

*Full Length Research Paper*

## **Correlation of Female Trinidadians, Bermudians, Sri-Lankans' Feminist Identity Development, and Self-Esteem: Reflection of Social Role Theory**

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**Self-esteem and feminist identity development share symbiotic dyads. Agentic and communal characteristics shape females' identity and determine whether they see themselves as products or producers of their social system and display descriptive and/or injunctive or prescriptive patterns of behavior. The aforementioned theoretical frameworks form the backdrop for my research which involved 40 Trinidadians, 20 Bermudians, and 38 Sri Lankans females ages 18 to 64. In my quantitative methodology study, I incorporated the Feminist Identity Development Scale (FIDS, Bargad & Hyde, 1991) and Rosenberg's (1965) Self-Esteem Model (RSE) to determine whether or not there was a significant correlation between Trinidadian and Bermudian females' self-esteem and feminist identity development. Descriptive statistics implementing a correlation matrix with the use of Mega Stats Add-Ins with Microsoft Excel determined that no significant correlation existed between Trinidadian and Bermudian female participants for their RSE and FIDS respectively. Additionally, one way ANOVA tests showed the correlation: (a) within sample group- Trinidadian females with no significant correlation between their FIDS and RSE; (b) within sample group- Afro and Indo- Trinidadians there was no significant correlation of RSE and a slight positive correlation of .0467 between participants' subscales of FIDS; (c) within sample group- there was no significant correlation between Bermudian participants' RSE but a significant negative correlation between subscales of FIDS; (d) within sample group- Sri Lankan females showed a significant negative correlation between subscales of FIDS; (e) among sample groups- Bermudian, Sri Lankan, and Trinidadian females there was a significant negative correlation among their RSE and no significant correlation of their FIDS. The findings corroborate other conclusions on FIDS and RSE and the social role theory.**

**Keywords:** Feminist identity development, social role theory

### **Introduction**

The *Global Gender Gap* (2012) ranked countries where disparities in equal opportunities for men and women exist. The *Global Gender Gap Index* (2012) examined four pillars of gender parity: (a) economic participation and opportunity; (b) educational attainment; (c) health and survival; and (d) political empowerment. Based on the *Global Gender Gap Index*, Sri Lanka ranked 39<sup>th</sup>, Trinidad and Tobago was at 43<sup>rd</sup>, and Bermuda was not included.

The problem of women being forced to adhere to strict gender roles continues to be one of the major deterrents in women's empowerment, self-esteem and feminist identity development. As women's empowerment advances at an exponential rate and more women are finding avenues to break the stereotypical notion of what a woman should do and what qualities she should possess there is need to determine what she does and how she defines herself within the gendered structure. As the story of Mala Yousafzai revealed, women are finding ways to

transcend the boundaries made for them by society and cultural belief systems. Understanding how women's roles continue to evolve is essential in examining the leadership potential in each society and determining the social role construct therein. As women seek to redefine themselves in the ever changing processes of life, empowerment, identity, and self-esteem become the significant intangible qualities needed for optimal functioning in society. The need to examine the social role construct and the prevalence of women who are defined as possessing more communal or more agentic characteristics and adhering to prescriptive rather than descriptive behaviour stereotypes is significant in the feminist identity development and self-esteem sphere.

Feminist identity, self-esteem and the social role construct are vital elements of what comprises women's empowerment, resilience and how they see themselves. Eisele and Stake (2008) linked feminist identity and positive mental health. They stated, "it is possible that adoption of a feminist identity is

strongly related to positive mental health” (p. 233). Women’s positive mental health defines the types of mothers and wives they become. Understanding how women perceive themselves as individuals and collectively can lead to increased awareness of how far their traditional role has changed.

Moreover, the dearth of information on Trinidadian, Sri Lankan, and Bermudian feminist identity development and self-esteem spawned the need for my research paper. A search for literature on Trinidadian and Bermudian feminist identity development and self-esteem yielded little information which made my study more significant in expanding the extant literature. Sri Lankan feminist studies for the last five years focused on the effects of the tsunami on the feminine perspectives.

Paynter (2008), in her exploratory study of nine Bermudian adolescents between the ages of 14 to 17 underscored the importance of identity. She stated, “Identity formation is an essential aspect of development that impacts later social development” (p. ii). Collins (2001) made the following apposite statement, “establishing a sense of identity is a central task in human development” (p. 1). The purpose of my paper was to determine whether or not there is a significant correlation between female Trinidadians, Sri Lankans, and Bermudians’ self-esteem and their feminist identity development and how their feminist identity reflects the social role theory.

#### **Within Group Sample- Trinidadian Females**

Firstly, the data garnered will be examined within the Trinidadian sample group between self-esteem and their feminist identity development. A correlation analysis using Mega Stats Add Ins for Microsoft Excel determined whether or not a correlation exists. With a Trinidadian population of 40% Indo-Trinidadian and 37.5% Afro-Trinidadian, the need to examine the data collected from an ethnic perspective is equally important. Boisnier (2003) vindicated, “Researchers have begun to explore the issue of feminist identity development in ethnically diverse population” (p. 211). In this study, there were 17 Afro-Trinidadian and 23 Indo-Trinidadian female participants, reflecting the dichotomy in population distribution. Thus, the results may be skewed in favour of the viewpoints of the Indo-Trinidadian female.

Afro-Trinidadians pertain to those Trinidadians of African descent whose forefathers were slaves brought to Trinidad to work on the sugar plantations. Indo-Trinidadians refer to those persons whose progenitors came as indentured immigrants from India to work on the sugar plantations. Further distinction, according to Baksh-Soodeen (1998) and Chouthi (1998), is that Afro-Trinidadian women found their “voices” and were more vocal in expressing their feminist identity versus Indo-Trinidadian women (p.5).

The culture of subservience is part of the Indo-Trinidadian past. The Indo-Trinidadian remains at loggerheads with her Muslim and Hindu heritage and her status as a Trinidadian woman. Such disparities typify her reticence to give “voice” to her thoughts and to “silence the self” (Witte & Sherman, 2002, p. 12). Yet, part of her desires to integrate or to be part of the intermixture that being a Trinidadian female entails such as the “creolization” of the Indian woman where there is a merging of the Afro and Indo Trinidadian culture (Mohammed, 1988, p. 23). This internal dilemma symbolizes the struggles of the Indo-Trinidadian woman to come to terms with her nature versus her nurture.

With this in mind, an ANOVA of the aggregate scores for both groups FIDS and self-esteem will be calculated to determine whether or not there is a significant correlation. Additionally, subscales of each component of the FIDS will be correlated using an ANOVA to determine whether or not any significant correlation exists. Any similarities in the feminist identity development between both Afro and Indo-Trinidadians could be linked to “creolization” which Mohammed (1988) viewed as more of an “intermixture,” or “interculturalization” rather than and “acculturation” where the Indo and Afro cultures are conflated to become more enriched (p. 24).

#### **Within Group Sample- Bermudian Females**

Secondly, the data garnered will be examined within the Bermudian sample group between self-esteem and their feminist identity development. An ANOVA implementing Mega Stats Add-Ins in Microsoft Excel will determine whether or not a correlation exists.

#### **Between Group Sample- Trinidadian and Bermudian Females’ RSE**

Thirdly, data collated and tabulated in the form of an ANOVA will determine whether or not there is a significant correlation between Bermudian and Trinidadian females’ self-esteem and FIDS. Subscales of each stage of the FIDS will be correlated using an ANOVA to determine whether or not a significant correlation exists. Fourthly, based on the information gathered, collated, and calculated, the researcher will determine whether or not the distal and proximal causes of the social role theory were vindicated.

Moradi, Subich, and Phillips (2002) in their critical analysis of the FIDS suggested, “further scholarship on the breadth of applicability and utility of their model of feminist identity development is needed” (p. 32). As if heeding their call, the data from this research expanded the body of information on the use of FIDS and RSE with a more diverse population. Moradi et al proposed that future research should “(a) recruit samples that reflect the within-group diversity among women” (p. 39). The paucity of such information fomented the need for further study. Data from this study were collected from a mixed ethnic population thus enhancing the extant research literature.

### **Within Group Sample- Sri Lankan Females' FIDS**

The data garnered will be examined within the Sri Lankan sample group for correlation among subscales of FIDS.

### **Among Group Sample- Trinidadian, Bermudian, and Sri Lankan Females' FIDS**

Data collated and tabulated in the form of an ANOVA will determine whether or not there is a significant correlation among Bermudian and Trinidadian females' self-esteem and FIDS. Subscales of each stage of the FIDS will be correlated using an ANOVA to determine whether or not a significant correlation exists. Data collated and tabulated in the form of an ANOVA will determine whether or not there is a significant correlation among Bermudian, Sri Lankan, and Trinidadian females' FIDS. Based on the information gathered, collated, and calculated, the researcher will determine whether or not the distal and proximal causes of the social role theory were vindicated.

### **Bermudian Women's Identity**

Having two female Premiers at the helm of the Bermudian Government demonstrated a definite representation of Bermudian women at the higher echelons of the political arena. However, there is still a need for women's empowerment according to the blog entitled "*Bermuda needs a new Feminism.*" In this blog, the author expressed the view that albeit, women comprised 50% of the population, women are only represented in government by 20%. Such an obvious lacuna sets the background for the study on Bermudian women's self-esteem and feminist identity development. The current government, Progressive Labour Party, hosted a women's empowerment function in May 2012 to honour women who contributed to the party's success. This action by itself vindicated that the then government does respect and value women and their contributions.

Conversely, Fehr (2011), when discussing the making of feminism in art in Bermuda, indicated:

That is very common. Very typically, the male is shown in a way that implies leadership rather than the two being equals together. Typically, the male is shown in a leadership role, and the woman is shown in a submissive role. And very often the woman in her submissive role will be shown with a happy smile on her face. (Moniz, 2011, p. 1)

Fehr (2011) further stated that, "He finds many young women, today resistant to seeing how they are diminished in portrayals in art and media" (Moniz, 2011, p. 1). This attitude transcends art and is inculcated in the everyday Bermudian society which Robinson (2011) suggested, "the island had suffered from something of an inferiority complex regarding its culture because the role played by black Bermudians in defining the modern Bermudian identity had traditionally been given short shrift" (p. 1).

### **Trinidadian Women's Identity**

Congruently, Trinidad currently, has a female Prime Minister and also has many members of parliament who are female. However, the construct of feminist identity according to Baksh-Soodeen (1998) and Chouthi (1998) is both in need of a stronger voice and also definitely seeped in issues of race with Afro-Trinidadian women being more vocal than Indo-Trinidadian women. Baksh-Soodeen (1998) indicated, "that second wave Caribbean feminism has been largely Afro-centric and simultaneously interlocked with processes of independence and national identity struggles" (p. 74). For this reason, data from part of the within sample group in Trinidad were analysed based on Indo and Afro Trinidadians' responses to shed light on any silos in differences in their FIDS and RSE.

### **Sri Lankan Women's Identity**

Until recently, Sri Lanka was gripped by a civil war that lasted 30 years. Once ruled by the British and now independent Sri Lanka has a population of 20 million. Women comprise 52% of the Sri Lankan population. However, only 2% of women are elected into government (Kodikara, 2011). Sri Lanka is currently governed by a male president. According to Kodikara "Sri Lanka remains the only country without any special measures to facilitate women's representation in Local Authorities" (p. 1). Such under-representation reflects the mind-set of the Sri Lankan society where according to Gunatilake (2012) "Gender roles are the foundations of ascribed roles for either gender, and these affect the lives of men and women around the globe in varying degrees" (p. 1). Sri Lankan respondents, with their close proximity to India and its deep-seated traditions, were expected to possess differences in FIDS from Bermudian and Trinidadian participants' as the gender boundaries are more clearly delineated. In fact, Hyndman (2008) in her examination of the after-effects of the tsunami indicated:

Interviews with 40 widows and widowers along the east coast of Sri Lanka in February 2006 suggest that the tsunami not only reorganized gender relations among specific ethno-national groups, but also changed the meaning of 'widow' with war widows and tsunami widows positioned differently within post-tsunami society and across ethnic groups. (p. 101)

Such disparity in treatment between men and women and their ability to remarry in favour of the men, is fraught with issues because the women exemplify an ideology in turmoil which could either evolve into a more developed sense of identity or remain in a state of confusion. Within such a state, the Sri Lankan woman defines herself as a product of the male perception of her rather than a producer of her own identity. In her presentation of the opinions of the Sri Lankan women in the garment industry, Gunatilake (2012) stated that the women interviewed were more interested in being home-makers, succumbing to their fates and letting the men take the leadership positions in society. This echoes similar sentiments from Kodikara (2012) who stated, about the nominations of women in elections, that:

To be considered a 'winnable' candidate, money and muscle are important as is the active involvement in maintaining and supporting the chains of dependency between the party and the constituency. Most women lack both money and muscle and are passive 'clients' in the margins of these networks (except if you a wife, widow or daughter of a politician of course). (p. 1). These statements graphically depict the powerlessness of the woman's stature in the Sri Lankan society.

### **Comparison of Bermudian, Trinidadian and Sri Lankan Women's Identity**

With such a heavy reliance on tradition and the archetypal notions of gender boundaries a comparison of the three women's identity segues. Barnes (1999) urged, "it would be useful to begin with the premise that women's relationship to feminism is often a layered and unruly process and that women frequently reject its epistemes and politics" (p. 38). Thus, epitomizes the complex nature of Caribbean feminist identity shrouded in the male eyes, perceived through the females'. Indeed, part of the rejection of the epistemology which defines feminist identity development is the environment and socialization processes where the polarities of nature versus nurture are iterative.

Stewart and Healey (1989) posited that social events and environmental factors affect identity development. Thus, the environment and social factors influence whether or not Trinidadian and Bermudian females possess an agentic viewpoint of themselves as both producers and products of their different social systems. However, based on the literature, it would appear that Sri Lankan women are typically more communal in perspectives preferring to leave the more agentic characteristics to their male counterparts.

Affected by their close proximity to the United States of America, Bermudian females, albeit, considered Caribbean could display a disparity in cultural values from that of the Trinidadian females, whose influence could be seen as more South American due to their closeness to Venezuela. Sri Lankan women would be expected to display a less evolved feminist identity development because of Sri Lanka's close proximity to Asian countries and the fact that the women are encapsulated in a culture of religion and adherence to norms and traditions, Albeit, Trinidad and Bermuda share a rich Caribbean heritage of slavery, there are definite incongruities in the leadership of both islands. Sri Lanka on the other hand, was a British colony and is now independent. Trinidad is independent and a republic whereas Bermuda remains a territory of the United Kingdom. The climate in Trinidad and Sri Lanka consists of the dry season and the rainy season. In Bermuda, however, there are four seasons. It is difficult to find research on Sri Lankan women and their motivational level or transformational leadership. The literature abounds with information on men as transformational leaders and trying to promote leaders in the

garment and diary industries which are predominantly female. This obvious silo in the skill set among the three nationalities of female participants sets Sri Lankan women apart.

Research conducted on Trinidadian and Bermudians' motivation and leadership style mirror the similarities and differences in their geographical location, culture, history, and climates. In studies conducted by Bissessar (2011), there were differences in leadership and motivational styles whereby the Bermudian female participants displayed a stronger transformational leadership style versus her Trinidadian counterpart who tended to display a more laissez-faire style of leadership. This would suggest that Bermudian female participants exemplified a more pronounced attempt to avoid societal messages regarding gender and leadership as opposed to their Trinidadian counterparts.

Such social role concepts seem more part of the typical Trinidadian culture where the stereotypical male/female construct is seen as an injunctive or prescriptive norm. The Bermudian female seems to be more agentic whereas the Trinidadian female is more communal in attributes. Bermudian female participants, therefore, exhibited an increased willingness to question the status quo and adopt internal standards rather than the canonical "feminine" behaviours of their fellow Trinidadians. Studies on gender and transformational leadership suggest that feminist theories and transformational leadership concepts intersect (Kark, 2004). Moreover, there is a strong link between transformational leadership skills to higher levels of feminist identity development.

Thus, one would expect the Bermudian female to exhibit a more evolved stage of FIDS than her Trinidadian coequal who is more laissez faire whilst the Bermudian female is more prone to exemplify transformational leadership. These findings further perpetuate the preponderance of the indelible imprint of the "glass ceiling" (Cotter, Hermsen, Ovadia, Vanneman, 2001), in action where women are willing to take on more communal qualities and subsume their nature for that of nurturer preferring to take a lesser position of authority. This is an empirical reflection of the social theory role where Trinidadian women take on prescriptive roles and see themselves as products of society rather than producers of society.

Another significant aspect is the similarity between Bermudian and Trinidadian females' motivational preferences. Both Bermudian and Trinidadian female participants exhibited extrinsic motivation with external regulation whereby their motivation was based on an expected reward system and there was an externally perceived locus of control (Bissessar 2011). Such findings are anathema to the aforementioned conclusions about the transformational leadership style of the Bermudian female participants but are in accordance with the Trinidadian female participants' laissez-faire leadership style. For the

Bermudian female respondent to possess high transformational leadership styles she should also display strong intrinsic motivation with an internal locus of control. In fact, Barbuto (2005) found a strong correlation between intrinsic motivation and transformational leadership.

From the data collected by Bissessar (2011), both sets of females obtained the highest scores in the subscales of extrinsic motivation. This indicated that both Bermudian and Trinidadian female participants did not possess an internal locus of control vis a vis motivation and implies that there is no “autonomy” or “authenticity” in their motivational levels as expanded by Ryan and Deci (2006). Thus, both groups of females’ motivational levels are based on external regulations such as acceptance by the male and extrinsic rewards for accomplishment. Ultimately, such acceptance would affect their level of self-esteem. Kernis (2003) discussed the difference between fragile and secure high self-esteem with fragile self-esteem grounded in extrinsic motivation which is the main motivation among participants interviewed by Bissessar (2011) in an earlier study when they completed the Academic Motivation Scale.

### **Literature Review**

Female identity development and self-esteem are conflated concepts with many articles linking both and suggesting a high level of each as complementary. According to Boisner (2003) “A growing body of literature demonstrates that adopting feminist beliefs or identity may be associated with higher self-esteem” (p. 213). Self-efficacy beliefs are the cornerstone of self-esteem and touted as essential to the social cognitive theory espoused by Bandura (1986). Pajares (2002) saw self-efficacy as synonymous with motivation, well-being, and personal accomplishment. Eisele and Stake (2008) in their study linked feminist identity development to self-efficacy as did Foss and Stanley (1986). Markowitz (1998) and Zimmerman, Israel, Schilz, and Checkoway (1992), and Zimmerman and Rappaport (1988) also concluded that high self-efficacy led to increased levels of engaged activism unlike low self-efficacy. Kaysen and Stake (2001) also linked feminist activism with self-efficacy.

Activism and self-efficacy are all part of women finding their voices. Saunders and West (2006) in their study found a direct correlation between women finding their voices and their feminist activism. They stated “Instrumentality, expressiveness, and a more developed feminist identity were all related positively to psychological well-being” (p. 199). In agreement with those conclusions, Witte and Sherman (2002) found that the passive aggressive stage espoused by Downing and Roush (1985) was akin to the traditional male/female role where the women were used to “silencing the self” rather than giving “voice” to the self (Musil, 1992, p. 10).

Smith (1999) concluded that women who identified themselves as feminists contained a higher level of self-esteem versus those who did not see themselves as feminists. Similarly, Fischer and Good (1994) associated strong feminist identity with high self-

esteem. Eisele and Stake (2008) affirmed, “positive relationships have been demonstrated between feminist attitudes and measures of self-esteem and self-efficacy” (p. 235). Burn, Aboud, and Moyles (2000) found that self-esteem derived from belonging to a collective feminist group was empowering and self-identification with the group was a construct of social identity. Similarly, Nicholson and Long (1990) found a positive correlation between self-acceptance and feminist attitudes among minority women. Carpenter and Johnson (2003) indicated “Women’s self-esteem is more strongly related to social acceptance and inclusion than to accomplishments” (p. 254).

Congruently, De Man and Bontoit (1982) and Moradi, and Subich (2002) found a positive correlation between RSE and subscales of FIDS. However, the PA subscale of FIDS was negatively correlated to RSE. In her research on specific aspects of FIDS, Duncan (2010) concluded that:

In three of the four feminist components (Revelation, Embeddedness, and Active Commitment), strong feminists scored significantly higher on feminist attitudes than did weak feminists who, in turn, scored significantly higher than nonfeminists. This pattern was reversed for Passive Acceptance (where strong feminists scored lowest). (p. 504)

Eisele and Stake suggested that nontraditional gender roles are positively correlated to self-esteem. Witte and Sherman (2002) found a direct correlation between passive acceptance and “silencing the self” (Musil, 1992, p.10) or women’s acceptance of the traditional gender roles such as agentic and communal perspective with descriptive and prescriptive characteristics and behaviours.

### **Model of Feminist Identity Development**

Cross’ (1978) seminal work on Black identity model fomented the feminist development theory implemented in this study. According to Cross, African Americans move along a continuum from “low or neutral to high salience” (Boisnier, 2003, p. 212). Downing and Roush (1985) suggested a five stage feminist identity model: (1) passive acceptance, (2) revelation, (3) embeddedness/emanation, (4) synthesis, and (5) active commitment.

Passive acceptance (PA) encompasses the traditional view that women are subservient and should be treated as less than men. Men are considered to be superior to women. Moradi, Subich, and Phillips (2002) stated, “passive acceptance is marked by a lack of awareness or denial of individual, institutional, and cultural discrimination against women” (p. 7).

Revelation (R) is the second stage along the continuum and is the catalyst for open questioning about the self and sex roles. Foisted on the female mindset, according to Boisnier (2003), is a state of dualistic thinking where women are seen in a sanguine light and men in a pessimistic one. Women become kindred spirits and bonds are formed in the

embeddedness/emanation stage where women share an affinity as fellow sufferers at the hands of the androcentric dominated society. There is a more relativist thinking and women cautiously interact with men. Moradi, Subich, and Phillips (2002) indicated that this stage is two-fold where “women in the first phase embed themselves in women’s culture and women’s company (eg. Take women studies courses, become involved in women’s support group) uncritically adopt feminist ideology” (p. 8).

Transcending gender binaries, the synthesis stage suggests a need to see men as individuals rather than a collective group. Women identities and roles take on a positive light and they become role models to be emulated. At this stage, Moradi, Subich, and Phillips (2002) stated, “women individually interpret feminism, transcend gender roles, and integrate personally defined behaviours, traits, values, roles, and interests in their lives” (p. 8).

The final stage, active commitment, “describes the stage in which the woman commits herself to meaningful action toward feminist goals” (Boisnier, 2003, p. 212). Men are considered equal to women but not the same emotionally and psychologically. At this stage, the woman commits herself to fostering a non-sexist community. Women’s actions are personalized and rational at this self-actualized stage of feminist identity development.

### **Social Role Theory**

The social role theory suggests that individuals possess social roles based on their gender. Dulin (2007) stated, “These stereotypic gender roles are formed by social norms that apply to people of a certain category or social position” (p. 105). Eagly and Koenig (2006) indicated that gender roles stem from two main differences: (a) descriptive norms and (b) injunctive or prescriptive norms. They expanded that descriptive norms are “beliefs about the characteristics of men and women” (p.163). Injunctive or prescriptive norms are “beliefs about what men and women should do” (p. 164). Eagly and Koenig posited that social roles rather than gender fuel individuals’ behaviour. The underlying premise of the social role theory of distal and proximal causes where there is the perpetuation of social structures and gender role constructs and the socialization process is similar to the division of labour (Eagly & Koenig). Dulin (2007) viewed the social role theory as structural rather than cultural further sustaining the construct of division of labour between genders.

Indeed, from a young age, individuals learn, emulate, and model gender specific roles they see in their everyday lives. Subconsciously, they form opinions based on their environment and class men as more agentic. Men are ascribed such characteristics as possessing more assertiveness, independence, and competence than women. Women are more communal. They characterize women as considerate, unselfish, amiable, and have concern for others (Eagly & Keonig, 2006). Such

clearly delineated qualities according to Eagly and Koenig are along the lines of division of labour based on gender stereotypes. Cotter, Hermsen, Ovadia, Vanneman (2001) further propagated such a clearly delineated dichotomy with their “glass ceiling” theory where women cater to the communal qualities and work at home-making, taking positions of lower power and prefer to stay within the realms of the invisible barriers created by an androcentric society. Society places certain expectations on individuals based on gender. The social role theory states that women and men behave differently in certain situations and take on gender specific roles as dictated by society.

Conway, Pizzamiglio, and Mount (1996) conducted research and found that participants rated low-status individuals as more communal and high status individuals as more agentic. Data also implied that communal qualities, associated with females, connoted a low status position. Ritter and Yoder (2004) extended the social theory to indicate that men and women follow traditional stereotypes where men are expected to take leadership positions and women willingly accept their role as housewives.

### **My Study Aims**

#### **Within Group Sample- Trinidadian Females**

Descriptive statistics were implemented in the form of correlation statistics in order to obtain the most accurate measure of the relationship among subscales of the dependent variable RSE and independent variable FIDS. Mega Stats Add-Ins in Micro Soft Excel implementing a one-way ANOVA for the aggregate scores of the FIDS and RSE for the within group sample of Afro and Indo Trinidadian females was used to determine whether or not there was a correlation. The independent variable is self-esteem with feminist identity development as the dependent variable. AN ANOVA of the aggregate scores for FIDS and RSE indicated whether or not there was a significant correlation between Trinidadian females’ self-esteem and feminist identity development. Subscales of each stage of the FIDS were correlated using an ANOVA. These aforementioned correlations answered the following hypothesis:

#### **Hypotheses:**

- H<sub>1</sub> There is a significant correlation between Trinidadian females’ RSE and FIDS.
- H<sub>2</sub> There is a significant correlation between Afro and Indo Trinidadian females’ RSE and FIDS.
- H<sub>3</sub> There is a significant correlation between PA, R, EE, S, and AC stages of the FIDS of Afro and Indo Trinidadian females’.

#### **Within Group Sample- Bermudian Females Hypotheses:**

- H<sub>4</sub> There is a significant correlation between Bermudian females’ RSE and FIDS.
- H<sub>5</sub> There is a significant correlation between PA, R, EE, S, and AC stages of FIDS.

### **Within Group Sample- Sri Lankan Hypotheses:**

H<sub>6</sub> There is a significant correlation between 38 Sri Lankan females' PA, R, EE, S, and AC stages of FIDS.

### **Among Group Sample- Trinidadian, Bermudian, and Sri Lankan Females Hypotheses:**

H<sub>7</sub> There is a significant correlation between Bermudian and Trinidadian females' FIDS and RSE.

H<sub>8</sub> There is a significant correlation between Trinidadian, Bermudian, and Sri Lankan participants' PA, R, EE, S, and AC stages of FIDS.

Based on the information gathered, collated, and calculated, the researcher will determine whether or not the distal and proximal causes of the social role theory were vindicated.

## **Methods**

### **Participants**

Bermudian and Trinidadian participants spoke English as their first language whilst Sri Lankan respondents spoke Tamil. Sri Lankan participants spoke an advanced level of English. All participants completed the survey in English (as indicated in Appendices A and B for sample). All respondents gave informed consent. All participants were informed that the data would be reported cumulatively rather than individually.

No female respondent was exposed to Women's Studies or Gender Studies. MacCalister (1999) suggested, "Students have been found to become more liberal in their attitudes toward women, and their feminist identity, job motivation, job certainty, and self-esteem to increase, after taking a women's studies class" (p. 283). Earlier, Musil (1992) echoed similar conclusions stating that the students who attended Women Studies class found their voices and empowered themselves.

### **Trinidadian**

Out of 70 RSE and FIDS questionnaires disseminated 40 were returned. The minimum sample size for 70 participants with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of .05 and a response distribution of 50% is 60 according to Raosoft calculations. Participants included two housewives, four primary school teachers, 23 full-time college students pursuing the associates' degree in Business Management (enrolled at University of the West Indies School of Business and Applied Studies, ROYTEC), four sales clerks, one hairdresser, two unemployed females, and four managers with ages ranging from 18 to 62 ( $M= 30.9$ ). Nine 18 year-old, six 19 year-old, and three 22 year-old Trinidadian females completed the RSE model and FIDS with the remaining 22 participants evenly distributed throughout the aforementioned age range. No Trinidadian female respondent was exposed to Women's Studies or Gender Studies. MacCalister (1999) suggested, "Students have been found to become more liberal in their attitudes toward women, and their feminist identity, job motivation, job certainty, and self-esteem to increase, after taking a women's studies class" (p. 283).

Respondents were recruited based on their desire to participate in the study and were known and in some cases not known by the researcher. Data for this study were collected in Summer 2010.

### **Bermudian**

Out of 40 RSE and FIDS questionnaires disseminated 20 were returned. The minimum sample size for 40 participants with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of .05 and a response distribution of 50% is 37 according to Raosoft calculations. Participants included five middle school teachers and 15 full-time college students enrolled at Bermuda Community College and pursuing their associates' degree. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 48 ( $M= 27.6$ ). Participants known to the researcher were sent emails asking for their input in the study. Those who were interested responded. Data for this study were collected in Summer 2010.

### **Sri Lankan**

Out of 50 FIDS questionnaires disseminated 38 were returned. The minimum sample size for 50 participants with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of .05 and a response distribution of 50% is 45 according to Raosoft calculations. Participants included students enrolled in classes at the University of Sri Jayewardenepura. Participants' ages ranged from 24 to 40 ( $M= 29.6$ ). Participants known to Dr. Hemamalie Gunatilake were asked to complete the FIDS. Those who were interested completed the questionnaire. Data from the Sri Lankan participants were collected in June 2011.

### **Overview of the Procedure**

For this study, Trinidadian and Bermudian participants completed the RSE whilst Trinidadian, Bermudian, and Sri Lankan Participants completed the FIDS measures to determine. They completed the surveys face-to-face, online, and via telephone. Trinidadian and Bermudian participants were asked their ages, their level of education, their job, whether or not they had taken a Women Studies class, and their geographic location. Sri Lankan participants were asked their ages and whether they had taken any Women Studies classes which they had not. Each Bermudian and Trinidadian respondent agreed to participate, completed both surveys individually, and returned the completed surveys to this researcher online or face-to-face. Each Sri Lankan participant returned the FIDS questionnaire face-to-face to Hemamalie Gunatilake.

### **Measures**

#### **Feminist identity development scale**

The Feminist Identity Development Scale (Bargad & Hyde, 1991) was implemented to assess the participants' feminist identity development (as indicated in Appendix B). Comprising of 48 questions, participants did not completed the questions with "No Scale" (NS) written next to them. These questions were numbers: 13, 15, 25, 26, 27, 31, 34, 39, and 41. The

remaining 39-item questionnaire is based on the five stages of Downing and Roush's (1985) model of feminist identity development. Downing and Roush (1985) suggested a five stage feminist identity model: (1) passive acceptance, (2) revelation, (3) embeddedness/emanation, (4) synthesis, and (5) active commitment. All subscales of this model were assessed to determine participants' level of feminist identity.

The alpha values according to Moradi and Subich (2000) range from .74 to .87. In their research, Moradi and Subich found an internal consistency reliability of "FIDS's R and S yielded alphas below this cut-off" (p. 72). The test of reliability for the FIDS, comparable stability was noted for PA ( $r = .77$ ), R ( $r = .77$ ), and EE ( $r = .79$ ), but S ( $r = .50$ ) and Active Commitment (AC) ( $r = .38$ ) were problematic" (Moradi & Subich, p. 73). The discriminant and convergent validity for the FIDS showed "relations of SSE dimensions were small or nonsignificant with PA, were highest with R, dropped slightly with EE and AC, and were nonsignificant with S" (p. 75).

Gertsmann and Kramer (1997) conducted a study of female college students using the FIDS and determined that it contained an internal consistency as measured by Cornbach's alpha with a range of .51-.81, with a mean of .71. Furthermore, a reliability test as measured by Spearman-Brown ranged from .69-.85, with a mean of .79. (See Moradi)

### Self-esteem (RSE)

Rosenberg, Schooler, Schoenbach, and Rosenberg (1995) indicated, "We marshal evidence that two types of self-esteem may have strikingly different consequences, global self-esteem being more relevant to psychological well-being and specific self-esteem being more relevant to behaviour" (p. 141). Specific self-esteem according to Rosenberg et al. is geared more toward academic achievement whereas global self-esteem is more psychological. The RSE used in this study measures global self-esteem rather than specific self-esteem (Flynn, 2003).

Rosenberg's (1965) Self-Esteem Scale (RSE) was employed to examine participants' level of self-esteem (as indicated in Appendix A). These 10-items measured 23 participants' level of self-esteem and self-acceptance globally. The instrument is divided into five positive statements and five negative statements. Participants *strongly agreed* (1), *agreed*, *disagreed*, and *strongly disagreed* (4) with the statements. The higher the score the lower the self esteem. According to Blascovich and Tomaka (1991), the RSE is one of the most frequently used instruments to measure global self-esteem. Blascovich and Tomaka reviewed the psychometric properties of the RSE and reported a Cornbach alpha range of .77 and .88. Test and re-test correlations indicated a Cornbach alpha range of .85 and .82 within a two-one-week interval.

## Results

The results will be discussed: (a) within Trinidadian sample group; (b) within Bermudian sample group; (c) within Sri Lankan sample group; and (d) among Trinidadian, Sri Lankan, and Bermudian sample group. The independent variable is self-esteem with feminist identity development as the dependent variable.

### Data Correlation within Trinidadian Sample Group Hypotheses:

H<sub>1</sub> There is no significant correlation between 40 Trinidadian females' RSE and FIDS.

The Table below indicates an *F* value of .41 and a *p* value of .53 when a correlation regression analysis was used in Micro Soft Excel Mega Stats Add-Ins. See Table 1 for Correlation of Trinidadian participants' RSE and FIDS.

Table 1  
*Correlation of Trinidadian participants' RSE and FIDS.*

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Regression	225.89	1	225.89	0.41	0.53
Residual	20,975.21	38	551.98		
Total	21,201.10	39			

H<sub>2</sub> There is no significant correlation between 17 Afro and 23 Indo Trinidadian females' RSE. See Table 2.2 for correlation of Indo and Afro-Trinidadian participants' RSE.

The Table 2.2 indicates an *F* value of .22 and a *p* value of .64.

H<sub>3</sub> There is a slight positive correlation of .046 between 17 Afro and 23 Indo Trinidadian females for FIDS.

Table 3.2 shows an *F* value of 4.22 with a *p* value of .046. See Table 3.2 for correlation of Indo and Afro-Trinidadian participants' FIDS.

Table 2.1  
*Correlation of Indo and Afro-Trinidadian participants' RSE. Mean and Standard Deviation*

	Mean	n	SD
AFRO	19.9	17	5.1
INDO	20.8	23	6.0
Total	20.4	40	5.58

Table 2.2 *Correlation of Indo and Afro-Trinidadian participants' RSE.-ANOVA Table*

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Treatment	6.92	1	6.921	0.22	0.64
Error	1,208.85	38	31.81		
Total	1,215.78	39			

Table 3.1  
Correlation of Indo and Afro-Trinidadian participants' FIDS.  
Mean and Standard Deviation

	Mean	n	SD
INDO	131.6	23	13.59
AFRO	117.2	18	29.96
Total	125.3	41	23.14

Table 3.2  
Correlation of Indo and Afro-Trinidadian participants' FIDS.  
ANOVA table

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Treatment	2,089.90	1	2,089.90	4.22	.046
Error	19,320.59	39	495.40		
Total	21,410.49	40			

**Data Correlation within Bermudian Sample Group**  
**Hypotheses:**

H<sub>4</sub> There is no significant correlation between 20 Bermudian females' RSE and their FIDS.

The Table below shows an *F* value of .47 and a *p* value of .50 using the RSE as the dependent variable and the FIDS as the independent variable a significant correlation is concluded based on a correlation regression matrix. See Table 4 for correlation of Bermudian participants' RSE and FIDS.

Table 4  
Correlation of Bermudian participants' RSE and FIDS.

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Regression	98.90	1	98.91	0.47	.50
Residual	3,776.09	18	209.78		
Total	3,875.00	19			

H<sub>5</sub> There is a significant negative correlation between Bermudians' PA, R, EE, S, and AC stages of FIDS. A one-way ANOVA yielded an *F* value of 59.44 and a *p* value of 4.84 E-that suggests that there is no correlation among the subscales of FIDS. See Table 5.2 for correlation of Bermudians' PA, R, EE, S, and AC.

Table 5.1  
Correlation of Bermudians' PA, R, EE, S, and AC.  
Mean and Standard Deviation

	Mean	N	SD
PA	23.5	20	0.51
R	16.7	20	1.53
EE	15.4	20	6.21
S	16.6	20	2.46
AC	28.6	20	2.76
Total	20.1	100	6.07

Table 5.2  
Correlation of Bermudians' PA, R, EE, S, and AC-  
ANOVA table

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Treatment	2,607.94	4	651.99	59.44	4.84
Error	1,042.10	95	10.97		
Total	3,650.04	99			

**Data Correlation within Sri Lankan Sample Group**  
**Hypotheses:**

H<sub>6</sub> There is a significant negative correlation between 38 Sri Lankan females' PA, R, EE, S, and AC stages of FIDS. A one-way ANOVA with four of the variables yielded the following post hoc analysis with *p* values indicating that there is no significant correlation between AC, PA and EE but slight correlations for R, S, and EE. See Table 6.2 for correlation of Sri Lankan participants' PA, R, EE, S, and AC.

Table 6.1  
Correlation of Sri Lankan participants' PA, R, EE, S, and AC.  
Mean and Standard Deviation

	Mean	n	SD
PA	32.7	38	6.15
R	21.7	38	2.56
EE	19.2	38	4.05
S	19.3	38	1.16
AC	25.7	38	5.82
Total	23.7	190	6.69

Table 6.2  
Correlation of Sri Lankan participants' PA, R, EE, S, and AC-  
ANOVA table

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Treatment	4,902.23	4	1,225.56	63.82	8.03
Error	3,552.42	185	19.20		
Total	8,454.65	189			

**Data Correlation among Trinidadian, Bermudian, and Sri Lankan Sample Group**  
**Hypotheses:**

H<sub>7</sub> There is a significant negative correlation between Trinidadian and Bermudian participants' RSE. Table 7.2 shows an *F* value of 20.81 and a *p* value of .0001 which indicates that the null hypothesis should be accepted. See Table 7.2 for correlation of Trinidadian and Bermudian participants' RSE.

Table 7.1  
Correlation of Trinidadian and Bermudian participants' RSE.  
Mean and Standard Deviation

	Mean	n	SD
TDAD SELF	20.4	40	5.58
BDA Self	26.9	20	4.09
Total	22.6	60	5.94

Table 7.2  
Correlation of Trinidadian and Bermudian participants' RSE-ANOVA table

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Treatment	550.41	1	550.41	20.81	-2.68
Error	1,534.33	58	26.45		
Total	2,084.73	59			

H<sub>8</sub> There is a significant negative correlation among Trinidadian, Bermudian, and Sri Lankans' stages of FIDS. A one-factor ANOVA implementing Mega Stats Add-Ins on Microsoft Excel in Table shows an *F* value of 12.24 with a *p* value of -1.85. See Table 8.2 for Correlation of Trinidadian, Bermudian, and Sri Lankan FIDS.

Table 8.1  
Correlation of Trinidadian, Bermudian, and Sri Lankan FIDS.  
Mean and Standard Deviation

	Mean	n	SD
TDAD	125.3	41	23.14
BDA	99.5	20	14.28
SL	122.7	38	18.72
Total	119.1	99	22.13

Table 8.2  
Correlation of Trinidadian, Bermudian, and Sri Lankan FIDS - ANOVA table

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Treatment	9,750.88	2	4,875.44	12.24	-1.85
Error	38,251.30	96	398.45		
Total	48,002.18	98			

When additional tests comparing Sri Lankan and Trinidadian participants' FIDS with one-way ANOVA were conducted there was a slight correlation of .5424 with an *F* value of .37. No difference was found between Bermudian and Sri Lankan's FIDS. See Table 9.2 for correlation of Trinidadian and Sri Lankan FIDS.

Table 9.1  
Correlation of Trinidadian and Sri Lankan FIDS.  
Mean and Standard Deviation

	Mean	n	SD
SL	122.7	38	18.72
TDAD	125.7	40	23.32
Total	124.2	78	21.12

Table 9.2  
Correlation of Trinidadian and Sri Lankan FIDS- ANOVA table

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Treatment	168.38	1	168.38	0.37	.54
Error	34,166.92	76	449.57		
Total	34,335.29	77			

## Discussion

### Trinidadians' RSE and FIDS

No significant correlation was found between Trinidadians' RSE and FIDS which would suggest that participants' feminist identity development and self-esteem were not linked. When analyzed based on ethnicity, no significant correlation was found between Indo and Afro Trinidadians' RSE. This suggests that albeit, it is generalized that Afro Trinidadian women found their voices before Indo Trinidadian women and are more vocal this in no way reflects differences in self-esteem. However, the findings that there is a slight correlations between Afro and Indo Trinidadians' FIDS illustrates that both ethnicities' feminist identity development is linked.

### Bermudian Participants

No significant correlation was found between Bermudian participants' RSE and FIDS. This suggests that there is no link between the participants' self-esteem and feminist identity development. When their scores for the stages of FIDS were correlated a significant negative correlation was obtained. This is in accordance with the stages of FIDS where the higher stages of feminist identity would result in lower levels of passive acceptance.

### Sri Lankan Participants

When the averages for each subscale of FIDS were correlated there was a significant negative correlation found. This suggests that the higher stages of the FIDS the higher the levels of feminist identity. This corroborates other findings on FIDS.

### Overall

When the RSE was correlated for Trinidadian and Bermudian participants, a negative correlation was found. This would suggest that when self-esteem increases for one group it decreases for the other group. A negative correlation was also found when the stages of FIDS were correlated for Trinidadians, Bermudians, and Sri Lankans. However, no significant correlation existed between Trinidadian and Sri Lankan participants' FIDS.

### **Link to Social Role Theory**

The general purpose of my study was to determine whether or not there was a significant correlation between Trinidadian, Sri Lankan and Bermudian participants' FIDS and Trinidadian and Bermudians' RSE. From the data examined, it can be concluded that Trinidadian women reflect more social and causal conditioning than their Bermudian counterparts vis a vis the pre-eminence of feminist identity development and self-esteem. Conversely, Bermudian females mirrored 'tendencies predisposed by natural selection' rather than "culturally constructed" paradigms akin to their Trinidadian counterparts as evidenced from their average scores at stage five of Downing and Roush's (1985) model.

Sri Lankan respondents demonstrated a strong reliance on tradition and adherence to the norm rather than seeing themselves as individuals. In essence, the Sri Lankan women displayed a more communal perspective with lower average scores of FIDS in areas demonstrating a more evolved levels of feminist identity development such as Revelation, Synthesis, and Active Commitment. They therefore, operated in a clearly delineated gender structure where disparate roles exist for males and females. This is in agreement with the more communal roles ascribed to females especially in Asian communities. The Sri Lankan participants showed more proximal causes of gender roles and gender expectations where they abide by what is expected of them.

Trinidadian and Sri Lankan participants resonated more of an implicit patriarchy where distinct role constructs existed (Myers, 2000). Trinidadian and Sri Lankan females exhibited a more nurtured sense of feminist development versus their Bermudian counterparts. This reinforces the proximal rather than the distal cause of gender roles and expectations. Eagly and Koenig (2006) stated, "The distal, or ultimate, causes of sex differences consist of (a) the physical characteristics of the sexes and (b) features of social structures and local ecologies" (p. 45). Such differences suggest that Sri Lankan, Bermudian, and Trinidadian participants adhered to the social structures and local ecologies of their disparate cultures and their enculturation. These findings suggest that Trinidadian and Sri Lankan participants portrayed the stereotypical communal qualities expected of them by society. Boisnier (2003) stated, "women in higher stages are theorized to have a more positive image of women and to embrace their identities as women and feminists" (p. 213). In this case, Bermudian participants scored higher averages in the fourth and fifth stages of the FIDS whilst Trinidadian and Sri Lankan counterparts scored lower. This suggested that Bermudian participants possessed increased levels of FIDS and RSE as opposed to Trinidadian and Sri Lankan females. Bermudian participants' feminist identity is more evolved and their self-esteem is higher than the other nationalities. This could be as a result of their close proximity to the American mainland. Sri Lankan and Indo Trinidadian participants share a history of similar belief systems and ethnicity which could account for lower levels of feminist

identity development. In such cultures, men are seen as having agentic qualities and women more communal qualities and gender structure is clearly defined.

### **Limitations**

Further studies should be conducted to determine the disparity between FIDS and RSE among Bermudian, Sri Lankan, and Trinidadian females. A mixed methodology with open-ended interviews would have resulted in a more expansive response to the hypotheses. A larger sample size would have allowed for increased generalizability of the findings with equal numbers of Indo-Trinidadian and Afro-Trinidadian. Another shortcoming would be the occurrence of social desirability bias where, according to Fisher (1993), "systematic error in self-report measures resulting from the desire of respondents to avoid embarrassment and project a favourable image to others" (p. 103).

### **Recommendations**

Moreover, a more diverse population with a larger sample in diversity may have yielded different results. Further studies on the correlation between RSE, Collective Self-Esteem (CSE), and FIDS among Sri Lankan, Bermudian, and Trinidadian females would provide insightful information on the geometrical interconnection of one with the other. It is recommended that a more specific correlation of females who were exposed to Women's Studies or Gender Studies classes will foment added fodder for the research literature. Another aspect would be to correlate findings from a society with enhanced feminist development. Nevertheless, present conclusions indicate the need for continued research on feminist identity development in the Caribbean in order to promote enhanced awareness and understanding of the social role constructs that define and stymie feminism and feminist identity development.

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**Appendix A**

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965)

The scale is a ten item Likert scale with items answered on a four point scale - from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The original sample for which the scale was developed consisted of 5,024 High School Juniors and Seniors from 10 randomly selected schools in New York State.

Instructions: Below is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself. If you strongly agree, circle SA. If you agree with the statement, circle A. If you disagree, circle D. If you strongly disagree, circle SD.

1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	SA	A	D	SD
2. At times, I think I am no good at all.	SA	A	D	SD
3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	SA	A	D	SD
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.	SA	A	D	SD

**Appendix B**

Feminist Identity Development Scale (FIDS)

Source: Bargad, A., & Hyde, J. S. (1991). Women’s studies: A study of feminist identity development in women. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 15, 181-201.

Instructions

On the following pages you will find a series of statements which people might use to describe themselves. Read each statement carefully and decide to what degree you think it presently describes you. Then select one of the five answers that best describes your present agreement or disagreement with the statement.

For example, if you strongly agree with the statement, “I like to return to the same vacation spot year after year,” you would rate the statement with the number 5 in the space provided as shown below:

1-strongly disagree

2-disagree

3-neither agree nor disagree

4-agree

5-strongly agree

5 I like to return to the same vacation spot year after year.

Remember to read each statement carefully and decide to what degree you think it describes you at the present time.

\_\_\_ 1. I don’t think there is any need for an Equal Rights Amendment; women are doing well. (1)

\_\_\_ 2. Being a part of a women’s community is important to me. (3)

\_\_\_ 3. I want to work to improve women’s status. (5)

\_\_\_ 4. I feel that some men are sensitive to women’s issues. (4)

\_\_\_ 5. I used to think there wasn’t a lot of sex discrimination, but now I know how much there really is. (2)