



Arab American University
Faculty of Graduate Studies

**“Visual Storytelling in Advocacy Films:
Cases from Palestine and the Globe”**

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**This thesis was submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Master`s degree in the
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Thesis Approval

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This thesis was defended successfully on 18/02/2024 and approved by:

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Declaration

I, the undersigned, presenter of the research titled:

Visual Storytelling in Advocacy Films: Cases from Palestine and the Globe.

I declare that the contents of this research are the product of my work and personal effort,
except for what is noted wherever stated.

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Acknowledgments

“Where you see wrong or inequality or injustice, speak out, because this is your country. This is your democracy. Make it. Protect it. Pass it on.” - Thurgood Marshall, 1978

The journey of my thesis has been a remarkable adventure, filled with both learning and challenges, and made possible by the support and inspiration from those around me. To my parents, I present to you this work that expresses how grateful I am to you and for the countless and incalculable support! you are the reason for this success, and you are the reason to whom I am now, and I hope to always make you proud.

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This thesis, more than an academic accomplishment, is a tribute to the relentless fighters against injustice and inequality, to all the people out there that are trying to keep their voices heard, I am grateful to contribute to this ongoing narrative of change and hope.

Lara Khammash

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Abstract

In a world where films are increasingly becoming more influential, visual storytelling, especially in films that promote the rights of marginalized groups, is becoming impactful on social movement and change. This study delves into exploring the cinematic narratives from various angles, highlighting the unique role that films play in promoting the rights and representations of marginalized groups in Palestine and around the world. By examining five films, this research looks at how films can serve as a vehicle for change through means of advocacy and positive representation.

A qualitative narrative analysis was employed, encompassing a close analysis of five films that are from USA, Nigeria, India, Palestine, and Lebanon, by examining their cinematographic elements such as character positioning, camera angles, and narrative structure. These elements were analyzed through the lens of framing and representation theories. The study concludes that visual storytelling serves as an effective tool for representing marginalized groups and advocating for different social norms by eliciting empathy and catalyzing social activism. It also shows that films employ both micro and macro components in framing advocacy messages, offering a representation of the complexities and challenges faced by those groups pushing against stereotypes and societal challenges and norms.

The study concludes that advocacy films, particularly those helmed by female directors and producers can contribute to the elevation of marginalized voices, where they serve as critical tool in shifting norms and underscoring the transformative power of cinema in advocating for social justice.

Keywords: Visual Storytelling, Advocacy Films, Marginalized Groups, Representations, Framing.

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Chapter One

Introducing the Research

1.1 Introduction

Recent advances in technology at the beginning of the twentieth century marked an era of transformation for storytelling and creative industries. The outcome of this transition contributed to the advancement of film, which brought together narrative interest and visual appeal to provide comprehensive portrayals of life's numerous events and occurrences.

Cinematic communication of visual narrative, which has become embedded various kinds of media, has a powerful impact. Films may immerse audiences in made-up worlds and experiences via the use of cinematographic, the mise-en-scene and audio-visual components, enabling them to better comprehend abstract ideas, concepts, and social realities. When these components are integrated with advocacy films, they could influence public opinion, inspire group action, and stimulate social change (Nichols, 2017). This integration promotes audiences' consideration of the implications of their actions and choices.

This advancement of digital technology has made it possible for activists and filmmakers to use an array of platforms and storytelling approaches, boosting cinema's ability to express a wide range of narratives. Filmmakers and activists have therefore been able to draw attention to issues that may otherwise have gone unrecognized. According to Greg M. Smith, "Filmic cues that can provide emotional information include facial expression, figure movement, dialogue, vocal expression and tone, costume, sound, music, lighting, mise-en-scene, set design, editing, camera (angle, distance, movement), depth of field, character qualities and histories and narrative situation" (Edubirdie, 2023, P 3). Documentary films for example, especially those with an advocacy purpose, have a

special capacity to increase public awareness of and promote discussion about a variety of social issues. (Renov, 2004).

However, advocacy films are distinct from mainstream films due to the focus on social change and action. Although a wide range of subjects are covered in advocacy films, the rights of marginalized groups is an additional significance since these films are advocating for a realistic social issue and trying to change the perspectives of cultures and social norms.

In research, the film industry has received a lot of attention as a tool for social change. Spigelman, J. (1969). Our understanding of the complex connection between visual storytelling and the portrayal of marginalized groups in advocacy films, however, is fundamentally lacking. Most of the previous research has been split into two groups and has only addressed either the social or technical aspects of filmmaking. However, the link between visual narrative approaches and their success in resolving the issues of marginalized groups is still partially researched, particularly in the context of the Palestinian context and globally.

The complicated Palestinian experience, which combines politics, culture, and history, serves as a frame and template for advocacy films. Palestinian filmmakers have long gone beyond the frequently biased narratives of the mainstream media to reflect the difficulties of occupation and displacement as well as culture. Films like Amos Gitai's *Promised Land* (2004), *Munich* (2005) directed by Steven Spielberg, *West Bank Story* (2005) by director Ari Sandel, Dennis Dogan's *You Don't Mess with the Zohan* (2008), and *David and Fatima* (2008) directed by Alain Zaloum, to list a few, show how this unchallenged process of racialization inflicts violence on Palestinians in real life and continues to trap them as silenced subjects. (Labidi, 2020)

Palestinian films "may serve as a visual alternative... a visible representation of the existence of the state of Palestine since 1948," (Said, 2006, p 3), which influences how the West sees its struggle. Furthermore, Palestinian films are not just examples of art; they are also representations of global activism and political resistance.

Despite how and why cinema is important to society, there is an obvious absence of understanding of how visual storytelling is employed in both Palestinian and global advocacy films.

This study attempts to close this gap by emphasizing films, their visual components, and narrative structures, with the rights of marginalized serving as the main theme focus.

Hence, this research is essential to better understand the connection between advocacy films and societal concerns impacting marginalized groups. It is crucial to think about how advocacy films might act as a real representation, promoting empathy and a greater knowledge of the issues or problems encountered by marginalized groups, in a culture where narratives are frequently set by stereotypes.

It aims to examine the narrative and visual elements of advocacy films. It will pay attention to how marginalized groups are represented within the framework of chosen areas. The goal of the study is to grasp how films build their reality, question preexisting concepts, and modify societal narratives by utilizing the two theoretical frameworks of Representation and Framing. Another goal of the study lies in evaluating the effectiveness of advocacy films in advancing the rights of marginalized groups by looking at visual characteristics including color, composition, and framing.

It is essential to put the films that spread this narrative in a broader context to fully understand them. While targeting similar social goals, the narrative designs, creative choices, and ethical viewpoints of films from various cultures might vary significantly.

Similar yet distinctive storytelling ideas that underlie this visual format may be found by contrasting Palestinian films with those from other global perspectives that are both connected in sharing for advocacy.

Although the idea of marginalized groups is broad, the emphasis of this research will be on how marginalized groups are represented in films that are focusing on advocacy films from the United States, India, the Arab World, Palestine, and Nigeria. Makers of these films, among others, offer diverse and parallel perspectives of these groups, which will be analyzed and focused on in this study.

An examination of the complex interactions between gender, social norms, and cultural traditions is covered by most of these films, which concentrate on the rights of marginalized groups. These films will be analyzed via a qualitative content analysis to determine how gender perception is built and deconstructed since their focus is the representation and advocacy of marginalized groups.

1.2 Research Problem

Visual elements, the backbone of cinema, serve as a potent medium for expressing a wide range of emotions, opinions, and narratives. These elements, which include meticulous cinematography, color symbolism, *mise-en-scène*, and visual motifs, transcend language barriers, connect deeply with audiences, and significantly enhance a film's narrative arc. The strategic use of these visual storytelling techniques is crucial in captivating viewers and shaping their perceptions and beliefs.

Advocacy cinema, a unique genre, has a rich history of addressing various social issues and propelling audiences toward activism or societal transformation. (Cizek,2001). These films make an impact by unveiling the hidden realities of marginalized communities—

realities that encompass systemic injustices, underrepresented cultural hardships, and social dilemmas often overlooked by mainstream narratives. Through powerful visual tools such as various lighting levels to highlight despair, contrasting color palettes to represent inequality, or close-up shots to capture the intimate emotional experiences of individuals, advocacy films amplify their messages and foster empathy and understanding among viewers. By reflecting these groups' intricate and often concealed experiences, such films contribute to public discourse and motivate social change and development. This study analyzes how these visual components are uniquely employed in advocacy films to frame, represent, and spread the core messages concerning marginalized groups.

1.3 Research Questions

The main research question:

How is visual storytelling utilized in advocacy films in representing the rights of marginalized groups?

From this main research question, the following **sub questions stem**:

Q1: What roles did visual storytelling techniques play in representing marginalized groups within advocacy films?

Q2: How is the narrative of marginalized groups framed in advocacy films that employ visual storytelling techniques?

Q3: What similarities and differences exist in using visual storytelling techniques in advocacy films from Palestine and Global contexts?

Q4: How do narrative structures in advocacy films differ or align in films from Palestine and Global contexts?

1.4 Research Objectives

- 1) To explore the role of visuals and storytelling in advocating for the rights of marginalized groups through films with focusing on several cinematographic elements that can contribute to enhancing or changing the narrative, impact, and audience engagement.
- 2) To have a broader understanding of how narratives of the marginalized are framed within advocacy films, by examining the different techniques used to highlight their struggles, challenges, and stories.
- 3) To have a comparison and contrast of the usage of visual storytelling and narrative structure in films across diverse cultural contexts and backgrounds, to understand the connection between universal themes and unique storytelling approaches.
- 4) To have an in-depth understanding of the similarities and differences in narratives between films that are produced in different global contexts, by assessing the cultural, social, political factors that might influence the filmic representations.
- 5) Explore how advocacy films portray marginalized groups, focusing on how they represent their realities and how they could overcome stereotypes.
- 6) Evaluate if and how advocacy films encourage viewers to engage in social change by analyzing their success in overcoming challenges and breaking down stereotypes to inspire action.

Chapter Two:

Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

In the realm of films, where visual storytelling takes a huge part in changing the narratives and how people shape their perspective and knowledge towards something specific, and this medium is considered a way of gaining a thorough grasp of how the narrative and social impact can be sensed through the lens of films, visuals, and narratives. This chapter explores the core ideas that have proven useful in assessing how films can communicate, persuade sometimes, and engage their viewers visually.

Initially starting with delving into the framing theory as defined by several scholars such as Entman (1993), which works on explaining how media impacts public perception. Subsequently, the representation theory with taking Stuart Hall's approach as our road map where it works on emphasizing the complexities of how films and media form social realities. In addition, this chapter also works in incorporating the Narrative Structure by focusing on the three act-model and its impact on storytelling dynamics in films.

2.2 Framing Theory

Framing theory has emerged as a fundamental concept in media studies, providing a lens through which to explore how the media distributes and presents information that shapes public perception and comprehension of events, topics, or stories. The underlying assumption of framing is that all representations of reality are selective representations, embedding some interpretations while excluding others. Entman (1993), one of the most prominent proponents of framing theory, defines it as "to frame" being the process of selecting certain aspects of a perception of reality and making them more prominent in a communicating text to promote a particular definition of a problem, a causal

interpretation, a moral judgement, and/or a treatment recommendation for the entity described.

Several definitions of ‘frame’ and ‘framing’ share several assumptions (as depicted by Entman, 1993; Reese, 2001; Scheufele, 1999). Frames are seen as patterns of interpretation through which people classify information to handle it efficiently. Framing emphasizes specific aspects of reality (Reese, 2001).

According to Entman (1993), frames do several things: define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments, focus on aspects of a story, define what is considered important, interpret issues in a way that shapes public opinion and impact policy-making and social reactions.

Using Entman’s (1993) framing theory, the analysis of this research will deconstruct the narratives in selected films to gain insight into the conscious and unconscious frameworks the films use. Also, it will examine the resonance of these frameworks framed and used in presenting the film's narratives. Furthermore, it will compare frames between the films, providing insight into Palestinian and global narratives to have an insight into what they have in common and what they differ in. Framing as a theory and as an analytical tool, is utilized to evaluate how the visual and narrative aspects of a film frame the issue or cause being advocated. Certain camera angles, lighting, and music, for example, can affect the emotional response of the audience and form their interpretation of the story being delivered.

This theory builds on the understanding of how films can shape the way we think and feel about critical issues. It goes deeper than just looking at the style or story of the film; it looks at why filmmakers choose to present their stories in certain ways and how this affects us as viewers. By employing Framing Theory, this study also aims to uncover the

underlying visual storytelling techniques that filmmakers employ to engage audiences, challenge narratives, and advocate for social change. The theory also gives a comprehensive look to explore how film elements like camera angles, lighting, color schemes, and mise-en-scène contribute to overarching narrative frames. It considers both the content's presentation and the audience's reception, making it an ideal choice for studies interested in media effects and audience engagement.

2.3 Representation Theory

When it comes to visual storytelling in movies, especially those based on advocacy stories, the idea of representation is important. Stuart Hall is one of the most prominent figures in cultural studies and his work stands out for its complexity. Hall (1997) argues that representation is not just about reflecting existing meanings or realities, but rather is a dynamic process that allows films and media to actively create social realities. He further explains that meaning is not necessarily derived from the person or group being represented but comes from complicated systems of representation based on cultural codes and rules. These rules, which are rooted in social norms and history, really shape how certain people or groups are represented and then interpreted in a cultural context.

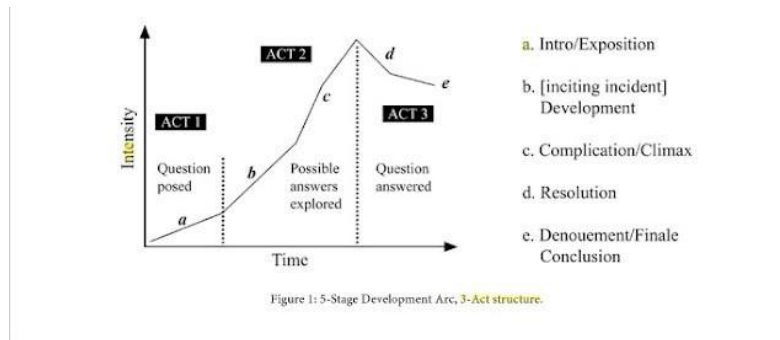
While filmmakers create stories with specific meanings in mind, viewers, with their diverse cultural and social backgrounds, have diverse ways of interpreting these stories, resulting in different interpretations and meanings (Hall, 1980). This research aims to create a layered analysis by combining Hall's representation theory and Mulvey's male gaze theory. Mulvey argues that Psychoanalysis theory derived from Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan is a political weapon in deconstructing visual industry. As psychoanalysis manifests the way of how the unconscious of patriarchal society has structured cinema,

the article probes on how psychoanalysis reflects socially established interpretation of sexual difference which controls images, sexuality, erotic ways of looking and spectacle. In her argument, Mulvey argues that the cinema offers the pleasure of scopophilia (pleasure in looking) subjecting people to control by the gaze. Stemmed from Oedipus complex, emerges the analysis the penis is meaningful (the phallus) which figures sexual difference.

Thus, visualities emerge from a phallo- centrism that asserts the masculine is to look (active) and the feminine as lacking, sexual objects to be looked at. Under this argument, women can exist only in relation to castration and cannot surpass it, where men accordingly will control narrative, cameras viewpoints and film fantasy and be representatives of power. The second argument looks at the ego libido (formation of identification processes) as based on Jacques Lacan theory, mirror stage, where spectator obtains narcissistic pleasure from the identification with a human figure on the screen, that indeed the male powerful characters. Yet Mulvey concedes that analyzing and deconstructing pleasure and women's images derived from psychoanalysis theory is a way to destroy it, where change is possible with the modern technologies available. (Mulvey, L. (2009/ 1989). By combining these two theories, we will be able to get a better understanding of how meaning is constructed in advocacy films and how varied factors can influence it. This will help us get a more detailed, in-depth look at advocacy films and how they shape culture, gender norms, and power dynamics, giving us a better understanding of their broader social impact and importance.

2.4 Narrative Structure

The three-act structure is a model used in writing and evaluating modern storytelling which divides a screenplay into three parts called the Setup, the Confrontation, and the Resolution. Todorov (1960) suggested that stories/films begin with an equilibrium where opposing forces are in balance. An event then happens which disrupts this balance, followed by a series of events. These problems are then solved to restore balance. (Cowey,2013). See Figure 1



(Figure 2.1 | A Visual Representation of The Three-Act Structure_(Cowey,2013)

The structure unites the elements of the story, which affects how we experience the story and how we relate to the characters. Knowing film narrative structure can improve the viewing experience and the art of filmmaking, whether screenwriting or directing. Most narrative structures in films follow the traditional three-act model. This model provides a solid basis for telling gripping stories. The three-act model divides a film into a beginning, a middle, and an end. It presents a prologue, a conflict, and a conclusion., Jenkins (2023).

2.5 Study Definitions

2.5.1 Visual Storytelling:

The term "visual narrative" has been used to describe several genres of visual storytelling, from news and information to photography and film industry to entertainment in short, any kind of a story, told visually, is a visual narrative, Caputo (2003).

Visual storytelling is the combination of multiple media (photographs, illustrations, video, animation, 3D models, and other graphics) with text and/or audio to create powerful and compelling stories for selected target audiences. Cairo, A. (2016).

2.6 Marginalized Groups

Diverse groups of people within a given culture, context, and history at risk of being subjected to multiple discrimination due to the interplay of different personal characteristics or grounds, such as sex, gender, age, ethnicity, religion or belief, health status, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, education, or income, or living in various geographic localities. (Marginalized Groups UN OHCHR, 2023)

2.7 Advocacy

Is a activity by an individual or group that aims to influence decisions within political, economic, and social institutions. Advocacy includes activities and publications to influence public policy, laws, and budgets by using facts, their relationships, the media, and messaging to educate government officials and the public. Advocacy can include many activities that a person or organization undertakes, including media campaigns, public speaking, commissioning and publishing research (Watson, G. (2001).

2.8 Literature Review

2.8.1 Advocacy Films

A study from Williams (2012) states that it is widely acknowledged that advocacy documentaries are essential as a vehicle for societal change. To reach the target audience and spur action, filmmakers must figure out how to distribute and market their films efficiently. This calls for a precise plan that considers the target audience and the best way to engage them, as well as a defined aim that is relevant to the story's narrative and social effort. The documentary, A documentary film or documentary is a non-fictional motion picture intended to "document reality", primarily for instruction, education or maintaining a historical record like other advocacy films (Oxford University Press, 2018). needs to have a compelling obstacle or source of advocacy that drives the story forward. Due to its ability to communicate truth and inspire change, documentary cinema is increasingly being employed by organizations to broaden their reach and influence. To effectively use the potential of this medium for social change, filmmakers must understand the contextual and creative perspectives of documentary discovery and advocacy.

Cooper (2015) argues that contemporary advocacy filmmaking requires more than just engaging storytelling and successful fundraising. The changing landscape documentary filmmakers must navigate necessitates that the film is only one component of a comprehensive advocacy campaign, with a clear mission statement for the films. This has become an essential element of modern advocacy, which has enabled campaigns to have a longer lifespan and reach a wider audience.

By understanding the fundamental concepts and components of contemporary advocacy cinema, future filmmakers can create powerful and impactful films that promote social

change. Cooper (2015) presents examples of how films can be utilized as part of a broader advocacy campaign. Furthermore, the researcher highlights the importance of character development and storytelling in creating an emotional bond with the viewer that can motivate people to act.

Meanwhile Gupta (2019) argued that creating phenomenological films in restrictive lived experiences are the goal of the cinematic-phenomenological research method, an original approach to social advocacy filmmaking. The approach entails close interaction between participants and filmmakers, with a focus on discovering the daily lives of excluded communities and people. The creation of this approach's theory and methodology, as well as the measures to take when doing cinematic-phenomenological research, are described in this study. It points out the usefulness of using cinematic approaches to capture the phenomenological components of these events and emphasizes the necessity of creating a secure and respectful environment for participants to express their experiences. The author argues that the shift to phenomenological cinema is a call for filmmakers to explore, create, and discover new methods to portray modern society. Gupta's report finishes with useful advice for filmmakers who are interested in applying this strategy for social advocacy.

In a different work, Cabasal (2021) emphasizes social advocacy cinema, a style of alternative cinema that highlights social issues in various formats such as short films, documentaries, animation, and experimental works. Alternative filmmaking differs from mainstream and independent filmmaking in that it aims to reach a wider audience outside of niche art festival sectors. However, filming and shooting these works can be difficult, particularly when they attack institutions, governmental officials, and private persons. Despite these obstacles, social advocacy film creation, distribution, and exhibition help

to strengthen marginalized groups, magnify their voices, and continue fighting for what is right and compassionate. The manner of production seeks to stand on truth and give a voice to people who have been silenced or excluded.

2.8.2 Visuals in Films

According to Qin (2022), structured films with a clear objective can efficiently capture the audience's attention and communicate information in a globally understandable manner. As a result, films may be an appealing alternative to traditional learning resources such as textbooks, which may not be as interesting for today's students. However, the subjective aspect of film, especially in documentary films, can lead to suspension or confusion, which contradicts the purpose of teaching critical thinking. Films, with their emphasis on visual information, allow for more freedom for interpretation and thought, potentially leading to more complex knowledge of the subject matter. As a result, films could be an effective tool for visualizing and engaging the audience with a proven impact.

Williams (2019) presented the significance of giving attention to visual features in visual storytelling, such as art and design elements, and how doing so may help in developing a diverse set of tools for reading and writing several types of visual texts. In Williams (2019) study, an examination of the visual content narratives of 124 educational resources in the United States reveals a variety of art and design aspects of work in students' visual narrative. The study findings imply that introducing students to a range of art and design aspects may help them in developing their visual literacy and provide a narrowed perspective that can be paired with other perspectives.

Cabasal, (2021) emphasizes social advocacy cinema, a style of alternative cinema that highlights social issues in various formats such as short films, documentaries, animation, and experimental works. Alternative filmmaking differs from mainstream and independent filmmaking in that it aims to reach a wider audience outside of niche art festival sectors. However, filming and shooting these works can be difficult, particularly when they attack institutions, governmental officials, and private persons. Despite these obstacles, social advocacy film creation, distribution, and exhibition help to strengthen marginalized groups, magnify their voices, and continue fighting for what is right and compassionate. The manner of production seeks to stand on truth and give a voice to people who have been silenced or excluded.

Cizek (2005) defines the three basic film forms commonly used in advocacy storytelling that are Narration-driven: The narrator recounts the story and leads the audience through the video in this form. It is helpful for clearly and concisely expressing difficult or abstract concepts. Interview-driven: This method relies on talking to people who have direct contact with the problem or subject under discussion. It is helpful for showing various viewpoints and individual experiences.

The goal of observational *verité* is to record events as they occur, without any editing or story. It helps to provide a feeling of urgency and honesty. It is crucial to choose the form that will serve your intended audience and the story you want to communicate during preproduction. This includes conducting research, creating a script or outline, scouting out locations, casting actors, and getting the crew and equipment ready. To ensure a successful filming and post-production process, planning and organization are essential. (Cizek, 2005)

Wardhani, (2023) employed a non-participant descriptive qualitative method to analyze the short film "Olak"'s content and visual elements. Films, which last no longer than 40 minutes, are frequently centered on certain problems like character tales, locations, or marketing and require a precise and clear message to be effectively communicated. It is crucial to consider the usefulness of films in delivering a potent message in a brief period when examining this literature. Filmmakers of short films must concentrate on issues and make sure the message is communicated concisely and clearly. Wardhani's study sheds light on the significance of films as a tool for delivering powerful messages and the need to apply the right research techniques when examining films. It also presents significant issues regarding the function of time in storytelling and filmmaking.

Hees (2009) discussed that the main subject is a critical analysis of participatory video as a tool of showcasing issues that are about social change in South Africa. The study places the community video project that was started as a component of it in Kayamandi, a South African informal settlement. Exploring how interactive video could help marginalized people represent themselves and effect social change is the goal. Any video process intended to bring about change in which the subject has been an integral part of the planning and/or production, as well as a primary consumer or target audience, is referred to as participatory video.

The study emphasizes the importance of subject participation as an essential component of the video production process and underlines the potential of participatory video in empowering marginalized individuals to represent themselves and effect social change.

Overall, this study offers a critical assessment of the use of participatory video as a tool for enacting social change, shedding light on both the potential and the difficulties of using video for activism and empowerment.

Smaill (2021) investigates the relationship between women, the environment, and documentary filming. It focuses on the Australian documentary industry and how chances for women in documentary production are changing, especially considering the growth of philanthropy financing and environmental documentaries. The conversation examines the connections between environmentalism and women in two examples, *Wild Things* and *The Leadership*. Due to the gendered makeup of the documentary industry, the rise of impact documentaries, and the gendered profile of environmentalism, the study argues that current documentary filmmaking is an important location for understanding the environment as a feminist concern. The study focuses on the importance of the impact films have and how it changes the way of thinking and works on changing the stereotypes by providing more opportunity for openness.

Though they also point to a research gap, the studies in the literature review provide a thorough grasp of advocacy films and visual storytelling. The gap is particularly noticeable when considering the influence and specific use of visual storytelling methods in globally focused advocacy films and how they work on prioritizing the portrayal of marginalized groups. However, less focus is placed on the understanding of how visual elements can also affect the way the audience feels about the films and how it can unconsciously change the way the audience is watching and understanding the message of the films. Williams (2012), Cooper (2015), and other researchers have provided a general summary of the role of advocacy films in social change.

Moreover, there is still a lack of research on the relationship between how globally the cultural narratives and how visual storytelling in advocacy films shapes and influences them. This gap necessitates research that, especially in Middle Eastern cinema, combines the perspective of marginalized groups and the narratives, social norms, and

cultural backgrounds with some technical aspects of filmmaking to provide a more in-depth understanding of the potential of visual storytelling in advocacy films. In addition to adding to the current body of knowledge in the field of media and film studies, this kind of research would help us comprehend the role that film plays in promoting social change and portrayal of those groups in certain contexts.

Chapter Three:

Method and Study Design

1.3 The Study Method

This descriptive-based qualitative study starts out by analyzing advocacy films, especially those that highlight the rights of marginalized groups.

A descriptive inquiry research design should be carefully developed to ensure that the results are valid and reliable. It is also used to describe characteristics of a population or phenomenon being studied. It does not answer questions about how/when/why the characteristics occurred, Rangarajan (2013).

The aim of this research is to clarify the connection between visual storytelling approaches and the advocacy narratives they inspire using a case study methodology. A case study can be used to describe the characteristics of a specific subject (such as a person, group, event, or organization). Instead of gathering a large volume of data to identify patterns across time or location, case studies gather detailed data to identify the characteristics of a narrowly defined subject. Rather than aiming to describe generalizable facts, case studies often focus on unusual or interesting cases that challenge assumptions, add complexity, or reveal something new about a research problem. (McCombes 2023).

3.2 Data Collection

A sample of five films from the Palestinian and global contexts will be chosen to collect data for this research. films that are focusing on advocacy from (Palestine/ Africa/Asia/America/ Middle East.) will be taken for analysis with a specific theme of the rights of marginalized groups and how they are represented in these films and advocating for a social issue and how these films will answer the main research question

which How is visual storytelling utilized in advocacy films advocating for the rights of marginalized groups?

In this study there are some steps to collect and analyze the data:

- (1) watch the short film from the internet without taking notes
- (2) watch for the second time without sound, and focus on the visual point
- (3) watch full video, taking note and compare the data elicited from the film
- (4) analyzing the data in terms of content and visual appearance. After the analysis, the result from the data analysis will be written down.

Based on their thematic importance to the rights of marginalized groups, each of the films was carefully chosen. Each film's visual components, storytelling approaches, and framing tactics were thoroughly gathered and analyzed.

The selection of the five films for this study was guided by several criteria's that align with the main research objectives. Firstly, the thematic significance of each of the films considered since all the films are focused on the rights of marginalized groups and they each offer a unique perspective on social change, addressing various issues in different cultural contexts and since there is this diversity in themes and settings this allowed to have a comprehensive analysis of how visual storytelling is taken into consideration and employed across different societal challenges and geographical locations.

Secondly, the geographical diversity since the films comes from different continents and this encompasses a broad spectrum of cultural narratives, ensuring a more global understanding of what is the main aim of this research. This diversity allows a comprehensive analysis across different geographical locations but also enriches the research with various cultural lenses and backgrounds and implores that there is cross cutting in the way marginalized groups are represented and treated regardless their

location. Furthermore, limiting the study to only analyzing five films was to ensure a depth of analysis since analyzing a larger number could lose the focus and depth of the study whereas smaller sample allows for more detailed and thorough examination of each film.

3.3 Sampling

The study population consists of all films produced for advocacy purposes in Palestine and globally. Meanwhile, the sample is based on choosing films that are focusing on advocacy. The chosen films will be from the year 2014 till 2021 with the theme based on rights of marginalized groups.

3.4 Selected Films

Farha (2021) | Palestine

A 2021 internationally co-produced historical drama film about a Palestinian girl's coming-of-age experience during the Nakba, the 1948 displacement of Palestinians from their homeland. 14-year-old girl Farha plays with other girls in a Palestinian village. While other girls are excited about their friend's marriage, Farha dreams about pursuing an education and going to school in the city like her best friend Farida. Farha asks her father Abu Farha to register her for school, but her father wants her to get married instead. Farha eventually makes her way to Syria and tells her story which now has been passed down through generations.

Capernaum (2018) | Lebanon

The film stars Syrian refugee child as Zain El Hajj, a 12-year-old living in the slums of Beirut. Capernaum is told in flashback format, focusing on Zain's life, including his

encounter with an Ethiopian immigrant Rahil and her infant son Yonas, and leading up to his attempt to sue his parents for child neglect.

Dry (2014) | Nigeria

Is a 2014 Nigerian drama film ,the film was released in response to the Child marriage controversy ongoing in Nigeria at the time.

The film's theme focuses on women's conditions in Nigeria and early marriage among young women, narrating the story of a thirteen-year-old girl, Halima whose poor uneducated parents marry her off to, a 60-year-old man, who constantly rapes her. Halima gets pregnant, she is consequently abandoned by her husband and discriminated against in society. Zara, a medical doctor who also suffered a horrific childhood meets Halima; she tries to help her get through her situation and save other young women under similar circumstances.

Parched (2015) | India

Parched is the story of four women in a desert village of Gujarat, India. The village and the society are plagued by several social norms, age-old traditions and practices of patriarchy, child marriage, dowry, marital rapes, and physical and mental abuse.

Wonder (2017) | USA

WONDER tells the inspiring and heartwarming story of August Pullman. Born with facial deformities that have prevented him from going to a mainstream school, Auggie becomes the most unlikely of heroes when he enters the local fifth grade. Like his family, his new classmates, and the larger community all struggle to find their compassion and acceptance of Auggie, Auggie's extraordinary journey will unite them all and prove you cannot blend in when you were born to stand out.

3.5 Analytical Framework

Following collection, the data is analyzed using both the representation theory and framing double-lens. This study intends to bridge the gap in the understanding of visual storytelling in advocacy films by analyzing how these films depict marginalized groups and the narrative structures they employ. Although there might be other studies which used the same methodology, this study aims to build on the previous studies.

Worring and Snoek (2009) define visual content analysis as the process of deriving meaningful descriptors for image and video data. These descriptors are the basis for searching large image and video collections. In practice, before the process starts, one applies image processing techniques which take the visual data, apply an operator, and return other visual data with less noise or specific characteristics of the visual data emphasized.

Seale and Tonkiss (2012), explain that content analysis involves the ‘qualitative examination of a sample (e.g., of media texts) for the presence and frequency of specific terms, narratives, or concepts. This involves sampling (choosing the media texts), coding (textual analysis for common denominators) and interpretation (drawing conclusions according to the scope of the research). In this study the visual content analysis will involve examining the technical elements with a specific focus on the camera angles.

3.6 Content Analysis

The content analysis will be based on three theoretical frameworks:

1. Framing Analysis

The study focuses on evaluating how the visual and narrative aspects of a film frame the issue or cause being advocated. Certain camera angles, lighting, and music, for example, can impact the emotional response of the audience and form their interpretation of the story being delivered. The choice of characters, language, and narrative development may all have an impact on the story's framing.

Following Entman's (1993) conceptualization of framing, the analysis will be as follows.

- **Frame selection:** Scenes or sequences focusing on marginalized groups and identities and the challenges of social norms.
- **Frame transformation: breaking** the stereotypes and introducing new perspectives with the utilization of film narratives and visual representations.
- **Casual attribution:** analyzing the film attributes and explanations of factors such as social structure and systematic factors.

2. Representation Analysis

Following Hall's (1997) conceptualization of representation, the analysis will identify the following elements in the films:

- **Stereotypes:** identify the stereotypes in the film, how the characters break away from these stereotypes and traditional gender norms. The analysis would assess if the film challenged this or not.
- **Intersectionality:** how this idea is represented if it was in the film? Does the film address unique experiences and challenges faced by individuals?

- **Empowerment:** the level of empowerment for the characters, did the film allow the character to control their own narrative? Or provide an opportunity for the characters to express their voice and share their influence? How did the characters challenge themselves? Resisted? And it changed during the film.
- **Sensitivity and Cultural context:** how the film engaged with specific contexts and gender norms and social norms.
- **Power dynamics:** imbalances in power/ control/ agency and how it contributes to challenge the main theme.

3. Narrative Three-Act Analysis

The three-act structure is a model used in narrative fiction that divides a story into three parts (acts), often called the Setup, the Confrontation, and the Resolution. It was popularized by Syd Field in his 1979 book *Screenplay: The Foundations of Screenwriting*. Based on his recommendation that a play have a "beginning, middle, and end. Michael, (2002)

On a basic level, Act One sets up the world, characters, the character's goal, as well as the conflicts or obstacles that are preventing them from achieving their goal. Act Two raises the stakes for the character to achieve the goal, escalating the conflict. Act Three resolves the story with either an achievement of that goal or a failure.

Act I

This is sometimes called the "setup" act, and it lays the groundwork for the conflict and revelations to come. It takes up the first 20% of your plot. The first act is made up of three core parts that lead the reader into your story. The story begins with the foundation of your story world. This is where the reader learns who your protagonist is, where they live,

and what their “normal world” looks like. It will take up between 5% and 15% of the story.

Act II

Sometimes called the “confrontation act,” the second act forms the bulk of the story—from about the 25% to 75%, or the second and third quarters. This is where the complexities of the characters, conflicts, and themes will evolve through the events of the plot.

Act III

The third act is the culmination of the main conflict and everything that the heroes have faced on their journey. The protagonist’s goal is finally within reach. During the last act, battles will be waged, triumphs celebrated, losses mourned, and loose ends tied off.

This final act comprises the final quarter of the story, or from the 75% point to 100%.

Chapter Four:

Findings

This chapter provides the research's main findings. It describes the narrative, plot, female characters in the five analyzed films that share the advocacy message of the rights of marginalized groups.

These films are seen as an effective advocacy tool since they highlight the challenges, determination, and empowerment of marginalized identities around the world. These findings to identify the underlying narrative structure by focusing on how visual storytelling is being framed and how representations are taking place to promote a shift in society by advocating for specific issues and norms, in this case, gender equality.

4.1 Films' Narratives Analysis

4.1.1 Film One: “Dry” (2014) | Nigeria



Figure 4.1 “Dry” (2014) | Nigeria

Overview: A compelling true story of Halima, a young 13-year-old girl who is getting married in a remote area of Africa, and Zara, a successful doctor from Wales. Halima, however, eventually gets sick and is teased as a result. Until Zara crosses her path, she is alone on her journey. Their lives are permanently changed the day they meet.
Film Title: "DRY"
Country of Origin: Africa Nigeria
Running Time : <u>115 minutes (about 2 hours)</u>
Director: Stephanie Linus
Theme : <u>Child marriage controversy</u>
Genre: Drama Documentary

Characters Description	
Halima	The 13-year-old protagonist and victim of child marriage, married off by her uneducated, financially struggling parents to Sani, a 60-year-old man who regularly rapes her. Halima becomes pregnant and experiences a vesicovaginal fistula (VVF) after giving birth; as a result, her husband abandons her, and she is subjected to discrimination among the society.
Dr. Zara	Experienced a terrible childhood herself; where it resulted in her attempts to assist young women who get to experience similar circumstances from being forced for marriage and to experiencing sexual harassment and violence. A compassionate social worker and medical doctor who is committed to promoting the rights and self-determination of young girls, especially child brides.

4.1.2 Plot

An award-winning doctor named Zara, who works at a hospital in Wales, first appears in the film. She had everything at her fingers, but her history in Africa haunted her. Halima, a thirteen-year-old girl from a neighborhood in Nigeria, was forced to marry an older man by her parents. Her husband considered her body to be his "property" and assaulted her as a result.

Halima then became pregnant, and after giving birth at home to a dead baby, she was left with a fistula disease which had its shameful reputation in their society. She was abandoned by her husband after being rejected by her village. When Zara, who was on a medical mission in Africa, faced her history with Halima as her patient, the two plotlines merged.

"Dry" portrays the harsh truth of child marriage and the terrible effects it may have on young girls. Additionally, it emphasizes the significance of educating and empowering women as well as giving access to healthcare for people who have fistulas that occur during pregnancy.

4.2 Three Act Narrative Structure

4.2.1 The Equilibrium:

The film opens with a scene of Halima, the main character, playing with other young girls in her age group when she is young, innocent, and full of ambitions and dreams, despite the restrictions placed on her by various social norms, societal practices, and traditions. The equilibrium portrays a typical patriarchal society in which young girls are forced to marry at an early age and women have little influence over their own lives.

4.2.2 Distribution

Conflict results from Halima being pushed into an early arranged marriage. The film constantly shows her crying, begging her parents to prevent her from leaving, and calling for help, showing how this tragic life-changing incident destroys her hopes and dreams and negatively affects her life. The disruption brings to light the life-threatening discriminatory practices that are common in the village's neighborhood, and which support the ongoing cycle of injustice and the suffering of young women like Halima around the world.

4.2.3 The new equilibrium:

It is reached when Halima is found trying to survive and keep herself alive with help from Dr. Zara, who is on her way to provide medical assistance. Dr. Zara provides Halima and other women with a way to come together to seek medical care and gain access to healthcare and education. The new equilibrium presents an opportunity and a step in the right direction by challenging the traditional roles that society has given to women. The film's climax emerges as Dr. Zara confronts the local culture about her desire to work for social change and the fact that she once stood in those women's shoes and was abused.

The film *Dry* presents different conflicts whether internal within the characters or among society. The following conflicts were noticed.

Halima throughout the film it is noticed as having an internal conflict, she is battling with her feelings as she is trying to come over the idea of her fate as a child bride and she struggles with the fact the society standards have shattered her goals and desires which left her in a state of intense mental problems physical and medical. This conflict was seen while she was mentioning she wishes if she is dead in more than three shots.



Figure 4.2 'Halima Sharing with Her Mother Her Wish to Die.' (Film Dry)

The second conflict seen in the film is Social Stigma and Discrimination which is also connected to the internal conflict that Halima was having, and it can be seen in the film with the flashbacks we see from Dr. Zara as well. Social Stigma and Discrimination are reflected in child marriage, which is common in the cultural and social norms of the Nigerian village where the film highlights how dangerous it is to young girls, including the considerable risk of being diagnosed with an awful disease that further marginalizes and isolates people who experience it.

Another challenge is reflected in how Halima and Other women with the same disease face discrimination from the society which affects their emotional and psychological health resulting them to suffer and feel social exclusion. It is crucial to address misunderstandings and stereotypes about women's health issues in this matter and try to raise awareness, which is what the film advocated for.



Figure 4.3 'Halima Neglected by Society for Being Diagnosed with this Disease.' (Film Dry).

4.2.4 Climax

The climax in the film “Dry” occurs when Dr Zara who had been on a mission to help women who are facing the VVF disease and she was healing people who came to her tent she notices Halima being held by her mother and coming to Dr Zara where they were trying to help her stay awake and not lose her breath, Halima is in danger, and Dr. Zara must utilize her medical expertise to try to save her life.

This sequence of the narrative would be the tensest because Halima's future is in danger. After numerous failed attempts to save Halima's life, the major twist of the movie occurs when Halima discovers that Dr. Zara is her biological mother. The fact that Halima passes away enhances the emotional impact and brings the film's first conflict, which Halima raised, to a resolution. Halima's passing opened the way for additional developments in the narrative, such as pushing Dr. Zara to act against harmful practices like child marriage and the lack of access to good medical care.

4.3 Representation and Narrative

4.3.1 Representation of Child Marriage

The film emphasizes the terrible effects child marriage has on young girls like Halima. It calls into question the practice and underlines the urgent need for change by highlighting the effects it has on these girls' mental and physical health. The presentation of child marriage in a realistic manner highlights the challenging reality that many young girls in Nigerian society—and around the world—must cope with.

4.3.2 Women Empowerment:

"Dry" focuses on the solidarity and empowerment of women themselves despite the challenges they face. As a powerful and sympathetic female character, Dr Zara serves as an example on how women may challenge social norms and push for a change since she has been in this situation but by the end of the film, we see her opening her own medical center to help people suffering from this disease. The film offers a positive narrative of women also taking control in their lives and fighting for their rights with wanting to pursue their dream of healing and accessing healthcare. In the film, it is also noticed that women with different characters and narratives have a level of influence on others and the power of women differs from one character to another such as the mother of Halima which was fully obeying her husband while the mother of Halima's husband was in full control over her son.

4.3.3 Stereotypes and Challenging Them

The portrayal of women in a variety of positions, such as the helpful medical personnel and other female patients, departs from bland representations and offers a more complex understanding of women's lives, even though Halima's character is presented as a helpless victim. Stereotypes according to (Hall et al., 2013, 2015) can reflect wider views of society and what the society thinks about those groups that are routinely stereotypes and that it can form a symbolic violence for Hall by inferring negative traits to be natural which is sensed in the narrative of the characters. See below Dialogue from "Dry."

(00:23:40 min) | Halima's Husband: "I want you to always look nice and beautiful, I paid a lot to have you as my wife."

(00:26:57) | Halima's Father: "What did you do to provoke him?"

(01:05:41) | *Halima's Husband*: "We must cleanse this home and restore my dignity."

The mentioned narration can be seen as reinforcing the stereotype of the role of a woman to always look beautiful for her husband, Halima's father did not care about his daughter and he just asked what did she do wrong to provoke her husband to beat her, and her husband neglecting the idea that she is diagnosed with a disease and only focusing on restoring his dignity by cleansing the house from Halima.

"Dry" advocates for a call to action and spreads knowledge about fistulas in labor, child marriage, and women's healthcare in Nigeria. The empowerment of women, having equal access to education, and access to quality healthcare are highlighted as solutions in the film. The film offers hope for a change in the way these social concerns are addressed by highlighting Halima's dramatic journey and the support given by Dr. Zara in the medical tent. The film's combination of both small and large components creates an appealing narrative that urges societal change and emphasizes the resilience of women in this struggle.

4.4 Camera and Positioning

4.4.1 Character Placing and Camera Position:

Positioning of the Characters within the frame is planned to highlight the power of each character by reinforcing the relationships and societal standards. Male characters who are enforcing child marriage are frequently positioned in higher, authoritative positions in the settings, while on the other hand young girls such as Halima appear in lower positions highlighting their helplessness and lack of agency in such situations. Camera positions and framing are crucial in communicating the characters' feelings and experiences throughout the entire film. Additionally, close-up shots are used to deepen the audience's

connection to the characters during emotionally charged scenes, particularly during Halima's pain and struggle.



Figure 4.4: “Halima’s Husband with Showing Him from Low Angel Camera Position to Enhance His Authoritative Role.” (Film Dry).



Figure 4.5: “Halima’s Husband neglecting Halima, Husband is Low Angle Frame to Show is Authority and Power.” (Film Dry).



Figure 4.6: “Close Up to Halima Crying When She Knows She is Getting Married Used to Deepen the Audience's Connection to The Character.” (Film Dry).

4.4.2 Symbolic Composition:

The film employs symbolic composition to highlight the primary ideas and messages presented in the narrative. For instance, the harsh and barren landscapes of Halima's

Nigerian village serve as an undesirable reminder of the limited opportunities and prospects that young girls live in with the tradition of child marriage. In contrast, the hospital and Dr. Zara's home serve as symbols of transformation and hope because of the brighter and bigger rooms.



Figure 4.7: Film Dry



Figure 4.8: Film Dry

4.5 Film Two: Parched



Figure 4.9: “Parched” (2015) | India.

Overview:

The imaginary village where the characters live in based on a rural area in northwest India and extremely dry. The director also tries to understand how and why these women continue to live by focusing on the additional information portrayed in the film, which includes the forced child marriages, the financial difficulties, the spousal and familial rape, and the physically and psychologically abusive husbands.

Film Title:

“Parched”

Country of Origin

Asia | India

Running Time:

118 minutes (about 2 hours)

Director:

Leena Yadav

Theme:

several social evils, age-old traditions and practices of patriarchy, child marriage, dowry, marital rapes, and physical and mental abuse.

Genre:

Drama

Roles**Characters Description**

Rani	A widow struggling to support her old mother-in-law and teenage son, Gulab. Rani marries Gulab off to a child bride by paying a hefty sum to the bride's family.
Lajjo	Is Rani's fun-loving best friend. She and her husband are unable to have a child, and Lajjo's husband beats her in frustration at his own infertility. Unable to earn as much as her, he beats her more because of her wages.
Janki	A young girl who is forced to marry Gulab, where he exercises physical and sexual violence against her.
Bijli	A dancer of a traveling dance company who satisfies male audiences with exotic dances every night while also entertaining clients striving towards desire.

- Plot

Parched is the story of four women in a desert village of Gujarat, India. The village and the society are plagued by several social evils, age-old traditions and practices of patriarchy, child marriage, dowry, marital rapes, and physical and mental abuse. Because the lives of these four ladies are connected, they become close friends and find comfort in one another's company. Together, they challenge the strict boundaries of their society, challenge gender norms, and fight for the elimination of the idea of patriarchal society. Through their individual experiences and struggles for their right to love, freedom, and self-determination, Rani, Lajjo, Bijli, and Janaki challenge social standards. They bravely act to reclaim their bodies and futures despite the conservative forces that are against them.

The story starts when Rani is looking for a wife for her son Gulab where she pays money for Janaki's parents to have Janaki as her daughter in law saying how beautiful she is. The transition in the story begins when Janaki shows up at the wedding with a distinctive look with her hair. This is where the story starts to change from Rani and Gulab, with Lajjo and her abusive husband she faces struggles for convincing him that she is not the one who is the problem of them not having children. "Parched" covers topics including female friendship, gender identities, independent women, and the right to make decisions without intervention from the larger community as the narrative progresses.

It shows how strong these women are in the face of adversity and how courageous they are to confront the injustices that their male-dominated culture is to blame for. It also raises awareness of the challenges faced by women in rural India's traditional communities and promotes women's empowerment and their right to pursue happiness outside of the constraints of social norms while challenging traditions and beliefs.

- Narrative Structure

The story, its main conflicts, and climax of the film "Parched" are intertwined with the challenges, obstacles, and successes of women and gender identities. Parched offers a powerful portrayal of women's role, friendships, their ability to affect positive change and challenge social norms within their communities and conservative culture. It also highlights the resilience and determination of women in the face of patriarchal norms.

- Equilibrium

The women in the early equilibrium are portrayed as following the patriarchal society's rules about traditional gender roles. They highlight the restricted opportunities and

limitations that women experience since they suffer discrimination and lack of control over their lives.

- **Distribution**

The narrative's disruptions show the women's struggles to reject the restrictions placed on them by society. Each of the characters encounters different difficulties that highlight the injustices experienced by women, bringing to light problems like infertility, child marriage, and the marginalization of women. By highlighting diverse cultural norms that are pushed for women by the patriarchal society point of view, the characters path their own way of finding solutions to break free from the limitations they have although it is sometimes against their own will and desire.

- **New Equilibrium**

The transition to the new equilibrium represents the freedom and independence those women gained at the end. They can defeat the oppressive powers that held them back due to their mutual support and friendship. The women who were questioning traditional gender roles and seeking for independence, who also want to remark themselves outside of what the society demands. The female characters establish a solid relationship where they share what they feel and what they go through among different issues. Together they were able to challenge traditional stereotypes and advocate for women to strive to find their freedom and empowerment.

Internal conflicts of female characters were seen arising from their desires to break free from the societal expectations and norms and gain their freedom. Rani was struggling to find her independence Away from her son, Lajjo's emotional and physical abuse from her husband and by facing infertility.

Bijili faces the dichotomy of her public image as a dancer and her personal life while Janaki has the internal conflict of being married at an early age and losing her innocence while also being a victim of physical and verbal violence.

Moreover, Patriarchal norms are also part of the conflict where the film portrays the battle of women as individuals against the dominant patriarchal norms that control their lives. Child marriage, domestic violence, and strict gender roles are representations of these social problems, which add to the rough conditions those women live in. The internal conflict of each character is supported by the role of patriarchal norms in their lives as individuals which made it difficult for them to demolish those norms at the beginning of the film.



Figure 4.10: “Being Physically and Sexually Abused for not Being Pregnant.” (Film Parched).

- Climax

"Parched" climax is represented as a powerful moment of resistance and change; When the female characters make the decision to jointly challenge the circumstances, they are in. The women challenge the social norms that have kept them in chains for so long and insist on having their freedom without looking back to what they have left behind. The plot twist is also when the characters decide to take control of their destinies and stand against the forces and limitations they have, which makes a change in the narrative as well.

4.6 Representation and Narrative

- Representation of Gender issues:

"Parched" presents a full representation of prominent gender issues and challenges women face in conservative and patriarchal Indian communities. The film focuses on highlighting the injustice experience for women which is most commonly the same experience in their village, including child marriage, domestic violence, and the social pressure and expectations of motherhood, and it sheds the light on the issue of infertility. Hence, the film explores these issues via the perspectives of its female characters where they seek for challenging society norms and emphasizing the need for a change.

- Women Empowerment:

The film portrays women as a proactive dynamic group, who challenge traditional gender norms and strive for their rights. For example, is that the oppression of women is a manifestation of the insecurity of men. This is clear as Lajjo's husband beats her in frustration for his lack of success in the labor market and for his own infertility. Which it is sensed in the film that although her husband knows about his own infertility, he is still abusing his wife for not being pregnant.

- Stereotypes and Challenging Them:

The film ends with a message of challenging different stereotypes and instead of focusing on presenting them as passive victims, the film highlights the twist within the characters' desires and way of thinking as soon as they feel the need of challenging the norms and traditions by working on getting their freedom away from the offensive norms.

See below Dialogue from "Parched."

(00:01:24) / Gulab (Looking at his young wife):

"I paid for this?"

(00:01:12) / Gulab ([monologue](#)) when his wife did not know about the sexual interaction after marriage:

"They sold me a useless goat."

(01:49:00) / Group of boys:

"She is a girl vending machine."



Figure 4.11: "Janaki Kept Looking at The Doll on Her Way to Her New Husband's House." (Film Parched).

4.7 Camera and Positioning

- Character Placing and Camera Position:

Positioning of the Characters within the frame is planned to highlight the power of each character by reinforcing the relationships and societal standards. The female characters in "Parched" are given greater screen time using a variety of camera angles and framing techniques. film, as a result, 'speaks the language of the patriarchy' (1975, 7). This patriarchal ideology constructs women in relation to men; women are a canvas on which male desires are projected, hence subverting female agency and power. This theory was well noticed when Bijili the Dancer had screen time, the sequence with Bijili often focused on Close- ups where it represents what this theory is all about. Power dynamics

and gender roles are most effectively displayed when characters are placed within the frame. Male characters are often given higher positions which stands for being in charge of the women in traditional male-dominated matter. in *Parched* female characters were framed to occupy more prominent areas, particularly during periods of resistance, signifying their empowerment and growing power.



Figure 4.12: “Close up Shots for The Dancer | for other Characters They Were Rarely Seen as Close Ups.”

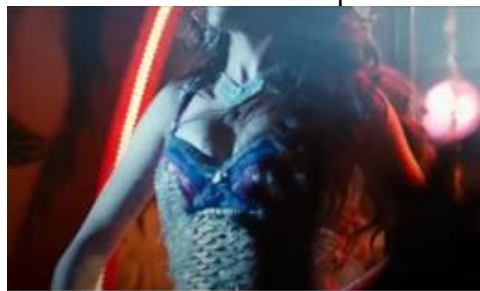


Figure 4.13: Film *Parched*

Symbolic Composition:

The film employs symbolic composition to highlight the primary ideas and messages presented in the narrative. For instance, the harsh and barren landscapes in the village gives us the feeling as an undesirable reminder of the limited opportunities and prospects that women and young girls live in with the social norms. In contrast, the last seen where we see the female characters breaking free from their society, it is full of colors, smiles and bright image and frame.



Figure 4.14: Film Parched.

4.8 Film Three: Wonder



Figure 4.15: “Wonder” (2017) | USA.

Overview:

“Wonder” follows a year in the life of August Pullman. He was born with a genetic abnormality that required him to undergo surgeries and medical treatments since his earliest days. Every member of the family is present when this extremely frightened fifth grader enters public school for the first time.

Auggie soon begins to question his parents' insistence that he will fit into the "normal" world.

Film Title:

“Wonder”

Running Time:

113 minutes (about 2 hours)

Stephen Chbosky

Theme:

Underlying Health Conditions | Bullying among peers

Characters	Description
Auggie	A 10-year-old boy who resides with his parents and has one sister. He received 27 different surgeries to help him function because he was born with an uncommon face defect termed "mandibulofacial dysostosis". As a result, when Auggie is out in public, he wears an astronaut helmet to hide his condition.
Via	Auggie's sister, a teenager that relates to the loneliness and isolation caused by Auggie's condition and constantly offers support to him. She struggles through the film to find support from her parents like the support her brother gets.

Jack Will	<p>A student who eventually becomes Auggie's best friend and collaborator in a science project.</p> <p>Jack is the first one to be nice to Auggie, accepting him the way he is.</p>

- Plot

The main character of the movie is 10-year-old Auggie Pullman, who was born with a rare condition which affects his facial features. Auggie's mother has been homeschooling him because of his numerous surgeries and health conditions. But as middle school approaches, his parents feel it is time for him to enroll in an ordinary school. For Auggie, entering middle school for the first time left him nervous and knowing that he will draw attention to himself among his peers and be subject to judgement and bullying for his appearance. He starts facing challenges with dealing with his school mates as having preconceptions and reactions, but soon forms a close friendship with his classmate, Jack Will.

Meanwhile, even though Via loves her family, she has been feeling neglected and her parents tend to spend more time looking after Auggie since he was born. She signs up for Drama Club after meeting a theater student named Justin, with whom she soon begins a romantic relationship. Via gives a moving performance that earns her acclaim from the crowd, and she feels supported by her family again. As the school year goes on, Auggie's courage and strength inspire those around him to stand up to their preconceptions and learn what real empathy and compassion are all about. The way Auggie's narrative affects his family, friends, and teachers' lives throughout the film is an amazing representation of the power one young child can have on an entire community.

- **Narrative Structure**

The narrative of "Wonder," grows through a profound examination of empathy, identity, and transformation. The three-act structure of the film fits with Todorov's ideas; it starts with an equilibrium, gets disrupted, and then moves to a new equilibrium. Within this framework, the film explores conflicts and climax scenes that, while delivering their powerful message, reflect the gender identities and norms presented in the film.

- **Equilibrium**

Auggie Pullman, who was born with a facial defect, serves as the protagonist of the opening sequence of the film and helps demonstrate the emotions that those who are disabled experience. Auggie is surrounded by a loving family who are doing their best to help him live his life without noticing the facial defects he has. His mother is the representation of strength and empathy, and his father strikes a balance between showing him love and humor, creating a safe environment for any viewer that Auggie is living in a comfortable environment and having initial stability. This snapshot of the Pullman family's accepting home life prepares us for the disruptions to come.

- **Disruption**

The disruptions start to become obvious when Auggie starts fifth grade at a public school, where he is living in internal conflict and social pressure of accepting the idea of leaving the house without wearing a helmet. Both Auggie's belief in himself and how his classmates would perceive and accept him are put to the test since it is obvious, he has some differences.

The Film portrays how social stereotypes, that are frequently influenced by gender standards and norms, show up in relationships between individuals. Being a victim of bullying and exclusion can be motivated by stereotypes based on people's appearances

which leaves the main character doubting himself in his value and his own acceptance. Due to these major disturbances, Auggie's sense of security and routine are significantly shifted exposing him to a world outside of his family's safe home. Auggie is forced to cope with issues in the outer world where stereotypes and social norms are at play because of the disruption.

- New Equilibrium

The major turning point occurs when the main character Auggie, hears his only friend in school and the only person who accepted him as a normal kid, making a crucial comment about his appearance. This heartbreaking scene reinforces the key ideas of the film and the main messages the film is advocating for. This focuses on how gender identities can gradually affect different relationships, where Auggie is forced to confront his weaknesses by knowing this information. The narrative changes due to the characters' personal self-reflections when Auggie's vulnerability is exposed, he is forced to deal with the reality of how people look at him. It acts as an inspiration for emotional growth and this turning point encouraged other characters to reflect on their own actions and attitudes which made a huge turn in the narrative.



Figure 4.16: "Auggie Walking in School Hallway." (Film Wonder). Breaking boundaries of accepting diverse groups can be considered as the main message of "Wonder". The film highlights the significance of appreciating the value and worth of

everyone without focusing on their appearance. The journey that is seen in the narrative encourages viewers to put aside stereotypes, embrace diversity and being different, and cultivate a loving relationship among others despite their differences. Moreover, “Wonder” advocates for a more compassionate and inclusive way of life by reinforcing the acceptance and understanding of other's situations which has the power to alter social norms and stereotypes.

Conflicts

- **Internal Conflict (Auggie):**

Auggie's struggle to find a balance between his self-identity and appearance is the primary cause of his inner conflict. He is unsure of himself and has self-doubts because of his unique facial defect. This psychological conflict can be related to by everyone who has ever felt pressure to conform to social norms of appearance and looks. Auggie's path is an example of the wider battle between accepting oneself and living up to social standards based on appearance and gender.



Figure 4.17: “On Halloween, I can Walk my Head Up High. Auggie (00:44-32)

- **Via's Internal Conflict:**

The internal conflict that Via, Auggie's sister is experiencing while coping with her changing sense of identity and feeling left behind from her parents and friends due to Auggie's condition, encourages her to comfort herself as she makes it through these challenges and struggles alone. The loving house of the Pullman's Family was a safe space for Auggie to be himself and act naturally but not for his sister where she was also doubting herself and asking why no one is taking care of her.

“Everything Revolves about the son not the daughter.”- Via | (00:35:43)

- **Social Conflicts | Stereotypes and Bullying**

A significant social conflict arises as Auggie arrives at school and finds himself confronted by his classmates' reactions. Some students' responses reflect societal stereotypes about how people should look and, indirectly, gender identities, while others show discrimination and discrimination. The argument demonstrates how people are typically judged by their physical appearance.

Verbal abuse, marginalization and peers bothering him because of his appearance is portrayed in the film. This shows how society may marginalize people who do not fit into the preconceptions of appearance and that people who are not fit based on the normal standards from gender norms or physical expectations are frequently affected more from social biases and discrimination.

4.9 Camera and Positioning

- **Character Placing and Camera Position:**

Close-up shots were captured in the film to highlight the feelings and draw the audience closer to the characters' experiences. This is essential for expressing the character's

emotions and problems since it enables the audience to relate to the character personally. Moreover, using Eye-Level shots are utilized in the film to help break down the barriers between the audience and the characters during dialogues by creating a sense of intimacy and acceptance, for example we see this in Auggie's different shots since it is working on normalizing the idea of speaking to someone with a facial defect and to keep the audience fully concentrated in the film by using these shots.



Figure 4.18: “Auggie’s Close Up Shots” (Film Wonder). Genuinely sympathetic friends are frequently at eye level creating a sense of equality. Characters who have preconceptions or misunderstandings, on the other hand, are placed above Auggie, emphasizing their discriminatory viewpoints.



Figure 4.19: “Sample Shots for Eye-Level Angle.” (Film Wonder).

- **Symbolic Structure:**

The symbolic change in Auggie's self-perception and how others see him and how he is framed in different positions and depending on the situation and narration is used to reinforce the main themes of Auggie's transitions to self-acceptance while he is wearing his astronaut helmet where people would don't judge his appearance because they don't

know the person's face underneath the helmet but when he takes it off this is where the change happens in how the pictures and perceptions are framed.

- Representation of Social Groups and Issues:

"Wonder" explores how social groups and issues are portrayed while focusing on Auggie's experience and how it affects his family, friends, and teachers. The film presents a miniature version of society, showing how perceptions toward identity, disabilities, and appearance can affect social interactions.

The story illustrates how true friendship and tiny acts of kindness can defy social expectations and result in significant personal progress, which is one of the main ideas the film is advocating about with the idea of bullying for people with disabilities since in fact, children with disabilities are bullied in schools and online about twice as often as children without disabilities (Rose, Simpson, & Moss, 2015).

4.10 Film Four: Capernaum.



Figure 4.20: “Capernaum” (2018) | Lebanon.

Overview:

The film stars Syrian refugee child as Zain El Hajj, a 12-year-old living in the slums of Beirut. Capernaum is told in flashback format, focusing on Zain's life, including his encounter

with an Ethiopian immigrant Rahil and her infant son Yonas, and leading up to his attempt to sue his parents for child neglect.

Film Title:

“CAPERNAUM”

Country of Origin:

Lebanon

Running Time:

126 minutes (about 2 hours)

Director:

Nadine Labaki

Theme:

Child Neglect | Social-Realism

Genre:

Drama

Roles

Characters	Description
Zain	A 12-year-old from the slums of <u>Beirut</u> , is serving a five-year prison sentence in <u>Roumieh Prison</u> for stabbing someone. Zain lives with his parents and takes care of at least seven younger siblings who make money in various schemes instead of going to school. He runs away from his abusive unhappy home to a new experience.

Rahil	Ethiopian woman working as a cleaner without legal papers, she takes pity on Zain and agrees to let him live with her at her tin shack in exchange for Zain babysitting her undocumented infant son Yonas when she is at work.
Sahar	Zain's 11-year-old sister. Zain had to hide the evidence of her first <u>period</u> , fearing she will be married to the landlord of their house if her parents discover that she can now become pregnant.

- Plot:

"Capernaum" represents the heartbreaking story of Zain, a 12-year-old Lebanese child who resolves to fight his parents for putting him to a life of poverty, neglect, and discomfort. The story of Zain is told in court through a sequence of flashbacks throughout the film.

Since the day he was born, Zain's life has been challenging since he lives in an exceedingly small, chaotic household where he is subjected to numerous sorts of abuse and neglect. Zain is working for a guy who is trying to persuade Zain's parents to marry their 11-year-old daughter in exchange for two chickens and by giving the chance for zain to be working as a delivery boy at the neighborhood's small market. Zain is horrified when his 11-year-old sister Sahar gets married off to their landlord to pay off a debt to the family. He escapes his house to protect her, which begins him on a journey on the streets. Later, Zain meets Rahil, an Ethiopian migrant worker who is working as a cleaner at the park. She pities on Zain and agrees to let him live with her in her tin shack in exchange for Zain babysitting her undocumented infant son Yonas when she is at work.

Zain is left to care for Yonas alone after Rahil gets detained for being without legal documents. He turns to extreme approaches to care for and feed the baby. Zain puts the

baby for adoption and starts working to leave the country in an illegal way by paying money for documents that are fake. This is where the major turnover happens in the film when Zain goes back home to take anything that has his name on it from his parents' house. The film's representation of the harsh realities experienced by immigrants and street children in Lebanon is both powerful and extraordinarily affecting. It explores issues of poverty, abuse, and the failure of the system to defend the most vulnerable people of the same society through Zain's eyes.

- **Narrative Structure:**

Non-professionals acted in the film. Their lives closely resembled the characters acted in the film. The producer put the actors in scenes according to their personal narrative and urged them to respond involuntarily with their own words and body language then adapted the script to follow their feeling when they diverged from the written script that they had to follow.

Despite the difficulties portrayed in the film, Zain promotes a gender role as a place for security, despite being a young child, Zain is represented as a mature young guardian especially for his sister Sahar where he understands her vulnerability, by including the way she conceals her menstruation which highlights the silent yet ongoing gender weaknesses that women face with providing a critical critique of the societies that unfairly burden people based on their gender which is also affecting the children.

- **Equilibrium:**

Even though life was extremely difficult, Zain's life is predictable in terms of his daily routine. He spends his days helping his family deal with the difficulties of their economic circumstances in the Beirut slums. The gender dynamics in the household are traditional, with girls being expected to take on traditional duties and responsibilities from

an early age. Since he is the only boy in his family, he is forced to get money, whereas in comparison his sister gets forced to get married and dies at the age of 11 because her parents gave her for taking two chickens. The equilibrium is disrupted when Zain's sister is forced to get married highlighting the deeply entrenched patriarchal norms that allow child marriages.

- Disruption:

Zain's equilibrium is disturbed by Sahar's marriage since it brutally imposes adult decisions on a child's environment. This is more than just a plot twist; it also serves as an honest remark on how young girls are often treated as objects in some communities. Sahar is traded off in exchange for a minor thing to keep her family surviving. The interactions of socioeconomic status and gender are further highlighted by Zain's escape and subsequent relationship with Rahil, an Ethiopian worker striving to keep her baby with her. Rahil faces more difficulties as a woman, with both her son and her being seen under the umbrella of marginalized identities. While struggling, she is leaving her son with a 12-year-old boy, she is begging for a guy from the black market just to keep her living with her son.

- New Equilibrium:

The courtroom scene shows the constraints of society while also offering a sense of hope. A child suing his parents is an extraordinary act of resistance against social norms and cultural structures that reinforce socioeconomic and gender inequality. By suing his parents, he expresses his dissatisfaction at being born into such a society. A young child is now shouting in the courtroom and in front of people and the press, which is frequently dominated by adults, and questioning not only his parents but the entire world about the reason for his existence.



Figure 4.21: “Zain in the Court Waiting for the Judge to Give his Decision.” (Film Capernaum).

The film presents different conflicts whether they are internal within the characters themselves or among society, in the film Capernaum the following conflicts are noticed:

1: An internal conflict, where Zain battles after his sister is being forced to marriage, he is left with feelings of betrayal, loss, and injustice, that are at the center of his psychological struggle.

In addition to brotherly affection, Zain's protective behaviors toward Sahar show a sense of the increased vulnerability of young girls in their community. This protective behavior is not just family; it shows that a young boy is becoming aware of the patriarchal standards that limit his sister's opinions and choices, even if he does so unconsciously. Zain's dilemma goes deeper than Sahar getting married, which is what finally breaks him. It comes from a long-simmering frustration about how gender roles and cultural expectations have repeatedly let him down. He observes his parents, particularly his father, maintaining these standards, which influences him to challenge them.

2: Ethiopian immigrant Rahil is constantly in violation of the law. As a woman and immigrant, Rahil is placed at risk for exploitation, imprisonment, and separation of her child. Rahil's situation highlights the heightened challenges faced by women in similar situations. While male immigrants also face significant challenges, Rahil is a mother in a violent society, and her situation highlights how gender can make an already tough situation worse. Not only does Rahil struggle with social processes that render her

invisible, but she also faces the challenges of parenting in tough and challenging circumstances.

3: Capernaum critiques society's tendency to ignore and accept such injustice practices in an indirect way. It highlights how the whole idea of patriarchy fails its most vulnerable citizens. Girls like Sahar and other child characters in the film are the most particularly affected by all of this since their lives are turned into objects whose values are determined by the social and economic effects they provide where it is usually at the risk of their physical health and psychological health. The way the family "sold" Sahar to her husband contrasts with the individual's rights and independence of people not obliged to show their intention in something positive or negative.

Capernaum is a narrative based on different conflicts that blends personal and social concepts and provides a wide perspective of the way people deal with unpleasant look at gender, social norms, and the devastating effects of these on the most vulnerable individuals.



Figure 4.22: “Zain and his Siblings Going to Work in the Streets” (Film Capernaum).

- **Climax:**

In "Capernaum," the plot reaches a peak when Zain learns that Sahar is getting married. This serves not just as a familial subplot, but it also represents the larger cultural and social constraints that a patriarchal culture has when it comes to the abuse of young girls. The film's accusation of gender inequality inspires Zain to speak out against traditional norms through Sahar's arranged marriage and Zain's reaction to it. When he leaves home

after finding this, it is an ideological and emotional departure from the system that allows such inequities to exist where he is going alone without even showing any care from his parents' side to search for him, he is going out there without any money, food, clothes, and legal papers to keep him safe and protected.

4.11 Representation and Narrative

- Representation of Social Groups and Issues

There are many ways that social groups are portrayed in *Capernaum*, Zain is viewed as the generation that society has forgotten and has been denied the opportunity to experience childhood. A devastating demonstration of how young girls are used as commodities in some social groups is Sahar's character. Rahil's character serves as another migrant representation. Her struggle emphasizes the interconnections of gender, race, and class while highlighting the several marginalization levels.

The narrative framework of the film highlights these portrayals. To promote discussion on individual freedom in oppressive groups, Zain's personal journey merges through wide societal themes.



Figure 4.23: “Rahil Putting Make-Up to Look to Impersonate the Person she has ID for.” (Film *Capernaum*).

- Narrative and Framing

The structure of the story itself acts as a frame, starting with Zain deciding to take legal action against his parents to take him away from a life of pain. This framing is consistent

with framing theory, as it puts the story into Zain's point of view and his decisions, which shape how the audience perceives what happened to him. Which is focusing on the POV of the character which is also noticed in technical aspect since the camera keeps moving with Zain as if it is following him wherever he goes which gives a feeling of being involved in Zain's life.

- Camera Angles and Positioning

Capernaum's camera angles are often filmed in a documentary style, which adds a sense of speed and realism to the story. The close-ups of the protagonists' faces reveal unfiltered emotion and allow us to see into their inner worlds. Wide pictures of the city—typically slums—create a broad perspective of a marginalized society. Power dynamics and social order are portrayed via frames. People in positions of power or privilege usually appear from above, demonstrating their influence over the lives of those below them. This is consistent with representation theory, as these visual signals demonstrate how repressive systems are that exclude particular social groups.



Figures 4.24: Film Capernaum

On a larger scale, "Capernaum" encourages us to rethink those systems that promote poverty and injustice. We are reminded of the need to solve the underlying causes that contribute to the suffering of socially vulnerable people by following Zain's journey. To summarize, 'Capernaum' employs minor components like camera technique and location to immerse us in the emotional journeys of the individuals. On a larger scale,

the film's portrayal of social groups and societal concerns is consistent by drawing the viewer's perception and argument for systemic change.

4.12 Film Five: Farha.



Figure 4.25:“Farha” (2021) | Palestine

Overview:

A 14-year-old Palestinian girl, nursing dreams of breaking out of the traditional gender expectations of her village to attend school at a nearby city, is forced into hiding by her father after their quiet settlement is attacked by soldiers of the newly created Israeli Defense Forces. Hiding inside a locked pantry while waiting for her father to return, she watches through a small opening in the wall as Israeli soldiers execute a Palestinian family.

Film Title:“Farha”

Country of Origin: Palestine

Running Time :92 minutes (about 1 and a half hours)

Director: Darin J. Sallam

Theme :Child marriage controversy

Genre: Historical Drama

Roles

Characters	Description
Farha	a 14-year-old girl who lives in a small village in Palestine, 1948. Girls her age are traditionally married off or spoken for, yet Farha wants to continue her education despite traditions and the restrictions of schooling in her village for boys only.
Abu Farha-Mukhtar	The father of Farha, he was the Mukhtar of the village (the controlling hand), When Israeli bombs reach their village, Farha's father locks her in the cellar of their home, promising to return as soon as he can.

- Plot:

The story of Farha, a fourteen-year-old Palestinian girl living in a village, is set against the backdrop of the 1948 Palestinian Nakba. Her dreams are met with the harsh realities of her surroundings as she battles with the obstacles of her culture and the oncoming disaster. Farha's desire to seek an education and break free from traditional gender norms stands out from the crowd, and her dad's objection to her goals is finally overturned by her uncle's support, marking an important turning point in her life.

The film follows Farha and her friend Farida through the difficulties of the scenario while the conflict rages. The danger is unbearable as the community enters chaos, with explosions and military threats. People are forced to leave their houses as the familiar environment transforms into a war. When Farha's father decides to stay behind and protect the village, her world is flipped upside down. They are separated, and Farha is cut off from the violence, leaving her to face the unknown.

At the end of "Farha," we find out what happened after Farha's journey, and it is heartbreaking to know that her father's fate is still a mystery. Her story will live on for

generations to come, showing the resilience of the human spirit and the impact of the Nakba on so many people.

"Farha" is an inspiring film that shows how the Nakba, the Nakba, also known as the Palestinian Catastrophe, which comprised the destruction of Palestinian society and homeland in 1948, and the permanent displacement of most of the Palestinian people. It is commemorated on 15 May, the Gregorian calendar date of the Israeli Declaration of Independence in 1948. For Palestinians, it is an annual day of commemoration of the displacement that preceded and followed Israel's establishment. had an impact on people and left a legacy in history. Frankel (2004). It is a story of survival, loss, and displacement, and it serves as a powerful reminder of what it means to be human.

- **Narrative Structure:**

Based on a true story, the film follows a little Palestinian girl who survived the Nakba in 1948, when Israeli forces drove hundreds of thousands of people from their homes. Farha, the main character in the film, is imprisoned in a pantry for her own safety when Israeli soldiers invade the neighborhood. She witnesses part of the brutality of the ethnic cleansing that led to the founding of the state of Israel through the holes in the door. The film starts with different scenes of young girls in the village who are preparing themselves to get married, while Farha is trying to convince her father that she wants to move to the city and go to school without giving care to what the village might think about her.

- **Equilibrium:**

A fourteen-year-old Palestinian girl Farha and her closest friend Farida both want to challenge gender norms and seek higher education in their small community. The desires of both Farha and Farida for a new existence are compatible with one another, creating a

sense of an equilibrium within the tight and uneducated neighborhood and reflect the societal norms and expectations of female role models in the village.

- **Disruption:**

When the village falls into a political crisis, which leads to the spread of violence, the disturbance starts. Farha is forced to confront the harsh realities of society as her dreams are challenged with unexpected chaos. Women's social roles and expectations are disrupted as they deal with uncertainty and difficulties that go against their conventional ideals. This notion also centered on Farha's emotional side because, when the Israelis attacked her village, her father encouraged her to go with his friends for the city to keep her safe and pursue her aspirations, but she refused.

- **New Equilibrium:**

When the story ends, the town suffers a catastrophe that limits Farha to her home, mirroring her limitation within the boundaries of normal gender expectations. The new equilibrium is achieved however, when her own change overcomes these limitations. In a society racked by crisis, Farha's bravery and refusal of the limitations imposed by traditional standards make up as an escape from the existing social structures which leaves Farha in hope although the fate of her father is not known. At the end, the audience are left with imagination of their own Prisoners of War (POV) for the following narrative which is what might leave the audience questioning how Farha's life was after this?



Figure 4.26: “Farha Trying to Imagine her Helping in the Israeli Raid to her Village.”
(Film Farha).

- **Climax:**

Farha witnesses the execution of a Palestinian family in the final moments of the film, which represents the violence of the political instability. At this point, the film exposes the truth about how vulnerable women are in violent circumstances and the pain and suffering they go through.

This scene is seen as the major twist in the film since Farha is on her own, looking through a door hole at what is happening in the outside world with her being unsafe, unprotected and in extreme danger.

The film presents different conflicts whether they are internal within the characters themselves or among society, in the film Farha it was noticed the following conflicts.

- **Farha's Internal Conflict:**

Farha's internal conflict is the story's main topic. Her desire to pursue a higher education, which goes against her family's traditional traditions, reflects an internal conflict. This contradiction serves as a reminder of the mismatch between personal goals and the cultural norms that limit chances for women and young girls. This was noticed in the first sequences of the film, Farha was against the marriage of her peers while they were excited and happy about this step, and she was only thinking of studying and being engaged in school.



Figure 4.27: “Farha and Farida Talking about her Dream of going to School.” (Film Farha).

- **Farha's Father Internal Conflict:**

Farha's father who was very well known in their village was seen in an internal struggle since he was left in a situation of being convinced that his daughter wants to achieve her goals and dreams and she wants to go to school, and he was feeling the internal and social pressure of the idea of leaving his daughter away from him in a city especially since all the girls in her age are getting married in the village. It was one of the main struggles that her father was going through, and it took him several tries to get convinced of this idea.

- **Social Conflict:**

The chaos and displacement brought on by political instability represent the larger picture of social conflict. As they are compelled to assume new roles and responsibilities in the evolving environment, women are frequently the victims of this struggle. As they struggle to maintain their families in an environment of chaos, women face more societal limitations. This is seen in the film from Farha's point of view since she was weak, with no one around, left behind in their house pantry facing the reality that she is still waiting for her father that never came back. She is now alone, leaving her with new responsibilities and challenges that might also remove the idea of her achieving her education.

- **Camera Angels and Character Positioning**

The camera work in "Farha" plays a significant role in expressing emotions and viewpoints. The audience becomes involved in the lives of the characters due to handheld, documentary-style camera angles, which forges an immediate connection. As Farha



violates traditional expectations and tries to be free, close-ups of her face show her inner battle. Character framing illustrates societal boundaries and power relations. Moreover, the fact that Farha interacts with her father, her uncle, and the entire Palestinian family in closed-off settings emphasizes the boundaries imposed by cultural standards.



Figures 4.28: Film Farha.

- **Representation:**

The film "Farha" illustrates the suffering of the Palestinian people during the Nakba with accuracy. It features a broad range of characters, including women, children, and families, all of whom are coping with the effects of the conflict. This representation is consistent with representation theory since it sheds light on the lives of many social groups while telling their stories against a chaotic background.

- **Narrative and Framing:**

The story itself serves as a frame for connecting Farha's experience to the larger social and political story. The struggles and aspirations of Farha are placed against the backdrop of a society that is evolving due to outside influences. This framing demonstrates the selected viewpoints that characters use to see the world. It is seen within the diverse ways of framing the characters. For example, Farha is always in a positive frame, holding a book while her peers are usually seen in marriage and wedding settings.

"Farha" criticizes societal and cultural constraints, notably those imposed on women. The micro and macro components of the movie highlight how crucial individual stories are in creating more comprehensive society narratives. Farha's rejection of traditional expectations is captured on camera, serving as a metaphor for the resilience of those who are working to bring change. The narrative and representational scope of the film go deeply into the Palestinian community's experiences, illuminating the conflict's varied effects. "Farha" exploits small details like camera angle and movement to completely immerse its audience in the emotions and difficulties of its characters. The movie challenges viewers to think about the impact of individual action within the context of broader societal change and cultural norms and it is focused on leaving the audience with their own imagination and way of interpreting the narrative from their personal perspectives.

4.12.1 Visual Storytelling Role in Representing Marginalized Groups

In the film "Dry," the narrative framing is essential for conveying the culture of Nigeria, where child marriage is widespread, and Halima is a symbol of struggle for many young women within a patriarchal culture. The camera angles are employed to emphasize the

characters' emotional distress, particularly during the tense moments, such as when Zara struggles to keep her daughter from falling asleep and losing her to death.

Similarly, the film “Parched” uses visual storytelling to illustrate the challenges of women in India. The characters' stories are connected through an intertwined narrative structure that highlights their shared struggle and resilience. In the first part of the film, the sequences of male-dominated traditional practices and gatherings highlight the limitations that women experience daily, and the camera angles typically show their interactions in restricted quarters, underlining their limited freedom. The positioning of the characters in the scenes and interactions highlights their shared journey towards self-empowerment, successfully communicating the advocacy message.

4.12.2 Visual Storytelling in Framing Messages

In “Dry,” framing theory is used to demonstrate how Halima battles with the severe social norms of Nigerian society. It portrays her as a young woman who opposes gender norms and aspires to achieve more than what is expected of her. Her position in the shot at significant points demonstrates her development from a shy girl to an eager opponent of child marriage. “Dry” illustrates how using visual storytelling may help share the perspective of marginalized identities. It shows a window into the wider picture of the child marriage issue using framing and representation theory. The story's framing choices, conclusion, and method of storytelling all work together to emphasize how crucial it is to fight oppressive cultural norms.

“Parched,” uses visual storytelling to support the freedom of marginalized groups in a particular cultural context. The framing choices made for the narrative, as well as its conclusion, all help to highlight how the main characters battle patriarchal customs and

mindset. The film explores the larger socioeconomic issues that impact women and emphasizes the need for collaboration to effect change.

Furthermore, “Wonder,” promotes empathy and the inclusion of people with disabilities by using a more complex portrayal of Auggie's experience and the diverse responses to him being different is made possible by the narrative's structure, framing, and film's ending. The film promotes the value of understanding and accepting differences via framing theory and representation theory, eventually conveying a strong advocacy message. Moreover, illustrating the effects of cultural norms and personal opinions and sharing the idea of stereotypes in this film is used in the narrative framing as we can sense the different perspectives of the characters.

“Capernaum,” Capernaum utilizes visual storytelling to show the challenges of marginalized people in a difficult situation. In the face of societal injustice, the main characters Zain, Rahil and Yonas serve as representations of independence, the hardships of the individuals and the larger societal concerns they symbolize. The film successfully applies framing theory to situate Zain's experience in the context of social injustices and judicial institutions.

Lastly, "Farha" shows the strength and resiliency of marginalized individuals in the face of historical trauma. Farha, the film's main character, stands in for the Nakba generation's resilience. The significance of story framing is how it communicates how societal expectations and historical events impact people's lives. The shots of Farha's typical day-to-day activities in a Palestinian highlight the tension between her aspirations and societal norms.

"Farha" employs visual storytelling methods to show how oppressed individuals may persevere in the face of historical obstacles. The film successfully communicates the need

to preserve stories of resiliency throughout historical change within the perspectives of marginalized individuals subjected to different social and cultural boundaries.

4.12.3 Approaches to Employing Visual Storytelling and Narrative Structures

The analyzed films "Dry", "Parched," "Wonder," "Capernaum," and "Farha" all tried to convey the same ideas. All of them emphasize the necessity for social change and the defense of marginalized communities. The films' cultural backgrounds, narrative approaches, and methods for amplifying their messages, however, vary.

Collectively, these films highlight the necessity of societal change and the need to defend marginalized groups. They use various cultural contexts, narrative tactics, and visual styles yet have a similar set of subjects. Each protagonist deals with challenges and shows resilience and strength in the face of overwhelming odds. With "Parched" and "Farha" choosing linear narrative, "Wonder" utilizing several character viewpoints, and "Capernaum" choosing non-linear storytelling, the films' storytelling techniques are different.

4.12.4 Approaches to Narrative Structures Palestinian and Global films

It was noticed that "Dry" or "Parched" concentrate on local difficulties in Nigeria or India respectively, while "Wonder," "Farha," and "Capernaum" deal with worldwide themes. But all these films advocate for social change via visual narrative, demonstrating the broad scope of cinema to improve the world and change the perspectives of people and communities. Although women overcome patriarchal restrictions in "Dry," "Parched," and "Farha" to take charge of their lives and determine their own fate, women

in "Wonder" and "Capernaum" fight for social justice and raise their voices to end injustice.

The films present a variety of viewpoints on social concerns, with "Dry" emphasizing the ability of visual storytelling to ignite lobbying efforts and "Parched" emphasizing women's resilience in a patriarchal culture. Furthermore, "Wonder," "Capernaum," and "Dry" show how empathy and solidarity may accelerate societal transformation.

No matter the context, the way gender is portrayed in diverse films is likely to be viewed as comparable since the gender viewpoint has always been founded on many sources of information and power dynamics. This is the foundation of Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, which holds that our understanding of what it is to be male, and female is informed by society, and that this is what is required of us in our positions and to live up to expectations. The parallels that may be seen in films illustrate this. The privacy of various cultures and customs can be used to explain the variations. For instance, unlike what has been seen in the Indian film, sexual diversity is not featured in the Palestinian film. In addition, even though they may be advocating related causes or goals, there are differences across faiths, cultures, and political ideologies that serve as the basis for these differences.

Chapter Five:

Discussion

This study aimed to examine visual storytelling used in films for advocacy in both the Palestinian and global settings. This analysis focuses on comparing these films both inside and outside of the Palestinian context to better understand the micro and macro factors that affect how social issues are portrayed and how marginalized groups are treated. The films examined included Capernaum, Dry, Parched, Wonder, and Farha.

The films in this study looked at having a mix of diverse cultures and themes that are all connected. Even though the context may be different, the themes are all the same - like being empowered, staying strong, and seeing things change. Whether you're watching a film about a child getting married in Nigeria (Dry), a film about gender roles in India (Parched), or a film about compassion and inclusion in the US (Wonder), the stories come from all over the world and make you feel something needs to be changed and advocated globally among all different social groups, challenging the gender norms and stereotypes.

5.1 Roles of Visual Storytelling in Representing Marginalized Groups:

Visual storytelling, as discussed by Qin (2022) and Williams (2019), is acknowledged for its potential to captivate audiences, and communicate complex subjects effectively. The analysis of this thesis revealed that films effectively use visual storytelling to immerse viewers with emotions to be more involved in the world of marginalized groups with employing some technical techniques like character positioning, camera angles and framing which aligns with Copper's (2015) research on the necessity of engaging storytelling in advocacy filmmaking and it also aligns with Gupta's (2019) emphasis on capturing the experiences of the marginalized groups.

Moreover, the use of these visual storytelling techniques in the analyzed films supports Entman's (1993) framing theory, showing how the films' narratives shape public perception and understanding of marginalized groups.

To completely immerse viewers in a character's emotional world, utilizing micro and macro components was essential in the films. These components, such as character positioning, camera angles, and framing, were employed to evoke empathy and link intimate stories to more significant social problems. Additionally, macro components, such as story framing and the representation of marginalized groups, have the potential to be utilized to strengthen advocacy messages and offer an understanding of societal difficulties.

The two Middle eastern films, *Farha* and *Capernaum*, delicately weave societal standards and cultural background into their stories. Although the films were advocating for different issues, these films provide viewers with a close-up view of the lives of those who reside in the occupied regions like *Farha*, while examining issues including roles, exclusion, and resilience that is also part of reality as the ideas portrayed in film are based on reality more than culturally impacted.

With visual storytelling approaches, the voices of marginalized groups and their experiences are raised in advocacy films. Filmmaking techniques including lighting contrasts and close-up shots and point of view type of shots are used to show the characters' deep structure as well as their issues and ambitions. Advocacy films can actively involve audiences due to these technical methods, which encourage people to empathize with the issues being raised and influence social change.

- **Framing of Marginalized Group Narratives:**

The films use framing to present diverse narratives of marginalized groups, promoting empathy and understanding. This approach mirrors Cizek's (2005) insights on various storytelling forms in advocacy, where narrative framing plays a crucial role in audience engagement.

The films employ framing which is a way to present the diverse narratives of marginalized groups from various cultural perspectives, which works on promoting empathy and encouraging understanding of each's situation, this approach mirrors Cizek's (2005) insights on the variety in storytelling forms for advocacy, where the framing of the narrative play a crucial role in engaging the audience and working on their emotional set up, illustrating how the films select and highlight certain aspects of reality to try to influence the audience's perceptions and response to what have been shared to them visually.

- **Global Impact of Local Narratives:**

Despite the differences in cultural settings and backgrounds, common themes of advocacy and social change emerge in the messages from the films analyzed. This finding supports SMail's (2021) study on the impact of local narratives specially in documentary films, which is also resonating with Wardhani's (2023) emphasis on the significance of films in delivering very powerful messages with a limited timeframe that can work on changing an entire perspective or point of view of any individual, these come across in highlighting the issues that are faced by marginalized group can be globally common with aligning with broader principles of representation and framing theories in portraying social challenges and advocating for a change.

Films, in this rich narrative landscape, are not just cinematic spectacles, but also vehicles for empowerment, change, and community progress. The study's findings indicate the long-lasting ability of visual storytelling to inspire activism in the Palestinian world as well as internationally as these narratives effect change.

Compared to prior studies that may have concentrated on the differences between Palestinian and foreign cinema narratives, the present study highlights the common themes of advocacy, resistance, freedom, and social progress that they all share. The findings eventually challenge the limited notion of films as local advocacy tools and instead represent them as global agents of change by underlining the persistent nature of suffering among individuals and the potential for change and how visual storytelling tries to address it in a wider context even if the origin is different.

- Representation of Marginalized Groups:

Marginalized groups are often represented in films at the starting of the equilibrium as facing a lot of challenges, aiming for empowerment resilience and change, with the films analyzed it was clear that these were in the beginning of the film with having the transcending cultural differences and backgrounds of the groups. This portrayal builds on the study of Cabasal (2021) which focuses on social advocacy and cinema's role in magnifying the voices of marginalized groups. Although the representation of diverse narratives, the representation of marginalized groups aligns with Hall's (1997) representation theory where films can be seen as a way of constructing social realities, challenging the stigmatization, and stereotyping, and offering new perspectives of acceptance and different societal roles.

- **Visual storytelling allows for realistic representation:**

The films analyzed have a mix of diverse cultures and themes that are all connected. Even though the context may be different, the themes are all the same - like being empowered, staying strong, and seeing things change. Whether you're watching a film about a child getting married in Nigeria (Dry), a film about gender roles in India (Parched), or a film about compassion and inclusion in the US (Wonder), the stories come from all over the world and make you feel something that needs to be changed and advocated globally among all different social groups and challenge the gender norms and stereotypes. These feelings and emotions are sensed from the way characters are represented and the different settings, The findings this study obtained are consistent with representation theory, highlighting the value of accurate representation.

Visual storytelling may be utilized effectively to represent marginalized gender groups while also conveying the complexity of their lives. This is consistent with earlier research (Hees, 2009) where it stressed the significance of real representation for social change and how interactive video could help marginalized people represent themselves and effect social change is the goal.

- **Female Leadership**

The analysis of the chosen films reveals that four of the five films were directed and produced by women. This indicates the increasing number as well as the contribution of female directors and producers in the cinematic landscape, as well as their influence on narrative details and the depiction of marginalized gender groups. These female directors, who are also known as feminists and activists, inject into their films with personal beliefs and aspirations, providing a unique perspective that goes beyond mere narrative. Their dual role as filmmakers and social change agents ensures that the films serve not only as

captivating stories, but also as powerful tools for challenging and transforming societal norms regarding gender. Films are made by individuals, and those individuals are the products of a cultural discourse. There is no denying that films frequently employ visual elements that are not entirely realistic. The interpretation we receive is dependent on a person's belief system, which is established by the cultural background of that specific individual. Most mainstream industry for films frequently exaggerates one person's view of how reality is represented, which can be sensed in films when the director or the producer is a man and when it is a woman since it differs from what perspective we are viewing the film and how the producer/ director wants us to interact with it.

5.2 Conclusion

This study emphasizes the complicated link between the power of cinema and its potential for helping the issues of marginalized groups in a world where visual storytelling is becoming increasingly prominent in representation, advocacy, and social transformation. Although the reviewed films are set in different settings, they all deal with issues of marginalized groups' determination, strength, and advocating for change. These themes include empowerment, questioning societal norms, and social advocacy.

The portrayal of marginalized groups remains embedded from the micro and macro parts of storytelling in films like *Capernaum*, *Dry*, *Parched*, *Wonder*, and *Farha*, challenging social existing assumptions.

The goal of these films is not just to provide entertainment but also to elicit a sense of purpose. They focus the audience's attention on significant issues and encourage individuals to think differently and, more importantly, act. These films can provoke a deeper feeling of emotion, comprehension, and inspire people to make a difference in our

communities and throughout the world by incorporating different narratives and tactics into their story.

Through a thorough analysis of films like "Capernaum," "Dry," "Parched," "Wonder," and "Farha," it has brought to light the separate ways that film exceeds basic entertainment to raise social justice issues and encourage change in society. Through clarifying the complex link between film and its capacity to assist marginalized groups, this study has expanded our comprehension and addressed an important knowledge gap regarding the use of visual storytelling in diverse cultural settings.

5.3 Recommendations

Scientific Recommendations:

- Impact Assessment

Although the goal of advocacy films is to help bring social change, it is useful to assess their effectiveness in the actual world. Have advocacy films altered public opinion, affected regulations, or inspired grassroots movements?

- Local Films, Global Impact

Examine the impact local films intended for a particular audience have on individuals worldwide. This can help gain understanding of common themes and experiences that humans face around the world.

- Expand research for Overlapping gender issues

Although intersectionality indicates that social identities can be deeply interconnected, gender is an essential component. A more thorough knowledge of representation may be obtained by looking at films that address overlapping social categories like ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation.

- **Cinematography and Advocacy**

Expand the research on how cinematography technical elements, like lighting, color schemes, and shot styles, affect audience perceptions and empathy towards marginalized groups in different shots and sequences.

5.4 Practical Recommendations:

- **Educate Future Filmmakers/ Include in Education Systems**

It is essential for future filmmakers to be aware of the potential impact their stories can have. It is possible to guarantee future film productions will still have an impact by offering workshops or instruction on how to compose meaningful and inspirational stories. Also, by embedding the concept of having an in-depth course in educational systems that focuses on representation in films from a technical and theoretical perspective.

- **Inclusion in Educational Systems**

Include in-depth courses on film representation in curriculum for colleges and universities. The theoretical and technical aspects of film representation should be covered in these courses, giving students the tools needed to evaluate films critically and produce significant works of cinema.

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الملخص

في عالم تزداد فيه الأفلام تأثيراً، أصبح سرد القصص البصرية، وخاصة في الأفلام التي تروج لحقوق الفئات المهمشة، أكثر تأثيراً نحو التغيير. تتعمق هذه الدراسة في استكشاف سرد القصص السينمائية من زوايا مختلفة، مسلطة الضوء على الدور الفريد الذي تشكله الأفلام في تعزيز حقوق وتمثيل الفئات المهمشة في فلسطين وحول العالم من خلال العمل على تحليل خمسة أفلام. هذا البحث يسلط الضوء على كيفية الاستفادة من الأفلام كوسيلة للتغيير من خلال التأثير في المشاهدين عن طريق التمثيلات المختلفة لهذه الفئات.

تم توظيف تحليل السرد النوعي، متضمناً تحليلاً مفصلاً لخمس أفلام من الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية ونيجيريا والهند وفلسطين ولبنان، من خلال فحص عناصرهم السينمائية مثل تموضع الشخصيات وزوايا الكاميرا وهيكلية السرد. وتم تحليل هذه العناصر من خلال الاعتماد على نظريات التأطير والتمثيلات. تخلص الدراسة إلى أن سرد القصص البصرية يعتبر أداة فعالة لتمثيل الفئات المهمشة والدعوة للمناصرة والتغيير المجتمعي، مقدمةً تمثيلاً للتحديات التي تواجهها تلك الفئات في مواجهة الصور النمطية والمعايير الاجتماعية.

تخلص الدراسة إلى أن الأفلام التي تدعو إلى المناصرة، وخاصة تلك التي يقودها مخرجات ومنتجات نساء، يمكن أن تسهم في رفع صوت الفئات المهمشة، حيث تعمل كأداة حاسمة في تغيير المعايير وتسلط الضوء على القوة التحويلية للسينما في الدعوة للعدالة الاجتماعية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: سرد القصص البصرية، أفلام المناصرة، الفئات المهمشة، التمثيلات، التأطير.