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From Ms. Marvel to Ms. Shabash: Sex and Power Distribution in Bangladeshi and Western Cultures

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Abstract

The medium of comics is a wonderful preserver of culture. Sequential art can effortlessly portray the latest trends and norms prevalent in any society. Comics from different parts of the world can help identify and analyze cultural differences across borders. Comic books talk about people, their dreams, their aspirations, their activities, and their ways of life. The depiction of norms, trends, traditions, celebrations, and conventions of different groups of people are well-contained in this art form. Western comics have been illustrating all these for years, securing their firm foothold in the world of sequential art. During the last few years, owing to various factors like the rise of comic-book based TV shows, superhero movies, and comic cons regularly happening in Bangladesh, the Bangladeshi comic book industry has experienced a boom. This paper aimed to identify and analyze the representation of cultures across a sample of Bangladeshi and western comics that were published during the last five years in order to determine the role of gender in the respective societies on the basis of Social Dominance Theory (SDT). While looking into societies via comics, Bangladesh remained the primary focus. Simultaneously, western comics aided in running a comparative study between the respective societies in terms of intergroup oppression, discrimination, and prejudice. A panel-by-panel content analysis based on the established cultural elements was done on the sample, after which SDT on these samples was applied. The results showed westerners exhibiting relatively more liberal attitude, higher civic consciousness, and responsibility-taking mentality, while Bangladeshis were portrayed to be more accepting of social class structures, their adults exercising a disproportionate amount of social power over the younger generation, and the participating society members showing greater disparity in power based on sex.

Keywords: Sequential Art, Comics and Culture, Social Dominance Theory, Social Role of Gender, Intergroup Oppression & Discrimination

1. INTRODUCTION

Comic books can be treated as museums or documentaries of culture and the changes in a society over time. Merriam-Webster dictionary defines culture as 'the beliefs, customs, arts, etc., of a particular society, group, place, or time' (Merriam-Webster n.d.). In the book 'Sociology', we find that culture is defined as 'the language, norms, values, beliefs, knowledge, and symbols that make up a way of life' (Calhoun, Light and Keller 1994). The very language we speak, the way we think, the way we are brought up, the things that we believe in – all talk about our ways of life. Comic books have a history of preserving the cultural elements and the ways of life of people. Sean Smith, Editor of The Boston College Chronicle, says 'Comic books have never just been about super-powered heroes in skintight costumes whose exploits are depicted with vivid illustrations and onomatopoeic words. Scholars, commentators and journalists alike have shown how, in and amongst the pages of Superman, The Avengers, Wonder Woman and Spiderman, lurk often fascinating snippets about American life, offering X-ray vision-like insights into societal and cultural shifts.' (Smith 2014). When our future generations would take interest to know about their ancestors' culture and how it developed, provided we have an established comic book industry, comics should be an important element since it accommodates the changes happening in our surrounding social, political, and personal life. Such education is not just to entertain children, but also for all age groups to learn how we welcome changes in our culture, how the mental framework changes with the transformation of the society with time. Social Dominance Theory (SDT) helps a great deal in explaining these phenomena. While looking into societies, we have considered Bangladesh as a primary focus. However, we have also gone through some major western comics and run a comparative study between Bangladeshi and western societies in terms of intergroup oppression, discrimination, and prejudice.

The prosperity of Bangladesh depends not only on the policy makers, the government, the respective authorities only but also on the youth, their progressive mindsets and drives. It is important to keep the youth in mind because of the big percentage of population occupied by them; according to the data from 2015, in Bangladesh, people from 15 to 59 years of age is 63.6% (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division: United Nations 2015). The rising comics industry with the relatively few players we have now is a fresh and untapped market in Bangladesh and hence worth taking much interests into.

Having said so, this paper takes interest in applying Social Dominance Theory (SDT) (Sidanius and Pratto 1999) on comic stories and analyze, how comics have portrayed existing group-based hierarchies in Bangladeshi and western societies.

There is abundance of social science literature on prejudice, stereotyping, gender, race, intergroup relations, and class discriminations. Various psychological motivations, cognitive processing of human minds, influence of social structure and environment on discriminatory behavior are the aspects we usually learn about in such literatures (Sidanius and Pratto 1999). What we also find in this book is that such literatures are mostly from sociology and social psychology and suffer from some limitations like, lab based experiments and relying on aggregate data which missed out psychological phenomena while expanding social structure, discriminations etc. and SDT takes an approach to overcome such limitations. According to SDT, there are three stratification systems for human group-based social hierarchies. These are, (i) an age-system, (ii) a gender system, and (iii) an arbitrary-set system (Sidanius and Pratto, Chapter 47: Social Dominance Theory 2012).

This paper took interest in identifying these three classifications in Bangladeshi and western comics. In addition, the paper tried comparing the degree of presence of the system(s) mentioned in SDT in these societies.

2. OBJECTIVES

The major objective of this paper was to identify the presence of intergroup oppression, discrimination, and prejudice i.e., sex and power distribution in Bangladeshi and western culture and society as captured by the comic books.

In addition, as represented by the comic books, a comparative analysis of Bangladeshi and western social systems have been studied regarding the degree of presence of the human group-based social hierarchies as guided by Social Dominance Theory.

2.1 Rational

In current times, we are facing fascinating and diverse challenges especially due to the free flow of information and wide accessible networks around the world. We are living in the era of the fourth industrial revolution now. If we look back and refresh our memories about the popular Sci-Fi movies or TV serials back in 80s or early 90s, we see that many of those fictional gadgets, technologies are realities now and very much part of our everyday lives. The level of emotional intelligence and cognitive processing of the people belonging to this era are different now. One simple observation would help us taking this hint – today's toddler is very comfortable playing with a smart phone or sliding photos in a tab whereas, if we look at the older generations, it took a bit of time for them to even switch from their regular phones to smartphones.

Professor Klaus Schwab, Founder and Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum, in his book about the fourth industrial revolution expressed that "we are at the beginning of a revolution that is fundamentally changing the way we live, work and relate to one another" (Schwab 2016).

If we look at the gender gap on a global scale, we see that it is widening in the workforce (World Economic Forum 2016). One of the conclusions of this study is alarming as it says that if the trend of such gender gap persists where the rate at which females are entering jobs like in computers, technology and engineering related fields is less than the rate at which labour markets are transforming towards such jobs creation, then females are at risk of not getting best placements at work. Hence, companies/businesses would have less diversity in their labour force. Such a consequence definitely would foster more discrimination and unequal power distribution in respective societies.

Also, from the current report detailing about the global risks of highest concerns, we learned that in the next 1.5 years, large scale involuntary migration is the highest (52.0%) global risk we will face and in the next 10 years, along with water and food crisis, and climate change issue, profound social instability measured as a great risk (23.3%) (World Economic Forum 2016) .

Hence, from every aspect it is interesting and of utmost importance to study how societies and cultures are functioning in terms of discrimination, intergroup oppression, and prejudice. Also, since there are some similarities and dissimilarities in the risks measured in the south Asian area and the western world, this paper took interest in comparing the social stratification systems and cultural aspects between these economies.

To understand the cultures and how societies are functioning at current times, we chose comic books of these societies because cartoonists/artists and story tellers are great observers and they depict the cultural, social, political, and religious issues and reflect it in their works which is then shared with the world impacting many minds. Since comics are pictures coupled with texts, its impact is more on human mind theorized by many like the Dual Coding Theory (Paivio 1971).

We believe our work would contribute in the areas of cultural and social studies, comic studies, and social psychology.

3. SAMPLING

A sample of 30 comics was chosen comprising of 15 Bangladeshi comics and 15 western comics. These comics were chosen from the 5-year period (September 2011- August 2016). The publishers and number of comics selected from each of them are given in the table below.

Sample Summary											
											Total
Bangladeshi Publisher (number of comics)	Dhaka Comics (7)	Mighty Punch Studios (5)	Panjeree Publications (3)								15
Western Publisher (number of comics)	Marvel (3)	DC (3)	Image (2)	IDW (1)	Dark Horse (1)	Valiant (1)	Boom Studios (1)	Delcourt (1)	Humanoids (1)	Splitter (1)	15
Total											30

Table 1. Sample Summary

4. METHODOLOGY

During this research, we followed a quasi-convenience sampling method. Since the study is concerned about comparing the prevalence of Social Dominance Orientations (SDOs) across western and Bangladeshi cultures, the stories in the comics had to have been set in a backdrop where regular Bangladeshi and western world was evident. We restricted our sample from covering comics from the science fiction genre set in futuristic cities, assuming that these will not cover the respective backgrounds we were interested in. For studying 'Western' comics, our samples were restricted within the USA and Europe.

This study takes a qualitative approach. We went deep into the contents of the sample comics and identified forces, processes, and systems available in those comics which are relevant to the focus of this study and then analyzed those. We also inserted panels from the comics while running the discussion. After dissecting the content and analyzing the social and cultural issues, we summarized our findings within the context of SDT.

5. THEORITICAL BACKGROUND

This section discusses the theory and literature used for studying the objectives set for this paper.

5.1 Social Instability

Earlier in this paper while explaining the rational for the objective of the study being set, it was mentioned that according to the global risk report (World Economic Forum 2016), in the next 10 years, social instability has been measured as one of the risks we will face on a global context. In this sub-section, we will discuss what is meant by such social instability. According to this report, the meaning of the terminology may vary but the data suggest that there has been a rise in protests over the past two decades. What we also learn from this report is that, there are various and profound transformations which influence social stability of most countries around the globe. Such transformations are the causal effects of globalization, wealth and income, concentration, shifting demographics, lack of job opportunities, changing climate, and technological progress (World Economic Forum 2016, 39).

5.2 Comic Books Mirroring Society, Culture, and Gender Issues

Times have changed from comic books being treated like cheap entertainment for kids to representing practical and thought-provoking issues regarding gender, discrimination, social structure, identity crisis, and even important global phenomena like climate change and war. Recognizing the value of comics, various academic courses on comic studies are being taught even at the higher level of educations. One of such courses was "Gender through Comic Books" taught by Christina Blanch of Ball State University in SuperMOOC (Comics Forum 2013). Other courses she taught using comic books were "Cultural Anthropology" and "Global Cultural Diversity" (Blanch 2013). Blanch mentioned the course on "Gender through Comic Books" is "one more benchmark in measuring global attitudes toward gender" (Blanch 2013). She further mentioned that among the benefits of using comic books to teach such a sensitive subject includes allowing people to voice in without stigma. Moreover, according to her, "The comics medium, as does much popular culture, provides an excellent view of society temporally. The characters, their depictions, and story arcs that are included reflect the times" (Comics Forum 2013). The course was a six-week long program which discussed topics like what is gender, femininity, masculinity, gender and culture.

Having talked about gender, it is important to mention about Brown's work on masculinity in comic books (Brown 1999) where he said that in comic books it was common to see a "male body" with muscles to characterizing masculinity. Brown further mentioned that, "It is, I think, important to note that this standard of masculinity so vigorously reinforced in Western culture is largely focused on white masculinity and is at root a fascist ideology." What we also found in Brown's article was that in comic books, the gay man, the Jewish man, and the Asian man had been portrayed as characters with softness. On the other hand, even in the contemporary western comics, black man had been imposed on with racial stereotypes which showed him as being too hard, too physical, too bodily – in one word, "hyper-masculine". Brown further mentioned in his article that is had been observed that the higher the degree of masculinity in black men, the greater the beastliness had been attached to the characters and the contemporary western culture saw black men as rapists, gangsters, crack-heads, and muggers than fathers, scholars, statesmen, and leaders.

Misericordia University in the states offers an academic course on addressing social issues through comic books (Misericordia University 2009). In this course students get to learn how ethnocentrism for example played role in some comics. The course also includes studying comics which talk about race, historical events, and wars.

While talking about comic books which incorporate social issues, it is integral to mention comic books like **Green Lantern** (vol.2) (Johns(w), et al. 2011), **The Amazing Spider-Man** in the early 70s (Lee, Kane and Romita Sr. 1971) which told stories about drug abuse. **Green Arrow** (Weisinger and Papp n.d.) another comic book example that tell us the stories of corruption, politics, and drugs.

5.3 Social Dominance Theory

According to this theory, human group-based social hierarchies have three stratification systems which are: 1) an age-system, 2) a gender-system, and 3) an arbitrary-set system (Sidanius and Pratto 2012). In the first system, the older people of the society dominate the younger, in the second system (aka patriarchal system) males of the society dominates the females, and the third set is constructed with the social categories like religion, social class, race, ethnicity, nationality and alike. SDT studies about the origin, maintenance, and reproduction of group-based social hierarchy which is processed at multilevel and these levels are- System-wide level, Intergroup level, and Person level. Each of these three levels processes group-based hierarchy through different forces which reinforce each other. Forces in the first level are: Hierarchy-enhancing/Hierarchy-attenuating legitimizing myths, and Hierarchy-enhancing/Hierarchy-attenuating social institutions, forces in the second level are: Social context, and Asymmetrical group behavior, and finally forces in the third level are Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) (Sidanius and Pratto 2001) & other group orientations and Aggregated individual discrimination. In (Sidanius and Pratto 2012), we also find that for the SDT, there are 3 assumptions, 1) human social systems are dynamically persistent, 2) group-based social hierarchies incorporate group-based oppression such as, sexism, racism, ethnocentrism, nationalism, and classism, 3) In a given society, at a given time, the severity of group-based social hierarchy is the outcome of the interaction of the multileveled hierarchy enhancing/attenuating forces within that particular society at any given time.

6. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

6.1 Bangladeshi Comics

Bangladeshi comics portrayed a hegemonic group development across all ages. In **Backbenchers Club** (Saifullah(a), et al. 2013), Rocky, an uber rich student is shown to be stylish and speaking in English, a very common 'show-off' in Bangladesh. Hegemony is also seen to be portrayed in many comics, such as in **Meenpishach** where Nimai, a servant, was sitting on the floor while Sadi and Radi, the masters, were sitting on the sofa (Haque 2013), Moreover, this also confirmed the class-structure and how typical a scene this was in Bangladesh. We also came across hegemony taken to the extreme in **Durjoy** where Imran, a male detective in the Detective Police Headquarters was seen to humiliate his female file clerk Neha in public (Sampad 2015). He tore down (see Fig 7) Neha's resignation letter that she had submitted and threw it on her face since she could not take the increasing number of framings of innocent people by the detective police any more. This showed power preserved by the dominant agency (police) in the society. As was depicted in **Guptoghatok** (Sampad 2016), we found a form of hierarchy existing even among the inmates of an asylum. Among the inmates, one was a king, and he even had his guards. This form of hierarchy was also evident in **Shabash 1**, where the villain Blatt was the long-forgotten king of cockroaches (Rahman 2013). The work showed a systematic group favoritism, and Blatt always had his loyal disciples to aid him. We also witnessed a group of *Lathials*, or bamboo stick fighters from Bangladesh, picking up their sticks to fight against oppression from the dominant rich class to the poor (Rahman 2016).

The major form of domination in the Bangladeshi comics was individual discrimination. In **Operation Breakdown**, the protagonist C.K. Zaki is shown to feign nervousness in front of police while disguised as a smuggler (Karim 2014). This helped in making the villain believe Zaki to be an actual criminal. Perhaps the most basic of individual discriminations is evident in **Durjoy** where we see the schoolgirl Neha to not confess about liking a boy owing to his dark skin (Sampad, Durjoy 2015). This is clear racism existing in the Bangladeshi culture. Such phenomenon was also evident for the female characters portrayed in **Ms. Shabash** (Rahman 2015) where a company starts producing skin-whitening creams containing dangers levels of chemicals. The product successfully targeted the people's inner insecurities. This showed that irrespective to sex, skin color was a major issue among the Bangladeshis and light-skinned people were subjected to favoritism (see Fig 4). However, it is true that women were exposed to such a situation more in Bangladesh. The same comic also showed that women were more interested to get their sons married to Ms. Shabash, and instead of focusing on her heroics, they only wanted her to spend time with their sons (Rahman, Ms. Shabash 2015). Even when women got married, they would have to come with a large dowry, and in **Durjoy 2: Dambhik** (Sampad 2016) , the character Tarek is seen to be poking his wife about not bringing much dowry from her father. Another issue which women face is their 'productification' when trying to find a possible suitor from the family level. In **Sharajantra,** Joshi was being displayed like a product in front of her potential in-laws (see Fig 6) and had to pass the test by proving her dance skills (Khan 2012). The helplessness of women was also shown in another example from the same comic where Joshi's mother, who came from an indigenous community, thought that her husband had not treated her right owing to her origin. In **Shabash 7**, we see the new vigilante Captain Kathal being supported by people since he had a jackfruit, the national fruit of Bangladesh, as a symbol (Rahman 2015). This showed that discrimination could take place based on arbitrary factors (in this case, nationalism) too. Finally, in **Shabash 4**, the Bangladeshi comic con crowd is shown to be less interested in the local superhero Shabash but more interested about internationally renowned superheroes (Rahman 2014). This is a reflection of the high society in Bangladesh where there is a greater preference for foreign products.

Some institutional discrimination was observed in **Mrittu Pathar 1** - where the protagonist special branch officer C.K. Zaki tortures a criminal (Karim 2015), **Durjoy** - where Imran, a corrupt male detective police, tortures innocents to gain confessions (Sampad 2015), and in **Guptaghatak** -where Tushar, an inmate, receives special treatment in the asylum since the asylum in-charge was using him (Sampad 2016).

The greatest myth-legitimizing came in the form of paternalistic myths. On a number of occasions, such as in **Meenpishach** -Pirali considering himself to have a greater say in the village politics (Haque 2013), **Durjoy 2**-Durjoy's father becoming too obsessed with work and being the man (Sampad 2016), **Sharajantra**-Babar Sobhan thought that his son was good enough for any foreign princess (Khan 2012), **Ms. Shabash** - aunty-bots preaching young women to dress modestly (Rahman 2015) , **Lathial** - Lathial not wanting people to know that she was a girl and not a man (Rahman 2016).

However, we did witness some legitimization of reciprocal myths, such as in **Naima na Raima** - both Naima and Raima considering themselves to be equal to men and do whatever men could (Tanmoy 2014), **Durjoy 2** - Durjoy's mother was a full-time scientist (Sampad 2016), and **Laily 2:Bhotoner Protishodh** -would beat the goons all by herself if required (Khan 2014). This portrayed the women in the affluent section of the community and were supported for having hierarchy-attenuating mentality. However, the majority saw them as coming after men in holding power. They were still expected to dance to the whims of the male authority figures.

One of the interesting aspects of Bangladeshi societies is a lack of civic consciousness (Khan 2014), (Rahman 2015). As we can see in figure 1,2 that the manholes are open causing accidents and flyers are destroying the aesthetic value of the city respectively.

Finally, myth legitimization of the sacred myths in particular were also evident in the sample. Orders of village leader for Sadi and Radi to return home was rightfully communicated by Abdullah in **Meenpishach** (Haque 2013), (see Fig 3) and people actually believing that a Hindu Sadhu could cause and control earthquakes in **Operation Breakdown** (see Fig 5) (Karim 2014) . These ideologies were supported by the community, and an overall class-system and Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) governed by the males was evident.
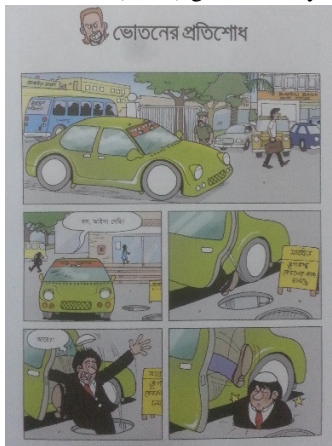

Fig 1: Laily 2: Bhotoner Protishodh

Fig 2: Shabash 7

Fig 3: Meenpishach

Fig 4: Ms. Shabash

Fig 5: Operation Breakdown

Fig 6: Sharajantra

Fig 7: Durjoy

6.2 Western Comics

The western comics also showed maintaining hierarchy in many levels. In many of those comics, we came across a high hierarchy -attenuating system. In the French comic **Koma 1** (Wazem(w), Peeters(a) and Ralenti(c) 2102), the family of Addidas is seen to barely make ends meet, and her father's job of being a chimney sweep did not earn enough to carry out the medical tests that Koma required. In such a situation out of frustration Addida's father engages himself in individual debilitating act (see Fig 13). There was a clear case of discrimination based on occupation. Such hegemony is also evident in the German comic **Smoke City 1** (Carre(w), Mariolle(w) and Carre(a) 2011), where out of the 6 heist planners, 4 were males. Among the females, Carmen was shown to be using her charms to seduce men and get the job done, while Minako was shown to be helping her master-trainer in the kitchen. However, Carmen is also shown to be the main organizer of the heist, establishing her power in the group. In the French comic **Manhunt 1: Tora Bora**, we see a female CIA agent Cindy who gets many officers killed under her watch while in pursuit of the terrorist Osama bin Laden (Bartoll(w) and Jef(a) 2014). She is later showed to restart her mission after 8 years. Some other aspects of hierarchy attenuation were observed in the US comic **Faith 1**, where the protagonist Faith is an extremely overweight young woman. She has problems with catching the attention of men owing to her weight and faces all the challenges than an average woman does (Houser(w) and Portela(a) 2016). But that does not stop her from fighting for justice. Such power of girls is perhaps best noted in the US comic **Lumberjanes 1**, where the adventures of a group of girls in a scout camp is told (Stevenson(w), et al. 2014). All the 5 main characters are shown to be confident and ready to fend of the evil or magic is found lurking in the jungle. Such powerful female make the society look more accepting of women making decisions. In the US comic **Harrow County**, we came across Emy, who sees a boy's skin trying to communicate with her while in the woods, yet she does not flinch (Bunn(w) and Crook(a) 2015). We also get to see the character Suzie in the US comic **Sex Criminals** where she has a particular medical condition, yet she uses that to her advantage (Fraction(w) and Zdarsky(a) 2013). An empowered female is also witnessed in the US comic **Thor 1**, where we see a female lifting the enchanted hammer of the God of Thunder and becoming Thor herself (Aaron(w), Dauterman(a) and Wilson(c) 2014). This was pivotal since a very popular superhero was sidelined in his own comic, giving a female character the limelight. Bravery and heroics among women is perhaps, among the superheroes, best demonstrated by American superhero Wonder Woman, and in **Wonder Woman 1** (see Fig 11), she is seen to be saving a girl from the villains (Azarello(w) and Chiang(a) 2011). Finally, the superhero which has taken the world by storm during the last few years is the US superhero Ms. Marvel, aka Kamala Khan, the Pakistani-American Muslim superhero. In **Ms. Marvel 1**, Kamala has to deal with her conservative parents who would not allow her to attend parties or mix with boys (Wilson(w), Alphona(a) and Herring(c) 2014). In spite of all these, she does not stop fighting crime and making sure the streets are safe. All the above examples show us that there is a high degree of hierarchy-attenuating system prevailing in the Western comics.

There are individual discriminations prevalent in the western comics. Starting with Mccullen taking advantage of Addidas being a kid by burning Addidas' contract (see Fig 10) in **Koma 1** (Wazem(w), Peeters(a) and Ralenti(c) 2102) to Jay dealing with the intern Wyatt or Faith punishing the animal abusers in **Faith 1** (Houser(w) and Portela(a) 2016), the comic **Harrow County 1** even showed the burning of witches that was prevalent a long time back in the USA (Bunn(w) and Crook(a) 2015). The comics also showed how one had to pay for being affiliated with an organization, and hence Sheriff Tubb was attacked in **Southern Bastards 1** (see Fig 12) (Aaron(w) and c), Southern Bastards 1 2014) and Suzie's father got killed by an outraged share trader who incurred a loss after buying shares of his company in **Sex Criminals 1** (Fraction(w) and Zdarsky(a) 2013). Such accidents could happen anytime, but the blame being passed to another person for no reason is certainly not desirable. Finally, among the superheroes from USA, we witnessed Batrock taking a condescending tone with the new Black Captain America in **All-New Captain America** (Remender(w) and Immonen(p) 2015), Batman being questioned by Commissioner Gordon for his apparent team-up with the criminal Joker in **Batman 1** (Snyder(w) and Capullo(a) 2011), and Superman discriminating against the corrupt businessmen in **Action Comics 1** (Morrison(w) and Morales(a) 2011).

As far as legitimizing myth is concerned, a significant number of sacred myth legitimization was observed. The fact that Muslims would not fight with other Muslims during the holy month of Ramadan even if they were enemies was shown in **Manhunt 1: Tora Bora** (Bartoll(w) and Jef(a) 2014). This comic also showed the terrorist Osama bin Laden fighting a Jihad against the US forces and deploying suicide bombers (see Fig 14). Such legitimizations were also witnessed in **Ms. Marvel 1** where Kamala, out of religious restrictions, would not touch alcohol (see Fig 8) or bacon, his brother would not be lenient with usury, and her friend Nakia would not take her head scarf off or go to a party and have fun with boys of her age (Wilson(w), Alphona(a) and Herring(c) 2014). In fact, Kamala is later seen telling his friend Bruno that her parents would have overtly supported her to become more than friends with Bruno if he was from Pakistan. This showed that even

when residing, the subordinate group (immigrant Pakistanis) would still want to marry a Pakistani rather than a member of the dominant group (Host country citizen. In this case, the US)

The examples of reciprocal myths were mainly limited to the equality of the sexes (**Ms. Marvel 1, Wonder Woman 1 and Thor 1**) and the rights of animals (see Fig 9) (**Faith 1**). These were enforced in a greater degree in the western world and the comics depicted that.

Finally, institutional discrimination is witnessed from both authoritative bodies (US General not allowing the deployment of more soldiers in Afghanistan in **Manhunt 1: Tora Bora**). Even Clark Kent, aka Superman, is shown to pretend getting beaten up by Intergang and corrupt businessmen evicting people from houses. (**Action Comics 1**)

Fig 8: Ms. Marvel 1

Fig 9: Faith 1

Fig 10: Koma 1

Fig 11: Wonder Woman 1

Fig 12: Southern Bastards 1

Fig 13: Koma 1

Fig 14: Manhunt 1: Tora Bora

7. CONCLUSION

Our study suggests that both Bangladeshi and western societies fall under the framework of SDT. However, there are subtle differences between those in that

- The degree of hierarchy attenuating forces and legitimizing reciprocal myths prevailing in the western societies and cultures is stronger than what the case is in Bangladesh. Even though both the societies have empowered women, in Bangladesh this aspect is visible more within the affluent class.
- Bangladesh is more accepting of classism compared to the western societies.
- Compared to westerners, Bangladeshis exhibit a higher inclination towards racism based on skin colour and gender.
- Westerners show a higher degree of dominance regarding ethnocentrism.
- Two of the systems that SDT is constructed with are 'age-system' and 'gender-system' in determining group-based hierarchy and we find that Bangladeshi social stratification system favors these sets more compared to the westerners.
- Legitimizations of sacred myths is more evident among Bangladeshis and Muslim communities within the western world.

Our overall results revealed that westerners exhibit relatively more liberal attitude, higher civic consciousness, and responsibility-taking mentality, while Bangladeshis were portrayed to be more accepting of social class structures, their adults exercising a disproportionate amount of social power over the younger generation, and the participating society members showing greater disparity in power based on sex. Applying the SDT's framework we learned SDO of individuals at an aggregate level using representative comic books from the respective societies and cultures. However, our study has limitations for not covering more societies in the western world and also covering a limited sample of comics. These we believe could be seen as opportunities for future multidisciplinary work for which we exerted effort to set the stepping stones.

Short Bio of the Authors

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Tahseen Salman Choudhury is working as the Research and Publication Officer at the Bangladesh Employers' Federation. Previously, he had completed both his B.B.A. (2006) and M.B.A. (2011) degrees from North South University, Dhaka, and had later worked in the banking and N.G.O. sectors. Between 2014 and 2015, he completed several online courses on comics/graphic novels and presented papers at national and international conferences. He is also the first to conduct a university-level workshop on Teaching Business Ethics using comics, Learning Nutrition with comics, and Learning Social Etiquettes with comics in Bangladesh hosted by University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh. In addition, he is also a Bangladeshi comic-book reviewer on YouTube and the first Bangladeshi Articulated Comic Book Art (A.C.B.A.) artist. He also hosts the weekly pop-culture themed radio show 'Comicbaj'. *(129 words)*

Arzoo Ismail

Arzoo Ismail is a full-time lecturer at the School of Business, University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB) since January 2014. Ms. Ismail earned her Master of Quantitative Economics (2012) degree from Goethe University, Frankfurt am Main, Germany and LL.M in Finance (2008) from the Institute for Law and Finance, Goethe University, Frankfurt am Main, Germany. She was appointed as a Frankfurt Scholar in Economics and Finance by the Citi Foundation in 2009. Ms. Ismail has won the Vice Chancellor's Excellence award, 2015 for engagement in Teaching and Learning, Honorable Mention from ULAB. She is also serving as the advisor for ULAB Nutrition and Wellness Club and Assistant Proctor, ULAB. Her primary research interests include gender studies, quality of education at the tertiary level, ICT and education, sustainability and society, social and cultural issues, youth and employment, and externality. *(139 words)*

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