematic aspects will be discussed further as the analysis unfolds.

woman happily joins that man and Nour smiles while looking at them. Nour's friend adheres to the traditional classification of feminine traits, whereby she appears affectionate and submissive to the man's assertiveness – a traditional masculine trait. With high key lighting, bright colours, and lively music, this scene indicates society's normalization of patriarchy, the power of men, and how women are expected to seek men's approval to find a husband; showing a patriarchal social pattern that reproduces male dominance (Bourdieu 2001). The choice of a medium wide shot to represent this male character gave the man power and attention, establishing power relations and male dominance from a cinematic viewpoint.

Moreover, whispering to her daughter's ear with a tone of disappointment, Nour's mother asks Nour to socialise and mingle with people and makes it clear that this party was arranged for Nour to find a husband. The idea of marriage overpowers Nour's parents. During the party, her father approaches her with a happy smile on his face and a man he wants to introduce. With all three characters appearing in the frame -establishing connection- he begins by saying the man, Bassam, has a pharmacy; Bassam corrects him saying he has two pharmacies, which indicates the importance of a man's job and ability to provide –a traditional masculine trait that is highly praised in society[110]. Her father leaves them together to get acquainted, while Nour is showing signs of disagreement to what her father did, perceived through her facial expression and overall atmosphere of the awkward silence between her and Bassam. Although Alfawaz et al. (2012) claims the father's authority can be described as democratic, especially in terms of marriage and that the Jordanian society is gradually changing the parents' power in marriage, the party scene indicates the pressure parents exert on their offspring to get married. On the other hand, in *When Monaliza Smiled*, Afaf[111] puts pressure on Monaliza to refuse marriage proposals and remain unmarried for selfish reasons, which also indicates the authority figure's pressure in such issues. However, marriage remains a main theme and is represented as an important social practice. Monaliza longs for marriage, while Afaf, who seems to have lost hope in getting married at her old age, wants Monaliza to stay unmarried out of fear of loneliness.

The scene above from *Captain Abu Raed* also speaks to Adely's (2016) claim that in Middle Eastern societies marriage is usually arranged by parents rather than being the autonomous choice of the individual. This appears in the film yet again: in one of the scenes Nour enters her house to find her father sitting with two men, Samer and his father; he asks her to join the

[110] As discussed in the gender roles representations section of this chapter
[111] Afaf is the authority figure in Monaliza's life.

conversation and introduces them to each other. She realises Samer is a suitor and does not seem to like that her father asked her to join. In this scene, Nour's father is trying hard for his daughter to accept this marriage proposal, while she completely ignores his wishes. The whole conversation is made very awkward as noted from the awkward silence moments, the body language, facial expressions of characters, and camera movement. The director seems to want to give this feeling of unease and awkwardness, perhaps to criticize the tradition of arranged marriage and the formalities involved with it.

Similarly, arranged marriage appears in *When Monaliza Smiled,* where Suhail and his sister, Rudaina, arrange a meeting with Afaf in order to propose to Monaliza. While it is somewhat a different case, where parents are absent due to death, the arrangement is still familial. Also, while Rudiana speaks for Suhail, Afaf tries to speak for Monaliza, but Monaliza refuses to let Afaf decide for her and asks them for time to think about the proposal. The disagreement between Afaf and Monaliza also appears through the scene composition as they sit opposite to each other rather than next to one another like Rudaina and Suhail who seem to be in agreement of the arrangement. The visual language in this scene with its low key lighting and character separation, gives an atmosphere of unease, perhaps to make the audience feel the uneasiness of Monaliza in this situation, especially that Afaf is trying to take a huge personal decision on her behalf. Likewise, in *Lissa Aisha* although Aisha is abandoned by her parents, by the end of the film appearing in medium close-up shot confidently talking about her experiences, she mentions that a suitor wanted to officially propose to her by arranging a meeting between his family and the mother figure in her life, Jumana. This indicates the extent to which marriage is a familial matter in the Jordanian society, rather than being a personal individual matter. Arranged marriage can be considered a characteristic of neopatriarchal gender regimes where the patriarchal family ideals prevail, and females have limited autonomy (Moghadam, 2020). The representation of family interference in the women's choice of marriage in the films can be read as a way of bringing attention to this as an issue perhaps in an attempt to influence subverting the tradition of arranged marriage that can limit the freedom of some members of the society. This is especially applicable to Nour's situation and her troubles with arranged marriage in *Captain Abu Raed.* The other films do not seem to stress arranged marriage as an issue affecting women's lives.

Choosing a partner based on compatibility rather than love (Adely, 2016) appears in the scenes mentioned above from *Captain Abu Raed*. Nour's father focuses on Bassam's and Samer's jobs, which indicate their wealth and ensures that Nour could be married to a man who

is financially and socially compatible. This appears in another scene where Nour's father is upset that she refused Bassam; the colours are darker than they usually are in Nour's house, the lighting is low key, and for most of the scene Nour and her father are in separate rooms, but they can still hear each other, which establishes separation of characters and their perspectives regarding marriage. In a wide shot, Nour's father approaches Nour and her mother and says "This is my daughter. I want her to be happy. What's wrong with Bassam? He's a respectable pharmacist and we know he's from a good family. Come on, I want to see my grandchildren. You're getting older, you're going to become a spinster." Nour angrily and silently leaves the house, showing her bitterness towards the situation and her father's harsh words. His words reveal more than an ideology connected to marriage. Happiness, here, is directly associated with marriage, indicating that it is the road to happiness which Nour's mother stresses by the end of this scene. Moreover, a man's job title, financial status, family status, and reputation all fall under finding and approving the compatible husband. Such scenes also suggest the father's power and dominance in deciding what he believes is best for his daughter, which Nour's mother emphasises by telling her daughter "he wants the best for you." The parents' attitude reinforces limited female autonomy in the Jordanian gender regime, supporting Moghadam's (2020) claim that the Jordanian society has a neopatriarchal gender regime. However, representing Nour's refusal of the situation and her parents' interference in her personal choices can be seen as an attempt by the director to criticise the patriarchal structure that imposes limitations to female autonomy in an attempt to subvert it.

Emphasis on compatibility, rather than love, as a basis for marriage (Adley, 2016) appears in *When Monaliza Smiled* when Rudiana tries to convince Afaf to approve Suhail's marriage proposal to Monaliza by accentuating that he owns a grocery shop and he is financially stable. Likewise, when Monaliza and Afaf discuss that Hamdi wants to marry Monaliza, Afaf refuses as she believes their backgrounds are not compatible; she indicates the importance of family status in marriage as a proof of incompatibility. Monaliza opposes her sister's perspective, with single shots of the characters speaking separation between them and their points of view is indicated. Contrary to Adley's (2016) claim, Monaliza's choice of marriage is based on love not compatibility. Likewise, in *Lissa Aisha,* Aisha's choice of marrying Paul was based on love and even years after getting divorced, she still believes love is very important for marriage. This represents a change in Jordanian youth's attitudes towards marriage; while it is still important, youth's attitudes have become less traditional where love comes before compatibility and the choice of partner is preferred to be an individual matter rather than a family matter (Al-matalka, 2016).

Moreover, while Nour's parents and society try to pressure her, she refuses to tolerate such traditions especially in terms of marriage; she prefers to live the way she wants and choose a partner herself rather than attending to her parents' wishes. Abu Raed agrees with her saying "You should live the way you want not the way society wants you to." Through this unconventional depiction of an older character with a more progressive outlook, the film attempts to challenge social pressures exerted on youth who are expected to follow traditional social norms linked to marriage. The film also clearly challenges this through Nour's personality and refusal to follow the norms. Butler's (1999) notion of subverting gender norms in society through challenging the system appears in the director's representation choices in this film.

Another issue represented in both *Captain Abu Raed* and *When Monaliza Smiled* is spinsterhood. This 'problem' in *Captain Abu Raed* does not only trouble Nour's father, but also Nour herself. A wide shot shows Abu Raed and Nour laying down on the rooftop of Abu Raed's house; taking in the views of Amman's sky Nour opens-up to Abu Raed about her issues with marriage. With dramatic music in the background and a sad tone she says: "when you're 22 people start asking, when are you getting married? At first you ignore them. But after five years, they still ask the same questions. It's frustrating. Everyone is worried about you "How can you be 26 and not married yet?" But when you're 30 and not married yet, you start doubting yourself like there's something wrong with you. All my friends are married and have children." In Jordan, the median age at first marriage is 22 for females and 27 for males (Sieverding, Berri and Abdulrahim, 2018). At age 30 a woman who is not married is usually called a spinster, while a man who is not married is never called the same. This could justify Nour's concerns as well as her father's, as they seem to believe marriage is very important. This corresponds to Al-matalka's (2016) study in which participants indicate the significance of marriage in Jordanian society by stating they would not wish to remain unmarried. Nour acknowledges this as well; Abu Raed with a questioning tone asks Nour: "but you want to get married one day, right?" Nour replies: "yes, but I don't want to live my life like other people want." With this, both characters assert the importance of marriage for continuing the social order. Although in *Captain Abu Raed* the overall tone suggests the director's attempt to subvert gender norms related to marriage, in this particular part of the scene the importance of marriage in society is reinforced through the statements of both Abu Raed and Nour.

This is also represented in *When Monaliza Smiled*; as mentioned earlier in a scene where Monaliza is trying to convince Afaf to approve Hamdi's marriage proposal, Afaf refuses,

claiming he is not compatible. Then, the real reason of fearing a lonely life is revealed in a scene with low-key lighting indicating a dramatic moment; with a sharp tone Afaf says: "Bottom line, you're not marrying the Egyptian or anyone else, the hell with marriage, do you understand?" she leaves the room and Monaliza follows her saying: "Now I get it, you don't want me to get married so we can both be stay-at-home spinsters, right? You want company. Did you ever consider asking me before sacrificing my life?" Afaf's rejection is considered by Monaliza as a form of sacrificing her life, which indicates the value of marriage to Monaliza. Moreover, this scene reinforces negative images of unmarried older women representing them as grumpy and lonely, or afraid of spinsterhood.

The films stress upon the challenges that face Jordanian youth focusing on marriage as a central concept. For example, in *Captain Abu Raed*, while Nour refuses the proposals she receives, Sameh has a profound wish for marriage[112]. He reveals the hardships young working-class men face. His wishes to get married are clear in different scenes in the film, he is constantly longing for a relationship. However, his desires for marriage are defeated as he does not have enough to money to secure a good life for a family. This is not only Sameh's struggle; increased unemployment, low wages, and insufficient income are cited as main reasons for the delay of marriage among Jordanian youth who –according to the films in this study– seem to long for and cherish the idea of marriage (Sieverding, Berri and Abdulrahim, 2018; Salem, 2014; Al-matalka, 2016). Both *Captain Abu Raed* and *When Monaliza Smiled* seem to be addressing societal changes or challenges to society's way of constructing marriage and its performance as a social ritual, which can indicate at times an attempt to subvert the gender regime that endorses traditional ideals regarding marriage.

Family structure and power relations

Jordanian society is a patriarchy where the family, one of the most important social institutions, is governed by a patriarchal structure (Moghadam, 2020); the father is the authority figure who is responsible for the family and all the matters of its members. The father, therefore, takes decisions for the family, and he has power, privilege, and control over all family members including his wife, which indicates masculine dominance (Al-Badayneh, 2012; Moghadam, 2004; Bourdieu, 2001). In *Captain Abu Raed* there are three different families where the Jordanian family structure and power relations are represented: Abu Murad's family, Abu Mohammad's family, and Abu Nour's family. Men are represented on top of the power pyramid

[112] Sameh is a young man working as a janitor at the airport with Abu Raed.

of the family, their influence in decision making and family control is clear. For example, Abu Nour keeps pressuring Nour to influence her decisions to accept marriage proposals and she refuses to surrender to his pressures, which makes him angry because he believes he knows what is best for her. This is also represented through the music which gives emotional cues to the characters' way of perceiving the situation they are in, and can sometimes reflect their state of mind.

In other instances, the father's decision making is not a mere influence but rather a given; Abu Mohammad decides that his young son, Tareq, should leave school and work to provide for the family. There seems to be no chance for Tareq to question this verdict and by the end of the film he leaves school to work full-time. Even Abu Raed is met with harsh words when he doubts Abu Mohammad's decision that Tareq should work. Abu Mohammad is depicted on screen as an easy to talk person with a smile on his face; however, when Abu Raed discusses such a 'private' matter with him the atmosphere changes, the colours are gloomier and the faces of both characters show signs of discontent. Likewise, Abu Murad is represented as the head of the family who wants everything, down to the meal cooked by Um Murad, to be his decision and if he does not like it, he will throw it away and physically abuse his wife[113]. When Abu Murad is depicted on screen he is usually shown in low key lighting and high contrast to establish the dramatic effect of an evil character, as he is in fact an abuser. His power is also revealed through low camera angles, which gives him an over powering position in contrast to Um Murad who is usually depicted from a high angle where the audience is looking down on her and her position as a weak wife.

Representations of men in this film entail that the father sits on top of the family power pyramid and the mother is a mere follower; his control and influence is shown as the "natural" order, which reflects the patriarchal hierarchal structure of the Jordanian family and indicates imbalance in gender relations and the distribution of power (Al-Badayneh, 2012; Moghadam, 2004). This is consistent with the assertion that in patriarchal societies there is a pattern where women are subordinate to men and the husband's power defines the wife's place and role within the family (Connell, 1987; Bourdieu, 2001). Um Murad in the film is demanded by her husband not to interfere in children's discipline and when she does, he physically abuses her, which signifies her place and role and instils fear of defiance. This is also noticed from the scene composition, where whenever Abu Murad and Um Murad are shown on screen together there is an atmosphere of fear and power abuse established by their positioning in the frame and the

[113] Domestic abuse is expanded upon further in the *Domestic Violence* section of this analysis.

music and colours used. Abu Murad's power as a discipliner of his wife and children corresponds to different research studies suggesting the prevalence of masculine dominance in the Jordanian family where the father's/husband's roles include maintaining discipline and punishing family members (Al-matalqa, 2016; Jalal and Gabel, 2014; Al-Badayneh, 2012; Moghadam, 2004). Whenever Um Murad deviates from the gender norm and expectation she is punished by Abu Murad. The film's representations are also in line with Connell's (1987, p.205) claim that power structure in the family is usually conventional where power is defined as "influence in decision-making." Thus, representations of familial power relations and structures here indicate masculine dominance and its normalizations in the neopatriarchal Jordanian gender regime.

Moreover, according to Connell (1987) the patriarchal social structure grants men power which gives them the ability to act as discipliners, and their use of force in the discipline process is usually justified as important in order to maintain this power. Fathers in this film are represented as authority figures in control of the family fate, and all other family members including the wife are controlled by the husband/father. Furthermore, in the case of the absence of the father, the oldest male in the family is represented as the father figure responsible for the family; in a scene where, with the help of Abu Raed, Um Murad and her children leave their home with Nour to escape their abusive father Abu Raed asks Murad to take care of his mother and little brother rather than asking Um Murad to take care of her family. This is representative of male power and dominance in the family where in the absence of the father the burden of being responsible for the family becomes the oldest son's issue. This implies the family structure and power relations in the Jordanian family, where men come first, and women are expected to be obedient and subordinate to men and the patriarchal structure endorsed by society. While in this instance gender norms and the patriarchal gender regime are reinforced in the film, it can be read that through representing the issues discussed above the film is subverting gender norms by discussing them and shedding light on them in a social structure that does not accept subversion and deviation from normative gender behaviour. Butler's notion of subverting gender norms appears significant in understanding Jordanian films' attempt in representing on screen what is can be subverted and challenged.

Family in *When Monaliza Smiled* is depicted differently than in *Captain Abu Raed* as most families represented are unconventional where the parents are absent due to death. For example, in Monaliza's family, Afaf is the head of the household and she is represented on top of the power pyramid where she is the one in control of family decision-making. Monaliza does not

agree to Afaf's claim of power, she refuses that Afaf takes decisions in matters pertaining to her personal life, such as marriage; in times of disagreement the two characters are usually depicted sitting opposite to each other or separated in the frame showing their detachment and issues. In the scene where Suhail and Rudaina visit Afaf's house to propose to Monaliza, Monaliza is surprised that Afaf has already been talking to Rudaina about the marriage and refuses it without consulting Monaliza. The colours are dark, lighting is low-key, and the two characters (Monaliza and Afaf) are whispering in the kitchen, as not to be heard by Rudaina and Suhail sitting in the living room. This is when Monaliza shows signs of refusal by telling Afaf "How can you make such a decision without telling me?" To reclaim her right to decision-making Monaliza does not refuse Suhail's proposal although it is clear from the conversation in the kitchen that she does not intend to marry him; she asks for time to think about the proposal before approving or disapproving. This scene, along with others, indicates Afaf's control over Monaliza and the power structure of the family where Afaf is on top of the power pyramid. However, Monaliza tends to subvert Afaf's power and reclaim her own by voicing her opinion. Further to this, when Monaliza falls in love with Hamdi and intends to marry him, she had to consult with her older sister who refused the idea, which represents the power Afaf has in the family. Although Afaf is represented as the one in control in the family, it is interesting to note that when a Jordanian filmmaker decided to have a female as the head of a household instead of being portrayed as a strong independent woman, she is represented as a weak and broken woman who fears leaving her home. She is usually shown in low-key lighting and dark shades of colour, and the recurrent use of a high camera angle are attempts to establish weakness of the character. This could allude to the patriarchal nature of the Jordanian society where women are believed to be weak and incapable.

The other families represented in the film are Rudians's family which consists of herself and her brother Suhail and Nayfeh's family which does not appear on the screen, but we hear about them from Nayfeh. In Rudaina's case, her brother does not seem to have any influence on her life. She lives independently and so does Suhail. Signs of familial control do not appear on the screen except for once by the end of the film; Rudaina is driving her car with Monaliza on her side while they follow Hamdi so Monaliza could make up with him and convince him to stay in Jordan rather than going back home to Egypt. On their way Suahil sees them in the streets and shouts "where are you going? Do you have no respect for me?" Rudaian shouts from the window as the car is moving "I'll tell you later!" This indicates that Suhail feels offended that his sister is leaving her neighbourhood without consulting with him, which in turn indicates men's control in the Jordanian family even in the absence of the father.

In Nayfeh's family it is clear that her husband is the one in power, although she is depicted as a powerful and fearful character at work. This is apparent from a scene where she is talking to Monaliza in the office and telling her about how she got this job; Nayfeh says: "Abu Ayham, my husband, didn't want me to work at first, but after our daughters got married and Ayham went to college, he gave me permission to work…" Nayfeh does not sound critical of her husband's decision, on the contrary she seems to be accepting the situation; while Monaliza who is cleaning her new desk does not seem to care for the whole conversation. This represents the naturalization, normalization, and female indifference towards the patriarchal family structure where that the husband in the Jordanian family is responsible for all decision-making in the house, even when his wife has a strong personality like Nayfeh's. This film represents conventional family structure and power relations even in unconventional Jordanian families, alluding to the power given to heads of household, who are usually men[114]. Butler's conception of gender performativity is crucial in understanding the power given to men in the Jordanian social structure, the presentation of men as dominant and this representation of them in film is a repetition of this act that normalises its existence. Thus, gender norms at times become reinforced through films. However, perhaps through this representation the films can be a force challenging and eventually subverting gender norms by exposing their image on screen.

Gender role representations and division of labour in the family

Gender roles are social practices that are socially constructed; they reflect culturally traditional feminine or masculine attitudes, behaviours, and personality traits (Alters and Schiff, 2009; Alsop, Fitzsimons, and Lennon, 2002; Beauvoir, 1973; Butler, 1999; Connell, 2005). Gender roles are also claimed to be reflected in a society's cultural products, such as media and film (Hofstede et. al., 2010). In *Captain Abu Raed* Jordanian society's gender roles are represented through characters' behaviours and relationships. Among the main male roles represented in the film are being providers, maintainers of discipline and maintainers of tradition. In one of the early scenes in the film, when Nour's father introduces her to Bassam he stresses that Bassam has two pharmacies something that shows his financial ability to provide for Nour. Nour's father also stressed Samer's job, the other suitor who proposed to Nour; being an architect indicates his financial stability and ability to provide, as well as his social status. This can indicate the film's reinforcement of stereotypical patriarchal representation of gender roles, and the importance of male roles as providers in Jordanian

[114] The case in *Lissa Aisha* is different where family is not part of the equation, given that Aisha is an orphan, and the film focuses on her life. Although there are parts where she speaks about family, family structure and power relations are not part of the conversation and do not appear on the screen.

society. Yet, due to representing both encounters with Bassam and Samer in an awkward comic sense, their representations can be read as a way of commenting on the gender system that enforces such characters. Subversion of the gender norms and system can be taken as another reading for the films representations.

Stressing upon man's duty to provide appears as a burden in the film as well. Abu Murad, while fighting with his wife and beating her, emphasizes that he works all day to provide for the family and this -as Um Murad justifies- puts pressure on him and justifies his violent attitude[115]. Moreover, even as children men are expected to be able to provide. In the film, Tareq works in the street selling goods although he is merely a young boy. The pressure of providing for the family is represented in the film as a male role, none of the female characters in *Captain Abu Raed* are represented as providers. Both *Captain Abu Raed* and *When Monaliza Smiled* represent gender role expectations in the Jordanian society where men are expected to be providers for their families (Al-matalka, 2016; Jalal and Gabel, 2014; Al-Badayneh, 2012; Moghadam, 2004). Providing is represented as a main male role in *When Monaliza Smiled.* This is suggested through different scenes. In one scene Rudaina is trying to convince Afaf that Suhail is a suitable husband for Monaliza, when Afaf refuses the first thing Rudaina stresses is that he is financially stable; she says: "But Suhail makes a good living…," which indicates his role as a provider and the importance of this role in marriage. Hamdi as well while telling Monaliza about his life stresses that he had to leave his country, Egypt, to make a good living. On a phone call with his mother, he asks her if she needs him to send money. This shows his financial responsibility towards his family and indicates that providing is an important male role and masculine characteristic. Moreover, Abu Sarah is also depicted as carrying the burden of providing for his family. While trying to convince Hamdi to open a small business with him, he stresses that with his daughters' tuition providing is not easy and he needs another source of income to be able to provide for his family. Although this is represented in a different sense in *Lissa Aisha,* the male role of providing is depicted once when Aisha is talking about a suitor who wants to marry her, one of the first things she stresses is his ability to provide which, along with other traits, makes him a suitable husband for any woman. Such scenes reveal the extent to which men in the Jordanian society, as well as other Arab societies, carry the burden of providing which could be a stressful task that puts pressure on Arab men. This can also be understood in terms of Butler's notion of gender norm subversion, where gender norms are represented in order dismantle them.

[115] This will be emphasised further in the section on Domestic Violence.

Another male role represented in the film is the maintainer of discipline. Through his violence towards his family, Abu Murad believes he is teaching his sons and wife discipline. More than once he alludes to using violence in order to maintain discipline. This also appears in previous research on Jordanian society, where maintaining discipline is one of the main male roles in the Jordanian family (Al-matalka, 2016; Jalal and Gabel, 2014; Al-Badayneh, 2012; Moghadam, 2004). Moreover, men appear in this film as maintainers of tradition. Nour's father insists that his daughter should get married and continue the social order and tradition. Abu Raed as well indicates such an idea by his assertive question that Nour wants to get married one day. This shows Jordanian men's tendency to maintain social traditions and even enforce them, as well as the power they hold in society.

Female gender roles, although represented differently in each film, they show mostly traditional role expectations, which correspond to Al-Badayneh's (2012) claim that gender roles in the Jordanian society are based on traditional social values. Women roles according to data on Jordanian social structure and gender roles, include caregiving by nurturing children and caring for and supporting the husband, as well as caring for the house by cleaning, cooking and serving (Al-matalka, 2016; Jalal and Gabel, 2014; Al-Badayneh, 2012; Moghadam, 2004). Moreover, according to Connell (1987, p. 223) "femininity is constructed in a way that defines the work of caring for other family members as womanly." Most women in *Captain Abu Raed* appear in domestic roles, Um Nour, Um Murad, and Um Mohammad all play the role of the nurturing and caring housewife. An image that also appears on Arab media in advertisements, where women are depicted in stereotypical homebound traditional roles (Al Rawi and Jbar, 2017).

Moreover, women are usually portrayed in Arab media as 'perfect' housewives and mothers who happily cook, clean and care for children and husbands (Al Rawi and Jabr, 2017). This film does not stray away from such representations. Um Murad, although a victim of domestic violence, happily cooks, cleans, and cares for her family. Um Mohammad as well, happily serves her husband and his guest, Abu Raed. Likewise, Um Nour, although from a higher social class and has the luxury of having a maid who does the job of cleaning and serving guests on her behalf, is always portrayed within the confines of the family caring for her daughter and her husband. All these stereotypical representations naturalize women's conformation to stereotypical gender roles and correspond to Al-Mahadin's (2003) claim of the continuous oppression of women in media representations, especially in the Jordanian context. This supports the claim that Arab media and cinema representations of women tend towards

the traditional roles of mother and wife neglecting women's professional social roles (Obediet, 2002, quoted in Ateya, 2014), except for Nour, the only woman with a profession in *Captain Abu Raed*.

The case is slightly different in *When Monaliza Smiled*; Monaliza, Afaf, Nayefh, Farah and Marah are all represented as working women. However, the film's representation of working women seems demeaning; their roles at work seem to be trivial and superficial. Farah and Marah are Monaliza's co-workers, when Abu Sarah introduces them to Monaliza he says: "Well, they sometimes work" while they are laughing. They are only seen laughing, eating and gossiping while at work. Nayfeh is represented as a loud, angry, scary, racist and rude woman who scares everyone in her department; she is on the phone most of the time and when depicted actually working she is rude to customers and does not seem to care about work.

Moreover, Monaliza does not seem to care about her job as much as she cares about Hamdi who she meets at work. Such representations of working women superficialise women's work and put them in stereotypical confines that harm the image of the Jordanian working woman. On the other hand, typical domestic female roles are represented in this film. Afaf, for example, is portrayed as a caring mother figure. After the death of their mother Afaf is the one responsible for Monaliza's rearing and caring while her father sits around doing nothing of the sort. Rudaina as well is depicted in a typical female role where she reveals that even after her husband disappeared she still washes his clothes and cooks him a meal every day in case he comes home, stressing that she still does what she used to do when he was around. Attending to children and men's needs as well as domestic unpaid work is typically represented as a woman role in this film. These representations suggest that woman are confined to conventional gender roles within the home, which allude to the nature of women's roles in the patriarchal Jordanian society.

The power structure that underlies gender roles indicates the traditional idea of men dominating and women conforming to their dominance (Beauvoir, 1978; Butler, 1999; Connell, 1987), an issue that can be seen in *Captain Abu Raed* through the relationships between men and women. The married women in the film, whether Um Murad, Um Mohammad, or Um Nour all seem to be dominated by their husbands, this is not only depicted by the storyline and events in the film but also through camera angle and movement choices which usually magnify the images of men in the film depicting them as more powerful. However, Um Nour tends to represent a different image where she can voice her opinion and even stop her husband from shouting when fighting with Nour. The composition of characters on screen in this family also

shows a more equal treatment of female and male characters, especially when the characters are represented as equals. For example, Um Nour and Abu Nour usually occupy a similar space in the frame with neither of them is overpowering or blocking the other person unless dramatically required. This could imply the influence of their social class, the upper class, as women in the working class are represented with total conformation to their husbands' dominance. For example, while Abu Murad is committing violence against Um Murad she says something and he beats her more because she raised her voice; in comparison when Um Nour shouts at her husband "enough!" he stops talking. Perhaps this indicates that a woman's place differs in different social classes, as it is suggested that a woman's place and role is defined by her husband and gender roles can differ in different class settings (Connell, 2005; 1987; Nordenmark, 2013). Masculine dominance is also apparent in *When Monaliza Smiled* through Nayfeh's conversation with Monaliza; Nayfeh indicates that her husband gave her permission to work after her daughters got married and her son graduated from high school. This representation suggests the extent to which men dominate in the Jordanian family and the position of the wife as dependent and weak in the neopatriarchal gender regime.

Gender roles are typically learned in a person's childhood through the process of gender socialization, through which individuals learn appropriate gendered behaviour suitable for their society (Stockard, 1999; Butler, 1999; Al-Badayneh, 2012). Gender socialization at childhood can be seen in *Captain Abu Raed* through different scenes. The group of children in the film which consists of about six boys and only two girls, are always playing the same games; the boys play football, which is considered a masculine sport, and the girls play together typical feminine games. This represents gender expectations and segregation in the playground which instils in children their roles and place in society. As far as film composition is concerned, the girls are always spotted walking behind the boys, never on their side or in front of them, which could indicate male dominance and could be a representation of the place of females in the society in contrast to their male counterparts. The boys are also taught to be providers; for example, Tareq works to provide for his family from an early childhood age.

Moreover, in one of the scenes from *Captain Abu Raed* Murad tells his brother that if he does not wash the chocolate from his face, he will remain a little boy and will never grow a moustache and be a man. This indicates the connection boys make with becoming men based on ability to grow facial hair[116]. Murad's father also stresses upon the idea of becoming a man and believes that by burning his son's hand he will teach him a lesson that will make him

[116] Moustache and masculinity are discussed further in the section on Masculinities

become a man, which in turn could instil the connection between being a man and being aggressive. Al-Badayneh (2012) claims that gender role expectations are learned at an early age, which is challenging for Jordanians who are expected to comply with such gender ideals. The film exemplifies this through Nour, who seems to have a difficult time accepting society's gender ideals which emphasise a woman's need for marriage. However, she concludes that something may be wrong with her and that is why she is not married yet. She conforms to gendered social expectations and does not feel at peace with her choice of delaying marriage. Traditional gender role expectations as represented in this film could pose challenges for Jordanian youth who are following up with global changes in youth life, as suggested in the next chapter by the audience reception of such representations in the films. This could be a way in which the director chooses to subvert the gender norms.

The concept of gender as a social construct could liberate Nour from social constrictions and role expectations, yet the filmmakers chose to represent this character as internally weak against the social expectations, perhaps in an attempt to show that even empowered women in the Jordanian society still have to challenge such gender ideals. This is evidenced from her conversation with Abu Raed showing her troubles with marriage especially that she is turning thirty; it also appears through the positioning of Nour in the frame and the high camera angle to show inferiority and weakness at times. She only seems to accept herself and her challenges through Abu Raed's reassurance that she must follow her heart instead of society. This could imply masculine dominance in the Jordanian society where women's place and self-worth is identified, influenced, and reassured by men; an issue which faces women in other societies as well (Connell, 1987; Bourdieu, 2001).

Stereotypically oppressive gender roles are reinforced on the Arab screen, whether in advertisements (Al Rawi and Jbar, 2017), in films (Obediet, 2002, quoted in Ateya, 2014) or in caricatures (Al-Mahadin, 2003)[117]; such roles are also at times reinforced in the Jordanian films chosen for this study. However, there is a tendency to empower women in *Captain Abu Raed* by depicting a female pilot, Nour, an issue I discuss later in this section. The above suggests that although the film represents two untraditional characters, Abu Raed and Nour, the majority of its characters, as well as those in *When Monaliza Smiled,* show manifestations of stereotypically traditional gender roles, which can reinforce traditional social roles for men and women and preserves the social structure and gender regime. However, this representation that

[117] Please refer to Chapter 3 for further information about gender representations in Jordanian and Arab media and cinema

conforms to gender norms can be read as an attempt expose the system for what it is in order to unsettle it and affect subverting it.

Division of labour is part of the gender regime of the family institution, as discussed in Chapter 2: Theoretical framework. There are two types for this division, domestic unpaid work often done by women and public paid work usually carried out by men (Connell, 1987; Nordenmark, 2013; Torabi, 2018). In *Captain Abu Raed* the division of labour appears to fall within the confines Connell (1987) and others suggest; Um Murad, Um Mohammad, and Um Nour are mainly depicted in the domestic sphere. Cooking, serving, childrearing and caregiving are recurrently represented as female labour. This is alluded to more than once in the film; for example, in a scene where Sameh is talking to Abu Raed he mentions how no one cooks like his late mother, which reveals the division of labour in the household. Likewise, Um Murad is seen cooking in the kitchen, representing women's unpaid labour in the Jordanian family. She is also portrayed as the main caregiver and the one responsible for childrearing. Moreover, Um Mohammad only appears in one scene in the film and her role is to open the door and serve tea to Abu Raed, her husband's guest. It is also worthy to note that while Um Nour does not perform the labour other women in the film do, she has a domestic worker who serves and cares for the house, and she is also a woman. Further, Um Nour's character provides care for her daughter and husband and supports them with her words. However, none of the male characters in the film are depicted working in the domestic sphere except for Abu Raed who lives alone and does not have a woman to attend to his domestic needs. The men are mainly portrayed in the public sphere, doing paid labour and providing for their families.

Likewise, in *When Monaliza Smiled* domestic unpaid work is usually portrayed as a woman's job, they are usually portrayed at the house and attending to housework; even if they have a role in the public paid sphere. Men in this film are usually depicted in the public sphere at work, in the street, at coffee shops, etc... They are never presented on screen attending to domestic work. Such representations reflect the situation of women in the Jordanian family, where traditional gender roles and a strict division of household labour prevails. Besides, such film representations correspond to research indicating that although women have moved to the public sphere, the division of labour has not been reconfigured to accommodate such changes, and women remain responsible for the domestic labour as well as their public labour (Connell, 1987; Nordenmark, 2013; Torabi, 2018). However, *Lissa Aisha* depicts a slightly different representation of division of labour. As the film discusses the life of an abandoned female - Aisha- it does not have a traditional family with traditional division of labour. However, when

Aisha lives with a group of female friends who are also orphans/abandoned, the division of labour seems to be distributed equally between the females in the household.

Arab media plays a significant role in empowering Arab women (Kay-Essien and Ismail, 2018; Rahbani, 2010). Women's empowerment in *Captain Abu Raed* is represented through Nour's character. She is a successful pilot with a strong personality and a tendency to lead an individualistic life. Her character is a representation of strength and power among Jordanian women. All the images of pilots portrayed on the screen show men as pilots and when women are shown as part of the crew, they are given the role of the flight attendant. Nour is the only female pilot shown in the film, and she is never presented in the same frame with male pilots who are usually walking together. This suggests that in the Jordanian society such a job is dominated by men, and that there is no place for a woman pilot among the group of male pilots. Representing a woman working in a male dominated job can be understood as a sign for empowering women in this film, showing that women in the Jordanian society are not only confined to the home anymore (Alfawaz et al., 2012). Yet, the representation of Nour as separate from her male counterparts can indicate power differentials and male dominance in the Jordanian gender regime.

All the other female characters in this film are represented in typical female roles, which is an issue Arab media faces, as strong independent women are usually the exception and the norm is representing women in the domestic sphere as mothers and housewives (Kay-Essien and Ismail, 2018; Rahbani, 2010). In this sense *Captain Abu Raed* does the same, where Nour's strong character is the exception and the other traditionally represented female characters are the norm. The only other time strength is seen in a female character is when Um Murad takes the decision to leave her abusive husband and save her family with the help of Nour and Abu Raed. However, the ability to take this decision came after pressure from Nour and Abu Raed who convinced her she will be safer with Nour and she will be doing herself and sons a favour by leaving Abu Murad. Women's representation as decision makers is only seen in this scene and through Nour's character, who is represented as a strong independent woman who takes her own decisions. This is evidenced through many scenes in the film, especially when she takes the decisions related to refusing her suitors, although her parents are in favour of accepting either of the marriage proposals.

Although *Captain Abu Raed* represents Nour as a pilot, the film still lacks focus on women's professional growth and abilities; the focus on Nour's character is rather connected to her personal life and struggles with society which weakens and troubles her in relation to marriage.

Moreover, the representation of Nour lacks focus on her as a professional, which also suggests the stereotypical nature of her representation. Likewise, in *When Monaliza Smiled* the spectator could associate Nayfeh's character with power and strength albeit in a negative sense, which does not empower her character. She is instead defeated by the end of the film, perhaps her husband's marriage to another woman is an attempt of the filmmakers to break her and show her defeated on screen a punishment she receives for deviating from her expected gender roles and characteristics. Such representations indicate that no matter how strong a Jordanian female can be, negative or otherwise, she is put back in her place and defeated by her misfortunes, whether the husband's second marriage in Nayfeh's case or the social and familial pressure to get married in Nour's case[118]. The representations of working women in the films shows limited female labour-force participation and autonomy, which is a characteristic of the neopatriarchal gender regime that Moghadam (2020) classifies Jordan within.

Due to the conservative nature of the Jordanian society, especially regarding gender regimes, representing gender roles in these Jordanian films can be read as a way of reinforcing the gender regime. However, if this representation is taken to a deeper philosophical level of analysis, it can be interpreted that through representing gender norms on screen there may be an attempt to expose the system that endorses and normalises the gender system. Thus, by doing so the films are attempting to subvert this patriarchal social structure through such representations.

Domestic violence

Domestic violence is a central issue in *Captain Abu Raed* represented through Abu Murad's physical abuse towards his family. From the first scene in the film, we hear him abusing his sons and wife from Abu Raed's open window. Abu Murad's physical abuse is represented throughout the film as an act of discipline, for example when he says while beating his children and wife "I'll teach you discipline." Men's violent behaviour as an act of discipline is supported by the patriarchal social structure which gives them power in the family and justifies using force in the process of discipline (Connell, 1987). In another scene the camera shows a miniature plane that Murad stole from a shop, then Abu Murad is shown heating a spoon on the stove; Murad comes into the house and finds his father in the kitchen. Abu Murad says: "Murad, you're my son and you know I love you. You're no longer a little boy, your sins are in the past. You're going to be a man." He then lifts his sleeve to show Murad burns his father left on his

[118] Gender roles are not clear in *Lissa Aisha;* thus, this film only appears in the division of labour discussion.

hand. Then he continues: “when I turned 13, my father taught me a lesson for stealing, every man has a point that defines him.” After that he forcefully burns Murad’s hand with the spoon he heated while Murad is resisting. In this scene Abu Murad did to his son what his father did to him, which indicates the long-term effects of violence and the reproduction of hegemonic masculinity through violence. Throughout the film whenever there is a domestic violence scene the colours are dark, lighting is low-key, and if music is heard it is usually painful and dramatic; this indicates the director’s intention of depicting the issue as unacceptable and problematic.

Moreover, Abu Murad’s words and actions indicate that violence is linked to becoming a man, representing, perhaps, a rite of passage. Such images of violence in the film are consistent with research suggesting that men in the Jordanian family, especially those acting as heads of household, are more privileged and powerful; they control women and children in the family and are given “the right to punish them for misbehaviour” (Al-Badayneh, 2012, p.370). Such beliefs could lead to the normalization of violence in the name of discipline, as represented in the film, which could lead to adverse results in society where there may be reproduction and transmission of a violent form of masculinity.

Domestic abuse in this film denotes the power relations in the family, and any indication of challenging the father’s power and the gender regime that endorses it is met with physical punishment. In a scene where Abu Murad is beating his wife because he believes she stole money from him, she is denying and begging him to leave her alone. He does not stop and shouts that she is a liar and a thief and says: “don’t raise your voice, you understand?” This suggests that by raising her voice she is challenging his masculinity and power, which is not acceptable. This form of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987) shows power abuse and any form of disobedience to Abu Murad’s power gives him ‘the right’ to abuse it. This speaks to a situation prevalent and sometimes acceptable in Arab societies, where violence is an exercise of masculine power and control (Al-Badayneh, 2012). Abu Murad exercises his power and imposes his authority by screaming loudly and being violent, while he does not accept his wife being loud. However, a Jordanian study found that this is sometimes socially accepted and that Jordanian women had a strong tendency to accept family violence as a form of discipline even in the case of physical violence towards women (Haj-Yahia, 2002). This suggests the prevalence of masculine dominance in patriarchal gender regimes (Bourdieu, 2001) and that violence is normalised and supported by some members of the society, indicating that representation of domestic violence in this film are not far from the reality of the Jordanian society.

Domestic violence is usually considered a private family matter in the Jordanian society (Al-Badayneh, 2012; Oweis, Gharaibeh, Al-Natour and Froelicher, 2009; David, 2018). In this film it is also represented as such, especially before Abu Raed decides to help the family. In the first scene of the film Abu Raed is trying to sleep but he cannot because Abu Murad, his next-door neighbour, is loudly fighting with his family and physically abusing them. Instead of helping, Abu Raed closes his window, which could be understood as an indication that family violence is a private issue. In the Jordanian society family reputation is very important and exposing one's struggle with domestic violence could ruin this reputation in society (Al-Badayneh, 2012); thus, Um Murad's choice of not seeking help could be justified as a form of protecting her family from social stigma while it is actually ruining her family's wellbeing. Moreover, there is no specific law in the Jordanian penal code that criminalizes domestic violence (Al-Badayneh, 2012; Oweis, Gharaibeh, Al-Natour and Froelicher, 2009; David, 2018), which could lead many women like Um Murad to give up on governmental help rather than considering it a safe haven.

Family violence as a private matter is also represented in a scene where Abu Raed finds Nour waiting in front of his house, he invites her in while Um Murad passes by with a bruised eye; Nour looks at Abu Raed wondering why, he whispers "her husband", implying that her husband beats her. The scene ends there, and the spectator can understand that this indeed is treated as a private family matter. However, Abu Raed later in the film does not treat it as such anymore and acts as a saviour by trying different ways to save the family. For example, when Abu Murad burns Murad's hand and Abu Raed finds that out, Abu Raed turns to the Family Protection Department to report this incident. While the Family Protection Department acts on this and two officers are sent to Abu Murad's house, they fail as Abu Murad shows them his other son to prove that Abu Raed is wrong, and his son's hand is fine. The film suggests that the Family Protection Department is not effective enough to solve the problem of domestic violence. It also suggests that the only way to solve this problem is escaping the home, as Abu Raed and Nour helped the family escape their abusive father. This situation is not helpful for building the society; rather than punishing the abuser the family is punished by having to change their life and flee their home and it is suggested by the ending of the film that Abu Raed is punished by getting killed by Abu Murad when he discovers he helped them flee. Such representations and the role of the Family Protection unit are discussed further in Chapter 6 through the audience reception of such matters.

There are some instances in the film where domestic violence is explained and sometimes justified to a certain extent from the abused themselves. For example, Abu Murad's alcohol abuse is sometimes indirectly used as a justification for his abusive behaviour, which appears when Um Murad directly says to Abu Murad "you're drunk, what a shame!" and then he gets angry and starts beating her. In another instance Abu Raed is sitting with Murad asking how his hand is doing after the burning incident then he says: "Your father wasn't like this in the past, I don't know what happened to him"; he then asks Murad about where his father is and Murad says: "out drinking somewhere, like always." This could suggest that the link between Abu Murad's violence and his alcohol problem could be read as an explanation. Moreover, in one of the scenes Murad is catching a glimpse of his father while working and trying to sell clothes in the street but nobody is buying, he has a look of frustration and Murad is shown with a look of sympathy. This might be significant as it might be a way to justify the abuse Abu Murad exerts on his family and give the audience a reason to sympathise with him; his job gets him frustrated and he returns home angry which could justify his abuse. This is also how Um Murad justifies the abuse by the end of the movie; when Nour is trying to convince her to escape her home and abuser to save her family Um Murad justifies that Abu Murad is abusive because he gets frustrated at work, to which Nour did not sympathise. Domestic abuse research in the Jordanian context also supports this view, where there is a tendency to blame the victim for the abuse and a lesser tendency to blame it on the abuser. Not only men support domestic violence, but women also accept it and justify it even when they are the victims (Al-Badayneh, 2012). The film's representation of violence in the family context, as seen from the above, is also an issue the Jordanian society suffers from due to beliefs that support and justify the use of violence, especially in relation to discipline. It also alludes to the patriarchal structure of the Jordanian society and male power, in this case power abuse.

Lissa Aisha as well depicts a scene where physical violence towards Aisha could be considered domestic. As Aisha is showing the filmmaker her old school, she says "when I was turning 7 there was a supervisor at the orphanage … she forbade me and another girl from food because we refused to fold the clothes, I was still 6 years old, and was feeling terribly hungry; our supervisors used to … leave the remaining of their food on the window's edge" She continues: "I jumped up and took the piece of bread they left and went running to my friend Suzan … and while splitting the piece into halves I found someone holding me up and throwing me away, it was the supervisor … She started kicking me towards a glass door till I hit it, it smashed over my body… I had around 12 stitches and it left a mark till today… I was given an unforgettable mark because I was hungry!!" This case of domestic violence was perpetuated

by a female, which indicates that both males and females are capable of physical harm and violence.

Sexuality

Sexual objectification of women and intensification of the male gaze are usually emphasised in Arab and Jordanian media (Al Rawi and Jbar, 2017; Al-Mahadin, 2003); which also appear in both *Captain Abu Raed* and *When Monaliza Smiled*. In the former this is seen through Sameh's gaze at women in the airport or in the street who are always represented as beautiful young women. Likewise, in *When Monaliza Smiled* both Monaliza and Rudaina who are young and single fall prey for the male gaze. In Monaliza's case the spectator can notice a man on his balcony checking Monaliza out while she is walking in the street. In Rudiana's case, she is opening her house door while a man passes by and his eyes are fixated one her, she turns to him and says "What?! Have you never seen a woman before?", which makes him stray his look and walk away. Strikingly, two women in the street disapprove of Rudiana's behaviour and possibly her loud voice and they are depicted gossiping about her. This supports Al-Mahadin's (2003) claim that women in Jordanian media are usually represented through two rigid dichotomies which either objectify or denigrate them; the conformist mother/housewife who is always represented in the private sphere and the 'sexy' single working woman who is represented in the public sphere and poses a threat to the morality of men by attracting their gaze. Through this it can be noted that some female characters in the films reinforce a type of negative representations of Jordanian women; while these portrayals could represent some members of the society many other diverse female entities are excluded. The representation of a fearless Rudaina while responding to the male perpetrator is a crucial aspect in the film that can represent an attempt to subvert the normative expectation of women's silence in cases of harassment.

The context of sexuality is depicted once again in *When Monaliza Smiled* through the story Monaliza tells Hamdi about how she has been known for not smiling at all in school, college, and at her first job after college. While a flashback is playing on the screen we hear Monaliza's voiceover saying "Right after I graduated, I worked as a secretary in a sewing factory. That wasn't a good idea at all." A flash back to her boss at work shows him saying "Monaliza, would it kill you to smile for clients? Cheer up dear, no need for more grumpiness." She continues reciting "three days later they replaced me with a girl who smiled from ear to ear, as for me they stuck me behind a sewing machine but even behind the machines it wasn't all about sewing, we were also required to smile and offer other services." The flashback scene shows

the boss talking to one of the girls behind the machine and she happily leaves with him to his office. From this it is understood that the other services Monaliza mentions are sexual services and that their boss exploits his position to get sexual attention from the female workers in the factory. For Monaliza to refer to sexual services as 'other services' is very telling of the taboo of discussing sexuality in Jordan. The veiling of language exposes gender mechanisms through which control over bodies and sexuality is exerted through a simple act of using symbols and metaphors to refer to the act of sex, stressing its status as a taboo topic to discuss in the Jordanian society. Sexual exploitation is also depicted in *Lissa Aisha*; Aisha and her friend Noura tell the story of a famous radio presenter who invited them to dinner when they asked him for help in finding a shelter after they left the orphanage. During the dinner he asks the girls to dance for money, Aisha says if they did not realise that he was exploiting them he might have gone further and sexually assaulted them. This represents an issue some women face in different societies where men tend to exploit their power to get sexual satisfaction from those who are less powerful.

In *When Monaliza Smiled,* sexuality is again veiled in the use of language regarding virginity. In a scene Afaf leaves her home alone for the first time in order to go to Suhail and tell him Monaliza does not want to marry him. On her way back, she passes by a butchery called "Ayed's Butchery", she seems very troubled and runs home, the shaky camera movement also shows her level of troublesome. The spectator is left to speculate what the story behind this is. Later in the scene where Monaliza tells Afaf about Hamdi and his intention to marry her the story behind Ayed is revealed. While fighting as Afaf refuses to approve Monaliza's marriage, the latter complains about her life and the troubles of running errands, referring to herself in third person she says: "Monaliza has to go far from here to get to a butcher because the butcher in the neighbourhood is the infamous Ayed, what do I have to do with you and Ayed?" Afaf shouts at Monaliza to stop talking, but the latter continues: "Enough already, what's the big deal? You fell in love with Ayed and he left you and married another woman and what now, it's been twenty years forget it already." Afaf slaps Monaliza on the face and cries: "Shut up! Don't ever mention this again. You have no idea what Ayed did to me (sad music plays in the background) You don't know what it means to love a man with all your heart, then this man takes the most precious thing you've got and tosses you to the dogs." It is understood from their conversation that 'the most precious thing' is a reference for Afaf's virginity. Here the spectator can understand the trouble behind Afaf's life, and it is referenced that this is the reason behind Afaf's fear of leaving her home; it could also explain why Afaf remained unmarried. The language choices and the veiling of the word virginity is very telling of the taboo status it is

given in the Jordanian society. It also alludes to the context of virginity in Jordan and how the loss of it outside wedlock could negatively affect women and their social status as well as self-image.

The issue of virginity is crucial in the Jordanian society as it is usually pinned as the cause of honour crimes (Eisner and Ghuneim, 2013; Mahadeen, 2013, 2017). Virginity is directly linked to the idea of family honour, reputation, and morality in the Jordanian context (Mahadeen, 2013); perhaps this is the reason behind Afaf's secrecy towards the issue as she would not want to be stigmatized by society or killed by a relative to preserve the honour and reputation of the family. This could also justify the weight the film gives to Afaf's virginity issue by depicting her as a traumatised and troubled character as well as an overprotective sister. Moreover, Afaf's reference to her virginity as 'the most precious thing' a woman has rather than saying the word virginity itself indicates the extent of conservatism in the discourse of discussing virginity and the female body in Jordanian media (Mahadeen, 2013). Such representations of virginity and the 'tabooisation' of it in Jordanian film could play a role in reinforcing negative gender representations; rather than empowering Afaf in the film as a strong woman who survived a sexual trauma, she is depicted as a victim who could not find ways to cope. Finally, while Afaf suffers because of losing her virginity, the man who took her virginity and caused her trauma, Ayed, simply continued his life and married another woman. This corresponds to a study concerning Moroccan cinema where it is claimed that "sexual behaviors outside of wedlock and extramarital sex, while prohibited religiously to all, are culturally only permitted to men" (Dinia and Kenza, 2016, p.50), as they are not required to prove virginity by having an intact hymen. The representation in this film and others suggests Jordanian and Arab cinemas' reinforcement of patriarchal power and dominance, as well as women being victims of the patriarchal system.

Representations of femininity and masculinity

Femininity and masculinity refer to "culturally desirable traits for males and females" (Hoffman and Borders, 2001 p. 40). Connell (1987) argues that the two concepts are relational, they exist in contrast to each other. Feminine and masculine traits govern 'doing gender' in a culturally specific way; the performance of being a man or a woman (Butler, 1999; Connell, 1987). The films' representations of femininity and masculinity seem to fall within traditional and usually stereotypical parameters. This analysis utilises Table 1: Traditional Feminine and

Masculine Personality Traits[119] to provide an analysis of representations of femininity and masculinity in the films.

In accordance with Table 1 feminine personality traits in *Captain Abu Raed* are represented along the lines of being nurturers, victims, fearful, dependant, physically weak, those who ask for advice, they get rescued, they are gentle and caring, they dominate the private sphere and are family oriented, they are tender, in need of protection, concerned with the quality of life, and are sexual objects. For example, Um Murad is represented as a family oriented, caring, tender, and nurturing mother; she takes care of her sons and treats them with gentleness and tenderness. She is also represented as a fearful victim who is dependent on her husband; she is usually seen dominating the private sphere, being physically abused by her husband and when Abu Raed and Nour help her flee home and leave it for her abusive husband, she is too scared and only takes the decision to flee after pressure from Nour and Abu Raed, who remind her that she is ruining her children's lives if she does not leave her husband. By doing so Abu Raed and Nour rescue Um Murad from her misfortunate life, which entails representing the traditionally feminine trait of getting rescued. Moreover, Um Murad is represented as a physically weak person who cannot stand up for herself and is always in need of protection; her son Murad tries to protect her from Abu Murad's abuse, but he fails. Murad also alludes to the idea of not leaving his mother alone in the house, which could be understood as form of protection. Further, while Abu Murad is represented as superior in the household, Um Murad is represented as an inferior follower always afraid to go against her husband's wishes, because if she does, he commits physical violence against her. This indicates traditional femininity representations in the film. Um Murad is not the only female character represented in traditional terms; Um Nour and Um Mohammad are also represented as such. Um Nour is portrayed as a caring, gentle, and tender mother who is always trying to make Nour feel better, while always supporting her husband's views of the importance of marriage for Nour's life. Apart from Nour all the women in the film are represented as dominating the private sphere and having no profession which means they are dependent on their husbands.

When Monaliza Smiled does not stray too far from representations of femininity in *Captain Abu Raed;* female characters are usually depicted with similar traits. For example, Monaliza is represented as an affectionate woman showing her emotions, especially when she is watching old Egyptian movies concerned with love and relationships and the emotions of love are clearly demonstrated on screen when she falls in love with Hamdi. She is also depicted

[119] Please refer to Chapter 2: Theoretical framework for the full table

as an emotional woman when Afaf tells her the story of Ayed and she starts crying. Moreover, in one of the scenes Asfour, a young boy from Monaliza's neighbourhood, sees Monaliza holding grocery bags on her way home, he insists that he carries the bags for her; while this could be understood as a chivalrous act it could also allude to ideas about women's physical weakness and their need for men's help. Another feminine trait that corresponds to Table 1 is 'get rescued', while this is not directly discussed in the film, the spectator could understand Hamdi's love for Monaliza as an act of rescue, as she laughs for the first time in her life when he tells her he loves her this could be seen as a form of rescue from her depressing life as well as rescue from spinsterhood as Hamdi proposes to Monaliza. Further, tending to physical appearance is cited as a traditional feminine trait in Table 1, this appears in *When Monaliza Smiled* when Monaliza begins developing emotions towards Hamdi and starts taking more care of her appearance.

Other female characters are also represented with traditional feminine personality traits. Afaf, for example, is represented as a caring nurturer. In the absence of their mother due to death Afaf nurtures Monaliza, she takes care of her and raises her as a child and even when Monaliza is older she still treats her like a child and is tentative towards her. Afaf is also represented as dominating the private sphere and a family-oriented woman. Throughout the film she is rarely seen in a public space, mainly due to her trauma which led her to have a phobia of leaving her home; this also represents her weakness, another traditionally feminine personality trait. Moreover, she is represented as a fearful dependant woman; she fears leaving her home and fears being alone, which is alluded to as a reason behind her refusal of Monaliza's marriage to anyone until the end of the movie when she overcomes her fears. Further, for most of the film she depends on Monaliza to run errands outside the home as she feared leaving. Another traditional feminine trait represented through Afaf's character is being a victim; her issue with virginity and the fear of society portrays her as a victim of the socio-cultural stigma related to the issue. Rudaina's character as well is represented in a traditional manner. When she tells Monaliza the story of her husband's disappearance and how she still waits for him every day although it has been seven years since he disappeared the spectator can sense traditional femininity personality traits such as showing emotion, being affectionate and tender. Such traits are accompanied with being sensitive, especially towards how Monaliza thinks about her. Rudaina is also represented as a sexual object through the scene where a man in the street walks by and keeps his eyes fixated on her until she shouts at him. Likewise, she is represented as a sexual object when Hamdi's cousin hits on her more than once and his eyes seem full of lust.

A different form of femininity seems to appear in *Captain Abu Raed* through Nour's character, while also being represented in traditional terms some of her attitudes and personality traits do not conform to what research suggests as traditionally feminine. For example, she is an independent woman tending to achievement and ambition, she performs rescue and dominates the public sphere. According to research (Al-Mahadin, 2003; Bem, 1985; England, Descartes and Collier-Meek, 2011; Hoffman and Borders, 2001; Hoffman, Hattie and Borders, 2005; Hofstede and Arrindell, 1998; Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 2010), such traits are considered traditionally masculine personality traits. Which suggests that a person can possess a range of personality traits and they are not confined to what is considered traditionally feminine or masculine. However, there are some instances where Nour's character is represented in traditional terms. She is represented as a victim of familial and societal pressure, which is clear from her conversations with Abu Raed especially when she tells him about her issues with marriage and the societal pressure connected to it. She is also represented as a person who asks for advice, in her case from a male; by conversing with Abu Raed, she gets reassurance from him that what she is doing is right, which indicates the influence of male opinion on females. Nour is also represented as a person concerned with the quality of life rather than material success, which is clear through her refusal of the wealthy suitors and telling Abu Raed that she wants to marry a person who understands her, and she can build a life with. In another instance in the film Abu Raed asks Nour "Are you afraid of flying?" to which she says she loves it, and Abu Raed has surprised facial expressions. This could make the spectator question if Abu Raed would ask the same question to a male pilot, it seems as if there is a preconception that women are expected to be afraid of flying planes. Such film representations indicate that even when a woman is portrayed in non-traditional terms, she is put back in her social place and role by representing her with traditional feminine personality traits and stressing these traits as feminine by representing the masculine in an entirely different way.

A slightly similar portrayal of deviant femininity is represented in *When Monaliza Smiled* through Nayfeh's character. Nyafeh is represented as an unemotional, tough and aggressive woman who inspires fear; everyone in her office fears her and she acts in a superior way although she seems inferior to her husband and submissive to his wishes. This appears when she tells Monaliza that her husband did not want her to work but eventually he gave her permission. Moreover, although most of her personality traits fall under the traditional masculine traits presented in Table 1, the filmmakers present her as emotional and tender in her personal life as she completely breaks down when her husband marries another woman. Representations of Nayfeh's character reinforces the position and place of women in Jordanian

culture where the filmmakers decide to 'put her back in her place' by breaking her down through her husband's cheating. Her representation in the film corresponds to Addoum's (2006) claim that a strong woman is a threat to the patriarchal social and family structure, thus, she needed to be controlled and her pride broken to reinforce patriarchal dominance and authority. Such representations of women reinforce the traditional image of the feminine and punish the deviant feminine personality like the case of Nayfeh. However, the representations of Nayfeh from this film and Nour from *Captain Abu Raed* although completely different share the idea that women can possess all sorts of personality traits and indicate that masculine and feminine personality traits are indeed socially constructed.

Representations of femininity in *Lissa Aisha* seem to be traditional. Although the orphan women in the film are depicted as independent, they still show indications of traditional feminine personality traits such as being fearful, ashamed, victims, tend to physical appearance, gentle and caring, family oriented and sexual objects. The quality of being fearful appears through the women's fear of social stigmatization due to being orphans, which makes them hid their real identities from society. This even appears as one of Aisha's roommates refuses to be filmed as she is afraid of society and being known as an orphan due to the social judgement towards this group. Fear is also depicted as a feminine trait when Aisha moves to her new house in which she lives alone, when the filmmaker visits her the next day of moving Aisha tells her she was afraid at night, but she kept fighting the feeling. She later explains that her fear of living alone is because she lives in a society that does not accept women living independently; thus, this could cause her issues.

Moreover, Aisha and her orphan friends seem to be ashamed of who they are, which could stem from society's stigmatization of orphans. Further, according to Aisha, the Jordanian society condemns her and her friends because they are orphans. Women who were raised in orphanages, women who live independently, and those who do not have a family, specifically a male family member who lives with them, are usually stigmatized by society as immoral women. Aisha and her orphan friends could be seen as victims of society's misunderstanding of orphans' lives, especially female orphans. Women in this film are also represented with traditional feminine personality trait of showing emotions; this appears clearly when Aisha is at university giving a presentation and she tells her colleagues that she was raised in an orphanage, the women in the room cry and show emotion, while the men seem to hold back their emotions. Furthermore, Aisha in this film is represented as tending to physical appearance, which is seen when she shows pictures to the filmmaker and says "look how thin I was! This is

how we – women – brag about our bodies." This indicates the prominence of the importance of women's physical appearance in the Jordanian society. Another traditional feminine trait represented in this film is women being sexual objects, which is clear from the story mentioned earlier in *Sexuality* section where the famous radio presenter sexually exploits the girls. Being gentle and caring also emerges as a feminine trait through Mama Jumana's gentleness and care towards Aisha and the way she addresses her. Finally, being family oriented is seen through Aisha's final remarks in the film as she says she eventually wants to settle down, get married, have children and a family of her own. All these representations indicate the prominence of traditional feminine personality traits in Jordanian films, and this can give an indication that perhaps in the Jordanian society women are expected to act within the confines of femininity, as *Lissa Aisha* is a documentary that shows Aisha's life as it is in society.

Masculine personality traits represented in the films are mostly traditional and correspond to the traits presented in Table 1. Masculine traits portrayed in *Captain Abu Raed* include physically strong, assertive, provider, problem solver, brave, protector, performs rescue, gives guidance, independent, inspires fear, aggressive, tough, superior, dominates the public sphere, and concerned with material success. For example, Abu Murad is represented as an angry man who is aggressive, tough, superior and inspires fear; this is clear from the scenes showing his violent behaviour and the physical abuse he exercises against his wife and sons. He is also represented as physically strong, as by the end of the film it is suggested that he kills Abu Raed with his bare hands. Another character with obvious traditional masculine personality traits is Abu Nour, who appears concerned with material success through his continuous efforts to marry Nour off to a wealthy man. Moreover, all the men in the film dominate the public sphere and are represented as providers, all the janitors, the taxi driver, the bus driver, and the pilots, apart from Nour, are men. The only man represented in the private sphere is Abu Mohammed who appears in one scene sitting in his house while his child, Tareq, works in the street to provide for the family. As for Abu Raed's character, while he appears as a caring, gentle and kind person, he is still represented in a traditional sense. He is portrayed as a problem solver who rescues people around him and gives advice; he tries to solve Tareq's problem of child labour by speaking to his father, but his effort is not fruitful. He also tries to solve Nour's problems by listening to her and giving her advice. Likewise, he helps Murad, his mother, and his brother by rescuing them from their abusive father, although he lost his life achieving this, which in turn makes him a brave person. Such representations of masculinity in the film reinforce the traditional image of a man and contribute to spreading traditional values connected to being a man in the Jordanian society.

In *When Monaliza Smiled* masculinity is mostly represented in a traditional way as well. All the men are represented in the public sphere, independent and as providers. Other traditional masculinity personality traits include being brave and performing rescue; this is represented early in the film when Monaliza's father rescues a foreign tourist from a thief. Performing rescue could also be seen represented through Hamdi as he rescues Monaliza from her depressive life and mental state. He is also portrayed as concerned with material success which can be seen through his story about leaving Egypt and his family in order to seek for a job that pays him better money. Another traditional personality trait emphasised in the film as masculine is being a sexual subject, as some men are represented hitting on women or gazing at them. However, there are some instances where traditional feminine personality traits are linked to a man. Abu Sarah, for example, has a fearful personality, he fears Nayfeh and is inferior to her although he is director of the department. Abu Sarah's character does not seem to fall within the confines of the traditionally masculine man in the Jordanian society. Such representations reinforce stereotypes linked to men in the Jordanian society and reinforce patriarchal social values.

Through the analysis presented above the current study found that masculine and feminine representations in the film reinforce patriarchal social structure and social values in the Jordanian society which contribute to the ongoing issue of Arab media reinforcing negative stereotypes of men and women. Feminine and masculine representations in this film conform and correspond to the list of traditional feminine and masculine personality traits in Table 1. This indicates the prominence of traditional representations of men and women in Jordanian films, which could allude to the situation in the Jordanian society itself and the neopatriarchal gender regime it endorses.

5.3 Conclusion

This chapter indicates the prominence of traditional portrayals of gender issues in the three Jordanian films selected for this study. Such representations include marriage and its importance as a social tradition, expectation, and ritual in the Jordanian society; the role and power of family in the Jordanian society; gender role expectations and the strict representation of the division of labour in the Jordanian family; domestic violence as an issue some families can face in the domestic sphere where males are usually the perpetrators; sexuality as a taboo topic to discuss in clear terms in Jordanian films; and femininity and masculinity representations that usually fall under the traditionally expected and accepted images of women and men in the films. All the previous, as discussed in this chapter, are in line with Moghadam's

(2020) classification of Jordan as a neo-patriarchal gender regime, where the patriarchal social structure and male dominance appear in different instances in the three different films. The films in this study can be read in two totally different manners; while the films can indicate a sense of reinforcing the gender regimes of the Jordanian society through depicting gender norms in a traditional sense, the representation of gender in the films can be understood as an attempt to expose the gender regime in order to subvert it and support change in social norms that control and create the gender regime. The next chapter investigates and analyses the audience reception of gender regime representations, indicating how a group of Jordanians perceive these issues in the films under study.

Chapter 6. Audience Reception of Gender Regimes Representations in Jordanian Cinema

6.0 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the current study in relation to a group of Jordanian university students' reception of gender regime representations in the three Jordanian films. To reiterate, gender regimes are defined as the current situation of gender relations in a given institution, and they are configured differently in different locations (Connell, 1987; Williams, 2002; Walby, 2020; Moghadam, 2020). Moghadam (2020) suggests three variations of gender regimes specific to the MENA region: neopatriarchal, conservative-corporatist, and a hybrid form. She classifies Jordan as a neopatriarchal gender regime, where patriarchal family laws that hinder women's autonomy are endorsed by the state, yet women have gained some social and political presence (Moghadam, 2020). Thus, this regime advocates a combination of modern and traditional patriarchal social and political practices (Sharabi, 1988)[120].

As discussed in the previous chapter, the three Jordanian films used in this study seem to endorse a neo-patriarchal gender regime, and general patriarchal social structure. The data discussed in this chapter was collected through focus groups and follow-up interviews conducted through fieldwork in Jordan[121]. This chapter addresses the following research questions: 1- How does a particular Jordanian audience respond to representations of gender regimes in Jordanian cinema? And what socio-cultural factors inform this reception? 2- What does this audience reception of Jordanian films suggest about perceptions of the situation of Jordanian gender regimes?[122] As explained in the Methodology chapter, after translation, transcription, and coding of the data on NVivo software, a thematic analysis process and an in-depth analysis of the collected data were conducted, through which I arrived at the findings of this study[123].

The chapter begins with opening remarks (section 6.1) where general observations concerning audience reception of Jordanian cinema in the current study are made. The rest of the chapter (section 6.2) is divided into five main themes concerned with the main gender

[120] Please refer back to Chapter 2 for a full discussion of gender regimes
[121] Fieldwork procedures are discussed in detail in Chapter 4: Research Methodology
[122] Please refer back to Chapter 1: Introduction, for the aims of this research
[123] Please refer to Chapter 4: Research Methodology for further details and a sample of thematic networks developed in the data analysis process

regime representations the participants of the study stressed upon in their discussion of gender in the films: 6.2.1 Reception of marriage representations, 6.2.2 Reception of gender role representations, power relations, and patriarchal structure in the family institution, 6.2.3 Reception of domestic violence representations, and 6.2.4 Reception of female sexuality representations. The chapter ends with a conclusion (section 6.3) that brings together the reception of gender regime representations and addresses whether a context of change regarding gender regimes can be demonstrated through participants' reception of the films.

6.1 Opening Remarks

It is claimed that Jordanian cinema is not widely popular among Jordanian audiences (Ciecko, 2009). To investigate this claim the current study takes two measures; fieldwork participants were asked to answer the following question as part of their PIS[124] "Do you watch Jordanian films? If yes, how often? If no, why not?" And a Facebook poll was created on a group for Jordanians asking, "Have you ever watched a Jordanian film?"[125] Fieldwork participants' response rate to this question was 95%; 30.8% answered that they had watched at least one Jordanian film, while 69.2% indicated they had never watched any. Responses to the Facebook poll came from 158 people (67.7% females and 32.3% males); 70.8% (112) of those who participated answered "No" (70.5% were females and 29.5% were males), while 29.2% (46) answered "Yes" (of whom 60.9% were females and 39.1% were males). This data indicates that most Jordanians participating in this study do not watch Jordanian films, which supports the claim of lack of popularity and raises the question of why such an issue exists[126].

Most fieldwork participants indicated that the lack of popularity is due to lack of marketing. For example, WMS-40F-6 stated, "Most Jordanian cinema productions are unknown, and we barely hear about Jordanian films, our films are not marketed well that's why they do not have an audience." CAR-27M-5 also said, "There's no marketing or support from the Ministry of Culture and the government does not care about the film industry." This is contrary to literature discussing the role of the RFC as a leading government agency working to support Jordanian cinema production. However, as the literature indicates, the efforts and influence of the RFC are not very fruitful due to little funding from the government (Ciecko, 2009; Potter, 2015). Further, LA-29F-4 said: "I never thought Jordanian films exist, I usually

[124] A sample of the Participant Information Sheet is provided in Appendix 2
[125] Details of the Facebook poll are provided in Chapter 4: Research Methodology
[126] This question is beyond the scope of the current study, although some remarks are presented. This question is part of the recommendations for further research on Jordanian cinema, presented in Chapter 7: Conclusions.

watch Hollywood or Egyptian films." These films are cited as the most popular among Jordanian audiences (Ciecko, 2009); the dependency on such films could justify the lack of popularity of Jordanian films as well as the modest number of Jordanian film productions per year.

The Facebook poll generated some comments that did not directly link to the lack of popularity of Jordanian films; some commented that they watched a couple of the films selected for this study, *Captain Abu Raed* and *When Monaliza Smiled*. However, one interesting comment stated: "Are there any Jordanian films?" which suggests the lack of Jordanian audiences' awareness of the existence of Jordanian films. The current study, by screening and discussing a selection of Jordanian films with a group of Jordanians and researching Jordanian cinema aims to spread awareness regarding Jordanian cinema and offer the chance of watching these films in an environment that supports conversing and thinking about the films and what they offer for the spectator, especially regarding gender regime representations.

The focus group discussions and interviews indicate that although participants are underexposed to Jordanian films, due to their lack of popularity, they had strong opinions and perceptions of what the films entail. The data pertaining to the reception of Jordanian films was collected by asking the study participants to discuss their answers to the following question after watching each film: *What do you think about the film? Please support your opinion with examples from the film*[127]. The fieldwork generated rich data discussing the intersection between Jordanian cinema and society. This intersection is important to understand the findings of the current study and why the film and reception analysis focus more on the stories and conversations in the films and their relation to society, rather than focusing on the stylistics and artistic form of the films.

One of the prominent ideas discussed in the reception of the films of the current study is that Jordanian films reflect Jordanian society and social issues[128]. For example, discussing *Captain Abu Raed,* CAR-3F-1.2 stated: "I felt the film was a mirror to the actual society to a certain extent." Two other participants from the same group agreed. CAR-7M-1.2 said: "the film handled many issues in one context but in general all the issues the film dealt with exist in society." CAR-8F-1.2 added: "I agree, the movie discussed many issues that all exist in our

[127] The follow-up questions are provided in the Appendix 1: Focus Group Interview Guide

[128] The social issues identified by participants in their reception of the films are linked to marriage, gender roles, power relations, patriarchal social structure, domestic violence, female sexuality, and femininity and masculinity, which are discussed respectively in this chapter.

society." There was a tendency from CAR-16F-7, discussing the same film, to expect the film to discuss all social issues; however, CAR-1F-7 countered this opinion saying: "this movie has a goal, it is not trying to show everything in society. The director wanted to shed light on certain issues or problems in the society, not on everything." The participant acknowledges that the film is a work of fiction that sheds light on social issues existing in Jordanian society. Although she stresses that the film does not discuss all aspects of the society, she saw that the film plays a role in illustrating and representing social issues. Moreover, CAR-18F-7 saw the intersection between the film and society from another perspective, she stated: "the dialogues between children reveal the ways of thinking among people in the Jordanian society."

Discussing *When Monaliza Smiled,* WMS-22M-3 stated: "The film reflects our society in general, even though the film is a bit old it still reflects today's society." WMS-21M-3 also said: "I liked the story of the film; it discussed a specific idea but while doing so it discussed so many other ideas about our society." Moreover, WMS-41F-6 stated: "I think the film reflects the actual Jordanian society and life in Jordan…" To which WMS-40F-6 added: "I agree, even cultural issues in the film represented our society, everything was reflective of the Jordanian society…" WMS-2F-1.3 also stated, "Although the film is meant to be funny and some scenes are exaggerated, the film reflects people in the Jordanian society, especially the working and middle classes." Further, as *Lissa Aisha* is a documentary film, participants also tended to conclude that it reflects Jordanian society especially regarding the situation of orphans and abandoned children. For example, LA-14M-2 claimed, "This film reflects the hardships and the lives of orphans in our society."

Such claims of intersections between film representations and Jordanian society correspond to the claim that cinema is a form of mass communication that "helped to shape the way we live… The content of film can both 'reflect' and 'shape' society" (Jowett & Linton, 1980, p. 67). Thus, film has become "an overarching social text" that the audience use "to evaluate their lives" (Danesi, 2001, p. 206). These responses are also in line with the notion that a society's gender role patterns and gender regimes are usually represented in the society's artistic and popular culture forms such as films (Hofstede et al., 2010, p.138). The reception analysis presented in this chapter reveals intersections between Jordanian films and society from the audience's perspective, especially focusing on the gender context of the films and the society.

6.2 Audience Reception of Gender Regime Representations in Jordanian Cinema

The reception investigation is informed by the participants' claims, presented earlier, of intersections between Jordanian films and society, as well as by the theoretical framework and literature review[129] discussing both the process of audience reception and the concept of gender regimes as well notions of gender as a performed social construct and gender roles as social practices. The analysis is also informed by the context of gender and gender regimes in Jordanian society[130]. Thus, the participants' reception of representations of marriage, gender roles, power relations, patriarchal social structure, domestic violence, female sexuality, and femininity and masculinity are a key plank for the analysis of audience reception of gender regime representations in Jordanian films. Moreover, the film analyses presented in Chapter 5 inform the discussion and analysis of the participants' responses.

6.2.1 Reception of representations of marriage

As discussed in Chapter 5, marriage is a prominent theme that appears strongly in the selected Jordanian films; thus, it is not a surprise that the study participants picked up on this topic while discussing gender in the films. Research indicates that this practice is highly significant and encouraged in Islam as it is part of the social and religious order of the society (Abdul-Rauf, 1995). As Jordanian society has a 94% Muslim population[131], the value of marriage could stem from its significance in Islam. However, Christian participants also stressed its importance. This could explain why in the films and in participants' responses this was a major theme. Moreover, as explained in the film analysis presented in the previous chapter[132], both *Captain Abu Raed* and *When Monaliza Smiled* discuss marriage as a central issue, which explains why participants noted this theme in their reception. Besides, marriage relationships as portrayed in the films represent gender relations and the patriarchal power structure related to this relationship. The discussion of marriage in this section is mainly focused upon participants' reception of the importance of marriage, parental involvement in marriage and arranged marriage, love and compatibility in marriage, age of marriage, and implications of patriarchal ideology.

While discussing gender issues in the films, participants emphasised the importance of marriage in Jordanian society. For example, rationalising Aisha's hesitation towards marriage

[129] Presented earlier in Chapter 2
[130] Presented in Chapter 3
[131] Please consult Chapter 3: Jordanian Cinema in Context for further context on the Jordanian society
[132] Please refer to Chapter 5: Representations of Gender in Jordanian Cinema

LA-33F-4 stated with an assertive tone: “A lot of people live without getting married, however, our religion urges us to get married and that's why it's important.” Here she stresses that the importance of marriage in society stems from its status in religion, in her case Islam. This is also shared among Christians in Jordanian society; CAR-1F-7, a Christian participant, while discussing marriage in *Captain Abu Raed* claimed: “although marriage is important in Christianity, in today’s Christian society in Jordan many young people are reluctant to get married and many of them abandon the idea.” Their words indicate the link between marriage and religion and suggest that religious teachings give value to the institution of marriage, whether in Islam or Christianity. Religion, thus, could be inferred as a factor that informs participants’ reception of gender regimes, specifically relating to marriage in this case. Moreover, the context of participants here informed their reception of the film and made them connect film representations to their own context, which is in line with Staiger’s (1992; 2000; 2005) argument of the confluence between audience, text, and context in creating meaning for films and how a spectator’s context and background play a major role in the process of film reception.

Marriage was discussed in FG7 as something inevitable in Jordanian society, which can explain the films’ attempt to represent people seeking marriage. While discussing Nour’s marriage suitors in *Captain Abu Raed*, there was a prolonged conversation regarding the importance of marriage in society. That marriage is an expectation for people in Jordanian society seems to be a thought-provoking issue for some participants while for others it seems to be an accepted norm, which reflects the variations of audience interpretations of marriage in the film and society. Below is an excerpt from this conversation:

> CAR-17F-7: In our society women must always have suitors otherwise people will think there's something wrong with them.
>
> CAR-1F-7: I wonder why our society always expects women to get married and have kids; many of my female friends chose not to get married and they are very happy with their lives. Why does our society always connect happiness for women with marriage, a lot of women do not find happiness in marriage. Why is happiness connected to a man who would control everything in a woman's life, maybe she's not a domestic person. I am not a domestic person at all, if I was living abroad, I would've never gotten married.
>
> Arene (The researcher): Is marriage essential in Jordanian society?

CAR-1F-7: Yes, you must get married in our society you are always expected to do so.

CAR-16F-7: Yes, that's true.

CAR-18F-7: I agree!

CAR-17F-7: Marriage is inevitable in our society, but it is a good thing.

CAR-1F-7 and the women who agreed with her seem to be critical of the pressure society exerts on people by having marriage as an important social expectation. With a tone of voice filled with frustration, she is questioning the importance of marriage and its connection to women's happiness in an attempt to perhaps challenge the tradition. Moreover, CAR-16F-7 is a 27 year-old single woman who throughout her reception of the film, especially when discussing Nour's challenges with marriage, stressed that society and her family exert too much pressure on her to get married, which makes her identify with the character of Nour and understand why Nour feels that something is wrong with her because she does not want to get married yet; it is society and the family according to this participant that makes a woman think this way, as women are expected to get married at a certain age. The representation of Nour's issue with marriage made this participant react to the film in a certain way reflecting on her own problems with marriage; her reception and process of creating meaning for the film shows a confluence between the audience, text and context (Staiger, 1992; 2000; 2005). In audience reception research this identification indicates that the media text does not have immanent meaning and that a spectator's identity background and complex cultural, social, political and economic conditions play a role in their reception of a media text (Staiger, 1992).

The participants in FG7 are all married women, except for CAR-16F-7, which indicates that their background can have an influence to their responses. In the case of CAR-1F-7 being a married woman did not deter her from questioning the importance of marriage, also similarly 16F although a single woman shared intersections of opinion with 1F. Their responses correspond to Butler's notion of subverting gender norms, where through questioning such an important ideal in society they seem to challenge the gender regime that enforces such ideals. Through challenging the social ideal it can be read that they are subverting gender norms. However, it seems that for CAR-17F-7 her status as a married woman influenced her outlook on marriage as an unquestionable, inevitable, and good tradition and social practice. CAR-18F-7 although briefly agreed with 1F with a frustrated tone of voice, did not voice her opinion

clearly on this matter, suggesting that society's normalisation of the importance of marriage sometimes goes unchallenged.

Moreover, in his follow-up interview FI-7M, who participated in FG1.1, FG1.2 and FG1.3 discussing *Lissa Aisha, Captain Abu Raed, and When Monaliza Smiled* respectively, also disagreed with the level of importance given to marriage; in his follow-up interview he stated "I don't know if I want to get married, marriage is a big responsibility that not everyone wants to carry. I don't like the idea of marriage being an essential thing in our society, it should be a choice not an expectation; this puts extra pressure on youth who don't want marriage." His view of marriage emphasizes the importance of marriage in the films and society; however, he personally stands against such level of importance. This indicates the pressure some Jordanians feel regarding marriage being an expectation, an issue Nour in *Captain Abu Raed* struggles with. This participant's disagreement with the prominence of marriage in Jordanian society corresponds to 1F and 16F; it reveals a deeply entrenched sense of scrutiny towards the gender regime that enforces gender ideals on the society. By being critical of this issue 7M subverts the significance of this ideal. Yet, he only discussed this issue in his follow-up interview, rather than voicing his opinion in the focus groups. This reveals a conformity to the social order within the group, perhaps indicating social pressure to conform to gender norms, although internally the participant challenges this norm.

In the excerpt from FG7 above, by questioning the level of importance given to marriage in the film and Jordanian society, CAR-1F-7 emphasized the importance of marriage and how it is considered the road to women's happiness. This is represented in *Captain Abu Raed,* as Nour's parents stress that they want her to be happy and that this is the reason behind their continuous pressure on her to get married. Both the film and the spectator's reception reveal society's belief of finding happiness in marriage. However, CAR-1F-7 refuted this and sounded critical of the matter. She linked marriage to domesticity and masculine control, which could reflect the status of women and roles in marriage. This participant's link between marriage and masculine control is suggested as an issue that faces women in patriarchal societies, as according to Connell (1987) the husband's power usually defines the wife's place which indicates masculine dominance in the marriage relationship. By discussing this issue CAR-1F-7 attempts to disagree with the significance of marriage whether in the film or in society; her position as a married woman does not seem to influence her opinion on the importance of marriage unlike other married female participants. Although this participant seems to construct a view of marriage as something that restricts individual freedom, in another Jordanian study

on the attitudes of Jordanians towards marriage, participants did not believe marriage restricts freedom and indicated that marriage is an important social practice. However, it was noted that most participants in that study do not wish to remain unmarried for reasons including sexual satisfaction rather than the sacredness of marriage (Al-matalka, 2016), perhaps due to sexual activity out of wedlock being a forbidden sin in Islamic religion (Abdul-Rauf, 1995).

Butler's (1999) conception of compulsory heterosexuality can be linked to the current discussion of the position of marriage as an important gender norm that regulates social life. The necessity to get married is enforced socially through some participants, as if social subjects are obliged to follow this path and those who challenge this gender norm in order to dismantle it and subvert it are either challenged by other participants who conform to the gender order or refrain from voicing their opinions in a group setting. This reveals that gender norms are constantly imposing on people what their gender identity should look like and how they must act in society. The gender norms manifest themselves in the conversation through conservative views; however, they are at times subverted by opinions that do not conform to the gender regime. The gender regime in this case is scrutinised in an attempt to subvert ideals that affect individual autonomy and freedom of choice.

Discussing the representation of marriage in *Captain Abu Raed* in FG1.2, marriage was considered an accepted norm by participants:

CAR-9F-1.2: Marriage is the norm; we are not against it…

CAR-6M-1.2: Yes, it is the norm.

CAR-9F-1.2: But I felt that the filmmakers wanted to send us a message, that whatever you achieve as a woman, you still have a deficiency if you are not married.

CAR-8F-1.2: Yes!

CAR-3F-1.2: Yes!

CAR-4F-1.2: I agree!

CAR-9F-1.2: This is the point I criticize about the film

Marriage here is perceived as an important social ritual. However, although CAR-9F-1.2 conforms to the notion that marriage is the norm in Jordanian society and assures she is not

against it, she criticises that the film demeans women by emphasising their need to be married no matter how successful they are. This proposes that a woman's place in Jordanian society is highly affected by whether she is married or not; marriage seems to be an achievement that exceeds all other achievements a woman can attain. I reiterate here that all those who agreed with CAR-9F-1.2 were educated females (8F and 3F are single, 4F is married); their position as women with a degree of autonomy may have influenced their reception. This implies that female participants in this study tend to distance themselves from the negative representations of women in this film and the negative social beliefs regarding women's place in society. On the other hand, male participants' detachment from this conversation, and especially 6M's moment of silence which can be read as a sign of disagreement (or disengagement) from 9F's claim, indicates that they may be unaware of women's issues or perhaps they agree with and endorse the gender regime that supports the representation of women being deficient if not married. The females' reactions suggest subversion of the gender norms which can be read as a positive step towards change in the Jordanian society regarding female disempowerment, which can be beneficial for subverting and changing the gender regime. Conversely, the males' silence towards the issue reveals the acceptance of the normalization of women's degradation in Jordanian films, which can be a result of the patriarchal ideology and a gender regime that endorses it. The heterosexual matrix Butler (1999) discusses appears to influence the position of men and women in this study, by imposing on them a gender ideal where male dominance is prevalent and patriarchal ideology while challenged and subverted by women is endorsed by men's silence.

Although some participants had different views, the inevitability of marriage according to CAR-17F-7 is "a good thing". For this participant, and others throughout the study, marriage is the norm and the basis for society. This underscores its significance for continuing the social order and suggests that the films' conservative representations do not stray from representing the Jordanian gender regime and enforcing it, even when negative female images are exemplified. As displayed in Chapter Five, through the use of music, lighting, camera movement and angles among other film visual language choices, in *Captain Abu Raed*, *When Monaliza Smiled*, and *Lissa Aisha* marriage is represented as an inevitable matter, as well. This points towards the intersection between the films and the society, especially since the current study's participants emphasised this and related such representations to their own context. Yet, the reading of the films as forces subverting gender norms related to marriage manifests in some audience responses as seen above, especially by women participants.

In FG1.2 discussing marriage in *Captain Abu Raed,* participants linked the importance of marriage to loneliness especially for women, which indicates their position in the gender regime as having limited autonomy and mobility (Moghadam, 2020). The conversation goes as follows:

> CAR-6M-1.2: I see that many older women after they are 45 or 50 years old live a tragic life alone. No one takes care of her, she is lonely, she has nothing to do, and she has no goals. This is what I've personally noticed.
>
> CAR-1F-1.2: Do you think it's the same for men?
>
> CAR-6M-1.2: Yes, I do!
>
> CAR-1F-1.2: But why? For example, I am married, and I have four children and eventually my children might get married and either me or my husband will die first. In my opinion, we have convinced ourselves that without marriage there is loneliness. I don't think this is true.

It is noted here that CAR-25M-5 discussing the same film also stressed loneliness as an issue for unmarried people stating with a sympathising tone of voice: "Abu Raed was lonely after his wife died and he remained lonely." Although CAR-6M-1.2 hesitantly agreed that men also experience loneliness if they do not get married, most of the conversation was targeted towards women and their position as lonely and weak without marriage. Perhaps his answer to the question raised about men's situation was an influence of groupthink to eliminate any criticism to his opinion, as throughout the focus groups and follow-up interview this participant does not seem to put men and women in the same place and is noted for voicing opinions that endorse the patriarchal social structure and masculine domination. CAR-1F-1.2 in the current conversation raised her question in an attempt to expose the gender regime CAR-6M-1.2 endorses. This appeared in the shared focus groups the two participants were part of. They are noted for challenging each other's opinions in different conversations, 6M as a force endorsing the gender regime and 1F as a force subverting it.

Further, CAR-1F-1.2 did not agree with the idea of loneliness without marriage; however, CAR-4F-1.2 interrupted 1F arguing this and making a distinction between women in urban and rural areas, stressing:

> There are many different communities and classes in Jordan. CAR-1F-1.2, you are speaking about an educated woman living in Amman. For example, for the villagers it's different; you really have to get married. Whatever the circumstances, marriage is the best choice for women, otherwise they will be alone and live with hard conditions. It's different. Maybe in different parts of society women can depend on themselves but in others they cannot.

This claim implies the effect of context on the reception of gender issues in the film. CAR-4F-1.2 identified as living in rural Jordan while CAR-1F-1.2 identified as living in urban Jordan; thus, their view of women's need for marriage is informed by their different backgrounds and may have biases based on the variations of their life situations. Both participants did not assign a social class in their PIS's; however, class variations are cited by the participant as a factor in that affects the different ways of practicing the gender regime. Moreover, CAR-4F-1.2's accusatory tone suggests that CAR-1F-1.2 is perceiving the issue from her own 'privileged' point of view, disregarding the society-wide differences between belonging to rural or urban Jordan and how women's situations differ in different Jordanian communities. While CAR-1F-1.2's opinion seems to be more progressive in discussing the gender regime, CAR-6M-1.2 seems to have a more traditional outlook; he completely agreed with CAR-4F-1.2's opinion and sounded forceful in his opinion, adding that women in almost the entire society cannot depend on themselves, which can support the claim of groupthink influence made earlier, as well as endorsing patriarchal ideology.

The earlier claim that women need marriage to live comfortably and 'decently', did not extend to men. This could denote the male dominated structure of the Jordanian gender regime, where women are perceived as weak and dependant on men[133]. Although some participants in this group had progressive and subversive views especially concerning women and marriage, others remain entrenched in more traditional and patriarchal mind-sets, which shows the diversity of ideologies among this group of participants and indicates the diversity in the Jordanian society itself. The arguments here imply that there may be variations within the gender regime of a society, where some communities may be more progressive and 'modernised' than others. Thus, Moghadam's (2020) classification of Jordan as a neopatriarchal gender regime, with both modern and traditional social structures, may be observed as valid.

[133] An issue discussed further in the analysis of the films in the previous chapter and later in the reception analysis of the current chapter.

As marriage is an expected social norm, participants implied that this puts pressure on Jordanian youth and linked this especially to Nour's character in *Captain Abu Raed*. As discussed above, CAR-16F-7 shared her experience with societal and familial pressure to get married, which made her identify with Nour's character and the challenges she faces due to this pressure. The data analysis also shows that there is pressure on both women and men in Jordanian society to get married. For example, CAR-9F-1.2 stated:

> The film also showed two different types of women; the oppressed woman who is defenceless, and the educated woman who is free and has the ability to make decisions but she still lives in a society where her family are still pushing her to get married when they remind her of her age, being 30 years old, as if something is wrong with her because she is not yet married. They show that even when a woman develops herself and reaches high ranks and positions, there is still a lot of pressure from the society to get married and have a family.

Her opinion and the film's representation of women suggest that educated and career-oriented women are free and capable while women from other backgrounds might not share the same privileges in life, a view that seems to shed light on categorizing women's worth in society in an attempt to subvert the gender norms. However, the shared point here between different women in society is the expected need and pressure for marriage. CAR-1F-7 also stressed the pressure on Jordanian women to get married; she said, "women in our society always suffer from almost the same issues, for example we are always expected and pressured to get married." Such reception of marriage in the film suggest that the film's representation of marriage may be reinforcing negative ideas about female worth and its link to marriage; an important attainment in woman's life is believed, according to the study participants and the film, to be marriage above all. This view is in line with Ateya's (2014, p.76) who states that such representations reinforce "the sexist idea that women's value and aspirations are achieved through marriage." This focus on discussing issues related to women and the enforcement of marriage by the gender regimes can be read as a subversive force that challenges this regime. Societal pressure to get married is also applicable to men according to the study participants; CAR-25M-5 also stated:

> I think Nour wanted to get married, everyone wants to get married and I don't think anyone would argue with that, but society pressures us to get married at a certain age; at 23 pressure on women to get married increases. Even for men it is almost the same. For example, I am 25 and my parents and people I know always try to pressure me to get

> married. Even one of my professors at university keeps asking me when I will get married and I always ask him to change the subject. I don't want to get married now I think I am still too young for marriage, maybe I will think about this when I'm 35. It's the same with Nour she didn't want to get married at that point although her suitors had good degrees and a lot of money

His response to the film shows the level of importance marriage holds in the Jordanian society as well as the preconception that everyone wants to get married, and how such ideas are strongly reinforced in the film. Such a preconception and the film's reinforcement of it can be an agent that exerts pressure on Jordanians to seek for marriage. It is noted that CAR-25M-5's issue stems from the pressure to get married by a certain age not from the idea of marriage itself, which he suggests is the 'natural' social order. In the Jordanian society the median age of first marriage is 27 for males and 22 for females (Sieverding, Berri and Abdulrahim, 2018). This explains the film's representation of Nour's troubles with marriage and societal pressure as she is approaching 30 years old. This also indicates that in their reception of marriage in this film participants tended to be critical towards the pressure society and family impose on people to get married at a certain age as well as the film's representation of this idea. The above also reveals that pressure to get married after a certain age is an issue for Jordanian youth of both genders. Moreover, research claims that Jordanians' delay of marriage is due to insufficient income and the wish for educational and career fulfilment before marriage (Sieverding, Berri and Abdulrahim, 2018; Salem, 2014). This can explain why a group of Jordanian university students believe that societal expectations to get married at a certain age can cause pressure on Jordanian youth. It also supports the argument that at some instances participants tend to subvert the gender regime by being critical of its ideals.

Pressure to get married is not only societal, but it was also discussed by participants as familial. This is represented in *Captain Abu Raed* through the pressure Nour's parents exert on her to get married, as discussed in Chapter 5. CAR-17F-7 and CAR-25M-5 both indicated that family members put pressure on them to get married while they refused, which shows that both genders suffer from this issue. Both of them had a frustrated tone of voice speaking about this subject, indicating the effects such an issue can have on Jordanian youth. Moreover, parental involvement in marriage is the norm in the Jordanian society, where marriage is usually arranged by the parents of the groom and the bride (Adely, 2016; Alfawaz et al., 2012). In their reception of the scenes from *Captain Abu Raed* where Nour had suitors proposing to her

through her father, some participants challenged the tradition of arranged marriage in Jordanian society. For example, with a confident tone CAR-25M-5 stated:

> I am against arranged marriage, I don't think it is possible to know who a person really is if you don't know them for a while before thinking about marriage, it is really hard in our society to end the marriage during the engagement period, that's why I prefer knowing the person for some time before getting engaged.

Criticising the long-standing tradition of arranged marriage evokes subversion and changes in thinking about gender regimes among educated Jordanians, particularly supported with the views of the current study participants towards marriage and family institutions. In the same focus group, CAR-26M-5 referred to the film itself to challenge and subvert this tradition, he stated:

> Nour challenged traditions and customs of marriage in our society to be able to find a husband who she could build a good life with. She did not conform to her family's wish of arranged marriage. If she did, she would've probably gotten divorced a year or two after, and if she had kids, they would not have a good life because they would be divided between the mother and the father. I think she wanted to marry someone she loves so their relationship could last, and their marriage would flourish.

Here he connected the flourishing of marriage to choosing the partner without the family pressure of arranging the meeting between the partners. Rather both participants believe a woman and a man should meet outside the confines of family arrangement. The above indicates that although marriage in the Jordanian society is usually arranged between families (Adely, 2016), these participants are against this tradition as it could limit their choices and lead to an unsuccessful marriage relationship. The connection made to Nour's situation implies the influence of film representations on reflecting upon a spectator's own life and perspectives, supporting the argument of the confluence between the audience, text, and context. This also corresponds to Butler's notion of subverting gender norms, where these male participants are attempting to subvert the concept of arranged marriage by being critical of its representation in the film and how this manifests in society. Both men and women in the current study appear to have opinions that are critical of gender regimes to varying degrees, which indicates a shared subversive force that can influence the position of some gender norms in the Jordanian society.

In their reception of the films, participants stressed the importance of love and understanding between the husband and the wife. This was presented in FG4 discussing *Lissa Aisha* where LA-37F-4 spoke about the marriage relationship and stated, “It should be a relationship built on sharing responsibilities and understanding.” Love and understanding were considered the basis for a ‘perfect’ marriage relationship according to CAR-26M-5 who stated: “The film presented a perfect marriage relationship, Abu Raed and his late wife; even after she died he still remembered her every day and she was still a big part of his life, this shows that they lived through a perfect marriage built on love and understanding.” Besides, in the following example participants from FG5 discussed the marriage relationships in *Captain Abu Raed* comparing Abu Nour and Um Nour’s relationship to Abu Murad and Um Murad’s. corresponding and supporting the previous statement the following participants stress the importance of understanding between the couple as follows; they continue the conversation stating:

> CAR-24M-5: This is contrary to Abu Murad and Um Murad's marriage; she struggled in her life because of him, just because he was poor, he didn't show her any love and there was no understanding between them.
>
> CAR-25M-5: The only couple we actually saw in the film who were understanding each other were Abu Nour and Um Nour; their conversations were full of give and take and this is the right way, when Um Nour was upset with her husband she shouted at him " enough" and he didn't say anything after that, while when Um Murad told Abu Murad "You’re drunk, what a shame!” he committed violence against her. There was a level of understanding in Abu Nour and Um Nour's relationship that we did not at all see in Um Murad and Abu Murad's relationship, as for Abu Raed's relationship with his wife, although we did not see it on screen we felt how much they loved each other.

Moreover, the importance of love and understanding for marriage continuity was discussed in FG3 speaking about the relationship between Monaliza’s parents in the film *When Monaliza Smiled*. For example, WMS-19M-3 said “Love and understanding between such couples is non-existent, they live together like brothers and sisters, there wouldn't be the warm and private relationships between the husband and the wife like it is in a normal and natural marriage relationship.” Judging by the context and the Arabic words he used, by “warm and private relationship [alaqa hamemeya]” he means that love and understanding are also connected to

good sexual relations between the married couple[134], which could be almost absent between some couples, especially for those he refers to as people staying together for the sake of their children. Although in Almatalka's (2016) study choice of marriage partner because of love ranked first and in Adely's (2016) study compatibility is claimed to be more important than love, the current study's participants' reception of marriage relationships indicates that both love and compatibility are important to build a good marriage relationship. And this opinion was shared among both males and females indicating that both genders support healthy marriage relationship and gender regimes.

The discussion in this section indicates that, while Jordanian films appear to reinforce patriarchal gender regimes related to marriage in Jordanian society, it is valid to argue that they may be subverting gender norms by exposing them on screen. This can be grasped through the provoking and diverse opinions and reactions to the films. The discussion also shows variations in the process of meaning making for the films due to the variations of audience backgrounds and identities. Their marital status at some points was clearly relevant to their reception of marriage in the films. However, as the participants are perceived as having seemingly similar backgrounds as Jordanian university students the variations in their reception of marriage could indicate an instability that suggests a context of change regarding thinking about gender regimes in the Jordanian society. While some participants endorse patriarchal ideology in their responses other challenge it, perhaps in an attempt to dismantle and subvert it and create change in gender norms.

6.2.2 Reception of gender role representations, power relations, and patriarchal structure in the family institution

The reception of gender regime representations in the films is in line with literature on gender regimes in Jordan and the Arab world presented in Chapter 3; it indicates that the patriarchal structure of the Jordanian family and power relations within it entail that the father is the authority figure and the one on top of the power pyramid. Moreover, participants' responses to the films suggest that in the marriage relationship in Jordanian society gender roles are seemingly traditional, where the role of the wife is to nurture the children and take care of the home, while the husband's role is to provide for his family and take decisions. The

[134] The use of a metaphorical and symbolic language to refer to sexuality is discussed further on the section on sexuality later in this chapter.

discussion presented in this section analyses such claims and their implications for the gender regime of the Jordanian family and their representation in Jordanian cinema.

Men are believed to be in control of women in the films and in Jordanian society. For instance, in an attempt to disagree with this, discussing the tradition of proposing to a woman's family as represented in the *Captain Abu Raed* CAR-17F-7 stated:

> There is an issue in our society that I think everyone will agree on. In our society the decision is always for men and this appeared in the film for both the working class and the upper class. The man always asks for the woman's hand, the man is the one who states whatever he wants without restrictions, especially in issues of marriage. For example, in the film one of Nour's suitors said what he wants or doesn't want from her, men always state what they want and what they like while women in our society are not always given the chance to state what they want and what they like when meeting a suitor.

Other participants in this group nodded their heads in agreement. Such claims suggest ideas about masculine domination in Jordanian society and their representation in Jordanian films. The structure of Jordanian society seems to follow a patriarchal pattern where men dominate and women conform to their dominance in all social classes (Connell, 1987; Bourdieu, 2001). Moreover, this participant's comment indicates that men's role entails being responsible for the whole family and to take decisions – prevailing pattern in patriarchal societies, including the Jordanian (Connell, 1987; Alfawaz et al., 2012; Al-Badayaneh, 2012). This participant's critical tone indicates an attempt to subvert the gender system that endorses such ideals Although CAR-1F-7 agreed with CAR-17F-7, she stressed that in today's younger generation women have more chances to express their opinions, especially in choosing who to marry. Showing signs of hesitation with her tone of voice and body language towards accepting 17F's opinion, she stressed:

> That's true, but this is beginning to change today – girls can sometimes say no I don't want certain things, or I want certain things. For example, one of my daughters received many marriage proposals and my husband would really want to marry her off because they're good but she refused because she doesn't want to.

This shows that although women express their approval or disapproval of the suitor, this does not mean that they are equal to men in taking decisions in the marriage relationship. However,

women's expression of opinion in marriage matters as what this participant indicates is in line with the form of democratic patriarchy Alfawaz et al. (2012) discusses as a progressive view of the Jordanian father. 1F's reception can again be interpreted as influenced by her position as a working woman who is seeking a higher degree and who belongs to an urban Jordanian community.

As indicated earlier men are in control of women according to some participants, and this was shared in FG4; however, there were slightly different viewpoints about control in the family in this focus group. The following conversation from a discussion of *Lissa Aisha* represents these different views:

> LA-29F-4: The man shouldn't be in control of everything, there should be sharing in the relationship, and there should be understanding.
>
> LA-33F-4: I think in our generation it is hard to find a husband in full control in the family. (more than one participant disagreed simultaneously indicating that is not true)
>
> LA-33F-4: I think it is rare to find a husband in control of his wife. For example, I would never let my future husband control my life. Even in the previous generation it is the same, people have more awareness now a woman wouldn't agree to let her husband impose his opinion on her especially when it's wrong, a woman has her own opinion as well! There should be more sharing and understanding between couples.

The response of LA-33F-4 suggests subversion of gender norms which indicates change in thinking about the gender regime of the Jordanian family institution; however, this opinion was countered by other participants in this group as they shook their heads in disagreement, suggesting that the status quo of gender relations is not as equal as 33F claims it to be. Yet, in the same conversation LA-37F-4 supports LA-33F-4's claim that men cannot control their wives anymore. Though she stresses that traditionally it is men who are supposed to be in control; and even if they are not they would prefer to be the authority figure. Both participants claim that as women became more empowered in society, men's ability to perform this authoritative role in the family decreased; they argue that while in the past women accepted men's control, today's youth generation does not usually accept this. She stated:

> LA-37F-4: There are many cases today where men prove to be more understanding, sometimes I feel like men today understand that women have an opinion and they cannot impose their opinions on women, I don't think they like this but there's nothing they can

do. Men in general like to control, but women today are not like women in the past where they would let men control everything, men have to accept reality. At the same time, I don't think the roles of men and women should be reversed, where the woman controls everything, it should be a relationship built on sharing responsibilities and understanding

LA-33F-4: I agree

Arene (The researcher): Do you see this in marriage relationships you see in daily life?

LA-37F-4: Yes, I think the percentage of this increased

LA-28F-4: The percentage increased, but that doesn't mean this is the norm

LA-29F-4: Men always want to be in control and give orders and I see this in society

LA-33F-4: But I see that a lot of women are the ones in control in their families

Although LA-37F-4 claimed that men's roles have changed to being less in control of their wives, she indicated that the percentage increased rather than the disappearance of men's control over women. LA-28F-4 also pointed out that the norm in society is masculine domination, which was agreed upon and stressed as an issue perceived in society. While some participants propose progressive and subversive views in order to counter and dismantle masculine domination, they still indicate the prominence of patriarchal ideology in Jordanian society. Such responses can challenge and subvert traditional notions of the patriarchal social structure predominant in Jordanian society (Alfawaz, 2012; Al-Badayaneh, 2012; Moghadam, 2020). However, some participants seem to accept the status quo, which can indicate the influence of a traditional gender regime prevailing in Jordan.

Interestingly, LA-36F-4 defended men arguing that some women in Jordan are raised to believe they should be controlled to which others agreed, disregarding that this may be a result of gender socialisation and an internalization of masculine dominance (Bourdieu, 2001; Stockard, 1999; Butler, 1999):

LA-36F-4: It's not always the man's fault, I think some women in our society like to play the submissive role, sometimes her family raises her to think she is weak and should be submissive (Many participants agreed with LA-36F-4 on this point)

LA-28F-4: Some women think they should be controlled when they get married

LA-30F-4: And some women like to be controlled

This suggests that women in Jordanian society may be aware of their plight and position, and that family and its gender socialisation process affects the development of gender identity. This is indicated as a main factor that influences the way a woman perceives her self-worth and masculine domination over her. It also brings to mind the extent to which a woman's familial background influences her progressiveness in thought, or lack thereof. Perhaps 36F, 28F, and 30F above are influenced by their position as young single women studying at university; it can also relate to their own lives and how they perceive family control and male dominance. Moreover, the previous conversation implies that the role of the husband is to have authority over the wife and the family in general. This indicates the patriarchal structure of the Jordanian family, the imbalance in power relations between the husband and the wife, and the degree to which masculine dominance prevails in Jordanian society. That some of the participants provide more progressive and subversive views than others –and sometimes the same person may have varying views– implies a context of change that may push forward the subversion of the gender regime; Moghadam's (2020) claim that the Jordanian gender regime is neopatriarchal – combining both modern and traditional social values– may be validated by this instability of opinions.

Reversing gender roles was depicted as an issue by participants in FG4 discussing *Lissa Aisha*. Such defiance to masculine domination and associated gender norms was highly disregarded in a group of all females:

LA-30F-4: I think the roles reversed nowadays; I think many men are sitting at home while their wives are the ones who provide for the family

LA-37F-4: On the issue of reversed roles, my sister is married she works while her husband doesn't, but their circumstances forced them to do this, she got a job abroad better than his job in Jordan and they moved but he hasn't found a job yet. This doesn't mean she became the man of the house and he became a woman it is only the circumstances which made them do so.

LA-30F-4: Their circumstances entailed this but what I meant is when a man is capable of working but he chooses to sit at home (and not do his expected role of providing) because he is lazy or he wants a specific job rather than accepting any respectable job.

Such claims of rejecting role reversal between men and women signify conformation to the social order and gender roles norms. Here it can be noted that the role of the husband in Jordanian society is believed to be the provider for his family, a role that appears to define masculinity throughout the current study. I wanted more clarification about the issue and asked, “Do you think both the husband and the wife should work and provide for the house or is it the man's role?” To which more than one participant answered simultaneously that it depends, and they stated the following:

> LA-37F-4: It depends on the family's income, and if the woman would like to work or not
>
> LA-29F-4: If I was married and my husband's income was not enough for the family, I would probably work to help him
>
> LA-33F-4: If the husband's income is enough for the family I think the woman should not work, she should free herself for her role and duty of nurturing the children and taking care of her home, but if the income of the husband is not enough the wife could work
>
> LA-36F-4: Even if the income was enough, I think the woman should be able to choose if she wants to work or not and she can have the choice of spending on her family or not, I think if the husband's income is enough the wife should keep her money for herself, it is her choice if she wants to contribute or not, because it's the man's role and duty to provide for the family.
>
> LA-37F-4: At the same time, I think a lot of women work but their children are not raised well. If a woman just wants to work for the sake of work without needing to spend on the family, I don't think she should work. ... However, if she can balance between work and raising her children, I don't see a problem with working. Children are very important and usually women are the ones who know how to raise them.
>
> LA-33F-4: I think it is better for the woman to stay at home and raise her children well, rather than work and put her children in a childcare facility where she doesn't know what bad habits they could learn, it is unjust for her to work for extra money she uses for her pleasure while her children could be getting hurt at the childcare facility

At this point I was wondering where the place of ambition is in relation to women's careers. I asked, "What if her goal from working is having a career and fulfilling her ambition not money?"

> LA-33F-4: I think a woman's ambition is in education not in having a career… under certain circumstances, she could use her degree to get a job. For example, if she gets divorced then she needs a job to provide for herself, but as long as she doesn't need to provide (i.e. she is married and her husband's income could cover for the family's needs) it is better that she stays at home and takes care of her children
>
> LA-35F-4: But if we want to consider that childcare services are bad for children then even if the woman is in need for money she shouldn't work, this doesn't make sense to me, I think especially today anyone can find excellent childcare facilities where they can make sure their children are safe, you just need to look for a good place.

The previous comments suggest that roles in Jordanian society are traditional where the husband is obliged to provide for his family, while the wife is not, and her role requires that she should be responsible for nurturing her children and raising them as well as take care of her house. Such gender role expectations also appear in the literature discussed earlier in this study (Al-matalka, 2016; Jalal and Gabel, 2014; Al-Badayneh, 2012; Moghadam, 2004 etc…). Besides, it was argued by the majority of this group's participants that women should prioritise their home and raising their children over having a career. It can be understood from the previous conversation that women are not usually able to do both, raise children and have a successful career, which indicates the domestication of women's roles and their place in society as belonging to the private sphere. Women's move to the public sphere seems to resonate negatively with some participants' responses. Moreover, such views are in line with traditional feminine and masculine traits discussed in the theoretical framework, where women are perceived as nurturing, caring, dominating the private sphere, and family oriented; whereas men are observed as providers, independent, and dominating the public sphere.

The data demonstrates subversive views regarding roles and power relations within marriage: some participants indicated that the man should not be the authority figure, and that power should be distributed equally between the husband and the wife. For example, LA-36F-4 wondered "Why do we always think that in marriage the man has to be in control of the woman, why do we not consider it a relationship where both are equally in control, like the husband interferes in the wife's decisions the wife should interfere in his. I think this all

depends on the relationship between the couple." LA-33F-4 agreed and said, "Exactly, the husband shouldn't overpower his wife." The indication in the previous comments is that masculine domination is prevalent in the Jordanian society, although these participants are trying to challenge and subvert such notion by questioning its relevance and importance.

Judging from this audience reception of gender regimes represented in the films, it can be inferred that a patriarchal pattern in the structure of the Jordanian family remains prevalent and strongly represented in Jordanian films; although some participants expressed progressive and subversive views of the structure of the Jordanian family, where women have more agency, there were other views that countered this. And while some participants viewed gender roles in a conventional and traditional manner, others had progressive views as to how these roles should be subverted. Such varying and inconsistent responses to this issue may indicate a context of change in the Jordanian family structure and expectations of gender roles, which in turn could suggest an attempt to subvert and change aspects of the neopatriarchal gender regime of the Jordanian society.

6.2.3 Reception of domestic violence representations

Participants discussing *Captain Abu Raed*, in FG1.2, FG5 and FG7, focused on the issue of domestic violence, as it was a focal issue in the film as presented in the film analysis in Chapter five. The participants related the issue to gender by discussing that men are the ones who usually commit violence and women and children are usually the victims, which corresponds to the traditional classification of feminine and masculine traits as victims and aggressors respectively. For example, CAR-26M-5 draws upon a personal anecdote to explicate this matter; with an uneasy tone and facial expressions showing sadness at the instance of recollecting the story, he said:

> The film represented the issue of domestic violence, and although I think the issue is decreasing it still exists in our society. For example, one day my uncle was beating his son after he tied him to a tree for a whole day and when I wanted to help my cousin and untie him his father saw me and threatened he would do the same to me.

Although other participants did not directly comment on this story, their body language and facial expression indicate that they felt uneasy at the mentioning of this incident. The participant's tendency to draw upon his life experience when discussing the film indicates the influence of context on the spectator's reception of film. It is important to note here that in all

discussions of the issue of domestic violence the anecdotes mentioned indicated a male victimizer, none of the discussions pointed towards a female victimiser. Pointedly, the participant is being critical towards domestic violence, especially with his position as a Jordanian man; this indicates subversion of the conventional view of this issue. As mentioned earlier, the victimised are usually women and children. For example, CAR-25M-5 stated with confidence and a sense of pride:

> In Jordan we have a tribal society. If I had a sister, I would probably beat her if she does something wrong. We are the type of people who use violence in our family. When a kid, whether a girl or a boy, does something wrong we would beat them up to discipline them. We do not have democracy in our house, if you raise your voice you will be beaten; but we respect each other and don't kill each other's personalities, the beating doesn't have to be severe or cause physical damage, it is only performed to scare you from doing wrong.

It is noted here that violence was connected to the fact that the Jordanian society is a tribal one, and that violence is performed to discipline where no severe physical damage is inflicted. Moreover, the speaker here identified with being affiliated to a tribe in his PIS, which suggest the influence of tribe as a factor affecting the spectator's reception.

Domestic violence was further discussed in FG7 and the conversation proved that children were also the victimised in this case, albeit male children. For example, CAR-1F-7 painfully recollected a personal anecdote as follows:

> One day one a student at my school was acting inappropriately and I wanted to call his parents to tell them, the kid began begging me not to call his father and then he showed me bruises his father inflicted on him, I was surprised. Before I became the principal of the school, I was a teacher and I never thought students suffer from such issues. After I became a principal, I began hearing unbelievable stories about domestic violence issues the students suffer from, and usually the father is the one who commits violence again his children and sometimes even his wife.

The uneasiness was clear among the group participants as they heard this story, through their body language and facial expressions. This uneasiness towards the issue of domestic violence suggests a prevalent sense of subversion. However, there was an emphasis here on the school

where CAR-1F-7 learned about domestic violence issues, which made one of the participants interrupt her asking:

> CAR-17F-7: Are kids in your school from the upper class?
>
> CAR-1F-7: The kids in my school belong to either the middle class or the upper class, and you wouldn't believe me if I say that most cases of domestic violence I know of are for people who belong to the upper class.

Some participants in this group reacted with surprised facial expressions. This shows that although in *Captain Abu Raed* domestic violence appears to be an issue that affects the working class, it seems to exist in all classes in the Jordanian society. CAR-25M-5 and CAR-27M-5 also connected the issue of domestic violence to poverty; they stated:

> CAR-25M-5: Because Abu Murad is a poor man, he beat his wife and children
>
> CAR-27M-5: Poverty creates such issues

Here their words and sympathising tones can be understood as a way of normalising violence. CAR-6M-1.2, and CAR-7M-1.2 also discussed domestic violence cases they have seen in the working-class schools where they work. However, CAR-1F-1.2 with a confident tone stated:

> Violence is not necessarily a product of poverty… I am a principal at a private school and most of my students' families are rich, but I deal with many domestic violence cases. I couldn't imagine all this exists but then you get used to it. Just recently we sent the Family Protection Unit to the house of one of our students.

This indicates that domestic violence does not only exist in the working class, but it is also a shared issue in all classes in society. This suggests the frequency of domestic violence in Jordanian society. Thus, contrary to Connell's (1987) and Nordenmark's (2013) claims, configurations of the gender regime –specifically regarding domestic violence– do not seem to take very different forms in different class settings in the Jordanian context.

Although participants in all three focus groups responding to *Captain Abu Raed* discussed that domestic violence affects children's outlook on life, it was still considered as a beneficial disciplining strategy in some cases. For example, CAR-23M-5 stated:

> I remember that about 7 years ago my neighbour tied his son to the car and dragged him around the neighbourhood because his son was had immoral tendencies and was a troublemaker. Now the son is a better person he's married and has children and is teaching his children to be good people unlike he was in the past. Sometimes violence has positive impacts and is necessary to make sure your family is disciplined.

In this group of all male participants, they nodded with agreement to his last statement. CAR-25M-5 also said:

> I am not against violence (beating) but not severe violence, when they banned beating in schools I was against it, I remember I had a math teacher at school who used to hit us, but it was for us to learn better, we were scared of him at the beginning then we loved him. He used to tell us 'I do not hit you because I have issues of my own and I'm taking it out on you, I hit you because I want you to learn and be educated', if it wasn't for that we wouldn't have studied.

With signs of agreement from the other group members, it is apparent, here, that in certain cases violence is accepted and is thought to be positive as it exalts discipline, which as discussed above is the role of the father/husband in the family. However, other participants in different groups stated that there is no excuse for family violence whatsoever; for example, 1F's discussion of the issue above is a clear indication of disagreement. This variation in opinions at times suggests conforming to gender regimes, while at others shows signs of subverting the regime.

6.2.4 Reception of representations of female sexuality

The theme of sexuality was alluded to in *When Monaliza* Smiled, as discussed in the analysis of sexuality in the film[135], albeit the discussion of sexuality and particularly the issue of virginity was veiled by language use where Afaf referred to her virginity as "the most precious thing you've got." While the term virginity was clearly veiled in the film, this issue was also met with very little discussion in the focus groups and the follow-up interviews, where the discussion of virginity by some participants was met with silence or nodding in agreement from other group members or was not discussed at all in other groups and interviews.

[135] Please refer to the section on sexuality in Chapter 5.

Most participants did not make the conscious choice to discuss anything related to sexuality, although there was an indication in *When Monaliza Smiled* about a character losing her virginity before marriage. Only two participants commented on this. Speaking about marriage in the film, WMS-20M-3 stated:

> There is the case of Afaf, who said very significant words when she was talking about her ex-boyfriend who, as she said, took her most precious belonging, which we all know is her virginity but because we live in a conservative society our films also reflect this and have to abide by social standards, she could not say the word virginity as is in the film. Afaf as a representative of Jordanian women wouldn't say she lost her virginity in clear terms because it's shameful and shouldn't even be discussed with anyone. Afaf clearly remained unmarried because she was not a virgin, no man in our society would accept to marry a woman who is not a virgin, unless she was divorced of course, because virginity is connected to honour and losing virginity before marriage is linked to immoral women who clearly had sex before marriage, something not accepted in our society or religion.

Other participants nodded in agreement to the status quo view of women's virginity, indicating an acceptance of limiting women's sexual freedom. This response and the reaction of other participants in this all male group by silently nodding and moving on to another topic, indicates the level of scrutiny women undergo by men in society. This can be understood as exerting patriarchal power and dominance by reinforcing the normalisation of gender norms that relate to the female body; it also speaks to Butler's (1999) conception of compulsory heterosexuality through which patriarchal conceptions are normalised in society. Such responses indicate the patriarchal nature of the Jordanian gender regime and the normativity of limited female autonomy in the family and the society.

Another participant from FG6 commented on the issue of virginity while discussing society's effect on people and the way generations recycle and impose traditional ways of thinking. WMS-40F-6 stated:

> Women are taught from a young age what they should and should not do and this affects how they raise their children. For example, when my mother was a child in the 70s, it was believed that it's shameful for a woman to ride a bicycle, this idea got stuck with her. I love cycling, it's one of my favourite hobbies, although my father supports me my mother does not because of her preconceived ideas that she acquired

> as a child, she always tells me I shouldn't ride a bike because it's shameful and dangerous as she was also taught that riding a bike could break a woman's hymen, and we all know how our society decides the morality of a woman by having an intact hymen when she gets married. That's why in the film we noticed that after her experience with her ex-boyfriend, Afaf never got married so she wouldn't be shamed by society, because her husband will for sure not like the fact that she's not a virgin and will probably divorce her and tell everyone he divorced her because she was not a virgin.

Other participants in this group agreed with 40F's claims; however, they did not clearly comment on the issue. As noticed from the comments above, virginity is an issue that only affects women in Jordanian films and society, as it is usually linked to the existence of an intact hymen at marriage and a woman's morality is clearly linked to her virginity (Mahadeen, 2013). A woman's virginity is very important for her to get married, and if she is not a virgin at marriage she is shamed by society. Moreover, as noted by WMS-20M-3 a woman's virginity is directly linked to her honour. By discussing her anecdote this female participant disagrees with the shamefulness related to the female body and to female virginity; this disagreement can be understood as a way of subverting the system that endorses such gender ideals. The fact that this study's participants refrained from discussing issues related to sexuality in Jordanian films and society is telling of the conservative nature of Jordanian society especially in relation to the female body.

Sexuality and the female body are taboos in the Jordanian context where a woman losing her virginity – or indulging in any sexual activity out of wedlock – has been historically punishable with death by the family in the name of honour crimes[136]. A female body is considered part of the family's honour and even speaking about this body is considered a taboo. Perhaps participants' resistance to speak about virginity, sexuality, and the female body reiterates the discomfort to discuss such controversial topics in a patriarchal gender regime where symbolism and metaphors are used to refer to such issues due to their sensitivity and the shameful status given to openly discussing such issues.

6.3 Conclusion

[136] Please refer back to Chapter 3 to read more about honour crimes in Jordan.

The participants of the current study expressed diverse opinions in their reception of gender regime representations in Jordanian films, the discussion presented in this chapter shows transformations and contrasting understandings. Such variations and instabilities in the audience responses suggest that there may be a context of change regarding gender regimes in the Jordanian society, especially regarding the normalization of patriarchal power in the family as well as assumptions concerning domestic violence and masculine dominance. Moreover, the data endorses the effect of socio-cultural factors on the reception of gender regime representations, namely religious, tribal, familial, educational, and class related influences in the process of film reception, which constitute the context of the audience.

According to the audience reception of gender regime representations in Jordanian films, it can be concluded that the gender regime of the Jordanian society appears to fall along the lines of Moghadam's (2020) classification. According to her, the Jordanian gender regime is neopatriarchal, where although there may be modern aspects, the traditional patriarchal social values and relations are part of the internal social structure that poses challenges to women: their autonomy, mobility, and the general masculine domination they have to endure. There were instances where masculine dominance and patriarchal ideologies where internalised and naturalised by the participants as they saw them normalised in Jordanian films' representations. At other points, participants rejected such gender ideals, but those participants were mainly women. I can conclude here that although Jordan may have a neopatriarchal gender regime, women in this study are more prone to subvert this system and present more progressive reception of gender regimes in the films, while the majority of men seem to remain supportive of a system that privileges them and gives them power and dominance. While Jordanian films play a significant role in reinforcing and normalising masculine dominance and the general neopatriarchal gender regime that endorses it, there are clear instances where the films attempt to subvert these gender regimes and ideals by representing few strong female characters and understanding male perspectives at certain points. In a society where patriarchy dominates it may have been that by shedding light on gender issues the system is scrutinised in an attempt to subvert it.

Chapter 7. Conclusions

By adopting an active audience paradigm to reception studies, the current study found that a confluence between the audience, text, and context (Staiger, 1992; 2000; 2005) plays a major role in creating meaning for the film, where variations of audience reception and interpretation of the films are not idiosyncratic but rather due to complex socio-cultural conditions and constructed identities. Watching films and the process of reception are intricate, where the audience can draw upon and reflect on their own identities and lives to construct meaning for the films. Meaning does not exist in the film itself, but rather through the interaction between the film and the person watching with their multifaceted identity which emphasises a certain meaning based on life experience and ideology. Audiences are active, as they actively involve themselves in a process of meaning-making which produces a reception unique to them. However, shared backgrounds can sometimes lead to a shared understanding of film representation. Some participants in this study seem to deviate from their peers' opinions, which reflects the differences within people even when they come from a shared society, culture, and background. The study found that within a national identity, Jordanian in this case, there are multiple factors such as religion, class, age, tribal affiliation, marital status, etc… that may inform different reactions to films and social themes under discussion. Film reception is as different and as similar as people are, because they have the power of meaning-making. The films as well are very different from each other; although they share intersecting themes, they present them differently on screen.

The audience participating in the current study tend to have different perspectives regarding Jordanian films; while at times they seem to be reinforcing the gender regime that endorses a patriarchal social structure at other instances it can be read that some audience members attempt to subvert gender norms that create this regime. Through tensions, transformations, critiques, and contrasting understandings in the focus group discussions and follow-up interviews, a context of change appears to be evoked by the audience responses' subversion of the conservative representations of Jordan society in the films, specifically with regards to gender regimes in the Jordanian context. Moreover, participants challenged and reinforced gender ideals, even when at times the Jordanian films selected for this study reinforced or subverted traditional gender regime representations. The gender regime attached to Jordan whether as inferred from the audience responses or the analysis of film representations, shows that there are modernised and traditional aspects existing simultaneously, yet females still have limited autonomy, mobility, and labour-force

participation and masculine dominance still prevails. The findings exhibit that Moghadam's (2020) categorization of Jordan as a neopatriarchal gender regime can be validated. However, subverting the gender regime and changing it to become more progressive may occur as evidenced by the audience reception analysis in Chapter 6.

As evidenced by the research findings, Jordanian cinema is not popular among Jordanian audiences[137]. Through the fieldwork conducted in Jordan this thesis may have contributed to raising awareness of Jordanian films in Jordan; although this could be perceived as a simple contribution as the sample of participants is limited in number, this shows a significant impact of this research. The contribution of this study extends to laying a ground for the study of Jordanian cinema and audience reception, especially from a gender regimes perspective. This intersection of different disciplines is an original contribution to knowledge in the fields of film studies, audience reception studies, and gender regimes studies. Scholars aiming to study this academically underrepresented cinema may find the current study useful to learn about and review the situation of Jordanian cinema, film audience reception, and gender regimes simultaneously. The contribution of the current study extends to undertaking the challenging task of laying ground work for future research concerning Jordanian cinema, as this cinema is relatively in its nascent stage.

Further studies on Jordanian cinema and audiences are required to build a database through which researchers can gain more information. As the scope of my research could not include many aspects of Jordanian cinema and audiences, I recommend the following further research. A larger scale study that includes Jordanian participants from various social and educational backgrounds, which can enable generalisations the current study was not able to conclude. Second, an investigation into audience reception of gender regime representations in Jordanian films through a transnational context could yield interesting information about how audiences from different countries watch and respond to these films. Another necessary study can be exploring the Jordanian cinema industry: its formation and up to date developments using empirical methodology uncovering the hidden history of this cinema and its current status, including representation of Jordanian films in local cinema houses, looking into who watches Jordanian films, and studying the implications of this for the future of the Jordanian cinema industry. A third study could provide a detailed examination of the question of why contemporary Jordanian audiences do not usually watch Jordanian films and what can be done to improve this industry to meet with the expectations of audiences. The list of questions and

[137] This finding is particularly discussed in the opening remarks to Chapter 6

research recommendations concerning Jordanian cinema and audiences could be very extensive, as there is lack in studies of this subject. However, I believe at this point, where research on Jordanian cinema is not full-fledged, it is important to use empirical methodologies that involve a field-based investigation. Finally, studies investigating the Jordanian gender regime and societal changes are necessary to interpret the current situation of gender related issues in Jordan.

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Filmography

Captain Abu Raed, 2007 [film]. Directed by Amin Matalqa. Jordan: Paper and Pen Films

Lissa Aisha, 2016 [film]. Directed by Asma Bseiso. Jordan: Karma Productions

When Monaliza Smiled, 2012 [film]. Directed by Fadi Haddad. Jordan: Made in Amman Productions & The Royal Film Commission

Appendices

Appendix A

Focus Group Interview Guide

The purpose of this research is to understand your reception/reading of contemporary Jordanian films, especially regarding gender as presented in the films. Thus, this session includes the following. You will watch a contemporary Jordanian film, where I would like you to pay close attention to gender representations in the film and take notes of scenes, characters, or anything you find interesting in the film and could aid the discussion. After watching the film and taking notes of what you consider acceptable or unacceptable gender roles in the film, we will have a discussion of the film. Here, I will steer and guide the discussion by asking open-ended questions and giving you space to have a conversation regarding gender roles in the film. (I read this allowed to participants at the beginning of each session)

Open-ended Discussion Questions

1- What do you think about the film? Please support your opinion with examples from the film, you can use specific scenes.
    a. What was the impression the film left on you? Please justify
    b. What did you think about the characters in the film? Was there one (or more) who you reacted to strongly? Why?
    c. Does the film reflect the reality of the Jordanian society? In other words, do you believe the film mirrors issues existing in the Jordanian society? What are these issues? Why do you believe so?
2- How do you respond to gender in the film? Please provide examples from the film.
    a. Do you believe the film mirrors gender issues existing in the Jordanian society? What are these issues? Why do you believe so?
    b. Does the film reflect the actual gender roles (the roles of men and women) in the Jordanian society? How? Please justify using examples from the film.
    c. In the universe of the film, what does it mean to ‘be a man’?
    d. In the universe of the film, what does it mean to ‘be a woman’?

Appendix B

Participant Information Sheet

Thank you for your participation in this study. Please fill out this sheet knowing that no one but the researcher will be able to view these pieces of information.

Your name:

Gender:

Age:

Religion:

Social class (Or Family Monthly Income):

Marital status:

Current City of Residence:

City of Origin:

Tribal Affiliation (If Applicable):

University Faculty:

University Major:

Current Education Level (BA, MA, PhD, and the year of study):

Employment/Occupation (If Applicable):

Contact information (Email):

Do you watch Jordanian films? If yes, how often and using what medium? If no, why not?

_____

Are you interested in gender issues in the Jordanian society? If yes, in what sense?

Appendix C

Consent for Participation in Research Project

Focus Groups

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by researcher Arene Al-Shara'h from Newcastle University. I understand that the project is designed to gather information regarding Jordanian students' reception of Jordanian films with a focus on gender representations in the films. I will be one of approximately 40 people participating in film screenings and focus groups for this research.

1- My participation in this research project is voluntary. I understand I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.
2- I understand that most participants will find the discussion interesting and thought provoking. If, however, I feel uncomfortable in any way during the focus group sessions or the film screenings, I have the right to decline to answer any question or end my participation in the focus group, film screening, or the research project without giving a reason.
3- Participation in this project involves filling a participation information sheet, a film screening, a focus group discussion. The film screening will last up to around an hour and a half, and the focus group discussion will last for approximately one hour. I understand and approve that the researcher will be taking notes during any encounter with participants.
4- For the purposes of data analysis for this study, videotaping is the main recording method along with audio recording. I understand that if I do not wish to be **videotaped,** I can speak to the researcher (Arene Al-Shara'h) and she will find a solution. However, I understand that if I do not wish to be **audio recorded**, I will not be able to participate in the study.
5- I understand that any recorded martial (video or audio) will be for research purposes only and will not be published anywhere, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure. The only person able to access these materials is the researcher. The researcher is committed to Newcastle University data protection guidelines.

6- I understand that the researcher will NOT identify me by my real name in any reports using information obtained from focus group discussions or questionnaires. To ensure anonymity the researcher will use pseudonyms to identify participants. However, please be consistent with using your first and last name throughout all the documents provided by the researcher. This is so the researcher can identify participants, compare data, and ensure a fair representation of information collected from participants.

7- I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

8- I have been given a copy of this consent form.

_____ _____

My Name and Signature Date