

“Who am I now? And who do I want to be?”

Identity in the *Ms. Marvel* Comics

How is identity developed both as a theme and through Ms. Marvel’s characterisation in *Ms. Marvel*?

Extended Essay in Group 1: English: Category 3: Studies in Language

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Introduction

Context

Ms. Marvel (2014-present) is a superhero comic book series written by Gwendolyn Willow Wilson and published by Marvel Comics, an American comic book company with iconic characters including Spiderman, Captain America and Wolverine (“Marvel Corporate Information”). Kamala Khan, a second-generation Pakistani-American teenage girl, becomes the superhero Ms. Marvel, deviating from the historic norm of “Anglo-centric [...] stories and heroes” in the comic book industry (Andrews). Kamala's multifaceted identity is continually developed throughout the series, highlighting the uniqueness of her character as one who is strong, young, female and Muslim. This leads to an exploration of the manifestation of identity within this series: **How is identity developed both as a theme and through Ms. Marvel's characterisation in *Ms. Marvel*?**

The source texts are Volumes 1-8 of the *Ms. Marvel* comics, supplemented by critical interpretations from scholars in the field of comics and Young Adult literature. Intergenerational, superhero, secret and religious identities will be explored thematically; while superhero identity, the superheroine monomyth and how memory shapes identity will be examined through Ms. Marvel's characterisation. Through the analysis of graphic convention and language, this essay will demonstrate how **aspects of Ms. Marvel's identity oscillate over time, paradoxically and synergistically conflicting with each other.**

Relevance

Comics are omnipresent, vital landscapes for portrayals of women and people of colour (Portwood-Stacer 522), who are traditionally marginalised in this text type. This question has contemporary application and will demonstrate the importance of the source texts in reflecting “the diversity of comic book audiences” (Kent 525).

Identity As A Theme

Generation Y and Z - Representation of Collective Identity

Those born around the 1980s-2000s are known as Generation Y and Z, or Millennials and Post-Millennials (“Generations X, Y, Z”). Choices in diction and framing made by Wilson and the illustrators illuminate and parallel the criticisms ‘older’ generations have towards Generation Y and Z. Wilson then empowers both Generation Y/Z characters and readers to defend their right to exist, validating the importance of this demographic and their ideas in contributing to positive societal change.

Volume 2 is appropriately titled “Generation Why”, a pun on ‘Generation Y’ that makes reference to the constant barrage of questions and criticisms this demographic is subjected to in the media. Generation Y and Z are characterised as “less capable and less intelligent” than previous generations (Gibbons 457): “a political burden, a public nuisance [...] parasites, leeches, brats, spawn” (2.10) (Wilson 2015). The catalogue of derogatory terms reveals the depth of criticism toward the two generations, who realise their only use is as expendable biofuel: “if we could harness that energy, we wouldn’t need to kill each other over oil and fry the planet and melt the ice caps [...] We’re parasites [...] We shouldn’t even be here” (2.10) (Wilson 2015) (see fig. 1). This use of polysyndeton creates tension, amplifying the sheer number of issues facing the planet; when combined with the plural pronoun “we”, blame is transferred to the group of teenagers speaking. The eye-level shot of the panels on the left page elevates urgency by highlighting the boy’s nervous body language and hopeless facial expression. The metaphor of “parasites” equates millennials and post-millennials with organisms that consume society’s resources while giving nothing in return, establishing Wilson’s purpose of illuminating the dehumanisation of Generations Y/Z and creating distinctive identity traits for this demographic. Both intergenerational and intragenerational beliefs about this demographic contribute towards shaping their identity as “an extra generation” of “spawn” fit only to be “harvested”.



Figure 1. Volume 2 - Issue 10 from G. Wilson, Illustrated by Adrian Alphona et al., *Generation Why*, Marvel Worldwide, 2015.

Wilson subsequently manipulates Ms. Marvel's individual identity as a member of Generation Z to empower younger generations by establishing the collective identity of Generation Y/Z as beneficial, influential individuals, rather than "parasites". Ms. Marvel expostulates, "We're not the ones who messed up [...] Maybe they do think of us as parasites, but they're not the ones who are gonna have to live with this mess-" (2.10) (Wilson 2015) (see fig. 1). The empowerment of Ms. Marvel's words is evident in the action to action panel transitions; as she speaks the gutter shows closer framing to place more emphasis on her face and mouth, and by extension, her speech. The pronoun "we" emphatically reminds Kamala's audience that she is also a part of the generation characterised as "parasites". She uses the adverb "just", conditionals like "maybe", and negation, "we're not the ones", to affirm her

resistance to her generation's characterisation as "parasites". Text and image mutually enforce ideas of resistance, validating the changing role Wilson's diverse millennial and post-millennial audience will have in becoming harbingers of change.

Collective Superhero Identity

A superhero's mission is integral to their identity (Duncan 197), while a common characteristic among superheroes is "the strong desire to help others, even when doing so involves great personal risk" (Dik 100). Wilson establishes a baseline identity for the superhero demographic as individuals whose mission is to act selflessly, though this identity can be in flux.

Throughout all volumes, Kamala's overarching superhero 'mission' remains a constant feature of her character: her first act as a hero is to use her newfound powers to save a fellow classmate from drowning. Later, she is conflicted about continuing to use these powers: "Maybe this is what I've been waiting for. Maybe I'm finally part of something...bigger" (1.2) (Wilson 2014) (see fig. 2). The ellipsis in her train of thought reveals something akin to reverence in the notion of something "bigger", as Kamala has previously expressed her desires to help others despite the danger to herself. Foreshortening in panel 4 depicts Kamala's fist taking up the majority of the frame; her fists later become hallmarks of her identity as Ms. Marvel, thus supporting Wilson and illustrator Alphona's purpose of establishing superheroes as those who have an obligation to act selflessly. When deviations from this selfless identity occur in later volumes, the fluctuating nature of superhero identity is further developed thematically.



Figure 2. Volume 1 - Issue 2 from G. Wilson, Illustrated by Adrian Alphona, *No Normal*, Marvel Worldwide, 2014.

The drawbacks of the selfless nature of a superhero identity are explored through Kamala's interactions with Wolverine, a well-seasoned superhero. Kamala expresses her desire to "help people without hurting other people" while Wolverine gives guidance about the repercussions superhero duty has on each hero (2.7) (Wilson 2015) (see fig. 3). The deliberate head-on framing of panels 1-2 emphasises the

facial expressions and physicality of both characters, suggesting that while they may be imbalanced in experience and age, both heroes acknowledge that when helping others, sometimes the hero must pay the price. The ellipses and questions in Ms. Marvel's dialogue contrast with Wolverine's blunt assertions and statements, juxtaposing her naivete and his worldliness while sharing a common goal, further enforcing Wilson's purpose of portraying the dynamic nature of superhero identity. A hero's missions and repercussions of their duties toward their physical or mental health form key parts of superhero identity, further exemplifying the dual and often conflicting nature that identity can have.



Figure 3. Volume 2 - Issue 7 from G. Wilson, Illustrated by Adrian Alphona and Jacob Wyatt, *Generation Why*, Marvel Worldwide, 2015.

Secret Identities

Volume 7, *Damage Per Second*, focuses on secret identities, such as Kamala's identity as Ms. Marvel. In *Damage Per Second*, Wilson investigates how different identities lead to isolation and ultimately the exposure of one's privacy. This type of identity is worthy of inclusion in light of 21st century digital technology that allows personal information to be easily exposed.

Wilson first explores the emotional distance created when an individual is forced to maintain secrecy. Kamala thinks: "We have three lives: a public life, a private life, and a secret life" (7.15) (Wilson 2017) (see fig. 4a). This tricolon suggests that individuals deliberately do not present certain aspects of themselves to the world. Visual irony is present in the large, wordless, interdependent panel combination on the right, where Kamala is surrounded by a busy cafeteria in the graphic, yet her narration box reveals she has "never felt more alone", intensifying the atmosphere of isolation (see fig. 4b). Having a soundless panel overlaid only by narration "provoke[s] a sense of direct experience and immediacy" (McCloud 134); the silence reveals how her identity as a hero distances her from her peers. Thus, the conflicts between an individual's various identities can result in emotional separation.



4a.



4b.

Figure 4a, 4b. Volume 7 - Issue 15 from G. Wilson, Illustrated by Mirka Andolfo et al., *Damage Per Second*, Marvel Worldwide, 2017.

Wilson then expresses the volatile potential of secrets to expose one's privacy. Kamala's narration boxes exhort: "In a world without secrets, we're always performing [...] Except...it doesn't always work. Something real always slips through" (7.17) (Wilson 2017) (see fig. 5). The ellipsis builds apprehension and inevitability, clearly expressing the volatile nature of secret identities. The first page is a borderless splash page that makes use of bleed - where the visual runs outside the border of the panel (see fig. 5). This creates a timeless feel as the contents are no longer caged by panel borders; instead they "escape into timeless space" (McCloud 103), emphasising that anyone's secrets can "slip through"

at any time. The presence of individual secret identities not only enforces emotional isolation from one's peers but also paradoxically infringes one's privacy. Kamala's oscillating dialectic between secrecy and emotional isolation allows the young readership of this series to empathise and self-identify with the comics.



Figure 5. Volume 7 - Issue 17 from G. Wilson, Illustrated by Mirka Alfondo et al., *Damage Per Second*, Marvel Worldwide, 2017.

Portrayals of Islam and Religion

The appearance of Kamala and other Muslim characters in *Ms. Marvel* is a significant reorientation from past portrayals of Islam in comics. Wilson normalises Muslim characters and their religion through anecdotes - crucial in light of rising xenophobia towards the Muslim community. She establishes that followers of all faiths undergo development of their religious identity, while examining the turbulent relationship second-generation immigrants have with their culture and heritage.

Religion plays a role in Kamala's superhero identity as Ms. Marvel, emphasising that religious identity is not monolithic. Kamala's first act with her powers is supported with an intertextual reference to a verse from the Quran, the central religious text of Islam: "Whoever kills one person, it is as if he has killed all of mankind - and whoever saves one person, it is as if he has saved all of mankind" (1.2) (Wilson 2014) (see fig. 6). Her thoughts characterise the significance of Kamala's relationship with her religion to her identity, illuminating that in times of stress, her faith acts as a guide to ethical dilemmas, revealing the catalytic role religious identity can have toward heroism. It is significant that Kamala is Muslim and is discovering the synergistic relationship between her religion and her other identities: Wilson demonstrates that non-Caucasian or Muslim characters also undergo identity development, normalising these minorities. This portrayal of Kamala's religious identity makes the concept of heroism more accessible and inclusive to minority groups who have not been represented in the superhero genre before.



Figure 6. Volume 1 - Issue 2 from G. Wilson, Illustrated by Adrian Alphona, *No Normal*, Marvel Worldwide, 2014.

The disconnect second-generation immigrants have with their religious heritage is exemplified when Kamala returns to Pakistan. Though her parents are from Pakistan, Kamala has grown up in the United States, making connecting with her roots difficult. She says, “I can wear a chudi daar and drink chai, but.. [...] Naani adjusted the spices in the food to *white people levels* so I could handle it [...] it’s kind of mortifying” (6.12) (Wilson 2016) (see fig. 7). Scenes in Pakistan have a predominantly earth-toned colour palette - reds, browns, oranges - which mirrors the arid climate, heat and dust of the Middle East. The deliberate choices in colour and Kamala’s anecdotal narration emphasise how Kamala is an outsider in the country of her origin, developing the tensions within an immigrant’s religious identity. Wilson’s exploration of the conflicts and harmonies within Islamic religious identity is a poignant shift away from the largely mono-cultural and mono-religious comic book universe, demonstrating the transformative power of the *Ms. Marvel* series.



Figure 7. Volume 6 - Issue 12 from G. Wilson, Illustrated by Adrian Alphona et al., *Civil War II*, Marvel Worldwide, 2016.

Conclusion: Identity as a Theme

Decisions made by author and illustrators effectively present various forms of collective identity throughout *Ms. Marvel*, including the intergenerational identity of Generations Y and Z, superhero identity, secret identities and religious identity, supporting the thematic development of identity as paradoxically harmonious and oppositional. It is significant that the theme of identity is examined so widely in *Ms. Marvel*, as in the US, 37% of the population are people of colour, yet only 14% of children's books in 2014 were about people of colour (Lee & Low Books). The *Ms. Marvel* series is the first time the theme of identity has been portrayed in the comic book text type with such variety, establishing these texts as highly innovative channels for the diversification of comic books.

Ms. Marvel's Identity Through Characterisation

Kamala Khan is the primary vehicle for the exploration of identity in *Ms. Marvel*. Her complex identity is constantly in fluctuation, with both tension and harmony existing between these facets, demonstrating that the formation of identity is not fixed; rather it is a process undergone by all individuals. This is significant within *Ms. Marvel* and the comic book genre, as by exploring the challenges Kamala has in developing her identity, it shows that minority groups also experience identity struggles, not just Caucasian male superheroes. The publication of Kamala Khan's multifaceted character highlights the necessity for the continued diversification of the comic book medium. Ms. Marvel's characterisation is therefore key to understanding how identity is explored within the series, and how identity in literature reflects the diversity of society.

Ms. Marvel's Superhero Identity

Ms. Marvel, Kamala Khan's superhero identity, undergoes drastic development throughout the texts. Initially highly insecure about her identity, as Kamala's level of comfort with her unique powers and self-image changes, so does her confidence in maintaining the identity of Ms. Marvel. Wilson uses Khan's development to illustrate the paramountcy of self-confidence in upholding superhero authority and identity.

Ms. Marvel's Confidence in Her Costume, Powers and Image

Peter Coogan, director of the Institute for Comics Studies, states that superhero identity consists of "the codename and the costume" (32). With regards to Ms. Marvel's costume, Wilson engages with the negative ramifications of compromising one's identity in favour of conforming to unattainable standards. Within the first issue of Volume 1, Kamala expresses desires to "kick butt in giant wedge heels" like Carol Danvers, her superhero idol - she believes this costume will allow her to emulate Carol and be "beautiful and awesome" (1.1) (Wilson 2014) (see fig. 8). This indirect characterisation through speech implies Kamala does not currently feel "beautiful and awesome"; the panel's framing highlights

Kamala's wistful, slightly forlorn facial expression. The colouring of the panels is warm and airy, emphasising the ethereal and unobtainable nature of Carol, who is depicted in the background. A splash panel of when Kamala is transformed into Ms. Marvel for the first time emphasises the difference between dark-skinned, dark-haired Kamala and blonde, all-American Carol (see fig. 9). Kamala's hands are upraised in confusion and her facial expression shows discomfort, further enforcing her insecurities and misgivings at conforming to the idealised version of Ms. Marvel. Kamala's agitation exemplifies her realisation that if she conformed to Carol's idealistic body, "she would have to compromise her own identity" (Kent 525). Colour palette, dialogue and body language build the idea that forsaking one's own identity in favour of unrealistic physical appearances is debilitating to one's self-esteem.



Figure 8. Volume 1 - Issue 1 from G. Wilson, Illustrated by Adrian Alphona, *No Normal*, Marvel Worldwide, 2014.

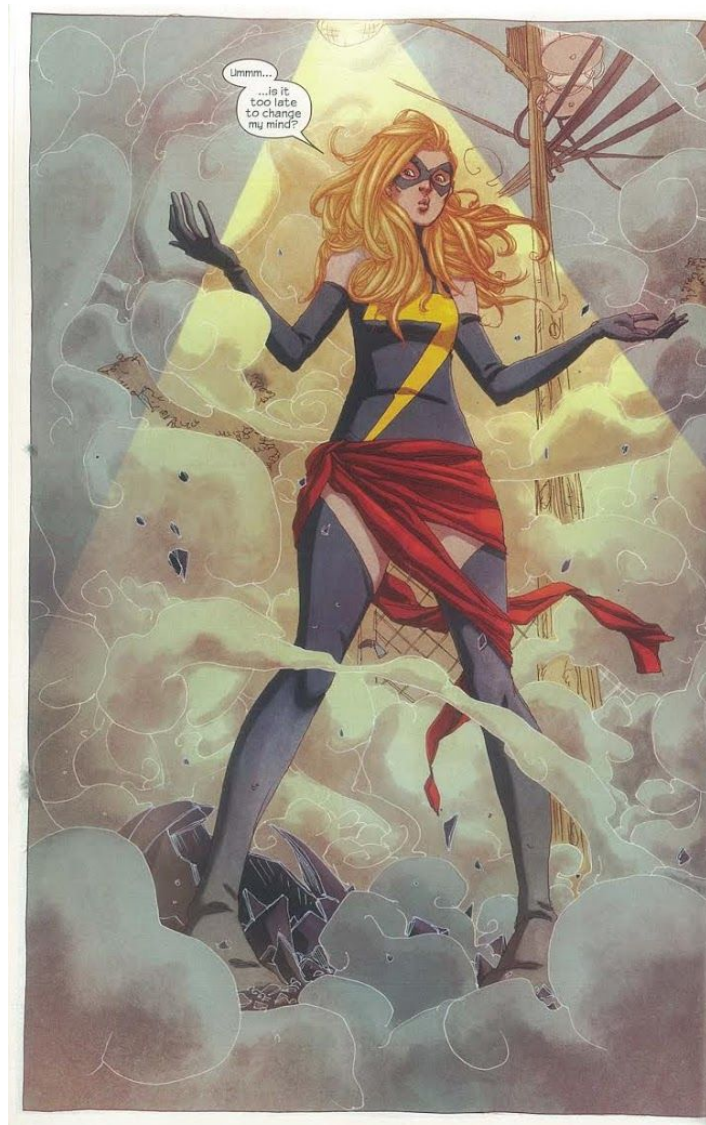


Figure 9. Volume 1 - Issue 1 from G. Wilson, Illustrated by Adrian Alphona, *No Normal*, Marvel Worldwide, 2014.

The manipulation of costume showcases Kamala's initial insecurities and emphasises the shift toward her later self-confidence. In Volume 1, Wilson characterises Kamala as hesitant and lacking in confidence about her powers and appearance. Kamala thinks, "Everybody's expecting Ms. Marvel [...] with the hair and the spandex [...] Not a sixteen-year-old brown girl with a 9pm curfew" (1.3) (Wilson 2014) (see fig. 10). The moment-to-moment transition and gutter in panels 1-2 showcase Kamala's stream of consciousness, highlighting her inner conflict that in order to truly be Ms. Marvel, she needs to resemble Carol. A conversation with Carol in Volume 4 revisits Kamala's confidence in her

superhero identity. Carol comments that Kamala seems “very...at home in your powers”, indirectly characterising Khan's self-awareness of the growth she has experienced since first acquiring her abilities. Kamala responds with an elated, “I feel weird and *awesome!*” (4.17) (Wilson 2015) (see fig. 11). The moment-to-moment transition frames her exhilarated expression, and her speech reveals her newfound conviction in her abilities. Thus, Khan's character development signifies the power self-confidence has in supporting one's identity. This supports Wilson's intent of characterising Kamala toward the beginning of her journey as insecure, ultimately juxtaposing with her eventual self-assurance in her superhero identity and powers. Kamala's character normalises identity fluctuations as a part of self-development in a format not traditionally known for its realism, crucial for Wilson's audience of young adults who may also experience insecurity.



Figure 10. Volume 1 - Issue 3 from G. Wilson, Illustrated by Adrian Alphona, *No Normal*, Marvel Worldwide, 2014.



Figure 11. Volume 4 - Issue 17 from G. Wilson. Illustrated by Adrian Alphona, *Last Days*, Marvel Worldwide, 2015.

The Superheroine Journey

The monomyth for both male and female heroes is a common narrative structure, broken down into sections: departure (exposition), initiation (climax) and return (resolution) (Coats 263). Key differences between male and female journeys include being imprisoned by femininity for heroines, whereas no such challenges occur for males. *Ms. Marvel* conforms to some aspects of the heroine's journey, with deviations towards the hero's journey, forming a crucial baseline for understanding the development of Kamala's identity. Through Kamala's characterisation, Wilson examines the highly turbulent journey toward self-discovery a female superhero undertakes.

In the 'departure' stage of her journey, Kamala's superhero identity is intertwined with her idol, Carol

Danvers. She receives a pendant in Volume 4 combining “[Carol’s] star and my [Kamala’s] lightning bolt” which becomes a symbol of their partnership (4.17) (Wilson 2015) (see fig. 12). The lighting across Kamala’s visage displays her upturned face, hopeful expression, and the bright, primary colours of her costume, which juxtaposes against Carol’s darker costume and sombre expression (see fig. 12). These graphic elements establish where Kamala is on her journey; she is still hopeful and naïve, which becomes apparent to her character development in later volumes.



Figure 12. Volume 4 - Issue 17 from G. Wilson, Illustrated by Adrian Alphona, *Last Days*, Marvel Worldwide, 2015.

Wilson examines Kamala's struggles toward realising her superhero identity through another similarity to the female monomyth, a keystone conflict where Kamala ultimately becomes estranged from Carol in Volume 6, *Civil War II*. This occurs in the late 'initiation' stage, where for female heroines, "the comfort of a domestic enclosure beckons" (Coats 263). Kamala's thoughts characterise her despondency over losing her hero's trust: "The people we love [...] make us who we are. So who am I without them? Who am I now?" (6.11) (Wilson 2016) (see fig. 13). Warm pink colouring mimics a setting sun, combining with the illustrator's decision to depict Kamala's abandonment of the pendant in a puddle, symbolising the closure of Kamala's reliance on Carol for self-identification. Beseeching rhetorical questions solidify the internal conflict and contradictions provoked by Kamala's identity. Her journey from innocence to independence is universal, allowing readers to empathise with different parts of her identity. This is especially important for females and cultural minorities who have traditionally been erased within the monomyth in favour of "Western values of masculinity" (Coats 262).



Figure 13. Volume 6 - Issue 11 from G. Wilson, Illustrated by Adrian Alphona et al., *Civil War II*, Marvel Worldwide, 2016.

Kamala's journey differs drastically from the heroine's monomyth at the end of the 'departure' stage. For girls, this involves the "ubiquitous trope of the love triangle" (Coats 263). Kamala instead undergoes the male section, where the hero "engages in battles with aspects of themselves [...] or battles against [...] superior powers" (Coats 263). Kamala's deviation from this portion of the female

monomyth is significant as it reveals progress away from “ubiquitous tropes” to which female characters are so often confined. This deviation validates her significance as a character in a text type often confined by “tropes”, elevating the importance of Kamala's diverse character in providing self-identification and vindication for culturally diverse young adults. Through Kamala's heroine arc, Wilson demonstrates that Kamala does not align with previous female archetypes in the traditionally male-dominated comic book industry.

Superhero or Civilian Identity?

The tensions between the civilian and superhero self are key to understanding identity within *Ms. Marvel*. Through Kamala's characterisation, Wilson reveals the internal struggle and anguish that results from prioritising one identity over another, destroying one's relationships with loved ones.

A consequence of the increase in Kamala's prowess and responsibilities as a superhero is the careless mistreatment of those she loves, including her best friend Bruno, who becomes triplegic due to Kamala's ill-executed heroics. He protests: “Your needs, your problems, your schedule, your rules... [...] Your friends didn't matter. This is the life you chose” (6.11) (Wilson 2016) (see fig. 14). The bold red speech bubble border in panel 1 reflects Bruno's pain and frustration, supported by emanata, revealing Kamala's shock at seeing the hurt she has inflicted. Drab, cool colouring builds a disheartening mood, while the obscuring of both characters' faces reflects their estrangement, developing Kamala's neglect of her personal life in favour of her identity as Ms. Marvel. Bruno's brutal honesty about Kamala's decision to prioritise her heroics is the climax of the ongoing struggle between her superhero and civilian identities, leading to the loss of Bruno as a friend, solidifying Wilson's intent of conveying the destructive potential of identity toward interpersonal relationships. Kamala's rhetorical questions characterise the conflict between these two important identities: “What if I can't just put my ordinary life on hold and be Ms. Marvel all the time? What does that mean about who I am - and who I want to be?” (5.5) (Wilson 2016) (see fig. 15). Panel 3 is framed off-centre, paralleling the imbalance of

Kamala's thoughts and between the facets of her identity (see fig. 20). She is compelled to realise that her superhero identity limits her from being involved in her civilian life, which causes her great distress, further suggesting the inability of identity to remain unchanged in the face of internal struggle while revealing its power to torment.



Figure 14. Volume 6 - Issue 11 from G. Wilson, Illustrated by Adrian Alphona et al., *Civil War II*, Marvel Worldwide, 2016.



Figure 15. Volume 5 - Issue 5 from G. Wilson, Illustrated by Takeshi Miyazawa et al., *Super Famous*, Marvel Worldwide, 2016.

Wilson reiterates the friction between Kamala's identities by proposing that one can be one's own greatest enemy. This appears both literally and metaphorically in Volume 5, where Kamala is forced to protect Jersey City from a rogue army of her clones, created in an attempt to allow her to balance her civilian identity and responsibilities as Ms. Marvel (5.5) (Wilson 2016) (see fig. 16). Her clones are a

metaphor for the constant pressure she experiences as a hero. The irony of Kamala defending the city from an army of herself demonstrates that Kamala's complex identity can be her greatest enemy. She is forced to acknowledge that in pursuing her alter ego, she neglects her civilian life, indicating character progression and self-realisation. Through the emotional consequences of prioritising one identity over the other, Wilson exemplifies for her audience that imbalance between identities is a conventional part of human development.

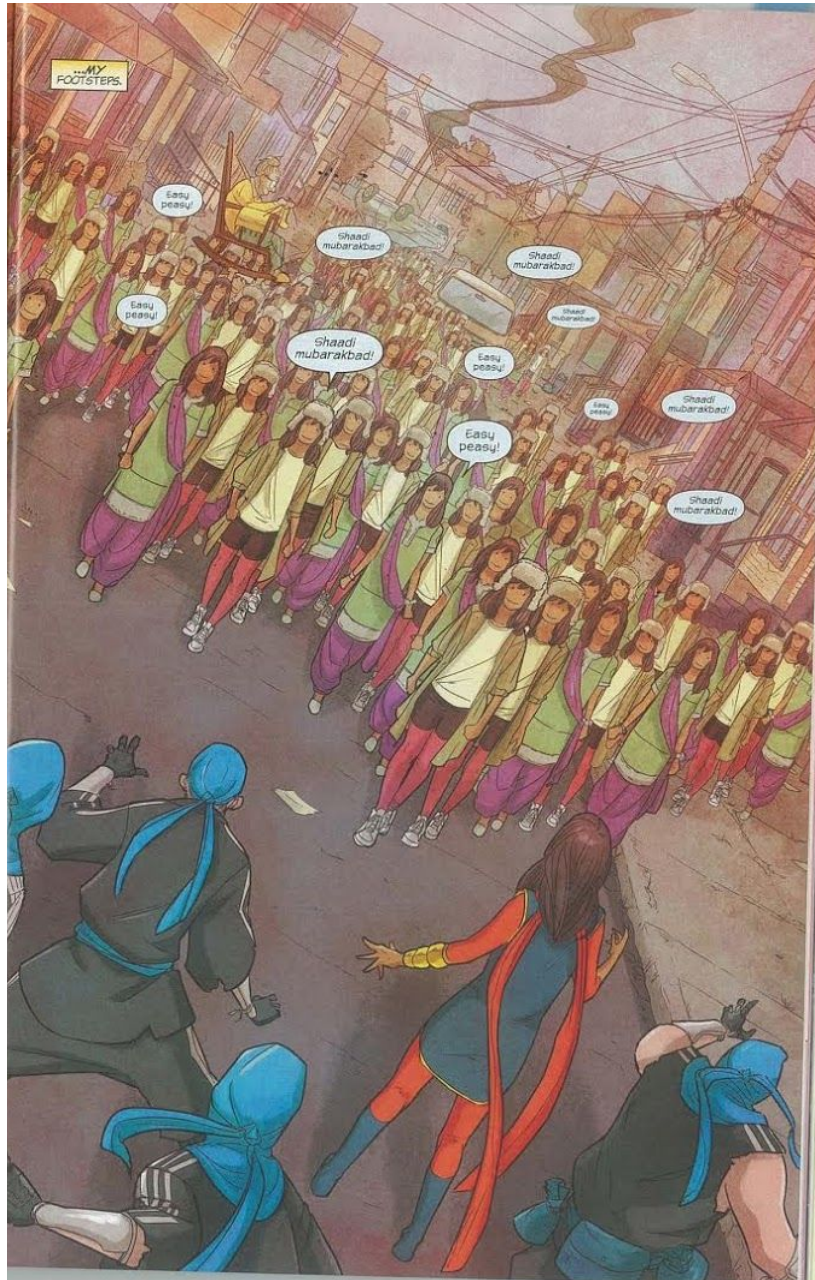


Figure 16. Volume 5 - Issue 5 from G. Wilson, Illustrated by Takeshi Miyazawa et al., *Super Famous*, Marvel Worldwide, 2016.

Role of Memory in Shaping Identity

Maria Nikolajeva, Cambridge University Professor of Education, states that “Memory is doubtless the greatest narrative engine in fiction” (88). Wilson employs memory in the form of flashbacks to explore the importance of the past in shaping current and future identities.

Wilson manipulates memory to illustrate how the roots of ancestry have a palpable influence in the present. Volume 6 contains flashbacks that reveal more of Kamala's heritage, including Bombay in September 1947 and Karachi, Pakistan sixteen years ago (6.8, 6.9) (Wilson 2016) (see fig. 17). The two flashbacks depict the memories and desires of Kamala's grandmother and mother respectively in maintaining firm cultural roots: “I don't want to have our child thousands of miles away from everything I've ever known, I want to stay here...” (6.8), “This child - she'll have nothing to remember at all - I want to stay here” (6.9). These memories enhance Kamala's characterisation by providing more information to the reader about her origins and heritage, especially her family's concern with preserving cultural identity through memory and geographical familiarity. For both flashbacks to Bombay and Pakistan, earth and jewel tones are the predominant colour palette. Green is the dominant colour in the second flashback and is associated with life, as “the birthplace of Islam” is “located in the dry desert”, making nature a valued part of life (“Colours of Islam”). This demonstrates the use of colour to evoke elements of Kamala's religion. The hues are dark and saturated, building a solemn atmosphere that parallels the weight of the choice to migrate. Associations between jewel tones and cultural significance are built, highlighting the historical migrations of her family that lead to Kamala's birth in the United States as a second-generation immigrant. This enhances Kamala's connection with her cultural roots, enforcing how her ties to her past cascade into her current identity.



Figure 17. Volume 6 - Issues 8, 9 from G. Wilson, Illustrated by Adrian Alphona et al., *Civil War II*, Marvel Worldwide, 2016.

Conclusion

In response to: "How is identity developed both as a theme and through Ms. Marvel's characterisation in *Ms. Marvel*?", identities simultaneously, paradoxically, conflict and are synergistic at different times. Both Wilson and the illustrators suggest that individuals have highly complex, interwoven identities, including Generation Y and Z, superhero, "secret", and religious identities. The interaction between Kamala's superhero identity and her other identities - especially civilian - has been demonstrated as a source of friction, as are some aspects of her religious identity. However, synergy and unity still exist within Kamala's post-millennial identity and her ancestral heritage.

The text type of the comic book and associated graphic conventions such as colour scheme, framing and panel transitions allow *Ms. Marvel*'s creators to explore the frictions and repercussions between each of these fluid identities. Linguistic and stylistic devices including diction, syntax, metaphor, and symbolism further Wilson's development of Kamala Khan's intertwined identities throughout her superheroine journey, though they can often be in contradiction. The deliberate evolution and inclusion of a wide variety of identities within *Ms. Marvel* demonstrates the resounding diversity and inclusivity of Kamala as a character, validating and representing an audience of young adults who have previously been marginalised. The development of identity in *Ms. Marvel* challenges stereotypes using the highly accessible and popular format of the comic book, allowing the texts to more accurately reflect the diversity of the society in which they are created.

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