Of Gendered Identities and Aspirations:
Zooming into the Case of the Middle Class 'Educated' Urban Youth of Dhaka

A Research Paper presented by:

SARAH TABASSUM

Bangladesh

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for obtaining the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Major:

Human Rights, Gender and Conflict Studies: Social Justice Perspectives

SJP

Members of the Examining Committee:

Kees Biekart, Supervisor

Kristen Cheney, Second Reader

The Hague, The Netherlands
December 2015

Disclaimer:

This document represents part of the author's study programme while at the Institute of Social Studies. The views stated therein are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Institute.

Inquiries:

Contents

Acknowledgements

Dedicated to my parents – thank you for your love, patience and faith in me to which I am forever indebted.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to my Thesis supervisor, Dr Kees Biekart for his active guidance and valuable suggestions in writing this thesis. I express my gratitude towards my second reader, Dr Kristen Cheney for being patient, supportive and enthusiastic in guiding me to complete the thesis. I would like to thank all my teachers (in ISS and beyond) who has supported and motivated me immensely to do this study. I am also grateful to Dr Erum Mariam and BRAC for granting me the opportunity to broaden both my professional and personal horizons further. To my friends, peers, colleagues and family members, I am grateful for your support and enthusiasm.

I am thankful to my research participants for sharing their stories; without them, this study would not have been possible. To Dr Shuchi Karim, thank you for being my constant source of inspiration and letting me find my own niche under your mentorship.

Lastly, thank you Dhaka – my home, my place of struggle and hope.

Abstract

With about nearly half of its population within the age range of 0-24 years old and a rapidly growing urban-centric middle class, Dhaka is a city that appears to cater to those in hopes for a better reality, economically as well as socio-politically. Nevertheless, the hope gets problematized when reality reflects rising occurrences of gender-based violence and discrimination against policies that claim to eradicate them through institutional help, such as education (e.g. schooling).

This research explores narratives from an emerging diverse group of 'educated' middle class youth whose lived, perceived and aspired experiences illustrate a reality that is far more nuanced than what statistics and state policies provide – a deep-rooted association of heteropatriarchal and heteronormative beliefs and practices that finds its way into their lives as they embark upon journeys to 'become someone'. The association is enhanced through the institutional structures of family, religion and community. Amidst micro level negotiations, the gendered narratives produce a set of cross-cutting agendas that are timely and significant to understand a behind-the-picture aspect of the reality of the 'next generation' which seems to have been normalized in the process of reproducing the unjust dominant discourses.

Keywords

Chapter 1 : Setting the stage

1.1 What is this research about?

In the 'Gender Statistics' report prepared by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (2012), the state details the visions, goals and objectives related to women's advancement and empowerment required to achieve gender equality and equity within the society through the adopted National Policy for Women's Advancement (NPWA) 2011 which has been incorporated into the national constitution in Article 28 (2012:1-5). Households are significantly male headed along with high rates of early marriage. The literacy rate is still higher for men than women. In terms of schooling, the completion rate varies in urban and rural context but is always relatively lower for girls than boys. However, the gender parity index has been improving in primary, secondary and tertiary levels along with participation of women in the public sector, state roles and private sector – even though the wage gap is still present (the average monthly income of female-headed households was TK 9,725 versus TK.11,763 for male headed household (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics 2012).

Alarmingly, in spite of a representation of quantitative indicators of improving economic participation of women as well as girls' educational attainment and performance, the vision to achieve gender equality in all spheres of life still has a long way to go (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics 2012). With the ever volatile political, cultural and social state of the urban (as well as rural) spaces, violence against young girls and women is increasing over the years nationwide through incidences of different kinds of physical, mental, verbal and sexual harassments in both public and private spheres (e.g. in 2010 and 2011, the number of incidents of rape reported 3367 and 3675 respectively). The total number of violence (all types) reported was 16,250 in 2010 and 19,998 in 2011 (2012:133-138). These increasing numbers reflect a failure in credibility of the claim that gender equality has been achieved. Boys, men and transgenders also fall victim to different forms of physical, mental and sexual violence even though this barely shows up in statistics. It brings forward the question, with such striking numbers of boys and girls attending schools and men and women going to work, what exactly within the system is not working? (This of course comes from the presumption that education is a great equalizer, when it can in fact also educate people to uphold the status quo.) What 'norm' validates such violence? What internal as well as external factors are constraining the process of emancipation and social justice?

As highlighted in the recent study by Munir et al. (2015), out of the 160 million people in Bangladesh, it is estimated that currently about 12 million falls under the category of middle class which is slated to rise in the next decade with annual rises of 2 million to enter this category in terms of rising purchasing power. With estimates of around 30 to 40 million of the population to transition from poverty to the middle class by 2025, it is fair enough to say that the statistics estimate a significant need for attention towards this emerging class who not only have the potential to influence changes economically but also politically and socio-culturally (2015:5).

With global and state policies constantly pushing towards economic growth under capitalistic markets, the rate of urbanization is around 2.96% in the last 5 years with the capital Dhaka facing a major rise in population of about total 15.391 million (consisting of a huge population in various strata in the lower and mid-middle-income category). Further, a country that boosts to have a median age of 24.3 years (nearly 50% of the population is within the age range of 0-24) indicates a generation that is young and striving to thrive[1].

Hence, it is important to look beyond the numbers and explore the narratives that dictate and construct the discourses. In case of gender inequality in Bangladesh, what the numbers present is alarming and yet conflicting. It shows signs of progress and yet it shows signs of regress when looking at how discrimination and violence against women (not to forget the lack of statistics/coverage on men and trans genders) is on the rise, reflecting how power hierarchies constructed by gender stereotypes are not being addressed and as a result have been used and abused by the perpetrators, which negates the little progress has been made. If safety and equal opportunities in private and public lives are still part of the bigger problem of achieving gender equity, how exactly is progress measured and validated then by the state? This provides food for thought as to, how dominant constructions of identity (such as, masculinity and femininity) are manifested by the societal structures (or whether at all) in such a youth-centric class stratified urbanized context. The nuanced, hidden narratives of gendered identities are therefore crucial and timely to unpack to tease out its implications on building future realities.

1.2 What makes it relevant?

In the context of development, this research explores how development is measured under a neo-liberal framework. Development is imagined to be restricted under this particular format where every structure has an extrinsic value and is reproduced to maintain the existing status quo and also those of heteronormativity and heteropatriarchy. This makes the research timely and historically significant, both from the global context and national (of Bangladesh) where the questions regarding what we mean by development and its relation to youth is of discussion and up for negotiation. On the road to attaining social justice and understanding the nuanced practices of inequity, this research aims to provide an intersectional outlook on how identities and aspirations of young people are significantly entangled with gender, class and education (amongst other institutions) which affects how we envision development.

---

[1]CIA World Factbook (2015), Bangladesh Demographics Profile 2014. Retrieved on November 09, 2015 <http://www.indexmundi.com/bangladesh/demographics_profile.html>

1.3 Questions

This research explores how the different contexts of institutional education (schooling considered for this study due to its significance and appeal nationally and globally) and class based realities contributes to forming identities and aspirations for the youth in the rapidly growing urban spaces and as to whether these are gendered in nature. As a result, we go back to understanding more intensely to what extent institutional education which are presumed in state policies to be one of the most effective ways of national development and targeted towards the growing middle class youth perpetuate dominant narratives or provides a space for change in collaboration with other structures such as family, community and religion, to achieve the goals of gender equity.

Main question:

How do aspirations become gendered for the 'educated' middle class youth of urban Dhaka?

Sub Questions:
1. **How do identities become gendered within the schooling and class context?**
2. **What role do gender identities have in shaping aspirations of the middle class urban 'educated' youth?**

1.4 Methodology

Even though the initial plan of research was to look into just the role of educational institution of schooling with an intersection of the class context in the lives of young people to understand the influence of these institutions, as I started my fieldwork I discovered how different contexts of schooling had been influenced by other structures such as family, community and religion which brings the intersectionality framework into more in-depth analysis. Looking into the stories that these different institutions had seeped into the lives of these youth has also forced me to integrate these into the study as a result of the fieldwork experience.

The participants[2] were chosen (through a gatekeeper and snowball method as well as via request for participants on a public group in social networking site Facebook) represent a relatively diverse sample of young people about to emerge as 'adults' from different higher secondary public educational systems (general and faith schools, all girls, all boys and co-educational schools), currently residing in the capital Dhaka. There is one outlier who studied and resided outside Dhaka for a greater part of her life, however she completed her last

---

[2] Participant profiles are provided in Appendices.

two years of high school from Dhaka and was also the only participant who has dormitory experiences (the rest four lives with their family). In depth life-history styled interviews were held with each of the participants who shared their aspirations and experiences that they have had so far within school spaces and beyond within the institutions of family and community, from their individual gendered lenses. Through these interviews, each participant[3] provided insight into their lives as they had lived, perceived and aspire to.

Within the individual narratives of the participants, I have used the support of different national policies on youth, education and gender. These policies provide a broader framework to the claim of this research with the narratives adding value.

1.5 Structure

Aspirations and identities are both gendered and class based in the context of middle class Dhaka youth. Contestations do take place in micro level but the state goal is mostly to reproduce a heteronormative generation that can fit into the neo-liberal market structures. Religion, family and community play significant roles in influencing the manifestations of these different educational and class contexts while determining the gendered identities and dreams.

The research tries to explore how schooling and class contexts has been framed and its deep rooted relationship to identities and aspirations by taking a microscopic look into the narratives of young people from urban Dhaka. These young people are what we can term to at the prime of their youth, venturing into the world with hopes of being, belonging and becoming a 'somebody' in the contested and yet rapidly growing middle class space of the country's capital. They experience schooling as a part of other experiences from other societal structures such as family, religion and community. All these embody their construction and prescription of who they are and what they want to be, amidst negotiations with various hierarchical power relations.

While conducting fieldwork, the informal interactions with the participants were very beneficial for understanding their narratives further. In the months of July and August 2015, the participants had just completed their Grade 12 public examinations and anxiously waiting for their results which would determine whether they would be allowed to sit for admission tests for public examinations as well as would determine their "valuation" of themselves within their family, friends and community, of their capabilities of having better educational and professional outcomes. In short, those two months, the participants seemed (along with hundreds of thousands other students as witnessed via social media as well as television) to be going through the most nerve-wrecking time of their lives where everything about their future lives was at stake which seemed to be endorsed by the media nationally. It required persuasion and assurance from my side as a researcher not to just find participants

---

[3] Pseudonyms have been used to protect identity of the participants.

who are willing to spare a time out of their "miseries", but also to convince them that it will not affect their individual time and spaces. I have been fortunate to have found an enthusiastic bunch of five young people who have not just shared their life stories with me in the middle of this "battle for the future", but also educated me into knowing about how intense and massively significant this is for them.

The paper has been designed in a way to not just reflect on these narratives, but to be able to do it in a way that combines theoretical aspects in a relevant manner. The second chapter, hence, provides a background on how institutionalization of gender and heteropatriarchy has an intimate relationship with the realities of young people from the urban middle class along with a brief discussion on how educations as an institution plays a huge role in this. Chapter 3 goes on to further problematize how being 'educated' works within this particular class context and as to how it becomes gendered through the classification of two dominant sexes with relevance to one's identity, faith and relationships. In Chapter 4, these identities are then analysed to illustrate how dreams/aspirations are constructed for and by these young people in the national context (as a result of the intense global 'pressure'). Finally, the paper closes with providing a brief outlook on how the research questions have been addressed as well as paving way forward for more cross-cutting studies on issues such as these that can help to comprehend the underlying structures that perpetuates and justifies inequitable practices in order to negate them altogether.

Chapter 2 : Dhaka and the reality of gender equity

2.1 Being middle class in Dhaka

Dhaka is considered to be the center of all innovation and progress – the hub for aspirations, employment, rise in social class, etc. In such a stratified environment, class divisions are quite existent in terms of the locations one lives in, the kind of schools and hospitals one access, the products one consume, etc. to name few indicators. The class division not only decides the kind of lifestyle one would lead, but also how one would be able to construct their fate both on a professional and personal level. From the recent study by Munir et al. (2015), we see the classes consist of, based on their purchasing power: the upper class (affluent), the upper middle class (established), the mid-middle class (emerging middle), the lower middle class (aspirant) and the lower class (bottom of the pyramid). The middle class is an emerging class that is rapidly on the rise as seen in the previous chapter. Hence they constitute an important part of the population in terms of how the dynamics of the urban spaces work. In order to understand them better, it is perhaps best to first look into how do we define the middle class and who are they, from not just a national but also from a global context. Later, this chapter portrays some of the experiences of my research participants who identified themselves as belonging to the middle class (stating their socio economic status to be of middle class) in the light of its influences on their identities.

Aristotle, one of the pioneers of term the 'middle class' has stated them to be key for holding together the various social and political development of a nation. In a global context, middle class is being termed as the fastest growing population. They are being called the 'consumerist' class who is crucial to the financial boom of neo-liberal economies. In the context of 'underdeveloped' economies, the middle class is often termed to be responsible for the transition to becoming middle-income economies. Even though statistically, about 2 million people annually in these countries transition to the middle class, such statistics is usually based on economic aspects such Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita, changes in standard of living, consumption of 'better' goods and services, etc. Socio-culturally, they present a new form of class struggle and are "both physically and ideologically" segregated from the poor as well as the rich. Being deemed heterogeneous, there are still certain traits that are usually tagged to being middle class (such as, the 'educated' class, strong emphasis on the maintenance of 'moralistic' values), however, these are required to be discussed under a more contextual specific setting (Birdsall 2014 and Varma 1998).

For this research, from the perspective of five young people aged 19-21, the term middle class has been framed in a very context specific manner. Each of the participants identified themselves as belonging to the middle class, and yet each of their description of where they come from and of their parents' socio-economic background is resonant with one another in different ways. For starters, the participants live in the following areas of, Moghbazar, Rampura, Mirpur, Khilgaon and Old Dhaka. These areas are generally identified as

populated by those belonging to the middle income status with having small and medium businesses as well as service holders in various sectors. What's common between all the five participants is that all their mothers are house-wives – a typical role that is considered ideal in a middle income household where the mother takes on the responsibility of maintaining household and child-rearing activity and father is usually considered as the breadwinner. While most of the fathers have received some form of higher education (such as, university), mothers have mostly completed schooling (till Grade 12) in some cases while some have attended university.

As shared by the participants, being in Dhaka is a struggle in itself for the middle class and yet it is Dhaka that is responsible to have economically brought these people "up" from poverty. With employment opportunities in various sectors and potentials for entrepreneurship, Dhaka has given the middle class opportunities to be middle class. The targets are to go up the ladder from lower middle class to upper middle class where professional respect and affluence is more sustainable. It opens up avenues for socio-cultural activities, as well as a better future for the next generation to be part of the capitalistic urban spaces. The target however, for many are NOT to belong to the upper class or become the "exploitative rich people". The way the "rich people" are conceived by some of the middle class youth is worth mentioning. Sumaiya states,

> "Being in the upper class is not very inspiring as there is a level of low morality that exists among them. They are too privileged and do not have any targets in life which sometimes can derail them (like being a drug addict). But as a middle class, we have to think twice not just about parent expectations but about other things. In comparison, someone from who is not from the upper class has more motivation to go ahead in life." (Sumaiya, interview August 02, 2015)

She further adds that the aspiration to belong to one's current reality and maybe go a bit up but not being called "upper class" is a non-gendered notion. If I take the perceptions of other four participants as examples, they all seem to agree with it. The term "upper class" has a sense of negativity attached to it that comes from the overall exploitation and abuse of power that those from the middle class face from the bourgeois of Dhaka. Being "successful" is a more important factor though it should be within the realms of middle class etiquettes and values.

All five participants have attended educational institutions that are public and have low cost tuition fees (since state funded or subsidized). Public schools considered by both families and these young people as the "schools of the mass public" as they are not just affordable but relevant in terms of the content taught in the curriculum. In contrast, private schools are considered for those who are "rich" and teach "Western culture". Further, even within public schooling, there are various types with each that assists in constructing the class of these young people. The schools that perform well in public examinations are the ones that "good students" go to – hence going to a top public school enhances one's middle class-ness in terms of adding "respect" to the family's status.

The debate regarding segregated versus co-education public schools present an interesting aspect of how middle class values can be looked at. Taking Sohana's perception who studied in a co-education school on this example,

> "Just studying in a combined (co-education) school does not make someone a bad person – those studying in combined are more comfortable in friendship among boys and girls. Girls and boys are not aliens and it's about getting habituated from an early age which those studying in separate (segregated) schools don't experience. Actually, it all depends on the mentality of the parents." (Sohana, interview August 08, 2015)

Values and the concept of "honour and shame" are at the very core of the middle class characteristics as the narratives of the participants constantly bring up. This idea that studying in the same space with those from the opposite can create "wrong" interactions is one of the reason why a lot of segregated schools in Dhaka where millions of young people are taught every day to uphold a mystical view of the opposite sex as well as those endorsed by heteronormative. Being in the "right" kind of school is important to instil the values that can reproduce the nature of the middle class. Being conscious about "what will the society think?" from the early years of one's life can begin by going to the type of school which allows the dominant gender roles to be at practice. From that context, even though coeducation schools are very handful in number and have a separate dynamics of its own, attending one from an early age can be considered a form of contestation to the majority who would rather have their young ones in separate spaces where the boys and girls can remain uncorrupted and naïve, as being shared by the participants in this study who had attended the co-educational school settings.

The middle class youth of Dhaka in this study hence demonstrate a combination of how their lives are not just centred about having an affordable standard of living but also how societal values of heteronormativity influences their decision making process of even what kinds of school they go to. As a result, the schools are further designed to cater to these decisions which go on to reproduce and sometimes contest the middle class-ness.

2.2 Heteropatriarchy is the 'norm'

Heteropatriarchy is an ideology where the heterosexual male is considered to be the one is control of the 'others'. Valdes (1996) states the four core tenets of this ideology are, first, turning persons into two the binaries of "male" and "female" with one being the active and the other passive (respectively) in its role; second, the male/female and sex/gender models are made to oppose each other with opposing identities; third, not acceptable and deemed punishable if anyone belongs to a category that is gender neutral or within transition; finally, devaluing of anyone with feminine traits. Together, these four stand as the pillars of compulsory heteropatriarchy. This ideology (which has evolved from the Greeks, and further enhanced and spread by the Roman imperialism and later emerged into the Indian subcontinent during the era of British colonialism) is what the status quo of the Bangladeshi society is made up of which ends up determining one's "control over ideology, identity, and destiny" (1996:170). As Valdes (1996) further explains,

"They represent control over every individual's capacity to experience and express the self; to shape and direct personality, both socially and sexually; and to realize one's being and fate, one's subjectivity and agency. Moreover, this ideology and its effect are neither benign nor beneficial." (1996:170)

If so, then why is it of such appeal in the dominant discourses within the country? Continuing from the discussion with the participants about how being middle class in Dhaka affects one's construction of aspiration and identity, though some of the aspects are non-gendered, but patriarchy and power plays a significant role in taking the discourse of middle class-ness among the young people further. If I consider the examples of the research participants' families, each has a mother whose role as a housewife is normalized. Hence, from an early age these young people have a construct of what and how families are designed and run. The notion of father as a breadwinner comes from an age-old "tradition" that it's a man's house with the wife running it and taking care of children. It constitutes a power relation which comes from a sense of economic and social dependency if looked from the context of the middle class. A happy household in the middle class looks typically like this where the girl naturally as time progresses takes the role of a mother, a lover and an unpaid (most times, unrecognized labour). The participants did however mention their mothers to be someone who is their friend and a place of comfort, the go-to person. The father, mentioned, is basically detached from the emotional support that the mother provides and is rather the source for providing the materialistic needs as well as the decision-maker of the household.

This "tradition" is where patriarchal structures are normalized and hence given validation unknowingly as it is so much a part of one's life. Within the chaotic urban structures, the middle class families taking on the responsibility of reproducing the dominant narratives of heteropatriarchy is beneficial for the neo-liberal markets to thrive. In order to explain this claim, I would like to discuss how heteropatriarchy has found its way in the global context and as a result found its way into the households of Dhaka.

'The globalization effect' has had an intense role to play to seep into the households of middle class Dhaka the seeds of heteropatriarchy which in turn feeds into the dynamics of heteronormativity. Power, hence, is a powerful too indeed to keep these structures intact as means to maintain the governmentality of the state's goals to create a "disciplined workforce" that achieves the policy objectives (Ministry of Education 2010). Even though globally and nationally, women and girls are stepping out of the prescribed roles of homemakers and choosing pathways they desire, the nuances behind how these "pathways" are designed and run are often ignored. While nation states are busy creating equal opportunities and spaces, it is constructed within the very spaces of heteropatriarchy which does not eliminate discrimination, instead new forms of gendered injustices pop up as the heteropatriarchal structures respond to these "threats" that seems to aim to topple them. Design and function of educational institutions, (sexual) violence, workplace discrimination, stereotyping sexual identities are just examples how these manifestations take place. Instead of equality, equity and complete transformation of the dominant structures is what is not considered in policy and practice. Being middle and being a girl or a boy in an urban space have different manifestations on one's identity and aspirations which will be discussed later from using an intersectional feminist

lens as introduced here through the pillars of heteropatriarchy and structural functionalism.

2.3 Institutionalizing 'gender'

In development, equality is a term that is more frequently used; equity is rather a complex concept to be yet put into use. Power, institutionalization of heteropatriarchy and heteronormativity and reproduction of these are at the core.

Contextualization is crucial to understand the nature and necessity of these concepts as well as how the social construct of gender is framed within this context. This section will discuss how is gender defined and understood in global and national contexts? In terms of various structures of urban Dhaka such as school, religion and family, how is gender understood and perceived? In spite of various policies in place, how do issues of gender and sexuality find their way into these policies? Looking into the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)[4], we can see that it talks about the extrinsic value of education and healthcare from a heteronormative lens – adopting these goals through state policies and interventions ignores the diverse contexts and nuances of gender equity which ends up reproducing dominant narratives in an institutionalized way. The section also illustrates examples of how some of the middle class urban youth construct gender within their lives and as to what it determines their identity and aspirations.

The state policies have a dream for the Bangladeshi youth (e.g. National Education Policy 2010, National Youth Policy 2003 (update in process; referenced)). The dream can sound a bit urban-centric too (this study is grateful for that); after all the policies indicate that cities are the future of any indicators of success. The dream is to build a nation of "skilled workers" who can contribute to the growing neo-liberal economy of Bangladesh – in technology, energy and services.

In an attempt to explore how the middle class 'educated' urban youth frames gender in their realities, five of my research participants were asked if they had a choice to be of any sex, who would they be? The responses are stated as follows,

> "I would love to be reborn as a girl. I have had to learn a lot, I have had to struggle a lot. Boys are more privileged and I don't want that. A girl can do many things than a boy." (Sumaiya, interview August 02, 2015)

> "I would rather be a boy – it will give me more independence and no household chores. Also, behaviour from relatives and parents might change." (Safiyah, interview August 06, 2015)

---

[4] United Nations (2010) Millennium Development Goals: At a Glance. Accessed on November 10, 2015 <http://www.un-kampagne.de/fileadmin/downloads/presse/MDGs-at-a-Glance-engl-03-2010_02.pdf>

"I am habituated to be a boy – being anything else is very complicated." (Sharif, interview August 07, 2015)

"I would stay as a girl – I know and so does everyone that boys are allowed to do many more things but as a girl I want to do many things too." (Sohana, interview August 08, 2015)

"Within this society and culture I live in, I would choose to be a boy again. Being a girl would be very painful." (Shahed, interview August 13, 2015)

Looking at their choices, it is significant to notice how the participants have categorized sex as two binaries, boy and girl. They would rather use the term 'gender' while describing the motivations behind these choices. Gender, as they have explained, are defined by how one is treated within these two binaries by different societal structures such as schools, parents and other family members, community and religion. In many ways, they perceive their gender restricts them and to some it is liberating within these restrictions. There are micro level negotiations that take places within this framework of gender, however it is worth exploring how and why gender has been institutionalized from their context.

When talking about schools and the experience from attending it, the participants talk about its design and functionality. Referring back to the discussion on how segregated and co-education schools are significant brings us to the point where the very design of these schools recognizes and validates that gender is two categories – a male and female. Additionally, the existence of faith based schools called Madrasah (which are always segregated) also reinforces this idea. The fact that boys and girls are two separate identities and have different roles to fill in is brought forward in a much normalized way within the very designs of these public schools. Additionally, when looking into how these schools run, talking with the participants gives us an idea how something as simple yet important as teacher recruitment is a gendered process.

As discovered in the participant narratives, teaching in public schools, in the context of the Bangladeshi society, is a low-paid job and mostly that of a woman as it is perceived to take less time (school hours are mostly in the morning of 6 to 8 hours) and hence the woman can always come back and give adequate time to her family and children. There are various things to consider here: firstly, it is a form of contestation for women who want to go beyond the private spaces of their houses as it provides them an experience of the outside world and that of mobility along with some sort of economic value for themselves and in their families; secondly, regardless of the low salary, they feel more valued within the context of not just the school spaces from their students but also from their family and community by doing a "respectable" job in training the next generation. However, as the participants have mentioned from their personal knowledges and of others who they know attend public schools, public schools that are all-girls and all-boys usually have mostly female and mostly male teachers, respectively, as also in the case for Madrasahs. The coeducation schools might have a more mix to their recruitment process; how-

ever, in many cases teacher recruitment varies subject wise (e.g. female teachers teaching English while male teachers teach Science). In many all-girls Madrasahs, sometimes the teachers are all male as men are considered to be more acceptable and credible torch-bearers of Islamic teachings.

The participants further elaborated their interactions with their teachers who constitute an important of their lived experience in schools. Female teachers have been cited sometimes to be of "motherly" nature while male teachers have not been given any gendered aspect to their role as a teacher but are influential nonetheless. The teachers have, as being mentioned, played a role in their shaping their aspirations – some have advised to follow the "traditional" path and some have inspired them to negotiate whenever they can.

Hence, when within an educational institution gender identities and roles play a key influence, it does not take place in vacuum but in support other institutions such as family and religion. In the context of the participants' narratives, it is their family's decision as to which school they should go to and how the experience of schooling will be shaped within and outside the school spaces. Often these decisions come from class and gender based views – such as, for girls, there are restrictions regarding as to how long they can stay outside after school hours or going out in evenings or requiring to take "permission" for everything whereas for boys, staying out late is not an issue or it is not required to "take permission" for everything as the society is acceptable towards it. Family here along with the support of community firmly establishes how each of these two sexes should behave and interact. Institutionalizing unjust notions of gender identities and roles is crucial in designing aspirations as these participants have further shared (some recognize it and negotiates with it, while some take it for granted) and is elaborated in later chapters.

2.4 Education: a tool for transformation?

The Educational system of Bangladesh mainly consists of the following: General Education System, Madrasah Education System, the Technical-Vocational Education System (equivalent to secondary and higher secondary) and a separate Professional Education System for Adults. The General and Madrasah education system is then divided into five levels: primary (years 1 to 5), junior (years 6 to 8), secondary (years 9 to 10) and higher secondary (years 11 and 12) and the tertiary (universities). For each of the first four levels some are segregated schools (all boys and all girls) and some are co-educational, whilst the commonality is that but they all follow the national curriculum as provided by the state. However, a majority of them are privately funded or partially subsidized by the government while some are wholly funded by the state. There is a small portion of schools that follow international standards and curriculum and are run and funded by an international educational board (Ministry of Education 2012).

All public schools follow the national curriculum board textbooks and syllabus which is known as the official curriculum. As endorsed by the Ministry of Education (2010), the National Education Policy states the vision, goals and objectives for young people clearly: to be able to be,

"…to realize our national dream, our young generation has to be developed as a human resource, efficient in education, knowledge and technology" (2010:6).

Whilst taking into account that the general vision is to build an 'army' of disciplined workforce who believes in the state endorsed nationalistic views and goals, the objectives as broken down further also mentions a holistic framework of what skills and competencies these 'human resources' would have. Apart from having basic skills on various academic subjects, the policy also states very clearly that the objectives to be achieved would be to use education,

"…to remove socio-economic discrimination irrespective of race, religion and creed and to eradicate gender disparity; to develop non-communalism, friendliness, global fraternity, fellow-feeling and respect for human rights" (Ministry of Education 2010:8).

Hence, schools are expected to address the issue of gender equality and equity. It is an institution whose spaces are lived by its key beneficiaries, the students, throughout their schooling period from primary till higher secondary which are constructed through (meaningful, purposeful and organic) interactions with the teachers, principal, school staff, to name some. The processes within the structures of each of these spaces provide researchers agencies the opportunity to explore what is known as the 'hidden curriculum'.

Education can transform and perpetuate. Its purpose and functions has been the subject of analysis, exploration and examination for years. Looking at education, as it has evolved throughout the years, the dissemination is traditionally understood to take place through institutions. Institutional education, hence, is what has become a central part of our lives, no matter where we live, as a form of validation through the various structures and processes endorsed within the capacity of these institutions and the socio-economic infrastructures around it. School is one such key institution that is considered as a legitimized space for disseminating education with a mechanism in place as Paulo Freire states below,

"…Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiques and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. This is the "banking" concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits" (Freire 2005 (1970):72).

This mechanism in schools hence becomes a tool as an 'attempt to domesticate the reality' (2005 (1970): 75) and ensure that the students adapt to the reproduction of the systems while being schooled, as well as after. Such concept of schooling is what has become the dominant culture worldwide and is rather "based on a mechanistic, static, naturalistic, spatialized view of consciousness, it transforms students into receiving objects" (2005 (1970):77). Schooling becomes the space that is used for reproduction of the oppressor's ideologies as well as a globalized phenomenon where instead of upholding equity, it has further 'monopolized their distribution' (Illich 1971:7).

Theorizing this, the 'hidden' curriculum has evolved from the works of various academicians and is part and parcel of the institutional educational system. In Kentli (2009), official curriculum is the more formally stated piece with

a set of goals, objectives and outcomes that should be obtained as a result of following it (through textbooks and other classroom teaching learning pedagogies facilitated by the teacher) (2009:83) – and the hidden curriculum, which is the underlying experiences that the students go through in the classrooms and in the various spaces of school through interaction with teachers, peers, school staff, etc. The combination of these interactions provides the framework for future manifestations with others as well as familiarization of concepts such as "universalism", "power" and "hegemony", and "hierarchy" (2009:84). The hidden curriculum that exists within these spaces contributes to constructing perceptions and perspectives of the students which in turn contributes to producing and reproducing dominant discourses within the political, social, cultural, religious and gendered spheres of the society. Such discourses may or may not be transformative (as the purpose of institutional education is usually imagined to be); hence, can result into continuing reproducing and establishing various notions and structures of injustices in the society. Such spaces are however not recognized; only the official space of teaching learning limited by textbooks and assessments is recognized through a form that is visible and measurable, i.e. through the performances of the students.

> "… Schools were not "innocent" sites of cultural transmission, or places for the inculcation of consensual values. Nor could schools be understood as meritocratic springboards for upward mobility – the great levelling mechanism, according to dominant liberal ideology. Rather, critical scholars argued that schools actually served to exacerbate or perpetuate social inequalities" (Levinson and Holland 1996:5).

The design and function of schools, if analysed from the context of Bangladesh, is deliberate and intentional. When particularly looking into the urban schools, they are divided and assessed based on certain factors: performance of its students in public examinations, class and geography. Each of these is also dependent on one another and not always mutually exclusive. The intention of the schools are to "further draw students into dominant projects of nationalism and capitalistic labour formation, or bind them even more tightly to systems of class, gender and race inequality" (1996:1). The segregated schools here further strengthen the divide between the sexes as two opposing identities with prescribed roles to play whereas within the spaces of co-educational schools the gender and class dynamics is played in a much more subtle manner (by the teacher and school administration). The faith schools on the other hand, use religion as a tool to validate their ideologies, hence using incorporating one institution into the running of another.

Chapter 3 : Being a 'boy' and a 'girl'

3.1 Who is the 'educated' youth?

Being 'educated' is often associated with how much time one has spent in an institution that is credited with a prescribed teaching learning curriculum. As discussed in the previous chapter the hidden curriculum of schools, this section will explore how "being educated" is framed within the context of this agenda of schools while discussing narratives from young people who have been part of it.

The key beneficiary of schools, as it is being put out by academics and policymakers alike, is the student. The student receives and appropriates the content of the curriculum for a period of time, and after the formal training of the curriculum ends the student is said to have been 'educated' to some extent, each time varying on the level of educational institution he or she has completed (e.g. primary, secondary, higher secondary, tertiary) (Levinson and Holland 1996). Who are these students then? How do the different socio-cultural settings frame the students to be 'educated'?

The extrinsic value of 'the educated'

As Levinson and Holland (1996) points out, students are the subjects and yet are also the voiceless objects of the schooling system. Being in a school environment has a number of effects on a young person's mind. Nevertheless, it's a very culture and context specific phenomenon. What it means to go to a school and how one becomes 'educated' depends very much on the culture and context an individual grows up in. Taking the example of the participants for this research, this claim can be explored a bit further. They described their school to be one a space where they had constructed various experiences – of (self) doubt, anxiety, anticipation, inspiration and exhilaration. Each of these experiences had instilled in them a sense of being who they are and what they want to be. The schools are built in ways to accelerate this variety of emotions – it assisted the participants to understand the world as it is and what possibilities it has in store for them. For some, they expressed the need to "adopt and adapt" whilst others have mentioned they have learnt to "be themselves" uncompromisingly even though they have yet to know how. Family and friends have been a constant mention within these schooling experiences where they feel that the integration of these is what encompasses school for them, even though in the eyes of the society it is just a space to provide them some form of credibility to enter the next stage of their educational lives (referred as institutional, such as university).

School, an institution, has that kind of profound impact on its key beneficiaries (Illich 1971). It embarks on creating identities that will cater to the maintenance of the status quo. The structure and functionality of schools provides students with the knowledges that are necessary to instil notions of discipline and obedience. It can provide someone with opportunities and possibilities while simultaneously push someone towards adhering to the dominant ideologies of social injustice that are tightly bound to systems of class and gender. The curriculum is the place for politics – the ultimate goal is to use it to

infiltrate the 'subjects' with a sense of what those in power consider as 'right and wrong' (Ibid).

Referring back to the participants who have identified themselves as middle class 'educated' youth, they have framed what it means to be educated under a more institutional framework. However, that's only the label. One participant (who has had the experience of studying in two different types of schools such as faith and co-educational) provided a more in-depth insight into how being called 'educated' within school settings can be limiting,

> "We do not learn everything from school. They only teach us from over-the-top, like scratching the surface. Too much of memorization, and there is no depth in what we are being taught. No space for innovation and creativity. Our system does not subscribe to that. We don't have the privilege to question, explore and discover! If you are taught to not ask questions and accept everything taught to you, why on earth will you not be later be exploited? You are bound to be made a fool of if this is how schools are teaching us that doubting and questioning is wrong!" (Shahed, interview August 13, 2015)

Another male participant (who went to an all-boys school) upholds a more extrinsic value of what it means to be 'educated',

> "Even though the school I went to was too strict and there was too much focus on punishment if we did not follow the rules. I think overall school is a great place to make friends and be involved in different kinds of activities such as sports and science clubs. However, maybe schools should be more specialized and from Grades 9 onwards teach us only the subjects that will help me to build up my career. Like for me, it felt unnecessary to study subjects like art, religion, Bengali literature and sociology as I am a Science student and want to study engineering in university." (Sharif, interview August 07, 2015)

The two female participants from the all-girls school have echoed that,

> "School is a great place where we have learnt to struggle and succeed. But it is not the school where we can just be 'educated'. There are other places as well, such as from reading books, Internet, Media (television, films), as well as from our friends and family." (Sumaiya, interview August 02, 2015)

Gendering 'educated-ness'

A female participant from the co-education school have expressed how being 'educated' can have an influence on someone's life,

> "Schools teach us so much through different subjects. It also teaches us to interact with others – such as it taught me the value of friendship and realizing your abilities. Schools are important to later get admission in universities and everything, but I know for one that in terms of getting educated there is no difference between a boy and a girl. Even though sometimes some girls are only educated so that they can get better marriage proposals when they go to university, but for me being educated it also means more opportunities to have the adventures I want for myself." (Sohana, interview August 08, 2015)

Hence being 'educated' can mean so much more than just the institutional aspect of completing school. It comes in many forms and ways even through the experience of schooling and even if one claims to be 'educated' because they attended schools, it is not necessarily the only way to be and have more

16

nuanced messages to it. Looking at the examples shared by these young people and referring back to their middle class contexts as well as to the types of schools they went to, there are similarities in terms of how they all agree being 'educated' is an acceptable concept in Dhaka as well as outside the country when one has acquired a certain level of institutional education; the dissimilarities are more the nuances that these young people have gathered out of the lived experience of schooling and how that has shaped their subjective explanations of what is means to be 'educated'.

Gendered aspects in relation to class appears to be a prominent mention in these narratives – being a 'boy' and a 'girl' does have an influence on how one would define you to be 'educated' or how much are you actually allowed to be 'educated' not just by the educational institution but also by one's family and community. Sometimes institutional education is a means of making a girl more desirable in the 'marriage market' as it holds the promise of an 'educated wife and mother' which is what the modern patriarchal man aims for to hold on to the status symbol of the societal hierarchy (Najeeb 2009). However, to what extent should the girl be 'educated' and what kind of education that is depends on the realms of 'honour and shame' that a typical patriarchal society upholds which is more complex in an urban space such as that in Dhaka. If public spaces are not considered safe (due to dangers of falling victims of sexual harassment or the mere fact that mingling in such spaces can 'spoil' the girl's 'purity and values'), it prevents the girl from getting 'educated'. The term 'educated' becomes problematic as its seems having some kind of institutional education can "validate" her capabilities to run a household or just to be identified as a more "respectable" girl and hence belonging to a relatively higher class of the society than a girl who never went to school (and is now less "qualified" to bring up her future children perhaps). Additionally, for many girls in Dhaka (as well as in rural areas of Bangladesh), going to school means a way to escape early marriage. It is a way to delay the "ultimate destiny" of household and child rearing while the older male husband claims his ownership of her fate (Chowdhury 2009, Islam 2010, Khan et al. 2000). On the other hand, there is a notion of "being too educated for a girl" that exists within this discussion. In this case, it is often assumed by the heteropatriarchal males that too much of "education" (such as going to school and then university) can ruin the "feminine nature and role" of the girl as she might get carried away by how "Western women" carry themselves instead of being the educated, polite Bangladeshi wife (could be working as well in a 'respectable' job but it should be not be at the cost of the taking care of her children and chores) (Schurmann 2009, Arends-Kuenning and Amin 2004). One participant in this research stated her family saying this to her recently,

> "Only having good results and being educated is not enough – how are you going to maintain your household when you are married?" (Sumaiya, interview August 02, 2015)

Thus, being 'educated' in the context of an urban middle class young male or female has a very deep rooted discourse of its own which of course has its own manifestations on gender roles and identities and as a result as to how that determines one's desires and needs of who they want to be. The more extrinsic value of education has been visible within this concept rather than the intrinsic. Going to school and then to other educational institutions means a sense of gaining economic as well as social, cultural and political freedom theoretically.

As the participants expressed that the next stage is fighting for admissions into public universities as it is considered to uphold further the educated-ness of the individual if they had studied from a public university. It represents not just belonging an elite class of intellectuals that the middle class families of these students in Dhaka wants to be associated with but in many cases is more affordable to the family than private universities (which are expensive and also considered to be a space for the 'rich spoilt kids of the society'). In reality, these public institutions have a role to fulfil in teaching conformity under the illusion of empowerment. For those not attending schools and universities, for example, exclusion occurs in terms of their identities being discarded from being considered credible and their role as individuals are further stratified and gendered (Robeyns 2009).

This is what the cultural capital of schooling illustrates as "a kind of a symbolic credit which one acquires through learning to embody and enact signs of social standing." (Levinson and Holland 1996:6) through influencing one's "taste" and "intelligence" – hence those with higher social standing are considered as role models and those with lower standing have no legitimacy. Schooling is used as an instrument to develop the "taste" and "intelligence" of the individual – even though one does not directly want to be called to be belonging to the elite class, middle class characteristics tends towards the need to be viewed as "respectable" and hence taste and intelligence can provide them with relevant social standing. The cultural capital can be converted to serve the economic capital and hence achieve the capitalistic goals of the state set by the bourgeois. Using students to achieve this goal is a form of "symbolic violence" where students are "instruments of knowledge…which are arbitrary" but presented in a way as if it is "universal and objective" (1996:6). This results the student into realizing the "social limits" and oblige as well as self-censor to the discriminatory structures. Being 'educated' is not a concept hence, but a phenomenon that is context specific as well as having a universalistic attribute to it.

3.2 The tale of 'us' and 'them'

The design of the schools in using sex of the students as measures to regulate their behaviour towards each other is an interesting spectrum to explore. While discussing with the participants, their narratives have provided strong indication that the structure and process of schools contributes to how the two sexes in question view each other – how it becomes a discussion of 'us' and 'them' in the way they understand and interact with each other. The schooling experience comprises of their fellow peers as well as their parents/family. The narratives provide a snapshot below:

> "They are privileged – they don't have hesitations while talking with girls, no shyness at all. But if a girl talks freely, they will start thinking that she is flirting. That's why we need to think and restrict ourselves up to which we can be friends. With girls, it is easy and more comfortable." (Sumaiya, interview August 02, 2015)

> "Girls are better listeners, tolerant and patient – due to their privilege and security, boys are always like that since birth. I mean my brother (younger than me by 3 years) does not care much about taking permission for going out and all but he is a lot of times sent as my bodyguard and I need permission for

everything. I understand my family has sacrificed a lot as being middle class and they want my security – but boys are usually a bit 'damn care' about everything and it's always the girl who has to care more." (Safiyah, interview August 06, 2015)

"Of course girls are different than boys. I am more interactive and comfortable with my male friends than female." (Sharif, interview August 07, 2015)

"Boys and girls don't think the same. Sometimes boys take friendship too negatively and in a romantic way which is not the case for girls. They are able to move around freely and hence more advanced than girls as it's a very restrictive life for them. I am not uncomfortable being around boys since I have grown up in a combined school – I understand their mentality better." (Sohana, interview August 08, 2015)

"Girls are more emotional and cry a lot and maybe it's just a problem with Bangladeshi girls, they should show it more with children. Boys are not that innocent – they always comment on the girls' appearance, clothes, etc. because it's a matter of increasing their value in the friend circle. Boys are very clever, they understand the smell of money, the smell of girls – they know how to keep a girl. They are stronger." (Shahed, interview August 13, 2015)

The above narratives have one thing in common – boys and girls are different from each other and each sex has a quite collective sense of what the other sex is like based on their 15 years of schooling which also comprises how their family, peers, and community view and treat both sexes. This collective sense gives a notion that there is a notion of 'brotherhood' and 'sisterhood' in place. If one is to take the literal meaning of these two terms they state to be a bond that is beyond blood relations between two or males, and two or more females, respectively where they have a shared understanding and perspective. The way the public schools are structured in Dhaka seems to have a similar effect on the youth – dividing them into two sexes where the process of schooling instils in them the strong sense of being part of this group of 'brothers' or 'sisters'. Each have each other's back and share a kind of a common notion of what one group thinks of the other – hence each group is required to have different characteristics, identities and roles. This shapes how the groups interact with each other – illustrating a strong evidence of how gendered identities are constructed from an early age. Peers, parents, family and community members further strengthen the identity and roles of each of the two groups which reproduces the culture of 'us' and 'them', fulfilling one of the major tenets of heteropatriarchy. The culture of 'us' and 'them' emphasizes on how different each are and hence highlights the power relations even further – such as boys being stronger and more natural in their 'lack of shyness' while girls are in their submissive roles of being the one who 'knows less' and is need of being controlled and so on. The stereotyped notions of masculinity and femininity can be seen through the examples of narratives shared by the participants. The division of 'us' and 'them' is something that stems from this – how they identify themselves as 'masculine' and 'feminine' as being crucial to being a male and a female, respectively. When it comes to discussions what qualities they would consider masculine and feminine, the following responses were recorded,

"A girl should be polite, have self-respect, and be confident and respectful to others. Girls are naturally better listeners, tolerant and patient" (Sumaiya, interview August 02, 2015)

"My mother thinks I am always sleeping like boys, I should be working with her in household chores. It's important to be feminine as doing boyish activities like going out a lot brings in a lot of criticism from parents and other family members. Boys are always more independent." (Safiyah, interview August 06, 2015)

"Well, I think we boys do swear a bit. Girls usually don't, and are also good in studies as well as know how to cook and do household stuff." (Sharif, interview August 07, 2015)

They view the other sex as having distinct traits and take these as only natural without once questioning them as it has been naturalized in the environments they live in. They are subjects of alien fascination for each other as well as active members of two opposing sides. Males and females are provided the role of boys and girls, who in turn will take up the role of men and women. The only (socially, culturally and religiously) acceptable form of relationship that can exist between them is that of brotherly and sisterly form – friendships should be bound with these restrictions, love and sex being the concepts acceptable within the institution of marriage. The key requirements of heteronormative societal structures with elements of heteropatriarchal philosophies are fulfilled and ready to be reproduced as it appears.

3.3 Of love, sex and sexuality

When becoming a 'girl' and a 'boy' is so strongly needed within the context of the participants, it leads to how relationships are perceived and lived within these black and white lines. It is important to explore how love, sex and sexuality are perceived within these lines.

To love or not to love

"In Bangladesh, any type of sexualization is bad. Sex is considered such a big deal." (Shahed, interview August 13, 2015)

"Our parents and teachers tell us, don't have a love affair. It's wrong." (Sohana, interview August 08, 2015)

Love is a complex subject and is usually compared to tackling the elephant in the room. Within the culture of the middle class of Dhaka, falling in love and being involved sexually outside the boundaries of marriage are considered to be sinful and is looked down upon (referring to the quotes above). The notion is that, culturally and religiously, it is not allowed as it promotes 'harmful' interaction between males and females that can destroy the sanctity of certain institutions such as religion, marriage, family and society. How that happens and in what ways is young people 'allowed' to construct love, sex and sexuality within the various schooling and socio-economic contexts they are in, is explored through the narratives provided by some of the participants.

As the above quotes show, falling in love is combined with the idea of young people being involved in sexual relationships and hence sense of e the purity being destroyed in the societal functions. Looking at how the schools are designed, segregated schools were built with the notion that males and females under the same roof in such an early age is inappropriate as it will allow free-mixing of the sexes. In order to maintain the existence of the identity and

roles of the 'two sexes', the design of segregated schools have certainly helped. It has created a sense of alien-ness and mystery in their minds about each other – this helps reinforcing the unequal structures of heteropatriarchy that men and women are different and that they have different roles to fill in where one plays the dominant and the other a submissive (no pun intended). In creating the co-educational schools, such extreme positions are a bit blurred; however the above notion stays in practice within these new structures in new forms and shapes. Faith schools are created to practice this notion but within the realms of religious teaching, hence emphasizing upon how important these institutions in governing the lives of its members.

On the other hand, the participants have revealed discussion related to anything that has the word 'sex' in it is a straightforward blasphemy and the individual is condemned either verbally or silently by the elders (such as parents, teachers, uncles, aunts, etc.). Sex, considered a taboo, is dirty and forbidden to be spoken off in public spaces and within individuals. The participants have mentioned not very strong narratives on their personal sexual experiences, and few have hesitated to speak in details about it. All of them however has emphasized on the need of getting educated in this topic in schools. The need for an educational angle to sexual and reproductive health was mentioned for making the conversations on these topics easier and relevant in the environment they live in other than letting it exist like an 'open secret' in a hush-hush manner while giggling and getting shocked at the very mention of words like "sex", "period", "penis", "vagina" (sometimes these words are mentioned in a derogatory way which goes on to show how far the manifestation of tabooing something so natural and human can go by turning them into insults). When it comes to the topic of sexual rights and about going beyond the stereotyped binaries of "male" and "female", the participants had not provided any interest or input into talking about them which shows the non-existence of these concepts in the spaces they grow up in which leads to the lack of recognition and/or interest in it. Especially in the context of schools where one is expected to get educated about different ways one can perceive their identities not just based on the reproductive organs they carry since birth but of how they perceive their 'gender' to be, these conversations do not take place and even something as basic as sexual intercourse is though mentioned in the Biology textbooks but not taught in class (teachers irrespective of being male or female leave the students on their own to study about it and is reluctant and/shy to explain it to them as they find it to be inappropriate culturally and religiously to be discussed within the 'sacred' spaces of a school). A teacher, who is considered a role model, a person who is expected to inspire and guide, by his/her students sets the example as it is expected someone who is part of the system of taboos – the teacher through not teaching teaches the students the concept of taboo, of (the prescribed) "morality"; the very concepts that are handed down to them from the top from those in powerful positions in various institutions such as religious leaders and parents who are determined to keep the status quo being reproduced. The pool of half-baked 'knowledges' (read: prejudices) on sex, desires and sexuality are intentionally maintained to cater to the established heteronormative structures.

Gendering (non) promiscuity

> "For a girl, to whom they have lost their virginity it's like she has to tag themselves along with him and get married to him and all. I mean, sex is not bad and you should not have it with everyone – your intentions are important for doing it and you need to be good at heart.
>
> Boys are not that innocent as well, they are the ones who visit these brothels, it's for them the brothels were created. They want promiscuity, but it's very complicated in Bangladesh. You are being misunderstood and then girls are also very complicated, too emotional." (Shahed, interview August 13, 2015)

The taboo culture goes deep within the contexts this paper is addressing. Within the young middle class youth dwelling within the sprawling alleys of Dhaka, it just not about the mere lack of opportunities to have discussions on gender binaries and sexualities or whether they should date and have sexual relationships, it is worth exploring how they address the issue of about these through the realms of 'good' and 'bad'. To recall the discussions on how important it is for them to identify themselves as a 'boy' or a 'girl' is connected to how they become a 'good girl', 'good boy', and a 'bad girl', 'bad boy'.

The idea of promiscuity seems to have a gendered aspect to the participants to some extent as well as related to the class one belongs to. A good girl and a good boy is someone who does not "sleep around with boys and/or does not have love affairs and even if he/she does it should result in marriage". A bad boy and a bad girl is hence someone who is promiscuous and is immoral as he/she has sexual relations without the commitment of marriage, someone who is termed as being "characterless". Some attributes here are worth noticing - the idea of boys being bad is dealt like an open secret and somehow is acceptable. As one of the male participant shares in his narrative, the existence of boys and men having sexual relations with multiple partners is not unknown and yet a blind eye is put upon. He went ahead to explain of how some of his own friends visit brothels in order to have sexual experiences as Bangladeshi girls usually do not want to get involved in sexual relations in fear of repercussions from their family, future husband and the society as the "purity" of the female body is important as is the notion of virginity. For males, virginity is not an issue, as long as being "bad" is concealed under the act of being a "good boy" is underplay, it is permissible for the boy to "wander around a bit".

Gendering promiscuity is an important aspect not just from the context of family but of the types of schools and public spaces the young people interact in. The phrase "boys will be boys" within the spaces of schools as much as in the public spheres of the society and in the private spheres of homes to justify their actions – such as, catcalling a woman, or staring at her rudely at her private parts (such as chests), winking and whistling at her – all these are merely aspects of the phase of boys becoming men. Even though the government has recognized such forms of "teasing" as a form of sexual harassment which leads to more extreme forms of violence against not just women and girls, but also young children. If born in the middle class where "shame and honour" are key characteristics for maintaining the functionality of this part of the population, check and control of one's sexual activities are not exactly discussed on the surface due to its taboo nature however, can be clearly seen through its various "moral codes"; these in definition can seem similar for males and females though in practice the former receives the privilege to "get away" as long as he

ends up maintaining an image that is economically and socio-culturally acceptable. For the latter, the reality can be harsh and is often in the form of shame, punishment and marriage (against their consent) (Chowdhury 2009, Connell 2005, Connell 1999, Islam 2010).

Repression of desires along with the support of discriminatory institutional structures (schools, family, religion, community) results into a creation of environment where there is a constant need to prove "manhood" by demeaning anything that is remotely physically female (as well as "feminine" attributes laid out by stereotypes) in the form of bodily control that encompasses the both mind and spirit of the individuals.

3.4 The discourse of (mis)interpreted faith

"Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people." (Marx 1976:175)

Whilst about 90% of the population of Bangladesh would highly disagree with what Marx had stated in his famous quote due to their subscribing to Islam (the biggest religion in Bangladesh with Hindus, Christians, Buddhists and non-believers referred to as minorities)[5], if taken within the context of this paper, one would be able to look through how the dominant narratives (mis)use faith in an organized manner to reproduce the oppressive practices of the status quo.

"You are being taught (in faith schools), don't question the teachings. It is taught in black and white. Such a strict environment – if you cannot memorize the huge quantity of Arabic verses daily from the Quran (the Holy book), you are punished severely by beating. They teach you things like jihad and how to oppress women and not the actual meanings of the religion (especially in the non-regulated Madrasahs). They use religion for making you choose political parties, divide men and women and create an environment of hatred and ignorance that true Islam does not teach. Most students go from poor families, many are orphans and don't have a choice. In the government regulated Madrasah's there are more students from middle income families and they teach you Maths, Bengali and English also. None of their religious teachings are updated and real – they teach you 'modified' religion." (Shahed, interview August 13, 2015)

Shahed attended both a non-regulated and regulated Madrasah till the age of 15 and then he requested his parents to transfer him to a regular public school after he completed one tier of religious education – he joined a co-educational school in Grade 7. He cites the primary reason of him attending the Madrasah was due to economic reasons as initially his parents were not as well enough to afford the fees of public schooling. Madrasahs are mostly free of cost (the non-regulated ones) and the ones that charge fee is affordable; ad-

---

ditionally, it is a residential system and his parents also felt being in such an environment will teach him not just the religion and make him a pious person but also some sort of discipline for future life. Shahed, in addition to the narrative above, shared that his experience in the Madrasah has taught him to not accept things as they are but to question and explore as much as possible. He admits that not everyone who studies in the Madrasah does that and majority to subscribe to what has been taught without questioning. He had the opportunity to meet boys from different walks of life and also made some lifelong friends irrespective of their beliefs. When being asked about how religion shapes his way of life, Shahed answered them from various contexts.

Shahed mentions that an early exposure to religion has made him read more on his own to find out the true interpretations of Islam. What he has found has made him question the functionality of these faith schools – are they truly the "peace, love and tolerance" that his religion prescribes? He explains that Islam has not in reality curbed away the rights of women – in fact Islam has preached that men and women can mingle in public spaces and there is no need for segregation of the two sexes. Women and men have roles to play but that does not mean women only have to do household chores – women should be involved in economic activities that enables them control like entrepreneurship and not activities where they are being regarded as "sexualized products". He feels that religion allows men and women to not compare each other in terms of physical strength as it's "pointless" but they can both equally contribute to the economy which can help change the mentality of "women being oppressed by Islam".

Among the other participants, none of them had attended a faith school. However, each had their own take at religion. With all other four subscribing to Islam as their belief system, Sohana and Sharif did not elaborate much how Islam is being perceived by them though their narratives on how schooling, parents, family and community members has shaped their identities gives an insight into the role of religion (Islam) in terms of constructing the sociocultural realities (such as their views on gender binaries and roles, the division of "us and them", sexuality, and so on). Nawshin wears a headscarf and even though in her narratives she states her frustration on how the spaces around her (both public and private) treat girls and boys differently, she does not state religion to be the key reason for such behaviour. Sumaiya shares that even though she believes in the practice of humanism, Islam has been misrepresented in her society which unfortunately has taken over the dominant discourse of what "real Islam" is. All participants nevertheless believe that it is the "culture and society" that is responsible for distorting the true purpose of religion and hence the failure to create a more secular environment that does not discriminate anyone. Their schools and family have just become mere victims to this which in turn affects their realities.

Religion is institutionalized in every aspect of life of these young people within the middle class of Dhaka – whether how schools are designed and run (segregated, combined and faith schools) or how male and female children are treated in the family and community. One's choices and practices are determined by the (mis)interpretations of the dominant organized religion in the country, Islam. This paper will not go on to analyse the religious texts of Islam and has no intention of trying to discover what the "actual Islam" is; the claim is merely that the discourse of the dominant religion seeps into the formation

of identities and roles of these young people through the support of other structures such as school, family and community. Religion and faith has a role to play what identity one chooses to have as well as how that identity and faith together defines one's role in life and society. Often these roles and identities are constructed as a part of expectation of rewards from "life after death" - hence, faith in a higher power or more dominantly in an institution has an influence on how one will act in life as well as determined by other structures of society through a sense of belonging to a "community". What is more interesting is how "culture" is being connected within this discourse and also among other narratives of gendered identities that the participants have shared which will be discussed in the next chapter in regards to whether culture is necessarily the "evil" or the "desired norm" within these contexts.

Chapter 4 : Aspiring to belong

4.1 Negotiating dreams

Dreams are what we are made of. Either we do it consciously or subconsciously, but in some way or the other it comes out through nuanced reflections of our activities. In a lot of the times, these dreams do not get transferred into reality. Additionally there is the whole dilemma of dreams versus aspirations. Aspirations are a way to translate the dreams into real life, and for many young people it is how they get to have a more constructive vision of their dreams. What if these aspirations were given to someone? What if these dreams had to be changed to fit into the aspirations given by those in authority? These questions are not imagined rather reflections of the narratives from the young people I interacted where they shared who decides what they should do in life and how they should be in various roles – interestingly enough, their 'socially approved' gender identities influence these decisions in many ways.

The 'national dream' to make everyone an engineer and doctor can be said to be in the way of ensuring that these armies of corporate 'dreamers' stay healthy, or so. Listening to the young people I talked to as well as being a passive witness of it in the past decade have made me better informed on this I must admit. Almost all of them stated the desire to apply for an engineering subject and/or to medical school. Further, it has to be a public institution due to various reasons that is discussed below.

Aspirations here thus, dwell based on the following four factors that has been developed by the United Nations (UN 4 A scheme) to measure human rights frameworks (UNESCO; Tomaševski 2001). Aspirations, a basic right that any human being is entitled to have can be looked through these lenses:

Availability: What exactly do we mean by aspirations that we can call 'available'? It means that aspiring to be something depends on the availability of institutions that can, not just cater to them but also provide you with opportunities afterwards to survive and thrive. The educational system of Bangladesh with all the different kinds of schools and universities (both private and public) makes it a very complex system to understand, and hence to also figure what is available for one and what is not is by no means an easy task. However, for millions of young people around the country, it is the only way to avail some sort of certification in order to move forward to the next stage that is, getting jobs that pay to achieve the 'national dream'. The value of education is measured in terms of its extrinsic performance and outcome it can have on the life of its beneficiaries. Schools and universities are the spaces that provide the resources of being validated as 'educated' to step forward in joining the employed population of the country. Hence, what they dream depends on the institutional permission which is determined by the class gender and religion one comes from. Someone from the upper class has more privileges in terms of what he or she can available due to it being within their own control unlike the middle class youth. Additionally, those from the middle class have an economic role to fulfil in the growing capitalistic market system; hence only aspirations that fit those roles are mostly available (such as, Shahed wants to become an

entrepreneur which is considered to be an 'elitist ambition' and it depends on how much availability of economic capital he can accumulate in the future).

Affordability: Just having these aspirations is not enough. Even if the path to reach these aspirations is available physically, it will come down to whether they are affordable. Such as, through the narratives of the young people in this research, they belong to a particular class where finance is not available in abundance. Thus, for the participants (and thousands of other students) who have completed schooling and want to attend universities in hopes to either enter the job or marriage market, they apply for admissions in public universities which are almost free of cost. Parents need to be able to afford the aspirations depending on financial means as well as whether having those aspirations will assist in an extrinsic outcome in the future for the parents e.g. having a job within the middle class context means that these young people can also take care of their parents as it is their responsibility to take care of them (this is a return of the parents' 'investment' on them which shows how capitalistic structures have seeped into the socio-emotional relationship dynamics within families – one of the purposes of having children is so that they can take care of their parents when you are old and hence parents support their children within their limited means to ensure these aspirations come to reality, as it appears while analysing the participant narratives). For a major part of the young population, 'unable to afford' (e.g. Sharif states admission in public university is the only way he can have a 'stable future') 'tuition fees are too expensive' or 'unrealistic' aspirations (e.g. Safiyah wants to be a journalist which her family members considers an impractical job for a girl and will also bring 'stigma and dishonour' instead in return of monetary gains which can also lead to them having difficulty finding a suitable man to marry her later) might lead them to change what they want their lives to be like.

Accessibility: Taking the example of Sohana who has stated her wish to become an army officer due to her need to have an 'independent and adventurous life'. However, her parents have warned, "It's not good for a girl to try to be so fearless." The very statement summarises whether Sohana has access to what she wants to be in the future – it is not just about mere physical abilities to access the aspirations but also on the social structures designed around one to purposefully have an influence on your ability to access it as a handful amount of girls join the defence annually due to it is still considered a man's job, or the permission from one's family or community which in Sohana's case is fortunately negotiable as she has been living on her own in a residential hostel for the last two years to complete her high school in Dhaka (her parents live outside Dhaka) and has mentioned that if she gets accepted in the army, they might just change their mind and not pressurize her to pursue in engineering. The difference between affordability and accessibility is the lack of an economic extrinsic outcome in the latter.

Acceptability: Finally, the question that every middle class family in the context of this paper asks themselves, should they dare to dream of something that 'unrealistic' or 'unaffordable' or 'unavailable'? Will it be acceptable by 'others'? Others here states for their family, their values instilled in them by their teachers, religion and their community. To fight this wide range of 'others' in order to achieve validation for one's aspirations to turn into reality depends heavily on the environment of negotiation that each of these young people can create

for themselves as well as what already exists within the intersectional structures of class and gender among others.

4.2 Being 'successful': two sides of a coin

As reflected within the narratives of the participants, once one has decided what they want to be, the next step is to prove if they can achieve. But on that path, there are hindrances that are institutionalized in nature. As discussed already, aspirations are prescribed and this can take place based on factors such as gender and class. The role of a male and a female is understood not in its nuanced form of in terms of just mere choice of aspirations but that of all the four A's analysed in the previous section. Depending on class based gendered realities, the male and the female will move towards achieving his/her ambitions.

Success is determined and measured for boys and girls, men and women in different ways like they are two sides of a coin existing within the same strata of middle class households. A woman's success comes not only from being 'educated' but also from how she has been able to present her educated self in front of world – the perfect balance between work, home and children. The need to have a heteronormative lifestyle is necessary here to uphold her success in achieving her aspired life. For the man, having a job that pays for the household is the norm. The male, or the 'husband' (for boys marriage is also not an option but necessary for keeping the heteronormative strictures intact as well as for reproductive purposes as sex outside marriage is not allowed due to 'religious and cultural reasons') is usually the breadwinner and even if the wife has a job she is usually not acknowledged as the primary source of income for the family. The indicator of success for a male is when he is able to take care of his family financially as well as being able to have a respectful image of a man with family (with a significant amount of control of decision making within the family). Hence, success is a gendered concept that gets coded into the thoughts and practices from an early age as a result of what one sees in his/her surroundings such as the participants of this study have witnessed in their own.

4.3 "This is our culture!"

Once labelled, we acknowledge the existence of something from how we understand and desire it to be. Creating binaries and labels is similar to that of shattering a baby's illusion of 'that something magical' – it is unfair and subjective. Throughout the narratives of the participants the role of culture has evidently come up more often. They have mentioned the deep connection and responsibility that 'culture' has to determine who they 'want' to be and who they are 'allowed' to be. Schooling experiences, gender and class based perceptions, religious practices – each has been justified under the lens of 'culture'.

What is culture indeed? Can it be a justification for everything and taken as it is? Does it hold the right to define one's identity? As Sir Edward Tylor (1871/1996:1) has stated, "Culture, or civilization, taken in its broad, ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a

member of society". It is something that is learned and hence not static. It evolves and adapts as per demands and needs of those living in it (Narayan 2000). However, in the context of this paper, it sounds as if culture is made out of hard rock that is unchangeable to the extent that it does not end up changing the nature of the rock. Heteropatriarchy and its companion heteronormativity are normalized within this 'culture' that functions with the sole purpose to maintain its core structures.

Culture is used hence as a pretext, it seems. The question is why is that necessary? It is indeed a strong necessity as under the umbrella of 'culture', structural functionalism is established. It is a framework where society is not a simplistic model but made out of parts that work together to create an environment of "solidarity and stability". In order for this happen, societal structures need to function in a similar pattern which will eventually help glue it all together in a macro level. The different structures, as termed by Herbert Spencer, are called "organs" which works together to making the "body" (that is the society) as a whole. He explains societies having characteristics similar to that of living organisms – "societies produce, protect, and reproduce" (Peet and Hartwick 2009:105). It hence creates a system where institutions have roles and functions that is based on a shared set of values and norms with requirement from every individual to conform to them. It does not problematize social injustice and has little or no concern for power, conflict and inequality. Inequality here is seen as a naturalized and normalized phenomenon that is necessary for maintaining the integration. Power is considered as a key part of the structures where in order for its function society requires different roles which justify the power distribution in terms of status division and justice system. The prevalence of classes and social stratification of individuals such as based on gender are "functionally necessary to the survival of the social system—that is, there has to be leadership, otherwise the society disintegrates" (Peet and Hartwick 2009:114, Anderson and Taylor 2006). Hence it is important for individuals to behave in a collective manner in terms of their lifestyles and beliefs – socialization process both in private and public spheres need to conform to relevant shared social norms that can be predictable and aid those in power to reach the prescribed goals.

Another important aspect of structural functionalism in development is through modernization that Peet and Hardwick (2009:119) discusses. The notion is that all parts of the society have to move forward following the model of 'developed' countries. In order to achieve this level of modernization, role of the state is to formulate policies that enable the transition from "underdeveloped" to "modern" as cohesive and conflict-free as possible by keeping the core societal structures intact. Even through the encouraged economic growth, modern nuclear families and emphasis on education to produce the "modern individuals", the idea is to keep power relations within structures intact. It also is committed to elitist ideologies, those of neoliberalism under the shadows of imperialism (especially for the "underdeveloped country such as Bangladesh where the urbanity and modernity are considered to be the stepping steps of entering the highly-considered superior Euro-American standards of living). This kind of legitimisation is not emerging from a national context but that of a global, through a widely used concept like globalization.

Maintaining homogeneous structures in a society that constantly becomes more complex and pushes towards the upholding of the heterogeneous is im-

portant - it makes individuals to be part of a group and not feel alienated. Hence, those who build the oppressive structures are aware of this and exploit it for the need of social control and maintaining status quo hence the intrinsic and extrinsic value of institutions in society (Peet and Hardwick 2009:114).

Now the question is how the culture of having the shared beliefs and practices become gendered? Why does that happen?

The cultural imagination of a modern 'man' and 'woman' happens within these emerging and rapidly growing modernized urban spaces in order to compete with the global images and yet the basic framework is still intact. As Fernandes (2000) writes,

> "…the tough as nails career woman who finds it easy to indulge in the occasional superstition. Her outlook is global, but her values make her grandma proud." (2000:623)

Whilst the modernization seems to be engulfed by the cultural politics of globalization immersed in the form of a potential threat of "Westernization", the framework of the "boy" and the "girl", the "masculine" and the "feminine" remain. Structures like family, religion and schooling further help mask the illusion of modernization into painting a picture of equality as does the state endorsed policies; however, the justification of "this is our culture" only manifests inequitable identities and roles in the end which results in the mass reproduction of dominant ideologies.

When it comes to agency through non-conformation to the dominant values, it is considered "deviant" behaviour and there is very little space for it (mostly in micro level) (Anderson and Taylor 2006). As seen through the narratives of the young people for this research, contestations are constantly happening within these rigid structures and yet in a small scale and gets termed under being "undesirable" or "unapproved". The dominant 'culture', therefore, remains unchallenged.

Chapter 5 : Final thoughts

Reflecting back on the problem statement, why is violence and inequality justified and so actively present when the state boasts of having policies and practices in place that supposedly makes everyone equal and grants them equal opportunities? Why education for the youth is considered such a natural equalizer? This research embarked upon not to find answers for these questions, rather to understand how the underlying dynamics behind these policies and practices are working. The idea was to bring out narratives from this targeted population from who so much is expected to fill in – to understand how the structures manifest in relation to class and gender. Being middle class (the rapidly growing section of the society), being young and 'educated' and being gendered – how do these factors affect who they become or want to be and how subjective and context specific they are. As a result, it hopefully provides a background to those interested to problematize the relationship between identity, aspirations and practices.

Through the narratives of these five young people, institutions seem to be at the core of determining identities and roles for them. These institutions are societal and have been developed to cater to various power structures that are heteronormative and heteropatriarchal in nature. Through education, class and gender identification, binaries are created in order to maintain the status quo, as well as to give space to neoliberal markets under the illusion of development. These identities are constructed to fit into the pre-established frameworks while often at the risk of upholding stigmas and prejudices that limit the emancipation process of an individual to be healthy and happy by promoting implicitly repression which genders one's relationships and activities.

Though negotiations take place in micro level, it is the sole minor point of friction that is present; however, it does not appear strong enough to shake off the foundations rather its purpose is to make way for subjective changes for the individual. To accommodate the rights at a macro level for attaining equity and freedom to choose who, where and how one wants to be, this paper departs with the thought that unless such structures are majorly challenged (as well as researched upon with a bigger sample size keeping cross cutting issues in mind due to their interdependence nature) instead of being merely reproduced without questions and nuances, the unequal practices will continue to find its way into the lives of the next generation in new shapes and forms.

References

Anderson, M. and H. Taylor (2006) 'Functionalism and Conflict Theory: The Continuing Debate', in Sociology: Understanding a Diverse Society, London: Thomson Wadsworth: 217-219.

Arends-Kuenning, M. and S. Amin (2001) 'Women's Capabilities and the Right to Education in Bangladesh', International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society 15(1): 125-142.

Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (2012) Statistics and Informatics Division, Ministry of Planning, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Accessed on May 18, 2015 < http://www.bbs.gov.bd/WebTestApplication/userfiles/Image/Health_Demo/Gender_Statistics.pdf>

Birdsall, N. (2014) Who You Callin' Middle Class? A Plea to the Development Community. Center for Global Development. Accessed on November 10, 2015<http://www.cgdev.org/search/Birdsall%20callin%20middle%20class.>

Chowdhury, F.D. (2009) 'Theorising Patriarchy: The Bangladesh Context', Asian Journal of Social Science 37(4): 599-622.

Connell, R.W., J.W. Messerschidt (2005) 'Hegemonic masculinities: Rethinking the Concept', Gender and Society, 19 (6): 829-859.

Connell, R. W. (1999) 'The Social Organization of Masculinity' in Masculinities, London: Polity Press: 67-8.

Department of Youth Development (2003) 'National Youth Policy'. Ministry of Youth and Sport, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Accessed on September 22, 2015 http://www.youth-policy.com/Policies/BGDnyp1.pdf

Fernandes, L. (2000) 'Nationalizing the Global': Media Images, Cultural Politics and the Middle Class in India', Media, Culture & Society 22(5): 611-628.

Freire, P. (2005 (1970)) 'The "banking" concept of education as an instrument of oppression' in Pedagogy of the Oppressed. New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc. Chapter 2: 71-86

Illich, I. (1971) 'Why We Must Disestablish School', in Deschooling Society. Harrow Books: 3-12.

Islam, M.T. (2010) 'Violence Against Women in Bangladesh: A Structural Setback to Peace and Security', Pakistan Journal of Criminology 2(2): 53-76.

Kentli, F.D. (2009) 'Comparison of Hidden Curriculum Theories', European Journal of Educational Studies 1(2): 83-88.

Khan, M., U. Rob and S. Hossain (2000) 'Violence Against Women and its Impact on Women's Lives-some Observations from Bangladesh', Journal of Family Welfare 46(2): 12-24.

Levinson, B. A. and D.C. Holland (1996) 'The Cultural Production of the Educated Person: An Introduction', in B.A. Levinson, D.E. Foley and D.C. Holland (eds.) The Cultural Production of the Educated Person: Ethnog-

raphies of Schooling and Local Practice. Albany: State University of New York Press: 1-30.

Marx, K (1976) 'Introduction to A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right. Collected Works'. Vol 3. New York.

Ministry of Education (2010) National Education Policy, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Accessed on May 18, 2015 < http://www.moedu.gov.bd/index.php?option=com_content&task=view &id=338&Itemid=416>

Ministry of Education (2012) Education Statistics, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Accessed on May 18, 2015 < http://www.moedu.gov.bd/index.php?option=com_content&task=view &id=300&Itemid=301>

Munir, Z., Muehlstein, O. and Nauhbar, V. (2015) 'Bangladesh: The Surging Consumer Market Nobody Saw Coming' BCG Perspectives. Accessed on November 10, 2015 < https://www.bcgperspectives.com/Images/BCG-Bangladesh-Surging-Consumer-Market-Oct-2015_tcm80-199361.pdf>

Najeeb, S.M. (2009) 'A Reversal of Educational Fortune? Educational Gender Gaps in Bangladesh', Journal of International Development 21 (1): 137 – 1

Narayan, U. (2000) "Undoing the 'Package Picture' of Cultures", Feminisms at a Millennium, Signs 25 (4): 1083-1086

Peet, R. and E. Hartwick (2009) 'Theories of Development: Contentions, Arguments, Alternatives' New York: The Guilford Press

Tomaševski, K. (2001) Human rights obligations: making education available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable. SIDA Accessed on September 18, 2015<http://www.right-to-education.org/sites/right-to-education.org/files/resource-attachments/Tomasevski_Primer%203.pdf>

Robeyns, I. (2009) 'Three models of education: Rights, capabilities and human capital', Theory and Research in Education 4(1): 69–84

Schurmann, A.T. (2009) 'Review of the Bangladesh Female Secondary School Stipend Project using a Social Exclusion Framework', Journal of health, population, and nutrition 27(4): 505-517

Tylor, E. B. (1871). Primitive culture. (1996, 26-40).

UNESCO. 'Towards a UNESCO culture and development indicators suite'. Accessed on September 18, 2015 < http://www.unesco.org/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CLT/creativity /pdf/culture_and_development_indicators/Dimension%205%20Human %20rights.pdf>

Varma, P.K. (1998) The Great Indian Middle Class. New Delhi, India: Penguin

Valdes, F. (1996) 'Unpacking Hetero-Patriarchy: Tracing the Conflation of Sex, Gender & (and) Sexual Orientation to its Origins', Yale JL & Human. 8: 161.

United Nations Volunteer Programme (2015), Bangladesh. Accessed on September 22, 2015. < http://www.beyond2015.org/sites/default/files/The%20World%20We%

20Want%20-%20Bangladeshi%20Youth%20Voices%20on%20post-2015.pdf>

Appendices: Participant Profile

Name	Background Information (sex, age, religion, parents' profession, aspiration)
Sumaiya (all-girls school)	Female, 19, Muslim, Father: teacher, Mother: housewife, wants to study to be a doctor or engineer in a public university
Safiyah (all-girls school)	Female, 18, Muslim, Father: service holder, Mother: housewife, wants to study in journalism; if gets admission in public university might be able to convince parents, otherwise architecture
Sharif (all-boys school)	Male, 19, Muslim, Father: service holder, Mother: housewife, wants to study in engineering in a public university
Sohana (coeducation school - from outside Dhaka till Grade 10; completed 11 & 12 from Dhaka)	Female, 19, Muslim, Father: service holder, Mother: housewife, wants to go to Army, mother wants her to study engineering however it's negotiable
Shahed (all-boys Madrasahs and coeducation school from Grade 7 onwards)	Male, 21, Muslim, Father: businessman, Mother: housewife, wants to study in business management maybe in country or abroad and develop father's business further