

PHENOMENAL YOUNG WOMEN: POSITIVE IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT IN FEMALE
BERMUDIAN ADOLESCENTS

by

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ABSTRACT

Identity formation is an essential aspect of development that impacts later social development (e.g., in Spender's model of Phenomenological Variant of Eco-Systems Theory, PVEST). Research on identity formation has encouraged research in various areas of identity development, including gender, ethnicity, and sexuality. In this study, the topic of identity is examined for young women growing up in Bermuda, a small island community in the midst of a cultural transition. This project was an exploratory study into the aspects of identity that were important in the lives of nine Bermudian women between the ages of 14 and 17. A semi-structured interview employing laddering strategies was conducted with participants. A narrative analysis of these interviews revealed nine thematic dimensions that were important in the lives of the participants. Implications of the findings for Spender's PVEST model are presented and further research areas are discussed.

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Dear Lord,

You have bought me on a fantastic, wonderful journey. I have so much to be grateful for. I have been blessed with a wonderful family. Thank You for two caring parents who have supported me in every way imaginable; financially, emotionally, spiritually. I am so blessed to have them in my life, they mean the world to me. Thank You for my sistee who both inspires and supports me. Thank You for all of the people in my family who have supported me. I thank You for my church family at Salvation Army Cedar Hill, who have prayed me through my schooling.

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I have been so blessed to know so many wonderful people who are loving, supportive and generous. They have enriched this journey so much and showed me how Your love really works.

Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen. Ephesians 3:20

NOTE TO THE READER

Dear Reader,

Thank you for picking up and reading my thesis. I am taking this opportunity to introduce you to some conventions that I have taken in the presentation of this work. Where I refer to the themes that arose in the interviews I use italics. Also, direct quotes from participants are in bold type.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

**I'm a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.**

Angelou (1986)

In the poem, *Phenomenal Woman*, Angelou presents a woman who exudes self confidence simply by acknowledging her strength as a woman. She knows who she is without shame or malice. I was introduced to this poem in my adolescence by my mother, a woman whom I consider phenomenal. When I read this poem I began to ask questions about my future as a woman. What makes a woman phenomenal? What makes her special and sets her apart from those around her? What parts of her journey bring her to a point where she can be described as phenomenal?

A young director by the name of Kiri Davis produced a video entitled '*A girl like me*', which in some ways asks these same questions. Her video was aimed at the stereotypes of African American women, especially in regard to the expectations of beauty. She conducts interviews with young African-American women who discuss their views on this subject.

Watching this video was a moving experience for me because it reminded me of a time when I was the age of the participants and I had similar discussions with my friends. The more I watched it, the more curious I became about this time in the lives of young women in my country, Bermuda. How did they navigate the period of adolescence? What forces shaped their voices, their positions, their decisions?

This study is an attempt to understand the factors that affect the lives of young women in Bermuda. I will be exploring a topic that has been studied by many psychologists, that of identity development, but I am looking at this topic for a different population. I am seeking to understand the challenges that young women in Bermuda face, and how they create a positive identity for themselves. This is not something that can be fully explored with a quantitative framework, as each individual interacts with her environment in a unique way. Rather, a qualitative study allows us to explore and celebrate the distinctiveness of each individual while observing some of the similarities between individuals.

The questions we will seek to answer are: (1) how do they see themselves, especially as they look toward the future? (2) how do their positive characteristics help them prepare and succeed in looking toward the future? (3) what aspects of identity are most important to young women in Bermuda? (4) what kinds of strengths do these girls draw on and see in themselves? These questions were important to the formulation of the interview protocol that was used during data collection. The sequencing of these research questions and the interview protocol both attempt to answer successively more core attributes in a process called laddering (Price, 2002).

In addition, this study reflects an attempt to bridge the gap between academic psychology and the general community of Bermuda. As such, there is a purposeful attempt to blend the language of academic with the more colloquial language of the community, in order to increase accessibility.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Psychological literature on female identity development provides valuable resources for designing research in areas that have been overlooked to date. The research in this area seems to posit that young women form a sense of strength and they use this strength to make positive decisions (e.g., Josselson, 1987; Shorter-Gooden & Washington, 1996; Jones, 1997). A strengths-based approach to viewing adolescent development helps explore the positive identities that females in Bermuda create. In the following sections, we will examine the research on identity development and how this research can be viewed within a Personal Construct Theory framework. We discuss the importance of personal constructivist research on identity development. Finally we examine the way in which the social environment of Bermuda is important to consider in the construction of identity development for adolescent women.

Identity Development

The subject of identity development has been the focus of psychological inquiry since Erik Erikson first introduced the concept. Erikson (1968) asserted that adolescence is pivotal for the developing ego. Identity is defined as a “self-definition which is comprised of goals, values, and beliefs to which the person is committed and which provide a sense of continuity over time” (Shorter-Gooden & Washington, 1996, p. 466). Many researchers and theorists in the field of psychology posit that the increasing cognitive, physiological and social developments during adolescence lead to a formal search and establishment of the personal identity in the young person (Berzonsky & Sullivan, 1992).

The way we now conceptualize adolescence and this time of exploration has changed since Erikson’s original formulation. Much of the early research on identity development focused on Caucasian middle and upper class boys. As a result, the uniqueness of many

populations was not considered in original theories. A classic example of this oversight is James Marcia's (1966) research that identified the four identity statuses. His research was done on 86 male university students and was assumed to be applicable to other populations.

One of the most influential opponents to the heavily male influenced identity research was Carol Gilligan (1982). Based on the work of Nancy Chodorow, she found that women's identity was based on intimacy rather than individuation, as was thought to be the basis of men's identity development. This finding had a tremendous effect on the way identity was conceptualized, because intimacy, in Erikson's original theory, was thought to come after the establishment of an identity; thus making women's development appear problematic. In effect, Gilligan's study seemed to suggest that these two 'stages' needed to be reversed. Research on this topic has both called this claim into question and supported it (Blisker, Shiedel, & Marcia, 1988; Dyk & Adams, 1990; Lytle, Bakken, & Roomig, 1997).

One of the reasons for this discrepancy has been research that now encapsulates the importance of the development of multiple identities (e.g. ethnic identity, gender identity, etc.) (Jones, 1997; Jones & McEwen, 2000). Many researchers focus on one of these aspects rather than looking at the experience of identity formation as a whole; however there have been a few studies that have examined the overall development of identity.

In a qualitative study, 17 African-American young women were interviewed as part of an exploratory study on the salience of multiple identities (Shorter-Gooden & Washington, 1996). These young women were between the ages of 18 and 22 and they were all students at a Junior College in Southern California. The authors examined the importance and salience of seven aspects of identity: race, gender, career, religious beliefs, political beliefs, and sexual orientation. For the participants, all of these areas of identity were important, but to differing degrees. When

given a non-leading question about their identity, 11 participants discussed their ethnicity, and six discussed their gender. An interesting finding from this study was that the participants associated being a black woman in America as being associated with 'strength'. The authors defined this strength as being "tough, determined and able to deal with the adversity one meets because of being Black, as well as having a strong sense of self that is not overrun by others" (Shorter-Gooden & Washington, 1996, p. 470).

This finding that adolescents consider a sense of strength to be important in their identity development is important to another research project done on a similar population (Hagglund, 2006). In this study, the researchers were curious about African-American females' choice to abstain from having sex. Fourteen African-American young women between the ages of 15 and 18 years old were interviewed surrounding their choice to remain sexually abstinent. One of the major themes that came from this analysis was the participants' concept of their own sexual identity. Participants described themselves as faithful and unique. These qualities seemed to foster in these young women a sense of self that reflects this strength that has been mentioned earlier. They also mentioned that, by making these positive choices, they could avoid negative stereotypes that the wider public held about young African-American females. These findings demonstrate the impact that the wider society has on the intimate formation of identity.

Another factor in their decision was the idea that they were becoming like their mothers and grandmothers. Again, with this theme, the participants had a sense of admiration for these women who seemed to face and overcome many obstacles including raising large families as a single parent. The centrality of the relationship between mothers and daughters helped foster strength and confidence for daughters (Shorter-Gooden & Washington, 1996).

These two studies have important implications for the present study. First, they bring to light the fact that the external environment has an important impact on the development of identity. This is reflected in both the difference and the variety around which aspects of identity were of importance in the Shorter Gooden and Washington (1996) study. It is also demonstrated in the way that young women try to avoid negative stereotypes of African-American women by abstaining from sex. Secondly, these studies show that the relationship between mothers and their daughters is an important aspect of their identity development. This is also demonstrated in both studies as participants discussed their admiration of their mothers and grandmothers. Thirdly, strength is an asset and an important part of identity development for Africa-American women and might be an important aspect of identity development for other populations.

The strength revealed in these studies shows a form of resilience. While resilience has been defined in a number of different ways, three common aspects have been recognized: The ability to rebuild and carrying on in the face of obstacles, a sense of self, determination, and a prosocial attitude (Dyer & McGuiness, 1996). This core strength and resilience has been conceptualized by some authors as a form of coping (Spencer, Fegley, & Harpalani, 2003).

Drawing upon the findings of coping resources in African-Americans, Margaret Beale Spencer and her colleagues formulated a theory in order to explain the development of these coping resources and their incorporation into a sense of identity. Based on the work of Urie Brofenbrenner, this theory, the Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST), describes a dynamic system of the development of identity in relationship to the social context in which individuals live (Spencer, Dupree, & Hartmann, 1997). These authors describe five interactive components (see Figure 1).

Factor 1, *net vulnerability*, (Lee, Spencer, & Harpalani, 2003) refers to the different contextual protective and risk factors that will affect the individual's development at any life stage. These factors are outside of the individual's control and include factors such as gender, age, race, etc. The net vulnerability is dependent upon the self-process of individuals as they come in contact with stereotypes and biases (Spencer et al., 1997). An example might be helpful in understanding the development of identity according to this theory. Let us use as an example of an African-American young woman who lives in an inner city. One of the stereotypes that she might come into contact with is that of black women as hyper sexual.

The second level of the PVEST framework is *net stress engagement level*. This refers to the individuals encountering challenging situations such as sexism as seen in the example above (Lee et al., 2003). These situations are mostly unavoidable, but can be countered by social support and other protective factors. If we return to the example of our young woman, let us imagine that this young woman becomes involved with sports activities but encounters teachers, friends, and family members who believe that young women should not be involved with sports. All of these individuals attempt to convince her that she should put her energy elsewhere.

According to PVEST, an individual will form *coping mechanisms* in response to deal with "a dissonance-producing situation" (Swanson et al., 2002, p. 77). The increased cognitive abilities of adolescence allow individuals to evaluate their own coping strategies. Those strategies that are adaptive in reducing psychological tension (even if they are generally maladaptive in society) are continuously used (Spencer et al., 1997). If we return to our example of the young woman she might develop in two directions. She could evaluate that being involved in sports is not a good idea based on the ways that other people are treating her. On the other hand, she could react against this negativity by becoming even more determined to succeed in

athletics. In both situations, the young woman is relying on different coping mechanisms in order to deal with a stressful situation.

The repeated patterns of coping mechanisms began to form the individual's *emergent identity* (Lee et al., 2003). This fourth characteristic describes how people begin to integrate their coping mechanisms into a personal identity. This integration is dependent on previous self-appraisal processes in relation to environmental stressors. Our young woman might begin to see herself as competent, athletic, and persistent should she decide to continue in the face of these stressful situations. She also might see herself as a person who has limited control over her future, should she decide not to pursue athletics.

This identity formation is crucial in the final aspect of the PVEST model, *life-stage, specific coping outcomes*. These outcomes can be either positive (such as balanced emotional life) or negative (such as an unbalanced emotional life). Again, this is dependent upon what has taken place in previous areas and the emotional, biological, and social development that has taken place. Our young woman might begin to develop her identity as an athlete or the change in her focus might push her to be more involved with academics.

This theory has called attention to the development of identity formation in reaction to adverse environments, especially in school. These authors contend that the creation of coping mechanisms in adverse environments is influenced by environmental factors such as religion, spirituality, and cultural pride (Lee et al, 2003). They also found that the ways that males and females draw on and create coping resources is different (Spencer et al, 1997), thus encouraging future researchers to continue to explore the factor of gender in research on identity development, confirming the assertions made by feminist researchers.

As stated earlier, the research in the area of identity development has largely focused on one aspect of identity development such as racial identity or gender identity, even this theory of Spencer's examines a specific context of ethnicity in an inner-city educational setting. This lack of attention to the holistic process of identity development was the motivation for multiple studies on the process of multiple identity development (Jones, 1997). Using a grounded theory method, the authors found that the largest influence on the way that these young women thought of their identity was the context in which the dimensions of identity (such as race, gender, sexuality, etc.) interacted with and influenced each other. The authors suggested that in order for one to understand the way that identity develops, we must also seek to understand the social context in which that development takes place.

Jones and McEwen (2000) also postulated a theory that examines the environmental variables in identity development and adds an extra layer of understanding. These authors conceptualized society as having an influence on seven contextual variables: Culture, race, gender, sexual orientation, class, and religion. These seven variables interact dynamically with each other and each exerts an influence on the individual's core, consisting of personal attributes, characteristics and identity.

Core Construing in Community Settings

This concept of the individual's core is similar to what Personal Construct Theorists call the core construct system. George Kelly, the founder of Personal Construct Theory, conceptualized core construing as the meaning making that individuals engage in that result in the maintenance of a personal identity (Butt, 2007). Through the core construct, the individual interprets the incidences of everyday life.

Research on the core construct has revealed four factors in the core construction process (Butler, 2006). Factor one involves the person's attempt to make sense of the world and his or her self. Often when people do this it is through themes of justice, authenticity and coherence. The second factor has to do with the way the person construes him- or herself in relation to others. Factor three adds a dimension of mastery and accomplishment to the core construction process. The final factor involves the person's efforts to individuate from others through non-conformity, uniqueness, independence and anti-authoritarianism.

These four processes are important in the forming of a personal identity. These models of core construing have generated a diversity of research that includes qualitative and quantitative research as well as therapy and the promotion of human well-being (e.g., Butler, 2006; Butt, 2004). Many researchers postulate that a person's sense of identity is shaped by the way that the four forces interact on the core person within the larger social context. It is therefore important to consider Bermudian society and its possible impact on the construing of identity for Bermudian adolescents.

Bermuda Background and History. Bermuda is a small archipelago located in the Atlantic Ocean approximately 700 miles west of North Carolina. It measures only 21 ½ miles². Although the discovery of Bermuda is credited to the Spanish sailor, Juan de Bermudez in 1505 or 1506, the establishment of the island as a community was credited to English sailors, specifically the English sea captain, Sir George Somers (Zuill, 1999). The colony was established through the Bermuda Company, a group of wealthy British men. Since its establishment, Bermuda has had a very strong maritime culture and many of Bermuda's past industries have been tied to this heritage. Examples of these industries include harvesting ambergris, whaling, ship building, and privateering. Today there are still industries that reflect

the importance of the ocean and specific family and child rearing practices reflect the prominence of maritime life. Many children are taught to swim at a young age. Some families' summer vacations consist of camping on the beach for weeks and sometimes months.

The early population of the island was made up of relatively wealthy English men and women, slaves of African, American Indian, and Caribbean descent, and young, poor Irish and Scottish men and women who came to Bermuda as indentured servants. Later, Bermuda's population also came to include a number Azorean Portuguese who were recruited to come to Bermuda and work as field labourers due to the shortage of Bermudian workers who had turned to working in the new, booming and more lucrative tourist industry (Zuill, 1999).

The diversity of Bermuda's current population has resulted in a very unique culture and a variety of traditions. The prototypical example of the blending of Bermuda's cultures is the Gombey. Gombey are traditional dancers that have their roots in West African, Caribbean and Native American practices. The practice of Gombey dancing began during slavery, and was often debased by the Caucasian population in Bermuda (Packwood, 1975).

In general, the different racial groups have lived together in relative peace. Bermuda does have a history of segregationist practices dating back to the days of slavery (Packwood, 1975). For example, after slavery, a number of ex-slaves were given land in a part of Bermuda called Tucker's Town. This land was later conned out of the hands of these people by Caucasian Bermudians. Separation along racial lines continued into the later part of the 20th century. The fight for equality for all racial groups were fought through protests and letters to the British parliament and came to a head with the race riots of the 1970's (Zuill, 1999). In 2002, a film entitled *When Voices Rise...* (Williams, 2002) detailed the actions of a group that was pivotal in ending segregationist practices in Bermuda. While this movie was spectacular, perhaps the most

compelling aspect of this movie was that the central group responsible for organizing the boycotts was unknown until the airing of this film at the 2002 Bermuda International Film Festival.

Today the island is in many ways still struggling to deal with the past oppressive policies; however, many children in my generation and younger do not have the memory of being separated from people based on the basis of skin colour as do older generations. While a complete exposition on the history of racial segregation is beyond the scope of this paper, I will share a personal example in order to present a clearer picture. When my grandmother was a child, she attended a small schoolhouse in her neighbourhood until the age of seven or eight. At that time, there was limited education available for people of colour. Her family was not very wealthy; however, her grandfather owned a fair amount of land. He did not like that his grandchildren were not able to attend school and so he decided to donate some of his land so that a school might be built for young children of colour. The school, Harrington Sound Primary School, still exists to this day. Unfortunately my grandmother was never able to attend, but all of her children and many of their children did.

Bermuda's present culture has been largely shaped by these experiences of oppression and privilege; however a full analysis of these forces is beyond the scope of this paper. It is important for the reader to understand some of the important social changes that have a direct impact on Bermudian children's development; however there is a scarcity of empirical research on the impact of these political and social changes.

In recent years, Bermuda has gone through a number of social and political changes. One of the largest changes has been in the educational system. In the mid to late 90's, the government of the time decided to change the school system from a British-modeled system to a North

American modeled system. This was done in spite of much protest from many in Bermudian society.

Previously, students attended primary school for seven years from the age of five to 12. At the end of primary school (P7) students took a test called the Eleven Plus exam. Those who did well on the test went to the higher status schools on the island. One of these higher status schools was the Berkley Institute, a historically black institution. Those who did not do as well on this test went to schools that placed more emphasis on trades. Students attended high school for five years, graduating from school between the ages of 16 or 17 years old. In the current educational system, students attend primary school for six years. They then move onto middle school, which they are assigned to attend based on proximity rather than academics. Students attend middle school for three years before moving onto one of the two public high schools for three years, graduating between at approximately 17 or 18 years old (Outerbridge, 1999). Present day high school students are among the first to have experienced their complete education in the current system. In addition, there are a number of private high schools which are modelled after different education systems, meaning that there is a difference in the curriculum and the type of education they are receiving.

Other social and political changes that have occurred recently in Bermuda have influenced the total climate of the island. One of these that has affected many is the change in governments. For the entire time that Bermuda has been a democratic nation, one party has been the leader of the nation. In 1998 this changed, and for the first time a different party became the leaders of Bermuda. This government has had some positive and negative effects on Bermudian society, as many governments do. They have recently implemented a programme known as

“Mirrors” to address some of the destructive behaviours that we are seeing in a lot of Bermuda’s youth (O’Kelly-Lynch, 2007).

While these changes have had a large impact on children both directly and indirectly, there still remain some traditional values which have been retained in regard to how children are reared. In Bermuda, children are generally raised in close proximity to members of their extended family. The philosophy of the community is that it takes a village to raise a child. Children are valued, but they are also taught to have respect for others, especially adults. Bermudian society places a very high value on manners. When one walks into a room they are supposed to say “Good Morning”, “Good Afternoon”, or “Good Evening”, depending on the time of day.

Children are also taught that they are an important part of Bermuda as a nation. As the two main forms of the island’s income are International Business and Tourism, children are taught to be ambassadors for their country. They are taught about the importance of maintaining the cleanliness and beauty of the island as well as a cautious friendliness when encountering visitors to the island.

Adults attempt to give children as many advantages as possible. One of these advantages is extensive travel. Bermuda is in a very ideal location. It takes two hours or less to travel to many of the gateway cities along the eastern seaboard of the United States. In addition, it takes approximately seven hours to travel from Bermuda to England. These assets, which make it an ideal vacation destination, also make it easy for Bermudians to travel outside of the island. Bermudians tend to travel a great deal and use the term ‘rock fever’ to describe the need to get off the island (Smith & Barritt, 2001).

There are other experiences that are important to the life of an adolescent growing up in Bermuda. One of the most unique experiences of being a young person is the importance of turning 16. In Bermuda culture, this is the age when a person is able to attain more freedom by getting a license to ride a 50cc motorcycle. It is important to know that, in Bermuda, families are only allowed one car per household (with the exception of doctor's families). So up until the time that a young person has their own bike they have to rely heavily on public transportation, walking, or their parents who would share a car. Receiving a bike is different in each family; however, the most important aspect of this time is that with receiving a bike there is a bit more freedom for the young person. However, this freedom is monitored by family and friends.

A personal example here might help to illustrate what this might look like. When I was a teenager and had my bike, a lady told my mom that she had seen me riding rather fast in the City of Hamilton. It was not in fact me that she had seen, but someone who had a similar bike; however, when my mother heard that I had been 'speeding' she had a talk with me about the responsibility that comes with owning a bike. At the time I was angry by this, but now as I look back I can see that this lady's actions reflect the ethic of communal care for young people even when they are older and begin to actively define who they are within the community.

There are five important characteristics of Bermudian society that can affect the self-definition of young people. These factors are the importance of extended family, the pervasiveness of family traditions, the emphasis on respect for elders, the continuity of close relationships, and the community sense of social responsibility. In Bermuda, life is organized around the extended family. Some people live in multi-generational family homes. In addition, families spend a lot of time with members of their extended family. Family support is important in raising families and makes for the easy transmission of family traditions. In addition, the time

spent with members of the extended family allows for educating young people in the importance of values, especially respect for elders. The smallness of the island allows for a relative continuity of relationships when compared to other larger countries such as Canada and the United States, where movement within the country can lead to great difficulty in continuity of relationships.

It is important for us to consider these social and political changes in Bermudian community as it is likely to have an impact on the identity development of adolescents. As these young women continue to grow and understand the world and their place in it, they are impacted by all of these changes as well as the hallmarks of Bermudian life. These elements are especially important in a small society such as Bermuda where there are multiple opportunities for young women to work out positions in response to these changes as they take a prominent position in the community and in the lives of participants. In response to these factors, adolescents come to see their position in society in response to these forces and their impact on individuals.

Research Focus

As stated above, the purpose of this project is to explore the identity processes that are important for female adolescents living in Bermuda. The landscape of Bermuda is changing culturally, physically, and emotionally. There have been many negative developments that have been associated with young people in Bermuda. With the increase of violence in Bermuda young people, both male and female, they are being cast in a very negative light. With all the political and social changes that are taking place in the lives of these young women, we will be exploring what is important to these ladies in terms of their identity, what positive characteristics they draw upon to create an identity, and how they view life in Bermuda.

Previous research has examined the development of identity in young women (e.g. Ollech & McCarthy, 1997; Shorter-Gooden & Washington, 1996). All of this research has taken place outside of Bermuda, and while it does shed light on some of the developmental processes that might be evident in the lives of Bermudian women, it does not help clarify the extent to which findings would be applicable to Bermudian women. Differences in the social structure and socializing institutions such as families and schools (Coté, 1996) sometimes have important impact on the development of youth. Therefore it is important to also examine the way that the young women in Bermuda construct their identities within the wider context of Bermudian society and in the more intimate settings of family, friends, and schools.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Design of the Study

This study was conducted using the perspective of Personal Construct Theory (PCT). George Kelly, the originator of this theory, proposed that individuals construe events as they occur with particular attention to its antecedents and its consequences (Kelly, 2003). Within this constructivist framework, it has been proposed that the semi-structured interview is a viable method of eliciting core constructs through a method called laddering (see Butler, 2006). Laddering allows the interviewer to get at progressively more fundamental constructs by asking the participants what is the significance of their answers. One description of laddering shows how interviewers construct the interview so that one can progressively get to the more meaningful and fundamental constructs by asking progressively more sensitive questions (Price, 2002).

Another important example of narrative interview strategies developed within the PCT framework is self-characterization. Kelly used this as a written form of assessment, asking interviewees to write a character sketch of themselves as it would be written by a friend that knew one intimately (Androutsopoulou, 2001). This has been proposed as a method of assessing someone in a therapeutic setting, but also as a form of enquiry within research. It was used in this study as a way of assessing the personal construction of identity. This tool is useful in the present study as it was used by Kelly to assess core constructs, which are facets of identity. The semi-structured interview protocol that was used in this research project made use of both laddered questions and the self-characterization.

Participants

The participants in this study were nine females between the ages of 14 and 17 years old, inclusive. This age range is representative of the age group of young persons in high school. All participants were currently enrolled in a high school in Bermuda in order to examine the construing of identity in relation to specific social contexts (Butler, 2006). It was therefore important to trace ways these young women formulate their identity within Bermudian society as emerging with peers and educational curricula. Each participant has spent the entirety of their schooling in Bermuda, although one of the participants had been part of a school exchange programme. Participants were largely recruited through word of mouth, largely through personal contact with adults who had daughters in the target range. An effort was made to recruit participants from different ethnic groups and from different high schools. Eight of the participants were Black and one was Caucasian. The participants attended five of the eight high schools on the island. In addition to the nine participants, four other young women were interested in participating in the study but for various reasons were not able to take part during the interview period.

Data Collection

After participants agreed to be a participant in the study, they were invited to a central location for a one hour interview with the author. The interview was conducted using a semi-structured protocol that the author created in collaboration with her thesis supervisor (see Appendix A). The interview protocol made use of laddered questions (e.g., Price, 2002). This is the process of starting with less invasive questions, mostly concerning actions, and moving to questions that engage the participant at a deeper level by helping to develop the personal narrative. This type of interview has been promoted for enriching data, encompassing

unanticipated data/perspectives, and allowing participants to feel comfortable enough to ask the researcher questions.

Analysis Process

The interview was both audio and video recorded. Once the data were collected, it was transcribed verbatim by the interviewer; first using the audio recording and then rechecking against the video recording, making special note of significant non-verbal responses. All identifying information was removed from the transcripts.

The data were then coded by the author in multiple steps as recommended by Josselson and Lieblich (2003). After the interviews were transcribed, the coder read through the transcripts twice, identifying themes related to core constructs. The data were broken down into meaning units of analysis and similar units were combined and labelled under a title that encapsulated the core construct. The themes from the transcripts were used to create a combined ‘story’ describing female adolescent identity development in Bermuda. Procedurally, analysis followed a systematic sequence of strategies.

- Transcription of interviews
- Protocol preparation and identification of meaning units;
- Multiple readings; identifying episodes and examples; identifying core constructs;
- “write her story” for participants → synthesize a common story & identify distinctive themes or outlooks reflected in participant perspectives on life in Bermuda

Rigour, Validity, and Ethical Responsibility

Interviews were conducted after approval was granted from the Research Ethic Board of Trinity Western University. Before conducting the interviews, the interviewer talked with parents and their daughters about the research process and the informed consent document using

culturally appropriate adaptations. (See Appendix B for informed consent documents.) This was conducted in order to satisfy the requirements of the research ethics board and the relative trust that the participants had of the researcher's intentions.

A number of steps were taken to ensure trustworthiness, rigour and validity in this study. After the interviews were coded according to the emerging themes, the results were checked with the participants (member checking). After the coding process and theme descriptions yielded complete drafts, the participants were contacted by phone and the interviewer shared the results with them. Participants were asked to comment on the results. Of the nine participants that took part, I was able to contact all of them; seven of the participants gave additional feedback to the researcher. Additionally, the principal researcher contacted a youth worker in Bermuda to ensure that the results reflect some of the issues that young people in Bermuda commonly deal with. In the conversation with the validity checker, we expressed a 'common knowledge' awareness of the results. That is, the results reflect something that is known about the lives of young women but is not actively discussed.

Researcher's Self Description

As the researcher, I recognize that this topic is one that is very near and dear to my heart. During the time that I was growing up in Bermuda, I often became frustrated because I found that the young people were not listened to and were given very little credit for the wisdom and knowledge that they had. This project is designed to correct that bias in two ways. First, I would like to find young people who, despite facing many challenges, are managing to create a positive identity. While I recognize that there are young people in Bermuda who are engaged in negative activities, I would like to demonstrate that there are positive young people in Bermuda who are trying to make a difference now and are hopeful about making a contribution

in the future. I want to demonstrate that these young people are intelligent and have voices that need to be listened to. Secondly, I want to demonstrate to the young people that there are older people who are ready and willing to listen to what they have to say. There are people who are hoping that they will continue to offer Bermuda their best.

Bermuda at the Time of the Study

It is helpful to note the social climate of the island at the time that the interviews took place. The interviews were all conducted between December 22, 2007 and December 31, 2007. The interviews took place in the weeks following a political election. Elections are often a time of tension, bringing to the forefront some of the issues that are important and controversial in the community. This election was no exception, and it is likely that the important issues in this election were present in the minds of these participants because of its prominence in the local media. This is, more than likely, one of the largest factors on the results of the study.

Participant Descriptions

At the time that the interviewer contacted the participants regarding their impressions of the results, they were offered an opportunity to create a name for themselves that would be used in the reporting of the results. Four of the participants who were contacted made up names for themselves. Three of the participants asked the researcher to come up with a name. Names for the remaining two participants were chosen by the researcher.

As a group, these young women were quite intelligent and well spoken. They had also travelled extensively outside of Bermuda to such places as Europe, South America, the Caribbean, and North America. Some of these trips were taken with parents, others with schools, and others were taken as a result of the activities that these young women took part in. The

following descriptions reflect their own observations of themselves as they answered specific questions that were part of the interview process.

Justine

Justine was 14 years old at the time of the interview. She enjoys performing arts, particularly singing and drama. Her aspiration is to become a lawyer. She describes herself as analytical, private, and loud. She is a respectful person, which she believes is a reflection of the way she was raised. She also describes herself as a person who likes things done in an orderly manner, a trait she suspect has been passed on from her mother. One of the people that Justine most admires is her grandfather, whom she describes as reliable and responsible. Although he can be loud and outspoken, he is kind and looks out for other people. She feels that she shares a lot of these characteristics.

Rochelle

Rochelle was 14 years old at the time of the interview. She enjoys sports, her favourite being football (soccer). She enjoys lots of different types of music but her favourites are R & B and Hip Hop. She describes herself as quiet, funny, and well-organized. She works hard at school and likes to make sure that she does things correctly and is well-organized. One person that she admires is her cousin, who has a lot of similar characteristics and also does well in school. The major difference between her and her cousin is that her cousin is more outspoken which can sometimes get her into trouble.

Danielle

Danielle was 15 years old at the time of the interview. She is involved with a number of sports and also has a part-time job. She would like to either be a chef or a teacher when she gets older. Danielle describes herself as talkative, funny, compassionate, and a good listener. A person that Danielle admires is her Nana whom she describes as giving, trustworthy, wise, and a good cook.

Kayla

Kayla was 17 years old and a senior in High School at the time of the interview. She was involved in sports and enjoys volunteering; however at the time of the interview she had cut back on some of her activities to focus on academics. She identifies herself as a Christian. Although others might say that she does not stand up for herself enough, she describes herself as caring, a good listener, and a social butterfly. She always strives for excellence in everything she does. This is something that she has learned from her mother whom she greatly respects.

Crystal

Crystal was 14 years old at the time of the interview. She is involved in sports and activities with her church. She describes herself as considerate, inviting, funny, lovable, and forgiving. At one time, she wanted to be a student counsellor. At the time of the interview, she has not settled on a career; however, she would like to do something within the service industry so that she can work with people. The people that she most admires are her parents whom she describes as loving, welcoming, unselfish, and inspirational. She also tries her best to exemplify these qualities.

Tia

Tia is 15 years old. She enjoys playing netball. She describes herself as an outgoing, open-minded person who tends to be loud and opinionated. Although she also says that she can be grumpy (particularly early in the morning) she is still well liked by many people as she has many friends and is still considered a favourite amongst both friends and family. She spends a lot of time doing things with friends and says that she does not keep still and likes to dress up. She has a lot in common with her Pa whom she looks up to. She describes him as a hard working, welcoming, fair, friendly man.

Sarah

Sarah is 17 years old. She enjoys studying languages and looks forward to pursuing this at University. She enjoys music as she plays instruments and sings. She describes herself as a friendly, smiley person. She has travelled a lot and she makes lifelong friends easily. She is a problem-solver and tends to be a people pleaser. She likes to be kept busy. Even when she is on vacation from school she is always 'on the move'. She tends to be a perfectionist and occasionally her self-confidence wavers. The person that she most admires is her mother, whom she describes as a charismatic, intelligent, talented, and driven woman; who has a very calming presence.

Jasmine

Jasmine is involved in dance and she also enjoys volunteering. She aspires to be a doctor and is planning to attend university in the fall. Jasmine describes herself as outgoing, talkative and friendly. She has a lot of spirit which comes through when she encourages those around her.

Jasmine considers herself to be pretty sensitive, especially to those who cannot speak for themselves. There are three possible sources of this sensitivity: Her experience of being a shy child and not feeling able to speak out for herself, the fact that she realizes how fortunate she is, or as a trait passed down from her mother and grandmother. Jasmine tries to keep a generally positive attitude but she sometimes doubts herself and downplays her own achievements even though she can be competitive. She considers herself to be funny and easy to get along with. One person that she admires is her father, whom she describes as assertive, knowledgeable, and a good leader. He is a very well organized person who always puts his best foot forward and is very thorough.

Stacey

Stacey is 16 years old. At the time of the interview, she was looking to get involved with more volunteering within the community. She describes herself as a person who laughs easily and likes to make others laugh. She is friendly, generous, and easily approachable. One of the people that she admires is her best friend Carly. Although they go to the same school, they lead very different lives and have different views on many issues; however they both work at ensuring that they can express their opinions freely without it getting out of hand.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The results presented here reflect the themes that became evident in the interviews of the participants. The themes are organized according to the organization of the narrative (see Appendix C). Each theme is presented here in terms of participants' descriptions.

Belonging

This theme reflects participants' description of Bermuda as 'home'; a place where they feel comfortable, safe, and protected. Participants talked about having lots of family and friends around them that helped to contribute to feelings of security and safety. Bermuda is presented as a small community in which young women can feel secure.

I mean, I have relatives everywhere. So, you know, I can lean on them I suppose. I have a lot of friends. I feel I guess comfortable, safe. Kayla

When you're in a time of struggle it's more than just your family you can turn to.

Tia

I feel safer here like cuz you hear stories like I don't know from personal experience but you hear stories about women getting attacked and stuff. And it's here in Bermuda but it's on a smaller scale, just, I just don't think that she would need to be as protective of herself. She needs to keep her guard up but don't be extremely overprotective. Crystal

Loyalty Paradoxes

Cultural loyalty, as described by Fowers (2001), is an attachment that one feels to their country, culture, and community. This feeling comes through in the way that persons discuss and feel towards their community. Cultural loyalty showed up in the voices of the participants as they

discussed their views on Bermuda. In their discussion, cultural loyalty was demonstrated as somewhat of a paradox in which there is both a push that makes Bermuda an enjoyable and lovely place to live, and a pull force which makes it a less desirable community.

Three paradoxes became evident in participants' discussions. In general, participants talked about aspects of Bermuda's physical and emotional climate that made it a pleasant place to live. However, these positive aspects of Bermuda's physical cultural and emotional climate were undercut by things that pointed to participants disinterest in Bermuda.

Ah...the weather I guess. Um. You could always go outside...play football or, just hang out. It's not much for people my age to do. Rochelle

It seems like everything's more peaceful. I really like that about it. Um. I like that we know most people like. I like...it's like nothing really big. I like that we're really small. It's more community. I like that...It's starting to change a little bit. Like the buildings are getting huge and they just don't look nice. That's only in town, everything else is like really nice. I like that. Crystal

Another widely-held paradox pertains to the balance of living in a small community. Bermuda's small community helps to contribute to participants' feelings of belonging as described above. At the same time, the small community also means that participants feel watched. Many expressed this feeling that everything knows lots of things about you.

I do like that everybody. Well you know everybody. You know what I mean? Like if you go down to the store you can be like Hi Mrs. P... Smith. Like you know everybody... Ummm. [I don't like] the fact that everybody knows your business.

Like everybody knows stuff about you that you didn't even know about you.

So...that's kind of annoying. Justine

If you get in trouble news travels fast... Like if you tell somebody something that you don't want somebody else to know, they're going to go tell somebody else, and eventually it'll end up to that person, that you didn't want to know. Danielle

Another place where there appeared to be a tension in loyalty is in participants' description of prescribed social behaviours in Bermuda. There was a commonly held belief that it is good to be social but there has to be a limit in what young people are willing to share with others so that there is a need for some privacy.

...Just...don't...put yourself out there too much. Kinda stay within your own bounds.

Don't tell everyone your business because it will be out. Cuz if you...you know [Bermuda is] already a small place. So if you tell one person, they tell that person and everybody knows ... [Do] not like be unsociable, just kinda reserved. Stacey

I try not to engage in gossip... So I stay...I'm to myself...friendly but to myself.
Kayla

Well like I said before, when somebody says something about you which is not true, so a lot of times, because everybody *knows* about everybody's business. Sometimes I try to, whether it be my...Sometimes I don't even tell my closest friends. I try to just keep it to myself because it gets out and then everybody knows false stuff about you which I don't like. So to avoid that I think I just keep my stuff to myself. Justine

Participants talked about what they saw were both the problems that they see arising in Bermudian politics at the present time and the things that they thought needed to be improved upon in the future. The major topic areas in this discussion were racism, housing, employment, and violence.

In discussing racism, participants talked about how racism was evident in both public (such as political parties) and private spheres (such as school and friendships).

I mean We might think now we've come a long way but even...even here recently, when polls and you know the parties or whatever. Most people, you ask them who are you voting for. They'll say [name of political party]. Why? 'Cause their [race]. Yeah ok. Well that's a good reason. You know what I mean? That's a big problem here. It. It's not as segregated at my school. It's black and it's white. The Portuguese children think they're black. So it's a mixture. [At other schools] it's very segregated and you know it's either black or white...or white tryna act black. Or that's what black people think. So that's probably another thing that bugs me.
Kayla

Um...I know my cousin, she came here and she was like "Oh wow Jasmine'. She's from America, and she was just like 'It seems like you guys seem like your really racist to your all...like you all are racist.'" I'm like "No we're not." But if I do think about it sometimes...it...I do see some of the ways I think... I don't...she asked me would you ever go out with a white boy. And I was like "NO!" This was a couple years ago though. I'm more open-minded now. Jasmine

The fact that umm...well going off into politics...the fact that it's very segregated. So like ummm...I think...I don't think that it should be like umm white people vote for the UBP and black people vote for the PLP. I think we should all be able to agree. So I don't like the political aspect in Bermuda. Stacey

Another concern was the limited affordable housing that is available on the island.

Participants expressed both frustration with the current situation and offered possible solutions.

But...for like...I don't know...for like other people, even the elderly people, or people that don't have homes. Like they say they're going to do stuff but nothing really happens. Justine

They should be...I don't know what they could actually do for them but more housing for elderly...more housing in general for people. I don't know if the government can do a lot of cheap housing...and maybe....you know um...look at people's wages. Maybe if it's under a certain amount they can allo...people can be allowed to stay at these places or something. I don't know what they could do but I think obviously housing is really limited in Bermuda...and it's so expensive...so it's like if you don't have a certain...job or a certain amount of money it's kind of...your left in the dust kind of. Jasmine

An additional concern is employment. Participants voiced a number of differing ideas on what the government had done thus far and could or should be doing.

Like you have all those people sitting on the side of the streets. And they continuously say oh...well we need to find jobs for these people or some like something and it's not done. And of course it's not there problem if someone 18 which is an adult wants to spend their time sitting on a wall. Justine They keep on saying that all the Bermudians, black Bermudian males don't go out and get jobs. Yeah! I do believe that that is something that needs to be changed. I don't know how but I would hope that that would change. Kayla

Another political concern that was raised by participants was the increase in violence, which is both a male and female problem. They also indicated that there needed to be more done to enforce the laws as they stand now.

I really don't like the gang violence. I mean a couple of years ago it started. It was just the males in Bermuda. You know gang violence. Maybe the Western versus town area. Now it's not even just the guys it's girls. I mean if you want to go out with your friends you have to make sure that you know they're either got your back or you know you're not going to go somewhere where someone's gonna fight you. Kayla

And the violence and stuff. Like, like you shouldn't have like illegal weapons and different things. And people have them and either people know, people that can do something about it know but they choose not to do anything about it. And then when they find out that these people have used it then..they only get in trouble for like two seconds and then it's over. Like... I don't know. And I think that people, they should be a lot stricter with, violence, and gangs, and when people threaten people. Cuz

...it...they think it's nothing but then their getting a call because someone died because...and they don't know why. You know what I mean? And they could have prevented it a long time ago. But they just watch it grow and grow and...and they can't do anything about it once it's finished right! Justine

The last political concern that participants mentioned was the issue of Bermuda becoming an independent nation rather than a territory of Great Britain. Participants mentioned concern over what might be the repercussions if the country did gain its independence.

One thing I wouldn't do is go independent. I hear that coming up a lot now. I wouldn't do that because even if I don't think that we would be able to depend on ourselves as much. We don't really rely on Britain but I think it's a good thing to have and a lot of the international businesses would say that they're going to leave us if we go independent, and that's a big thing for us because it's our main income so I wouldn't do that. And I hear that being talked about a lot . So that's the only thing that I would say I really wouldn't do. Crystal

I know independence is going to happen eventually but again right now I think that the disadvantages outweigh the advantages. Because I mean having the UK passport is just amazing because it means we can work anywhere in Europe. So...that's basically the main thing. The UK passport. If we can get independence and I can keep my passport then fine. Sarah.

Traditional Values

Participants mentioned the importance of some traditions and holidays that were part of Bermuda culture. They also discussed some expectations of Bermudians.

It's a lot of family stuff. Like the traditions and different holidays that we celebrate together. We have a lot of parades. Christmas is the best holiday. And the other parades, mostly we just go to them. Usually we don't watch the stuff we just walk around and talk to your friend. Rochelle

(Explaining about a friend who came to visit from far away) **Oh wow. I think she was here to see the gombey and stuff. I think that's really a big part. Um. She really liked how everybody was friendly like I explained to her that most people know everyone here and... And um...that's pretty much it. Crystal**

We hug. I...when...I was away I was in this school with people from all over the world, it was amazing. But I...They just don't like to hug. I mean I hug when I first meet people, and I don't know if that's just me but I think it's a Bermudian thing. We're a very huggy people. And...uh I don't know. The British are just like oh my god this person's touching me. And then, it's we...I think there's a bigger separation between people in other cultures where Bermudians are very welcoming and I definitely noticed that (Sarah).

Like we're very accepting. We're just a lovable community (Stacey).

Culture in Transition

Participants discussed a shift in some of the values and behaviours of young people. The shift in the culture is also seen in other areas of the community, for example in the express

teaching of Bermuda history. Participants expressed both anger and frustration at the change in values by peers and also confusion in regard to where the change came from.

Yes! Youth of today, not respectful...I mean respectful. You go...even going on a bus and standing up for an elder, an elderly person. I find that something that Bermudians, young Bermudians, youth do not do. They're so disrespectful. If they're in town they'll be cursing and you know, just not behaving. Not behaving how a Bermudian should be behaving. Bermudians are supposed to be kind people.

Kayla

Um. I don't know though. I feel...and I don't know if it's just me I feel like Bermuda's a whole...or maybe I just don't know it. I feel like I don't really know who we really really are...we don't really have,...I don't know if it's lost in my generation, culture and stuff. I even know um... I didn't know a lot of like history about Bermuda until I kinda forced myself to learn it. I wasn't really taught it at school or anything. So I don't know, I feel like it's been lost, the culture. I feel like I *need* to know a bit more about it... I just, I just I don't feel we have a real sense of self as Bermudians. Or just maybe me maybe my generation because that's all I can speak for. But I feel like yeah...we don't really know who we are (Jasmine).

Social Interaction

Many participants mentioned that there was not a lot available for young people to do on the island, which is demonstrated by Kayla's response below. Many mentioned that they spent a lot of time with friends in 'town' as described by Rochelle.

It's really *nothing* here for us to do. I mean we don't even have arcades, just somewhere for us to go and have fun. What? We have the beach and that you can only do on...in the day time in Summer. So it can get quite boring. Kayla

Um. It's not enough stuff for people my age to do, other than like parties and stuff and town. It's not much for us to do... . Usually everybody goes to like KFC or somewhere to get food and just sit down and eat. Or we walk around and go to the shops. That's all. Rochelle

For other participants, belonging to organized activities kept them quite busy and also helped them in other areas.

Jasmine discusses volunteering: **But I think...umm when I first started I was like really shy. I used to be really shy anyway. So I wasn't...I kinda just sat in the background and stuff. Like I had to be more assertive to be the leader and stuff.**

Aspirations

For this group, goal setting and having a direction for your life was discussed as important. Some already knew the career route in which they wanted to go and were participating in activities that helped them to achieve those aspirations. For example, two of the participants who wish to be in the medical field volunteer regularly at the hospital. Others participated in activities for their enjoyment, although they were not directly related to their career aspirations.

If you don't know... your morals and you don't know...where you're go...where you want to go. You know. If you're just stuck in being 'Oh ok, well what am I going to do next?' So like, if you don't have a goal for yourself, then it's easy to get

yourself caught up in the moment, and just live for...NOW (*emphasis*). You know what I mean. And in some cases that could be a good thing... some cases that could be a bad thing. But if you're just gonna live for right now then that goes to show that... you don't know where you want to be in 10 years. Or you don't know if you want to go to colleges. That's my opinion. Justine

High Expectations for Bermudian women

The participants in this study communicated the difficulties that were associated with being a young woman, especially in terms of the high expectations of them as well as difficult social interactions. This was best summed up by Tia, who describes being a woman in Bermuda as lots of emotional work. In particular, participants discussed competitiveness with other girls, the importance of a young woman 'carrying herself' well, and the difficulty in choosing friendships.

Competitiveness:

Girls... in Bermuda... It's like their all tryna be the best. And tryna be the prettiest or the most, you know. It's...Girls are always trying to be on top of another girl. Even if that's pulling down one of their friends. You know...saying things about one another to make themselves look or feel better. I don't know. It's just the way it is... I mean and it wasn't like that when I was probably like thirteen. And I'm 17 now. And it's getting worse I mean. Then girls have problems with... you know... her boyfriend likes you, you know. Simple little things like that. At my age. I don't know about anybody under my age or above me. These are the problems now. Boys and stuff like that. Just trivial things that would get girls not to like each other. Kayla

Carrying one's self:

I think that it's more pressure on women because of all this stuff like don't get pregnant, don't do this, don't do that where boys kinda just do what they want... maybe boys too but personally it's hard for girls to...to maintain a good status within the community (Stacey)

Respect yourself and...don't let people come over you and don't let people mislead you...It basically comes from where you came from and everything, and how you were brought up. But you can change it though. It's not like a girl has to repeat what's...been passed down...from generation. Because that's not the case, so I just think respect yourself and don't let anybody take advantage of you. Justine

Friendships:

Well being a woman in Bermuda, you really have to watch who you hang around, because they can, they can get you into plenty trouble... some people act different when they're just meeting somebody new. And then once you get to know 'em they switch Danielle.

Um. I mean I...yeah. I think. Ok, if you're talking about fitting in, ok, that's a big issue today in Bermuda. Every young girl wants to *fit in!* You know, nobody really wants to be an individual. Everybody just wants to do what everybody else is doing. And girls get caught up. I think they don't even, it's hard for me to, because it's so small. Everybody thinks they have to know everybody. They have to go out and be

friends with everybody. So that includes going out drinking, smoking, having sex. You know? It's just something that Bermudians my age *females*, that's what we struggle with the most. So a foreigner coming to Bermuda I think they would need to be aware of that. Stand alone, you know, don't get caught up. (Kayla)

Summary

At the heart of their stories, these young women showed clear dedication to Bermuda as a community and a nation. In other settings, the high expectations communicated to them might have seemed excessive – but in Bermuda, the support and nurturing toward a lived ethic of care has continued to sustain the heart of vibrant community life. The threats perceived to arise in recent years are expressed with regret, but there is still a confidence in being able to face those challenges without fail. This distinctive ecology for family life and personal identity is summarized in the shared narrative and themes descriptions presented in Appendix C.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This exploratory investigation has examined personal identity in relation to a changing Bermudian community. A narrative strategy was adopted to reveal the lives of young women making their way through high school and beyond. The research questions that launched this study were: (1) what aspects of identity are most important to young women in Bermuda? (2) how do they see themselves, especially as they look toward the future? (3) how do these characteristics help them prepare and succeed in looking toward the future? (4) what kinds of strengths do these girls draw on and see in themselves?

Conceptual Synthesis for Identity Development in Bermuda

In understanding the results, many theories can help us to conceptualize the process of identity formation and help us to answer the research questions. If we begin at the societal level with examining how young women view the larger society, it seems that the construct of cultural loyalty helps us to give voice to these participants.

Fowers' (2001) conceptualization of cultural loyalty asserts that people develop a partiality and attachment to the people and places surrounding them as they grew up. The participants in this study demonstrated many examples of loyalty to Bermuda. These showed up especially in the theme of *Belonging*. However, cultural loyalty is complicated by other factors.

Specifically participants, while demonstrating loyalty to Bermudian culture, also demonstrate tensions in the experiencing of loyalty, as evidenced by the *loyalty paradoxes*. We can see then that the development of cultural loyalty is not an easy acceptance of culture but rather, in adolescence, loyalty emerges from a questioning of culture and the wider world.

The particular expressions of these young women are part of their own identity development as they also demonstrate that they have found particular strategies in order to deal with the parts of Bermuda culture that are difficult. In particular, two of the *loyalty paradoxes* demonstrate what Spencer and colleagues would call a reactive coping mechanism. Living in a close-knit community for these young women means that they feel both supported and watched. In order to deal with both, the girls keep some things to themselves.

The decision of these young women to keep some information about their personal lives to themselves can be explained with an analogy to the distinctive structure of the Bermuda house. In Bermuda, two of the most important structures in a home's construction are the roof and the tank. As Bermuda has no natural water sources (i.e., rivers, lakes or streams), Bermudian houses are specifically constructed to catch the rain water and use it as a natural water source. The water lands on roofs and falls through pipes to the water tank that is beneath the house. As the water is so precious, people are generally kept away from the tank beneath the house. In a similar fashion, these young women have constructed an 'emotional tank,' a place to store precious aspects of life that they wish to keep away from other people.

The development of cultural loyalty in these participants is intertwined with the development of ethnic identity development. While many authors distinguish between the development of national, ethnic, and cultural identity, these facets of identity are more intimately linked in a country like Bermuda. For these young women, the development of a definition of what it means to be Bermudian reflects a constantly changing script that is written and rewritten as they continually engage in the interaction with the wider environment (Yi & Shorter-Gooden, 1999).

Part of this script writing seems to be the interaction of current *political concerns* with the changing culture and the maintenance of *traditional values*. When participants discuss some of their *political concerns* there is also a tension as the *political concerns* do not match the *traditional values*. For example, as a country, Bermuda would be likely described as a friendly and welcoming community; however, the rise in violence and housing concerns demonstrates a violation of these values. When these young women express confusion in the direction that the country is taking, it might represent an appraisal of the inconsistency in values and behaviours of the wider community.

Another part of this script writing is present when participants come into contact with other communities through travel (both coming into contact with visitors to the island and through travel away from the island) and media. These participants demonstrate, when talking about their free time, a void felt in the lack of things for young people to do. In their voices, Bermuda is a place that is 'boring'. This gives an understanding of their evaluation of the setting in which these young women are creating their own scripts.

An additional factor in the development of script writing is the *roles of women* in Bermudian society. While other studies have found that young women tend to associate being a woman with strength (Shorter-Gooden & Washington, 1996), these participants associate being a woman in Bermuda with work. Perhaps this is a difference only in emphasis, such that participants in previous studies recognize the resilience of those who overcome obstacles, while participants in this study realize the effort that it takes to overcome such obstacles.

The difference between the 'work' of a woman versus the 'strength' of a woman might reflect the importance and the dual roles of women in Bermudian society. In the year 2000, 17,871 women were part of Bermuda's work force (Department of Statistics, 2007). This is

equivalent to 55% of all females living on the Island (Department of Statistics, 2007). In addition, many of these women were involved with professional and technical, and administrative and managerial occupations. In addition, 20% of female headed households in Bermuda were single-parent homes, demonstrating that women contribute significantly to both the workforce and the home.

Perhaps what is being communicated to these young women is an idea that they can and should contribute to society through employment; however, this expectation can be compromised by making bad decisions. As Kayla reflects that she has a number of friends who **“basically had life handed to them and they could have made something out of the life. But now they’re pregnant and can’t do this and can’t do this.”** It appears that *the high expectations of women* also become a part of the script writing process and an additional layer in the construction of the ‘emotional tank’ as girls seek to understand their relationship to the expectations placed on them by the wider society. The combination of burden and opportunity that emerges in the lives of these young women reflects an androgynous backdrop to the high expectations for young women. The facet of burden is more explicit and clear to these young women, while the opportunities of androgyny are still implicitly present. This might be related to the developmental age of these young women, such that the egocentric experience of burden may seem salient at these times, while the inspiration and strength of the ethic of care takes time to root deeply.

In trying to deal with all of the confusions and changes in the society, participants are both developing positive coping responses (Spencer et al., 2007) and also engaging in the development of their narrative ethnic scripts (Yi & Shorter-Gooden, 1999). Thus far, we have examined the development of identity in terms of the individual’s interpretation and meaning

making of their surroundings; however a large part of the identity development of young Bermudian also involves their interaction with different parts of Bermudian society. In particular, three institutions seem to be primary in working out these identity issues.

The first institution is family. Participants expressed the importance of advice that was given to them by parents, especially female relatives. For example, in discussing overcoming challenges, Crystal discussed how her parents had been instrumental in teaching her how to forgive other people:

They [parents] told me like you really aren't helping yourself if you're mad at someone. You have to learn to build a bridge and get over it.

The interactions that participants have with members of their families help them to navigate their way through life and become significant in their development. This is demonstrated in the discussions participants had about people who they admire. Of the nine participants, three mentioned one or both of their parents. Of the remaining six, five of them mentioned other family members. This reflects the centrality of the family in Bermuda.

In addition, friends are also an important part of the individual's interactions. Stacey mentioned that though her friends and she have been raised with different political views they still are able to discuss their views without letting it get out of hand. As participants are trying to figure out where they fit in the wider society they take the opportunity to discuss their positions with their friends in order to figure out their own stance on issues.

Finally, interactions with the school community are an important part of the individual's interactions. School is the place where the young women in this study also work out parts of their identity. Part of this interaction is related to how other people see these participants based on the school that they attend. For example, Rochelle discussed how students who attend some schools

“**[think] that we think that we’re smarter than them**”. Others mentioned that at school and through school activities, issues of identity became salient. For example, Jasmine discussed how having an exchange student visit her school caused her school mates to consider the cultural markers of Bermuda.

Social activities are an important part of the way that young people also help to carve their identity in a changing society. Participants discussed the way that social activities, especially extracurricular activities helped to shape who they are. For example, Jasmine discussed the way that being involved in extracurricular activities helped her to deal with being shy and also helped her to decide her future career direction. This demonstrates that there are purposeful and happenstance situations that help to sort out participants’ identity.

Thus far, three theories have assisted in our conceptualization of the data; Fowers’ notion of cultural loyalty (Fowers, 2001); Yi and Shorter-Gooden’s (1999) theory of ethnic script writing; and Spencer’s concept of coping in the PVEST (Spencer et al., 1997). These theories help us to understand the interactional nature of the themes as they emerged in this study, as well as the lives of the participants. These themes were *belonging, the paradox of loyalty, political views, traditional values, the culture in transition, social interactions, aspirations, and high expectations of women*.

If we return to the analogy of the Bermuda house we now see that there are two features that need to be considered. The first is the tank that stores personal and emotional information that is worthy of protection. It also becomes necessary to think about the roof of the house. In Bermuda, the roof acts as a filter of water into the tank. In a similar vein, these young women thoughtfully consider those things that belong in the tank from those things that do not; that is things that they can keep to themselves and those things they can share and with whom. This

active process of interacting with Bermuda society suggests that these young women possess a ‘worldly innocence’. They demonstrate a certain understanding of the nature of the world and their place in it; however, their understanding is limited by a lack of alternative scripts.

Answering the Research Questions

In the previous section, we summarized the way the data unfolds through narrative analysis of the interviews and connects with the theoretical literature. Those results also help us to answer the research questions. At the beginning of the study we sought to understand (1) what aspects of identity are most important to young women in Bermuda? (2) how do they see themselves, especially as they look toward the future? (3) how do these characteristics help them prepare and succeed in looking toward the future? (4) what kinds of strengths do these girls draw on and see in themselves?

During the process of analysis it became helpful to change the research questions to reflect the shifts in understanding reflected in the results. The narrative research approach recognizes the value of research directions being shaped by participants who share their life stories with investigators. The new versions of research questions have become: (a) how is the identity of young women in Bermuda tied in with Bermudian society and life today? (b) how do young women view Bermuda today? (c) what is the experience of being a young woman in Bermuda today? (d) how does the connection between Bermudian society and Bermudian individuals show up strongly in school, family, and friends? and (e) what activities provide opportunities for young women to live out distinctively unique features of their personal story? The first question can be understood as the central focus of the project. The later questions can be understood as focus points that help us to organize and conceptualize the project.

The results allow us to do two things. First they give us answers the questions that were the focus of this research study. In addition, they allow us to understand how Bermudian women's sense of identity can be informed and can inform literature on the subject of identity development. Let us first turn to the answers to the research questions.

Young women's views on Bermuda. The first question that was asked was 'how do young women view Bermuda today'. Through looking at the participants' responses, we see that their views on Bermuda are many and varied; especially in view of the past, present, and future. Themes of *belonging and traditional values* demonstrate a relationship that these young women have with the history of the Bermuda. These themes reflect an appreciation for their place in Bermuda, as Bermudians. It also speaks to a history of learning what it means to be a Bermudian. The traditional values that are expressed reflect the fact that these young women have internalized the values of the community and these values are a part of who they are currently.

Young women feel a sense of *belonging* that is a part of who they are, and because they are a part of the Bermudian community they can comfortably critique it. This is tied to how they view Bermuda currently. Participants expressed, quite eloquently, their views on *politics* and the changing face of Bermuda culture. In particular, there seems to be a disconnect between what they present as Bermudian values and the way the wider society operates. This suggests that the *traditional values* with which children and young people are raised need to play a more prominent role in future decision making. In this sense, the *traditional values* can inform the direction in which Bermuda turns as we continue to play a role in the global marketplace.

Participants' expressions of things that are both missing and need to be added demonstrate that they are quite cognisant of the current issues. This, of course, is tied into the way that participants view their future. Indeed, all of these themes tied into participants' views of

the future. Participants expressed the idea that perhaps gaining the lost sense of ‘Bermudianness’ is important in the future direction of the country both individually and collectively.

Being a Woman in Bermuda: The experience. The second question that we asked was ‘what was the experience of being a young woman in Bermuda’. One of the interesting findings of this study was the result that participants found that there were *high expectations of women* and more emotional work for women. Other studies have found that young women feel that there is a strength that is important in being a woman and overcoming struggles associated with this (Shorter-Gooden & Washington, 1996; Hagglund, 2006). It seems that the participants in this study are not only seeing the difficulties associated with being a woman, but are also deciding how they will deal with them and overcome them. For some of the participants, the advice received from others, especially mothers, is important in dealing with the stress of being a young woman. This lends credence to the assertion that family is an important part of the identity of young women and the idea that they are not left to navigate these decisions alone.

Connections: School, Family, and Friends. The third question that needs to be addressed is ‘how does the connection between Bermudian society and Bermudian individuals show up strongly in school, family, and friends’. The participants in this study reflected what has been conceptualized for the purpose of this study as multi-layered community. Bermuda is a community in which people serve many different roles (e.g. your cousin may also be your co-worker, pastor, best childhood friend, etc.). Living in a community with multiple layers of relationships in close proximity allows young people to sort out their thoughts on certain issues in many different domains, including school, with friends, and with family. This process is important for the emerging identity of these young women and helps them to feel supported as

best summed up by Tia who states; **“When you’re in a time of struggle it’s more than just your family you can turn to.”**

Activities and the Emergent Identity. The fourth question that we asked is ‘what activities provide opportunities for young women to live out distinctively unique features of their personal story’. In this study, many of the participants were involved in extra-curricular activities or were looking for new activities to involve themselves with. For those who were currently involved in activities, it seems that these activities facilitate interests and open up these participants to new experiences. For example, Sarah spoke about how being involved in the theatre community in Bermuda allowed her to meet directors from Broadway. In addition, activities allowed the participants to develop some of those characteristics that are important to the development of identity in young people. For example, Jasmine spoke about how being involved with certain activities helped her to become more outgoing.

Changing Theory: Fitting Bermuda

Earlier we discussed the importance of the extended family, the pervasiveness of family traditions, the emphasis of respect for elders, and the continuity of relationships as hallmarks of Bermudian community. These factors contribute to the experience of a small community and helps us to answer the final question and thus to hypothesize a theory about development of identity in Bermudian women. This final question is ‘how is the identity of women tied in with Bermudian society today’.

Earlier we asserted that the results can inform and be informed by research. Indeed, through the process of transcribing, coding and analyzing the interviews many theories came to mind that might help us to better understand the data. For example Piaget, Erikson, and Gilligan

were all theorists that could add some understanding to the data; however all of these theories do not fully capture what seems to be taking place in the lives of these young women.

The theory that seems to best help us to understand the data is the PVEST model; however even this model does not exactly fit the results. If we are to reflect on the origin of this theory, it may not be surprising that this theory does not completely reflect the experience of these women.

The PVEST model was composed as a theory for understanding the way African American young people react to structural racism in educational settings (Spencer, Noll, Stoltzfus, & Harpalani, 2001). As stated earlier, Bermuda is a small island community thus the setting is very different. The multiplicity of relationships in Bermuda is not a hallmark of urban communities. In keeping in line with Spencer, Dupree & Hartmann's (1997) belief that an individual's perception of their cultural context affects the way that they perceive that cultural context and their place in it, some adjustments to the PVEST model can be made to fit the cultural context of Bermuda.

Three areas of the PVEST that have been changed are the Risk Contributors, the Stress Engagement, and the Reactive Coping Methods (see Figure 2). Spencer's PVEST begins with net vulnerability which consists of risk and protective factors in the environment. For the purposes of this study, this has been reconceptualised as Bermuda social context. Similar to the PVEST model, this does represent environmental and personal attributes that are beyond the individual's control (race, sex, socio-economic status, physical status, and biological characteristics). Through self appraisal, the person comes to see how these factors affect the way other people see them and also affects the way that the individual sees themselves.

In Bermuda, there are other factors that can affect this self appraisal and as such needs to be incorporated into this theory (See Figure 2b). Young women in Bermuda evaluate who they are in response to non-Bermudian influences. In being exposed to the lives of others through media and travel, young Bermudians come to see similarities and differences in their life scripts. An example of this was demonstrated in Stacey's interview below:

I like the fact that you can be yourself in school. Like you watch TVs about American children and they're all like depressed. I don't see that growing up in Bermuda. I don't know. Maybe it's just because I go (school) but I don't see that. I feel like you can be yourself and every body's like just one big family.

Self-evaluation processes are also a part of the way that young women view the *traditional values* and the change in these values due to the *shifting Bermudian culture*. Young women are aware of violations of acceptable behaviour from other young people and these become a part of their evaluations of themselves. However, they are also aware of larger violations of these expectations in society and in politics. All of these environmental influences (non-Bermudian influences, traditional values, changing culture, and political climate) are evaluated by young women in Bermuda as they continue to grow and develop.

Spencer calls the next phase stress engagement because it demonstrates this reaction and interaction with risk and protective factors (Spencer et al., 1999). In this study, we changed this dimension to domains of living. It is true that some of these interactions are stressful others are encouraging. Also, the term 'domains of living' does not carry the negative connotation that the former term carries.

'Domains of living' describes the interaction of the individual with their social support network. In Bermuda, this includes interactions with school, family, extended family, fictive kin,

friends, spiritual support, and neighbours (see Figure 2b). In Bermuda, this interaction is multi-stranded and is mostly supportive in nature. It is displayed in the diagram as a circle in order to demonstrate the interconnectivity of different support systems.

Through the multi-layered interaction of the individual with the various domains of living, the individual begins to develop Personal Resources, termed Reactive Coping Methods in the original PVEST model. Through interactions and self-reflection the individual begins to form personal resources. These are patterns of behaviour and ways of constructing the world that are useful. As these patterns continue to emerge, stable self constructions become part of the emergent identity of the individual and are displayed in stable coping responses. These stable coping responses ultimately lead to life stage outcomes, the final two elements in Spencer's model.

The process of identity development in Bermudian women occurs on multiple levels. Issues of identity such as culture, gender, age, etc are a part of the interconnected on many levels, especially within the small community of Bermuda. Rather than segmenting, it is best to view this time of development as a process in which young women are constantly weaving into their identity issues that help them to clearly see who they are as they look toward their futures.

Implications for Counselling Psychology

Bermuda has, in the past, implemented programmes that have been meant to counteract the negative behaviours of our youth. The results offer some explanations as to why this is not a good idea but also offers a substitute for this tendency. First, programmes that are developed in other countries lack the cultural sensitivity and accuracy that is important in service delivery. When we blindly implement programmes that do not take into account the specific needs of

Bermuda, we risk teaching our children that our traditional Bermudian values are of lesser importance and do not need to be kept.

When I was at home at Christmas time, I happened to have a talk with a woman who works with youth in Bermuda. We came upon the topic of a newly instituted programme taken from the United States and implemented in Bermuda to reduce the number of harmful behaviours in youth. She said that she had attended a ceremony honouring participants and it left her very disappointed. While the graduates of the programme expressed the need for a change and what they would be doing to continue in a positive direction, she felt that the honourees spoke in a manner that violated Bermudian social norms and as such negated the changes that they were discussing. Her concerns demonstrate the necessity of those who would counsel young people in Bermuda to do so in a culturally appropriate manner congruent with Bermudian values such as friendliness, respect for elders, and appropriate manners.

In addition, the results demonstrate that young women in Bermuda are dealing with a number of different issues. As they struggle through them, they have a number of different resources to lean on. Perhaps those who would seek to counsel young people in Bermuda need to consider a systematic approach that takes into account all of the resources that young people possess and can access such as family and friends.

Limitations and Future Research

Recruitment took the form of word of mouth recruiting. This meant that many of the participants knew the researcher in some form before the interview. The exact impact of this relationship is unknown. While, for some participants, this meant that they might have been more open because of their relationship with the researcher, it could also possibly mean that some were less willing to share, or more guarded in their responses. In addition, there was little

racial variety in the participants. These results could reflect this bias. The majority of the students (seven) also attended private schools, therefore these results can also reflect a social class bias.

Other studies have shown that young women at this age have a great respect and regard for their mothers and grandmothers (e.g. Hagglund, 2006). In this study, this topic did come up directly in only one of the interviews and indirectly in two of the interviews. A future study might look at the role that female role models such as mothers or grandmothers play in the identity of emergent women. In addition, it would be important to look at the role of other family members such as fathers which were not mentioned as often. Finally, an additional study should look at the emergent identities of males in the same age group as these young women and which factors are important in their identity development.

Conclusion

Thus far, there has been very little research on Bermuda as a community, and especially the voices of the young people within the community. Despite this lack of attention to the lived experience of our youth, we still implement programmes to ‘correct’ their actions. This study demonstrates that the distinctiveness of Bermuda is important in formulating plans to help foster positive stable coping outcomes in the lives of our young people. It also demonstrates that youth in the community are actively sorting through the messages that they are receiving from family, school, friends, the media, the wider community, and the world in a manner that is both positive and productive. At the heart of the narratives shared by these young women, we find a dedicated endorsement of their high callings as women, leaders, and community stalwarts. Adults working with young women in Bermuda have the opportunity to support this process as we seek to affirm them as phenomenal women, the future of our country.

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APPENDIX A: Interview Protocol

1. Can you tell me a little about yourself? What do you do in a typical day?
2. What activities do you enjoy?
3. What is your favourite thing about growing up in Bermuda?
4. What is your least favourite thing about growing up in Bermuda?
5. Imagine that you have a friend visiting from New Zealand. You have to show her around and help them to become familiar with Bermuda culture. What do you think will be important to know about being a woman in Bermuda?
6. Imagine there was someone who knew you really well, maybe a best friend or one of your parents, or your favourite teacher. If they were to describe you to me, someone who doesn't know you very well, how do you think they would describe you? (Probes to follow up on characteristics that they use to describe themselves)
7. I want you to think about someone that you know personally (someone that you talk to on a fairly regular basis) that you admire or respect or look up to? What characteristics of that person do you admire? Do you share any of these characteristics?
8. Participants are then given the poem "Phenomenal Woman" by Maya Angelou. Is there a particular part of the poem that you like? Do you see yourself in any part of the poem?

Personal Construct Theory Principles for Narrative Analysis

Data gathering procedures, including the interview protocol and probing process, drew upon laddering strategies and self-characterization to elicit core constructions of identity features. In the process of narrative analysis, these same principles guided formulations of meaning units, themes, and the shared story "Growing up Bermudian." Core construing often unfolds and encompasses construing at low levels of cognitive awareness, sometimes calling for analyzes that draw out communality among personal construal patterns of people who share social background and experience. At several points during interviews participants expressed puzzlement at questions and probes that seemed to ask for "obvious" responses. The taken-for-granted status also emerged in the matter-of-fact tone emerging from member checking and from consultation about the results with Bermudians. Core construing patterns frequently reflect partial or localized differentiation among multiple strands of identity processes. In this project, the centrality of gender identity emerged amidst the backdrop of strong intersections among experiences shaped by age, ethnicity and race, nationality, and family background.

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Phenomenal Woman by Maya Angelou

Pretty women wonder
Where my secret lies.
I'm not cute or built to suit
A fashion model's size
But when I start to tell them,
They think I'm telling lies.
I say,
It's in the reach of my arms
The span of my hips,
The stride of my step,
The curl of my lips.

I'm a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.

I walk into a room
Just as cool as you please,
And to a man,
The fellows stand or,
Fall down to their knees.
Then they swarm around me,
A hive of honey bees.
I say,
It's the fire in my eyes,
And the flash of my teeth,
The swing of my waist,
And the joy in my feet.

I'm a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.

Men themselves have wondered
What they see in me.
They try so much
But they can't touch
My inner mystery.
When I try to show them,
They say they still can't see.
I say,
It's in the arch of my back,
The sun of my smile,
The ride of my breasts,
The grace of my style.

I'm a woman,
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.

Now you understand
Just why my head's not bowed.
I don't have to shout or jump about
Or have to talk real loud.
When you see me passing
It ought to make you proud.
I say, it's in the click of my heels,
The bend of my hair,
The palm of my hand,
The need of my care,
'Cause I'm a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.

APPENDIX B: Informed Consent for Participants and parents Participant Consent Form

Phenomenal Young Women: Positive Identity Development in Female Bermudian Adolescents

Research Team: Jonéa Paynter, Counselling Psychology Department, (778)240-3071 (Canada) (441) 236-1472 (Bermuda), Dr. Marvin McDonald, Counselling Psychology Department, Trinity Western University (604) 513-2121

Purpose: You have been asked to participate in this study which examines how Bermudian females view growing up in Bermuda. Living in Bermuda is a unique experience, and it is very different from what people in other parts of the world experience. We want to know what things you like and dislike about living here. We are also looking at how you think of yourself in relationship to the rest of Bermudian society.

Procedures: If you choose to participate in this study you will be interviewed by Jonéa Paynter, the principle investigator. The initial interview will take approximately one hour to complete. During this time you will be asked questions about who you are and your life in Bermuda. All interviews will be videotaped and/or audio taped. The only person who will view and/or hear them is Jonéa. She will view them to type up what you say and any identifying information about you will be removed (such as your name, where you live, what school you attend, and any other individuals' names that you might mention). After all the interviews are collected they will be coded. This process might take up to five months. At this time Jonéa will contact you again over the phone and share the results with you and check in to ensure that her results reflect your experience. This additional phone call will take approximately half an hour.

Potential Risks and Discomforts: Although there are no anticipated risks to participating in this study, embarrassing topics may sometimes come up in the interview. You can skip any questions that make you feel uncomfortable.

Potential Benefits to Participants and/or to Society: By participating in this study you are contributing to scientific literature about the needs and concerns of adolescents both worldwide and more locally. Hopefully this knowledge will also be more directly helpful for people who work with adolescents in Bermuda.

Confidentiality: Once the data has been coded all identifying information will be removed. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. The transcripts related to this study will be stored in a locked filing cabinet for a period of seven years. After this time all the transcripts will be destroyed. The videos will also be stored in a locked file cabinet until the end of the study, at which time the videos will be destroyed. Participants in the study will not be named in any reports of the completed study.

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Contact for information about the study: If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, you may contact Jonéa Paynter or one of her associates at (441)236-1472 until January 3, 2008 and (778)240-3071 or (604)513-2121 (extension 3223).

You can also contact us by e-mail at pywbda@gmail.com

Contact for concerns about the rights of research subjects: If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact Ms. Sue Funk in the Office of Research at 604-513-2142 or sue.funk@twu.ca.

Consent: Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study and that your responses may be put in anonymous form and kept for further use after the completion of this study.

Participant Signature

Date

Printed Name of the Participant

Parental Consent Form

Phenomenal Young Women: Positive Identity Development in Female Bermudian Adolescents

Research Team: Jonéa Paynter, Counselling Psychology Department, (778)240-3071 (Canada) (441) 236-1472 (Bermuda); Dr. Marvin McDonald, Counselling Psychology Department, Trinity Western University (604) 513-2121

Purpose: Your daughter has been asked to participate in this study which examines how Bermudian females view growing up in Bermuda. Living in Bermuda is a unique experience, and it is very different from what people in other parts of the world experience. We want to know what things your daughter likes and dislikes about living here. We are also examining how she thinks of herself in relationship to the rest of Bermudian society.

Procedures: If your daughter chooses to participate in this study she will be interviewed by Jonéa Paynter, the principle investigator. The initial interview will take approximately one hour to complete. During this time she will be asked questions about herself and her life in Bermuda. All interviews will be videotaped and/or audiotaped. The only person who will view and/or hear them is Jonéa. She will view them to type up what your daughter says and any identifying information about her will be removed (such as her name, where she lives, her school, and other individual's names that she might mention). After all the interviews are collected they will be coded. This process might take up to five months. At this time Jonéa will contact your daughter again over the phone and share the results with her and check in to make sure that the results reflect your daughter's experience. This phone call will take approximately half an hour.

Potential Risks and Discomforts: Although there are no anticipated risks to participating in this study, embarrassing topics may come up in the interview. Your daughter can skip any questions that she does not feel comfortable answering.

Potential Benefits to Participants and/or to Society: By participating in this study your daughter is contributing to scientific literature about the needs and concerns of adolescents both worldwide and more locally. Hopefully this knowledge will also be more directly helpful for people who work with adolescents in Bermuda.

Confidentiality: Once the data has been coded all identifying information will be removed. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with your daughter will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with her permission or as required by law. All transcripts related to this study will be stored in a locked filing cabinet for a period of seven years. After this time all documents will be destroyed. The video and audio recordings will be kept in a locked filing cabinet until the end of the study, at which time they will be destroyed. Participants in the study will not be named in any reports of the completed study.

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Contact for information about the study: If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, you may contact Jonéa Paynter or one of her associates at (441)236-1472 until January 3, 2008 and (778)240-3071 thereafter; or (604)513-2121 (extension 3223). You can also contact us by e-mail at pywbda@gmail.com

Contact for concerns about the rights of research subjects: If you have any concerns about your daughter's treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact Ms. Sue Funk in the Office of Research at 604-513-2142 or sue.funk@twu.ca.

Consent: I consent/do not consent (circle one) to my daughter's participation in this study.

Parent or Guardian's Signature

Date

Printed Name Parent or Guardian signing above

APPENDIX C: Shared Narrative and Theme Descriptions

Growing Up Bermudian

Joanna was born and raised on the island of Bermuda. Living in Bermuda as a child was pleasant. The weather made it easy for her to spend a lot of time outdoors swimming, playing games with friends, or just relaxing in the sunshine. It afforded her opportunities to become involved in different activities, such as dance, sports, theatre, and music. Living on a small island, community was a large part of her life. She knew all of her neighbours by name and felt secure in knowing that others were watching out for her. From a young age she was taught that respect, openness, friendliness, and helpfulness were hallmarks of a Bermudian identity.

Childhood was pleasant for Joanna, but as she became an adolescent she began to see Bermuda in a whole new light. She began to realize that not everything was positive in growing up there. The weather did not change. The people did not change. But the way Joanna understood them did.

She began to see that living in Bermuda had 'it's positives and negatives'. Joanna became concerned about the political scene, where she saw racism sabotage the peacefulness of the community. She was concerned about issues of equality for all people in the areas of education, housing, and employment. She was also upset by the increasing violence and crime and was concerned about the future and safety of people. Although she became involved in many activities, through her travels to other countries she also realized that there were not many things for young people to do on the island.

Joanna's travels brought her into contact with people whose lifestyles were very different. It illuminated both the assets and the liabilities of her community. She saw the value in the concern and care showed by other Bermudians, knowing that she could rely on 'more than just her family'. She also realized that living in that small community meant that 'everyone knew her business.' So she had to be careful about what she shares with others.

She appreciated some of the aspects of Bermuda culture that made it unique; such as the food, the holidays, and the traditions. Through her travels and the comments of older people, she also sensed that her generation might have lost some sense of Bermudianness. But it wasn't clear what exactly has been lost or why that happened.

In particular she saw that being a young woman involved an intense amount of 'emotional work'. High expectations were placed on her to maintain a good reputation within the community and these expectations were often different from the boys and young men around her. In order to meet these challenges, she had to know her own morals and values, and make sure that she kept the 'right company'. She learned that there were some things that she had to keep to herself as it was important that not everyone know her business. She was encouraged to set goals for herself, so as not to get caught up in things that have changed the direction of other young women who have gone before her.

Despite the challenges and confusions that faced her, Joanna had a sense that she would be able to accomplish much. Drawing on the strength of those that inspire and support her, Joanna began to build a sense of confidence. She had a sense that she could continue to overcome any challenges that arose in her life.

Theme Descriptions

Belonging – *Bermuda is home*—Home means being cared for, being able to be oneself, being known and understood by others, being encouraged, being kept safe, respected; having something to offer others that is valued, being obligated to fulfill duties, being able to have fun, being comfortable.

Loyalty Paradoxes – Loyalty is defined as a connection to country, place, & culture. As people lived in a community they share values and beliefs. A sense of community and belonging in Bermuda touches on all these topics/ concerns. Loyalty to Bermuda as a community is balanced by aspects of life in Bermuda that people don't like.

- Bermuda's a nice place to live but there are "there are problems, too"
- The small community is nice but that means that news travels fast.
- It's good to be friendly and open but you have to be wise about what things to keep to yourself.

Politics – Major political concerns are a part of community life and political issues are discussed at home, in school, with friends, etc. Talking about these issues in different areas and with different people helps young people to figure out their own personal stance on these issues. The major concerns for community life in Bermuda are:

- Racism: Concerns over overt and subtle racism in political parties and in everyday life.
- Housing: Compassion for those who are seeking housing, concern for future housing feeling bad for others, and in future, will I have access to housing?
- Employment: many unemployed individuals 'sitting on the wall'; concern pertaining to unequal hiring practices and how that might impact future employment for youth for beginning a career.
- Violence – There has been an increase in violence and many wonder what the government is going to do to stop it.
- Independence - People expressed concerns over the future of Bermuda's position as a nation. Should we become an independent nation? How could future independence affect the economy of Bermuda?

Traditional Values – Children are explicitly taught that Bermudians are: Friendly; Respectful; Well-mannered; Kind; Welcoming; and Open

These values have been upheld by many young people; however not all young people adhere to these values. This might partially explain why there has been an increase in violence within younger people.

Culture in Transition – The loss of some traditional values by some young people reflect a larger cultural transition. There are elements of the culture that have been maintained (e.g. some holidays and parades, the importance of families). However there has also been a loss of some of the culture. There is some confusion also as to why and how the culture was lost, but it might partially be because Bermuda's history is not explicitly taught in all of Bermuda's schools to the same degree.

Recreation & Free time/ Social Interactions – It is important for young people to find worthwhile enjoyable things to do in their free time. There are a number of organized activities that are available to do; however some people do not know about them and there are other constraints such as transportation and expenses. It is important for young people to make their own fun. On the average day many young people go into town and window-shop and eat. In the summertime some might go swimming. Through watching T.V. and travel teenagers see lots of interesting things that they would like to have available in Bermuda. In comparison, Bermuda is ‘boring.’

Aspirations – Many young people have set realistic ambitions for themselves. By setting these goals it gives young women a sense of direction in their lives. Having goals is largely encouraged by schools, family, and friends.

High expectations for Bermudian Women – There is recognition that being a woman is more emotional work. In trying to navigate womanhood young women must deal with challenges like:

- Competitiveness with other girls. Some young women are violent towards one another; others are malicious and hurtful to other women. You have to be careful who you tell things to.
- Sexuality – how a woman ‘carries herself,’ including the things she wears and how she behaves. Making sure that she does not get pregnant. [– true for young men;]
- Friendships – Being careful of who your friends are. It’s important to have genuine friends and also friends who will build you up and not pull you down.
- Direction – it is important to have goals and a sense of where you would like to go in the future.

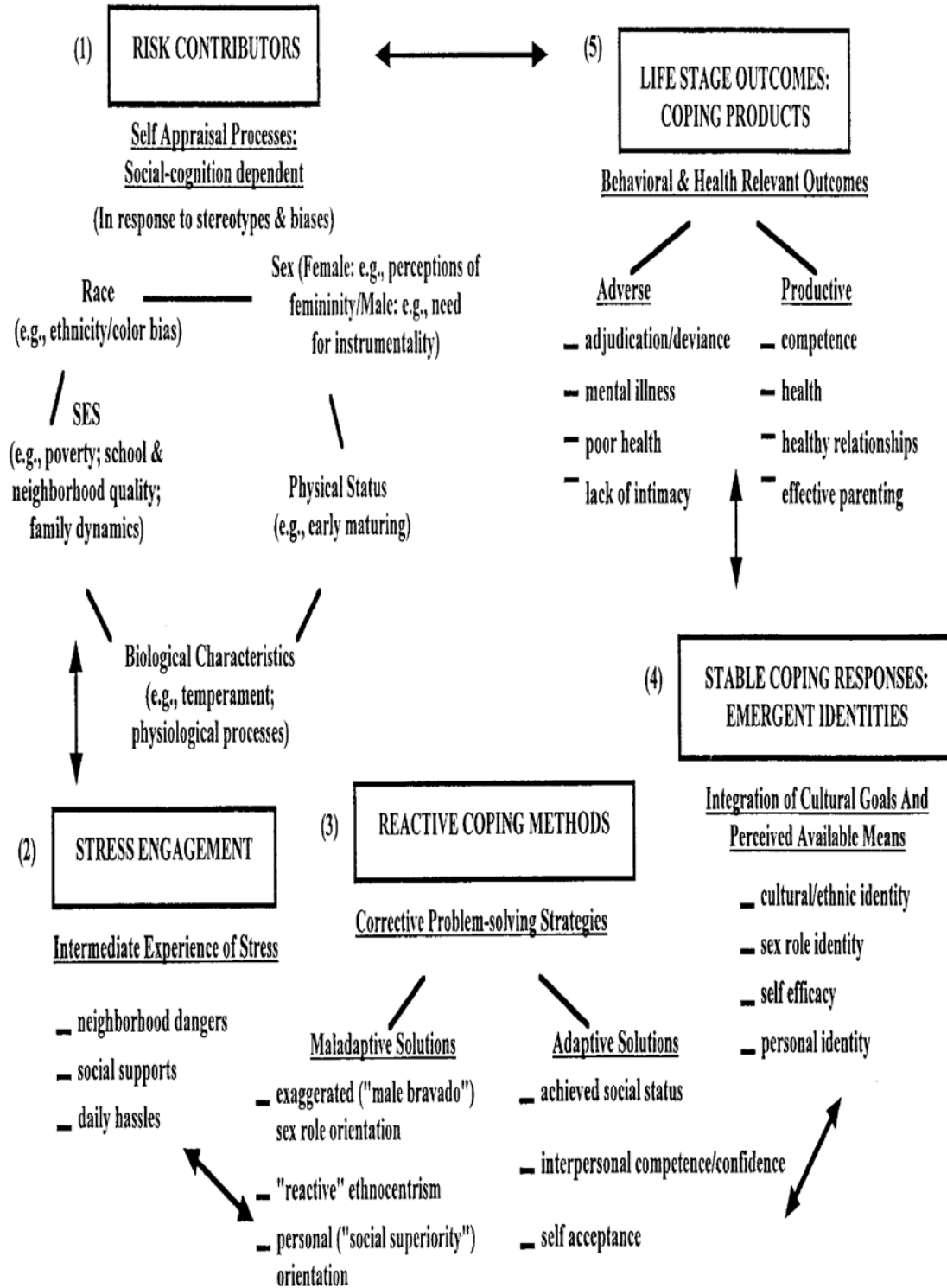


Figure 1. A diagram outlining the Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST) from Spencer, Dupree, Hartmann, 1997.

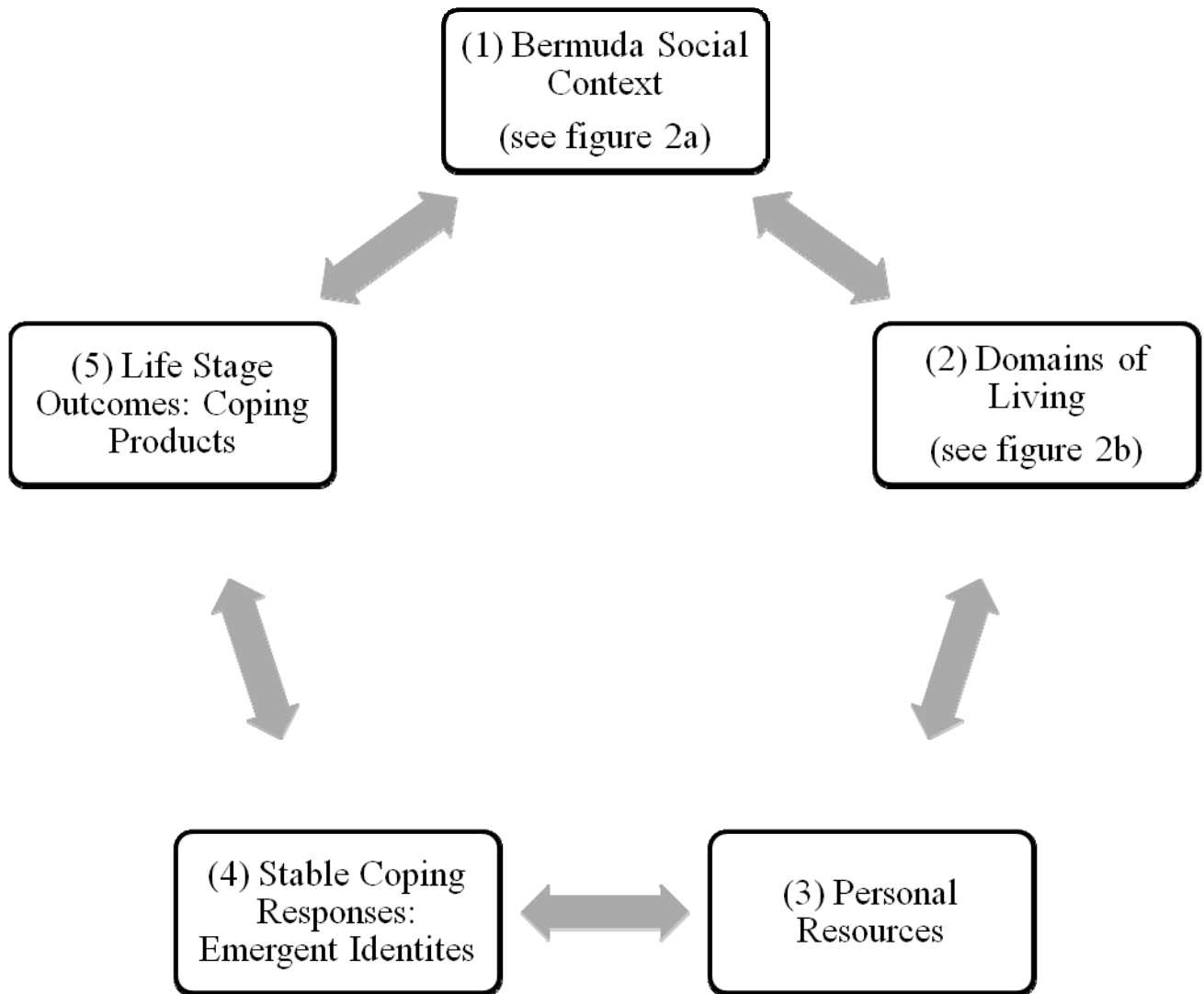


Figure 2. Adapted PVEST for Bermudian young women.

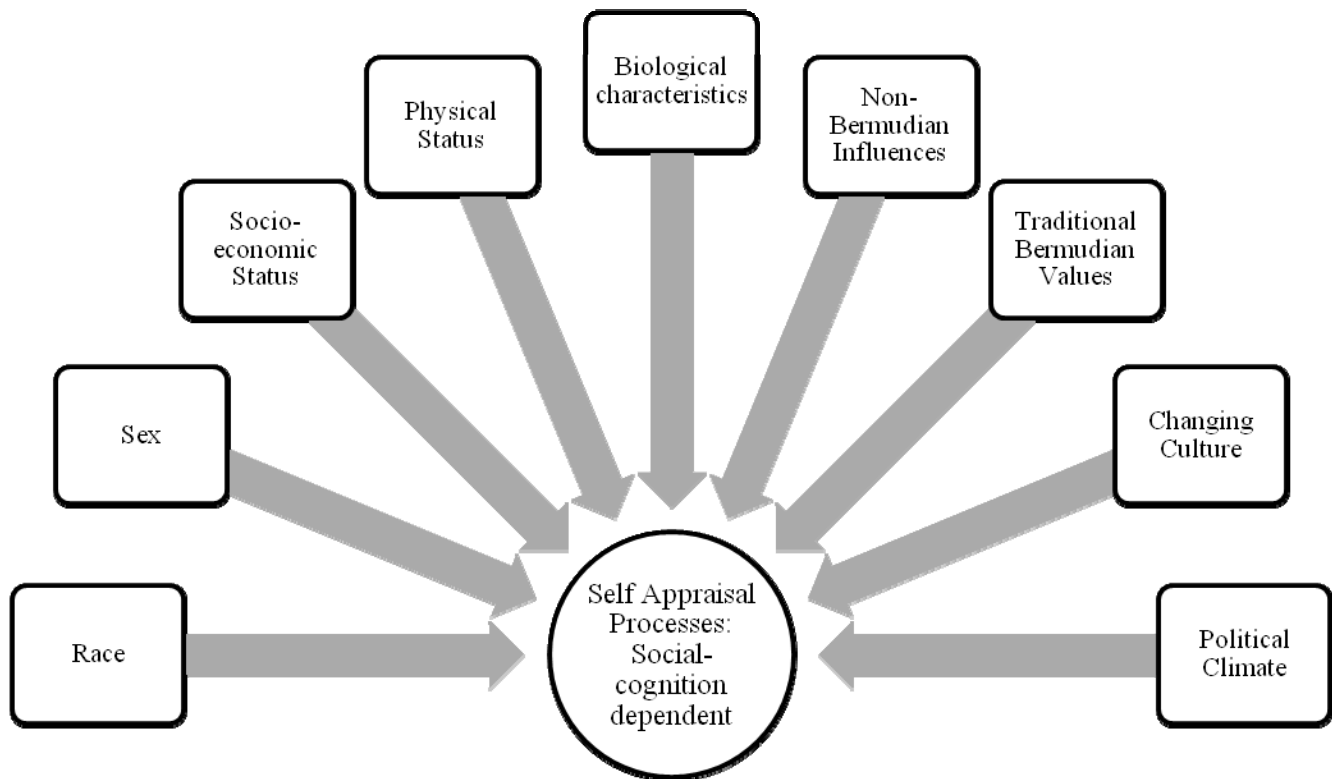


Figure 2a. A diagram to show the relationship among relevant factors in the Bermuda Social Context.

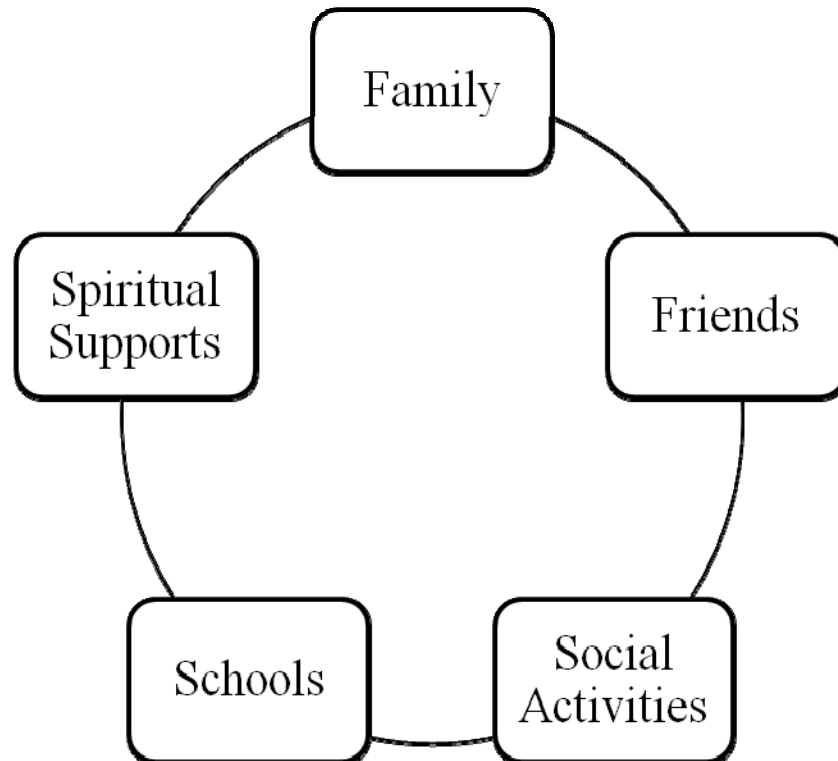


Figure 2b. A diagram to show Domains of Living in Bermuda in which young women ‘work out’ identity related matters.