ASPECTS OF THE CONSTRUCTION
OF A POLITICISED FEMALE IDENTITY IN SOUTH AFRICAN
FASHION PHOTOGRAPHY

Volume 1

Nirma Dolly Madhoo-CHIPPS

Submitted to the Faculty of Arts, Durban Institute of Technology
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Master’s Degree in Technology: Fashion

Supervisor: Philippa Kethro

February 2006
REFERENCE DECLARATION
IN RESPECT OF A
MASTER'S/DOCTOR'S/LAUREATUS DISSERTATION/THESIS

I, Niema Dolly Madhuo-Chipps
Full names of student

and I, Philippa Kethro
Full names of supervisor

do hereby declare that in respect of the following dissertation/thesis:

Aspects of the Construction of a Politicised Female Identity in South African Fashion Photography

(1) as far as we know and can ascertain:

(a) no other similar dissertation / thesis exists;
(b) the only similar dissertation(s)/thesis(es) that exist(s) is/he/she been referenced in my dissertation as follows:

(delete which is inapplicable)

(2) all references as detailed in the dissertation are complete in terms of all personal communications engaged in and published works consulted.

25.4.2006

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT

SIGNATURE OF SUPERVISOR

Master's Degree in Technology: Fashion

DATE

DATE
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND DEDICATIONS

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the following people for their assistance on the preparation of this dissertation.

**Supervisor**
Ms. Philippa Kethro, for her expert guidance, constant assistance and who gave of her time and care to fulfill the requirements of this study unfailingly and beyond her scope as supervisor

**Department heads**
Mr. G. Vorster, Head of Department: Fashion
Mr. P. Reddy, Faculty Officer: Arts – both of Durban Institute of Technology, for their interest and assistance

**Staff**
Durban Institute of Technology, Libraries: Steve Biko, Brickfield, M.L Sultan and City campuses

**Family**
This project is dedicated to my parents, Mr. & Mrs. D. Madhoo and my partner, Shayne Chipps for their unfailing support and for believing in me

**Participants**
Fashion experts Jillian Lochner, Dion Chang and Sara Callow for agreeing to be the elite participants, for their precious time and invaluable input
Peter Machen, both as friend and for collaborative participation, for his time and vision towards this research project

**Proof-reader**
Rehana Laher, for proof-reading and technical advice
ABSTRACT

This dissertation questions and expands currently held notions of traditional fashion identities in South African fashion photography. The impetus for this study stems from observations of a relatively low level of political engagement in local fashion photography as compared to other areas of art and design which seem very enunciative of a politics of identity. Investigation of identity politics in South African fashion photography was informed by a staged investigation. Firstly, accounts of a literature review of fashion theory and key theories of identity allow entrenched constructions of fashion representations to be seen as restrictively politicised. Primary investigation of expert fashion views followed. The concepts of hybridity and fluidity in theories of identity were central to the discovery of alternative politicised fashion identities. These informed a brief which was constructed from analysis of primary data in order to mount alternative proposals of politicised fashion identity. These proposals took the form of a hypothetical exhibition in Volume 2 of this dissertation, representing the culmination of staged data collection and analysis.
# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acknowledgements and Dedications</th>
<th>i</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contents</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Chapter 1: STUDY ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

1.2 FASHION PHOTOGRAPHY AND A POLITICS OF IDENTITY

1.3 THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL ORIENTATION OF STUDY

## Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

2.2 WHAT CAN BE CONSTRUED AS FASHION IDENTITY?

2.3 THE CONSTRUCTION OF FEMALE IDENTITIES IN FASHION IMAGES

2.3.1 Archetypes of Desire: Icons and Ways of Being in Fashion Imagery

2.3.2 The Politics of Identity in Fashion Imagery

- The Eroticised Body: Sexualised Identities in Fashion Photography
- Mainstream Identities: Promotion versus Subversion
- Perspectives on Gender and Sexuality in Fashion Photography
- Race and Ethnicity: A Politics of Colour in Fashion Imagery
- Non-Grata Identities: Abjection and the Imperfect Body in Fashion Imagery

2.4 FASHION PHOTOGRAPHY AND IDENTITY FORMATION IN FEMALE CONSUMERS

2.4.1 Every Action has a Reaction: Instances of Adoption versus Resistance in Female Consumers

- Plastic Fantastic: The Sanitising of Sex in Fashion Imagery
- Implications of the Slender Body: The Social Disorder of Anorexia
2.5 FEMALE FASHION CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

2.5.1 A Culture of Commodification 25

2.5.2 Cultural Kamikaze or Cultural Jujitsu? : Ideology versus Pleasure in Fashion Magazine Consumption 26

2.6 THEORIES, THEORISTS: A SUMMATION OF RESEARCH APPROACH 29

2.6.1 The Politics of Interpretation 29

- Reading Texts 29
- Interpreting the Popular 30
- From Popular Reading into the Hyper-real 31

2.6.2 Questions of Identity 32

2.7 CONCLUSION 34

Chapter 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS 35

3.1 INTRODUCTION 35

3.2 PROBLEMATIZING CRITICAL QUESTIONS 36

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN 37

3.4 DATA COLLECTION PART ONE 37

3.4.1 The Pilot Study 38

3.4.2 Sampling and Instrumentation 39

3.4.3 Access 40

3.4.4 Semi-Structured Interview Schedule 41

3.5 APPROACH TO DATA ANALYSIS PART ONE 42

3.5.1 Generating Meaning 43

- Coding 43
- Triangulation 43
- Clustering 44
- Making Conceptual/Theoretical Coherence 44
APPENDICES

A: Elite interview: Jillian Lochner
B: Elite interview: Dion Chang
C: Elite interview: Sara Callow
Chapter One

STUDY ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

It may come as a surprise to many in the academy that fashion is a highly theorised field. Simmel, in as early as 1904 (cited by Barnard, 1996:10) proposed that the social tendency that people have of wanting to be a part of a group (union) or apart from that larger whole (isolation) reveals a desire for differentiation. This can be performative through fashion, making fashion politicised in distinguishing one group from another (ibid). The term 'politics' in the cultural studies tradition refers to the distribution and operation of power in human relations, the range of sites upon which it is constituted, and the mechanisms through which it is distributed through society (Turner, 1996:216). Theorists such as Roland Barthes have written on the semiotics of fashion, while more contemporary theorists such as Fred Davis, Jennifer Craik and others have extended early semiotic theory through sociological and cultural studies approaches. These perspectives bring into focus the concept that fashion is not ideologically neutral.

1.2 FASHION PHOTOGRAPHY AND A POLITICS OF IDENTITY

The notion of identity in South African visual culture and how this is informed by ideological concerns is explored in van Eeden and du Preez (2005). These editors, drawing from Stuart Hall in their introduction (2005:3-4) to their book, posit cultural practices as practices that invest texts with symbolic meanings and therefore are never neutral or transparent, but are encoded with ideological propositions about power. Contemporary representations of identity in South Africa
show evidence of engagement with political discourses in most fields of art and design, except for, as the proposal for this study initially put forward – a lack of a politics of identity in the arena of local fashion photography. My interest as a fashion student in the fashion imagery generated by local fashion publications as compared with overseas ones such as *i-D* (founded 1980) and *Dazed and Confused* (Founded 1991) was fuelled by my awareness of this seeming disparity. Although there have been shifts as the study has progressed, the crux of the study revolves around initial interest in underlying textual messages conveyed by this array of fashion images; what are they saying to South African women? Are they speaking about South African women? The integral role of mass culture and the media in the ideological construction and representation of identities is an essential issue (van Eeden and du Preez, 2005:7), justifying this need to investigate the politics of identity in local fashion photography and to explore the possibilities of expanding notions of politicised female fashion identities in South Africa.

Critical research questions are as follows:

- What is to be construed as fashion identity?
- How do experts see the construction of fashion identity in fashion photography?
- Where does the potential lie for expanding politicised notions of fashion identity in South Africa?

The following section maps the research process from theory via literature review and primary data collection to a practical component culminating in an exhibition catalogue that represents explorations of politicised notions of South African female fashion identities.
1.3 THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

This study explores the different categories of meaning in the process of female identity construction in the context of South African fashion photography. Fashion photography is perceived as playing a pivotal role in influencing the perception and formation of socially constructed identity (Jobling 1993:3) and it is in the light of this, that this study investigates the level of political enunciation in South African fashion imagery. This study also attempts to document and understand the hierarchies and mechanisms through which fashion photographs are generated in the publishing industry so as to be able to understand what elements motivate expression in the local context.

Chapter Two consists of a review and discussion of theoretical viewpoints that expand the idea of fashion politics. This theoretical framework provides the ground for deriving a methodological approach to this study. An interpretive approach that also draws from critical theory is deemed necessary to provide an adequate context for analysis of data, which comes from both modernist, ideological standpoints and postmodernist popular outlooks.

The purpose of Chapter Three is to pursue theoretical points of departure for research and methodology, so that data analysed can be used to generate meaning with appropriate resonance. Data collection was performed in two stages; the first being elite interviewing of three experts in fashion publishing in South Africa. This process informed the construction of a working brief that conceptualises representations of politicised South African female fashion identities. The second stage involves a reflective execution of a fashion shoot as a further source of data. Reflexive documentation was undertaken as participant observer of the researcher's own process of art direction towards construction of politicised female fashion identity. This stage is recorded and indicated in analysis that culminates in a series of six different politicised female fashion
identities which are portrayed in an exhibition catalogue, which forms the practical component to this study.

Chapter Four is a summation of the whole research endeavour. It reflects upon production of the exhibition catalogue and deliberates further on the issue of politicised fashion identities.
Chapter Two

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

From fashion photography's first tentative steps in the 1890s to fashion imagery now, there have been transformations caused by macro-trends. Socio-cultural, economical and technological forces affect the photographic representation of women, which is now regarded as a "legitimate, though often contentious art form" (Tulloch, 2002:1). Art or commercial photography, with or without a social agenda, are classifications of fashion photography that provoke debate especially when investigated through the different lenses of the ideological, feminist, modernist, post-modernist or hyper-real approaches. Infinite combinations of interpretations from these schools of thought have applied variously to television, film, the street cultures, subcultures and pornography, and have promoted fashion photography's polysemic status, making its products - images read as text, inexhaustive forums of interpretation. This chapter reviews selected literature and theories from these sources, in order to establish a theoretical framework for investigating politicised fashion imagery as a basis for the analysis and interpretation of data.

The conceptions of “fashion identity” constitute core research questions of this study so and an attempt is first made to explain its significance in the following section.
2.2 WHAT CAN BE CONSTRUED AS FASHION IDENTITY?

Although I have not come across the term ‘fashion identity’ as a whole during this literature review, the discrete themes of ‘fashion’ and ‘identity’ occur frequently in fashion theory and a definition can be formulated according to the diverse writings on the matter. Davis (1992:17-18) argues that fashionable clothing is meaningful to consumers because it expresses ambivalences surrounding social identities, such as "youth versus age, masculinity versus femininity, androgyny versus singularity, inclusiveness versus exclusiveness, work versus play, domesticity versus worldliness, conformity versus rebellion...Fashion's code modifications seem constantly to move within and among the symbols by which clothing encodes these tensions, now highlighting this, now mutating that, juxtaposing what was previously disparate, inverting major to minor and vice versa". Kaiser, Nagasawa and Hutton (1995:174) deduce from Davis' theory that fashion is linked to these ambivalences that are "deeply etched into the culturally encoded identity formulas through which Western men and women conceive of themselves". Therefore identity can be sartorially connoted through dress and body management techniques, such as exercising and dieting to look thin (Bordo, 1990:215). Entwistle (2000:114) notes that performances of those identities have something to do with our location in the social world as members of particular groups, classes and cultural communities.

Kaiser's theory about 'minding appearances' further elaborates the question of identity by proposing that the mind is engaged in situated bodily activities by critically framing, organizing, managing and interpreting "perceptions of the dressed body and its relation to the social world" (2000:79). A fashion identity can be seen as a visual articulation of social psychological yearnings that are aesthetic and also political in nature (Kaiser, 1995:251-270).

If fashion, as suggested by Craik (1994:10), is a technique of acculturation, then fashion identities can be considered to be projections of this acculturation. Therefore, fashion identities could be considered to be, simultaneously, projections of the psycho-social self and visual
articulations of an idealized self that is fluidly defined by these reconstructions. Such reconstructions are compositions that convey pre-fabricated codes of self-hood as the basis of social intercourse (ibid).

Theorists like Ted Polhemus (1998:72-79) also give an interesting, postmodern twist to understanding fashion identity by suggesting that the full range of styles and techniques including geochronicity (leaping across cultural-geographic divides) of style and synchronicity (leaping across time stylistically). There is "the possibility of moving among images of different identities, a system of expression in which everyone can choose what to express through their own clothing" (Malossi, 1998:59). Madonna is an example of a cultural pop icon who, through her dramatic shifts in style and image, has put the constructiveness and fluidity of fashion identities into relief (Kellner, 1995:268). From boy toy to material girl and ambitious blonde, via hair pulled back in a bun and in a business suit for news interviews and her role as \textit{Evita}, to religious adherent of the Kabbalah (Gardner, 2005), she has demonstrated that one's appearance and image help produce what one is, or at least how one is perceived and related to, and she influenced and empowered thousands of "wannabees" in this process (Kellner, ibid; Real, 1996:93).

Kellner (1995:232-233) remarks that modern/postmodern identity has been increasingly linked to style, to producing an image, how one looks, almost as if everyone has to have their own look, style and image to have their own identity. By constructing identities based on fashion and image, we somehow play into the imperatives of the fashion and consumer industries which offer a "new you", and a solution to all sorts of problems through buying into the regimes and the fantasy that fashion and its imagery have to offer (Kellner, 1995:291).
2.3 THE CONSTRUCTION OF FEMALE IDENTITIES IN FASHION IMAGES

Fashion spreads in magazines are visual stories that are constructed generally with the aim of unfolding a narrative, and traditionally with the aim of advertising fashion goods while promoting a certain trend or look for the season (Chang, 2005). It is however, the Body that is the "central trope" of that system (Jobling 1999:107).

Fashion, in large part through its imagery, has, from the most blatant to the most subliminal ways played a pivotal role in the changing standards of body ideals such as size and weight as well as social ideals such as class and race (Craik, 1994). According to Roland Barthes' *Fashion System* (1983), which proposes an analytical system to decode the language of fashion magazines, 'Fashion euphoria' is a ubiquitous part of fashion imagery, in fashion's "bon ton, which forbids it to offer anything aesthetically or morally displeasing" (1983:261). In 'Rhetoric of the Image' (Barthes, 1993:25), rhetoric is posited as being the signifying aspect of ideology, and ideology is also called myth by Barthes (as cited by Barnard, 1996:91). We could plausibly consider that Fashion euphoria is ideology, or myth, and *bon ton* is the performative rhetoric of that myth as seen in the majority of fashion imagery, destined for the most prominent segment, the popular / mainstream market.

The narratives in the fashion imagery of these publications have been mostly oriented towards a decorative aesthetic (Lochner, 2005), proposing new ways to be pretty and appealing as diversions that may be aspirational to some. These aspirations also embody politicised identity. However, as this review will try demonstrate, this seemingly superficial façade could be interpreted as veiling an ambitious motto of conspicuous consumption and one that has hugely contributed to standardising ideological contemporary canons of beauty in a Western, hegemonic sense both in Europe and America and locally, in South Africa.
The following sub-section deals with the different types of female identities constructed and commodified by the fashion publishing industry seen from ideological and popular perspectives. The main idea is that representation of women seems to revolve around the fact that men look at women, and that this subsequently is the visual organizing principle in oil painting, magazine advertising and motion pictures (Gaines, 1990:3), while populist theories posit popular practices such as consumption of fashion imagery as resistant to ideological forces, which are forfeited for pleasure (Fiske, 1989; Dyer, Lovell and McCrindle, 1993).

2.3.1 Archetypes of Desire: Icons and Ways of Being in Fashion Imagery.

As fashion photography has served as an index of changing ideas about fashion, it has also presented propositions of archetypes of desire, contextualised by the way that fashion spreads have historically situated the fashion model, as both desiring (or aspiring to be desired) and desirable. Levy (2000:101) proposes that all photography provides ideal images and that fashion photography depends on enormously on style, pose and setting to deliver its message, one of packaged desire. Desire becomes a part of how identity is articulated in normative fashion imagery.

Western fashion systems play on the element of desire in commodifying female fashion identities resulting in the ideal of woman as being feminine in a sexy, chic way (Quick, 1997:140). This is in opposition to other fashion systems where women are not necessarily constructed and judged by their sex appeal such as the Japanese vision of woman as intellectual, sober and asexual, an antithesis to the Western ideal (ibid).

Examples of 1930s and 1940s American female fashion identities can be seen in the work (1933-1960) of fashion photographer Louise Dahl-Wolfe whose expression of the ideals of
youth, vitality and freedom linked to the ‘American Dream’ and smoothed away contradictions and anxiety by presenting a fiction of stability during a period of turmoil (Arnold, 2002:46). This type of representation reinforced Americanness as uniformly White - presenting an identity that ignored the nation’s ethnic diversity (Arnold, 2002:49) but we also see the occurrence of such specific models throughout history. There have historically been specific looks that have embodied a desirable way of being, as a sellable commodity in tune with the zeitgeist.

The ‘Single Girl’ in the 60s (Radner, 2001:191) was typified by white models such as Twiggy and Jean Shrimpton, whose slender, pubescent figures came to epitomise an ideal that was glamorous, adored by men while portraying economic independence. This established consumerism as the mechanism that replaced maternity in the construction of the feminine (ibid). This kind of iconising was carried over in the late 80s into the 90s where a fad for curvy, celebrity supermodels such as Claudia Schiffer dominated fashion visual culture, but by the late 90s this phenomenon receded into obsolescence, giving way to more imperfect / anonymous-looking models whereby new icons like Kate Moss incarnated the new ideal and (again) the ectomorphic woman (Quick, 1997).

2.3.2 The Politics of Identity in Fashion Imagery

The term ‘politics’ refers to the complex of relations between people living in society, especially conduct between people in a particular area of experience (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 1995:901). Questions of identity are subject to the politics of representation as well as ‘politics’ involving questioning how identities are produced and taken up through the practices of representation (Grossberg, 1996:90).

Excluding postmodernist/hyper-real orientation, the idea that all cultural representations are political is prevalent in critical theory (Kellner and Durham, 2001:24). Because identity is socially negotiated and therefore intrinsically politicised (Kaiser, 1995), this study
acknowledges that the nature of the fashion photograph in proposing identity makes its contents invariably politicised.

I have to however remark that political content does vary in its extent of enunciation. Examples of images that have been proposed in the past, such as Corinne Day’s fashion spread, titled “Under Exposure” and featuring Kate Moss (Day, 1993:145-149), have shocked the fashion industry, with their supposedly paedophilic connotations: Moss, who has an ectomorphic, under-developed body, was already an adult at the time of the shoot and was photographed posing in underwear. It is useful to note that if “Under Exposure” had been published in a publication such as The Face, it might even not have caused any offence (Smedley, 2000:148), demonstrating that the site of publication is also important in understanding who the perceivers are and how identity politics operate.

Regardless of the outcry the shoot elicited, as in the case of other shock-value examples of politically challenging imagery in fashion magazines, there is an inevitable normalising absorption in the mainstream over time, noted by Bernard (as cited by Craik, 1994:81). This is seen in the case of Kate Moss, whose career subsequently rocketed off after her infamous debut, making her the most commercially-endorsed model in fashion history (AllAmerican Talent and Celebrity Network, 2005).

Some past and current representations of identities in fashion photography that represent politics of identities such as gender and race are broached in the following sub-sections.

The Eroticised Body: Sexualised Identities in Fashion Photography

As women's bodies became objects of desire in the spectacle of fashion photography, the focal interest in sex and the body have generated issues concerning identity formation, power versus objectification, and visual pleasure (Jobling 1999:11). Representations of women are, in the majority of fashion photographs set to conjure the erotic through beauty, posture and
body language. The extent to which parts of women's bodies are exposed - from semi-nudity to nudity and poses that include sexual cues such as "closed eyes, open mouth, legs spread," as Myers argues (as cited by Crane, 2000:203), demonstrates how the lexicon of fashion imagery has expanded to accommodate sex as common currency, a resulting mainstreaming of sexualised identity.

Davis (as cited by Crane, 2000:18) states that hegemonic femininity is a conception of femininity based on masculine ideals (and is therefore patriarchal), promoting female appearance that emphasize physical attributes and sexuality in a way that encourages women to look at themselves and other women as men would. Gaines (1990:1) also suggests that according to feminist theories, "the image of woman is a construction", industrially manufactured and pieced together according to aesthetic rules such as lighting, gesture, and composition, and 'prefabricated' by men.

Hegemonic femininity assumes that women are all alike in their passivity as recipients of the male gaze, allocating them a traditional exhibitionist role (Mulvey, 1989:19). But, it must be noted that attitudes towards media images identified with hegemonic femininity are said to be moving towards a conception of such images as indications of power rather than passivity (Arnold, 2001:63; Radner, 2001:183). Although Mulvey (1989:29-38) does propose the possibility of a female gaze by conceding that women can, and do take pleasure as spectators, her position still deliberates upon the male gaze; as Fiske (1989b:50) notes - Mulvey is primarily concerned with exploring the hegemonic force of patriarchal cinematic pleasure, rather than the ways it can be evaded or resisted. In this light it is useful to look at British cultural studies which contribute to the theorization of women's pleasures through the crucial notion of resistance, which restores "some modicum of power" to women, whom earlier formulations of ideology did not afford them (Gaines, 1990:7).

Barthes' concepts of jouissance and plaisir as elaborated by Fiske in his writings on popular culture (1989a:62-76; 1989b:54-55), propose that pleasure is sited in the body (jouissance)
and not in the mind (plaisir), thereby resisting ideological control. Considering that the majority of fashion publications cater for a female audience and not a male one, an observation supported by Jobling (1999:122), it can be relevantly assumed that jouissance could be a valid alternative, as sexually-charged pleasure that offers an alternative standpoint to that of the ideological, and one that does not necessarily sex the gaze. Concurrently, Sawchuck (as cited by Craik, 1994:13) warns against concentrating too much on the gaze and scopophilia because, looking is only part of the process, and other facets of practices of interpretation, such as projection and fantasy need to be explored.

**Mainstream Identities: Promotion versus Subversion**

While some sexually alluring representations of women can be seen as celebrating and enabling liberating expressions of power and desire, a potential negation can be identified in their pervasive nature filling magazines and billboards with a claustrophobically narrow vision of a constantly available voluptuous femininity (Arnold 1999:488). Coupled with fashion publishing's need to constantly evolve and a need for marketplace distinction (Stout, 1998:34), the industry has witnessed the launch of publications such as *Nova* (1965-1975), *The Face* (1980-2005) and *i-D* (1980-current).

These innovative publications and their adventurous conceptualising of fashion spreads have made traditionally mainstream periodicals such as *Vogue* (founded in 1874) and *Cosmopolitan* (founded in 1886) seem unimaginative and relatively apolitical by comparison (Beard, 2002; Jobling, 1999:17). *Nova* realised that women had a sense of humour and they wanted to be treated intelligently; the publication included features that broached political and taboo subjects (Quick, 1997:109). Triggs (2000:130) states that in publications like *i-D*, sex still sells, but with recontextualised and reassigned new meanings. This publication deals more with parody, inviting a re-evaluation of socially constructed images of sex and morality in print. The fashion identities constructed and showcased in these alternative publications such as *The Face*, have proposed new ways of seeing, by pushing the boundaries that conceptualise identities.
Dazed and Confused (founded 1991- current), also of the visionary genre, is a publication that politicises fashion identity as part of its philosophy. A particular edition of that publication has featured a fashion spread conceptualised and art-directed by avant-garde designer Alexander McQueen who, by featuring models with severe physical disabilities, subverted and questioned the tradition of portraying physical perfection as a representation of beauty (Khan, 2000:118).

Politicised issues explored in fashion magazines have as Jobling (1999:190-210) has shown, included femininity, gender and androgyny, race and ethnicity, alien bodies, masquerade, fetishism, performance, fin-de-siècle / millennium, subculture, anti-fashion, and class, amongst others. Because it is not possible to cover all of these themes of identity politics in this study, those that are deemed most relevant to this research, in the interpretation of collected data and of its practical have been selected for discussion.

Perspectives on Gender and Sexuality in Fashion Photography

If we consider that fixed gender identities and intolerance of gender ambivalence have progressively disappeared from around the end of the twentieth century, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, hegemonic ideals of appropriate gender behaviour and appearance still remain distinctively different for male and female identities (Crane 2000:17). Gender is a social construction (Kaiser, 1995:65; Craik, 1992:44), and appearances in everyday life shape our impressions of what it is like to be male or female. Representations of gender in fashion images and by extension, sexuality, reaffirm these constructed characteristics and in the vast majority of cases, in a hegemonic fashion.

On a South African level, it is interesting to note the constructing of femininity in Huisgenoot (founded in 1916) as examined by Vlijoen and Vlijoen (2005). Originally a lifestyle magazine for the Afrikaner community Huisgenoot, was, around the 1950s, also a cultural text which included representations of women with allusions to an Afrikaner identity. This was textually
read through the various articles that represented Afrikaner women as being sober, God-fearing, and family-oriented; concepts which along with a presumptive passivity in visual representations of women, embodied ideological signifiers of pragmatism and patriarchy, supposedly lying at core of Afrikaner identity (Viljoen and Viljoen, 2005:90-96). Huisgenoot has since then changed its brand identity from the conservative to "profit-driven populism" (ibid), but we still see the patriarchal norms being applied to the construction of female identities in South Africa in it and other mainstream magazines such as Cosmopolitan and Elle.

Chang (2005) notes that South African publications all have a specific formula that is repeated in every issue – for instance Cosmopolitan's is sex tips, how to find the 'g-spot' and exclusives like one cited by Vienne (2000:92), "Hot New Sex Position – a Move So Erotic You'll Wear Out the Mattress Springs This Month"; These sensibilities are unequivocally reflected in the fashion imagery as sexualised fashion identities (ibid). Although this could be translated as promoting an emancipation of women and their sexuality, Vienne (2000:91) suggests that magazines give advertisers what they want, and these companies, by and large are owned by men whose views on sex override the desires of female readers. This view is reflected by Kaiser (1995:418) in her discussion of the nature of a gendered social stratification and the economic power that men hold: "Since most advertisers are men, they may be convinced that what sells a product to men is consistent with what sells a product to women," states Dispenza (as cited by Kaiser, 1995:419).

However there are magazines that produce imagery to purposefully subvert or question these stereotypes - publications like The Face and i-D and locally SL, regularly broach issues like 'queer gender' and sometimes parody or satirize the proposed conceptions of mainstream hegemonic bodily erogenous zones, bodily gender and parts of the body signifying gender, through their fashion spreads; The resulting images seem to be tensioned between art and abstraction while still retaining the commercial glossy appeal of mainstream publications.
Andrea Giacobbe is one of the fashion photographers who has produced shoots for *The Face*, and his digitally enhanced exploration of identities that are dislocated from the fixed sexualised stereotypes into fluid ones could be interpreted as alien; sometimes transgendered, and placed in an anti-narrative that could be collapsing into the hyper-real or a simulacrum (see section 2.5.1), his characters problematizing interpretation (Jobling, 2000). Giacobbe strives for a visionary deconstruction of sexual and gender identities – offering contemporary evidence of what Barthes (1995:133) suggested would be the embodiment of a new social politics and sexual politics. Examples of Giacobbe’s fashion spreads titled ‘Simplex Concordia’ published in *The Face*, (Giacobbe, 1996:90-99) and ‘La Comédie’ in *Dazed and Confused* (Sanders, Poynter and James, 1999) provoke new orders of idiosyncratic expression.

Diametrically opposed to Giaccobe but still portraying politicised identity, is image-producer Cindy Sherman, an artist who takes fashion photographs. She poses for all her photographs herself, in a sensibility that parodies hegemonic femininity with its constant repetition of the same model – herself, in satirised, stereotypified poses. Sherman resists the erotic atmosphere that the fashion model is supposed to conjure by positioning the female figure in such a way that it appears grotesque or soft and limp, as opposed to polar opposites of a popular idea of fetishized femininity – high-heeled and corseted, erect, flamboyant and exhibitionist (Mulvey, 1999:324). Loreck (2000:26) succinctly comments on the incarnations in Sherman’s fashion images; “The very same autonomous theatricality that turns the wearer into a clown, a madwoman, or a simpleton, renders desire, as the motor behind every fashion magazine, truly visible as a dynamic of constant failing: the smouldering eroticism of consumption and imitation could never construct ‘female’ identity, except as caricature.”

Alternative constructions of female identities that can be considered subversive and against the grain but are in fact a reflection of social subcultural phenomena, as can be seen in skate and snowboarding culture embodied by identities such as “Riot Grrrls”, iconised by Tank Girl (Salen, 2000a:84). Riot Grrrls defy the male sexist environment they operate in by resisting, challenging, and adapting images and ideologies established by their male counterparts.
through recontextualising language and gender stereotypes (Salen, 2000a:85). These, grouped with other hi-tech female fashion identities such as “Digital Sirens” (illustrated by archetypes such as Lara Croft) explore new expressions of femininity and feminism in portraying an aggressive, inaccessible femininity inviting young women to develop their own definitions of Girl Power (Salen, 2000b:148-151). While these female fashion identities are popularised mostly virtually, and in ‘Riot Grrrlzines’ (ibid) they find little or no expression in mainstream fashion circuits.

Race and Ethnicity: A Politics of Colour in Fashion Imagery

This theme is particularly relevant to this study because the shifts in multicultural and recently democratised South Africa are recent, current and most tangible. It is interesting to review the historical exclusion of black women from mainstream Western discourses of beauty, femininity and attractiveness in a mainstream Anglo-American context. Scholarly work on this issue can inform a critical view of fashion photographic representation of race and ethnicity in the South African context.

Anglo-American fashion discourse claimed in the late 90s that, “the use of a black face on the cover of a magazine can set sales plummeting by 20 per cent” (Jobling 1999:152), and a former fashion director at British Elle commented in 1990 that, “according to market research, black girls on covers don’t sell” (Jobling, 1999:182). This would appear to be a mainstream fashion myth: Cheddie (2002:63) states that the economic power of the black consumer was known to the fashion industry and to the advertising industry a decade before the first black model made her appearance on the cover of Harper’s Bazaar in 1965. Another myth the author dispels is the “narrative of the liberal progressive editor/photographer” (ibid); Janice Cheddie challenges these notions by arguing that it is primarily discourses of primitivism and otherness that white image-makers were representing upon the introduction of the first black models on the fashion scene. Arnold (2001:96) also notes that the use of several black and asian models in the 1970s was mainly for photo shoots with exotic themes. To extend
fashion’s showcasing of primitivism, we see publications which feature fashion spreads in exotic destinations and use indigenous subjects as props for the white models in the fashion shoots. For example, British Vogue and even The Face have respectively published fashion spreads photographed in Sri Lanka and Borneo with white models surrounded by darker natives; this juxtaposition raises issues about racial identities – with the model's skin tone being represented as being lighter there is this connotation that she is superior and more civilized than them (Jobling, 1999:78).

The supposed emancipation in terms of the integration of non-white models in the fashion industry is documented in the form of successful black models like Iman in the 1980s, Naomi Campbell in the 1990s and more recently, Alek Wek (Jury, 2001; White, 2000). The latter is however the only black model who has achieved stardom through the genuineness of her look – ebony skin tone, ethnic features and a shaved head; no wig (White, 2000). Croal (as cited by Seyaki, 2003) notes that Naomi Campbell generally sports a coiffure of long straight hair and often wears colour contact lenses, aspects configurative of Eurocentricity. Meanwhile, most black models say that they are not allowed to wear their ‘locks’ and are forced to wear ‘wigs, falls and weaves’ so as to have flowing hair that emulates that of white models (Gregory and Jacobs, 1993).

The individual success stories of black models seem divorced from their wider social and political backgrounds (Cheddie, 2002). Paul Jobling's review of fashion spreads may corroborate the idea that ethnicity is treated as a form of exoticism. His survey of twelve fashion periodicals spanning from 1980-1996 (1999:189-210) found that only 8% of fashion spreads represent men and women from more than one race, and of these, just over half represent models of one race only, most prevalently Japanese, Afro-Caribbeans and African Americans. “These figures clearly unmask the covert racism of the fashion industry” (Jobling 1999:152), a view supported by Mikki Taylor (2001) in her article deploring the absence of black models in fashion merchandising.
Chang (2005), as an expert in South African fashion publishing however affirms that if pre-
democratic governmental politics were the cause of the absence of non-white models in 
fashion imagery, democracy oversaw the gradual introduction of models of colour that 
changed perceptions of beauty that essentially revolved around white skin and blonde hair 
stereotypes. This question is further explored in Chapter 3, in light of research data.

Non-Grata Identities: Abjection and the Imperfect Body in Fashion Imagery

Townsend says “In Western culture we seem to have a problem in looking at certain images of 
the human figure, represented photographically” (1998:8). The concept of abjection has been 
explored by Julia Kristeva (as cited by Patin and McLerren, 1997:1). It holds that self-identity 
feels threatened by a breaching of the body’s boundaries through its production of matter that 
is deemed socially impure. This tension between the clean and dirty body is crystallised in the 
processes such as ingestion and excretion of food. The way that this is visually represented 
can either connote or denote an abject relationship.

Bodily fluids that come from body orifices provoke emotions of disgust and horror (ibid) as well 
as bodily functions and aspects such as body hair and body fat are elements that are almost 
ever represented in mainstream fashion imagery. In fact, this conspicuous absence from the 
 latter somehow legitimises and consolidates horror and abjection of these natural processes 
and the conspicuous presence of the plastic body forges plastic ideals, which are unattainable 
to its audience (Shapiro, 2000:102-104). Bordo, (cited by Radner, 2001:183) states that this is 
therefore oppressive, through its subliminal potential in affirming such beliefs in its audience. 
The very idea of fashion is challenged by such depiction of the abject, in radical, but still 
fashion orientated publications such as Dazed and Confused and The Face. These issues do 
not find representation in local mainstream publications.
Another group of women who do not find representation in mainstream fashion imagery is that of ageing women to whom Church Gibson (2000a:79) attributes the phenomenon of an invisibility that afflicts this group within advertising, marketing and the fashion industry in Western society. This comes despite the economic power they possess. Church Gibson (2000b:350) draws on Sontag and de Beauvoir to note that this has in fact has more to do with notions of beauty in Western culture, where women are always judged primarily on their sexual allure and an automatic association of senility, sterility and impotence to the ageing female body relegates this social group to the abject.

The sanitized and plastic perfection of traditional fashion magazine pages, and the oppressive standards of beauty to which they adhere are however challenged by non-conformists that see through the excessive façade of glamour, a façade on the brink of collapse and explored through depictions of abject, brutalized and imperfect bodies (Arnold, 1999:489-493). Fashion photographers like Juergen Teller and Corinne Day have explored the human aspects of women in representing them with images that are real, often exposing the skin as mottled and tired, showing bruises and signs of flaws rather than smoothing it all away (ibid; Cotton, 2000).

The fashion identity ‘Heroin Chic’ became pervasive in fashion in the late 90s (Arnold, 2001:48) but did not grow to the ubiquitous scale of ideals of slenderness. While heroin chic was criticized by conservatives as 'glorifying death', it is useful to note, in the defence of photographers such as Corinne Day, who produced the imagery supposedly suggesting this look, that they were attempting to depict life in a more honest and realistic style, a move away from fashion’s traditional representation of impossible beauty (ibid). This aesthetising of the abject, projected through Heroin Chic was fashion imagery as social commentary, representing a social marginal reality whereby subculture crossed channels to mainstream (Jobling, 1999:112), from where it then became conspicuously diffused. That it was taken as potentially formative is debatable because according to Chang (2005) this depends on who is consuming these images – older women do not buy into a style they do not like whereas
younger women are more susceptible to being convinced. Sections 2.4 and 2.5 deal with the dynamics of how consumers read and apply cultural texts in more detail.

Other explorations of imperfection and the 'real' body can be found in South African fashion photographer Jillian Lochner's book, *SNLV* (2003) where her photographic imagery questions the values of fashion photography. In a specifically chilling sequence, Lochner photographs her models playing with a chicken carcass, with both actress and prop looking pale and corpse-like in each image. This conjures issues of objectification and questions about the humanity of the tropes in fashion imagery (de Waal, 2003:111).

**2.4 FASHION PHOTOGRAPHY AND IDENTITY FORMATION IN FEMALE CONSUMERS**

"Fashion photography provokes viewers and consumers into confirming their own identity through structures of desire." It is in this way that fashion photography "exceeds the seams of the clothes it portrays" by playing with current definitions of sexuality and identity, "constituting a nexus between fashion and selfhood" as Craik, (1994:114) has importantly pointed out.

Kaiser (1985:558-560) describes contemporary everyday life as saturated with bombardments of images via media and as we become accustomed to seeing and interpreting, we develop a "media logic" that becomes a part of how we form perceptions in everyday life; it influences how we perceive appearances, for example, how we apply these media perceptions of tall, thin models to judgements of our own or others' bodies in everyday life. Media in the form of fashion photography is therefore formative in our perceptions of what looks 'right', although we do bring our prior experiences and understandings to the viewing experience. In that sense, these images interact with us as we shape our perceptions of social identity (ibid).
2.4.1 Every Action Has A Reaction: Instances of Adoption versus Resistance in Female Consumers

This section looks at past and current instances of female identities, and potential ones, in the arena of fashion photography and the interface with its audience, while some factors that govern interpretation by theorists such as John Fiske are discussed alongside with these in section 2.6 to elaborate on those issues.

Plastic Fantastic: The Sanitising of Sex in Fashion Imagery

In her essay titled “Shave, Wax, Depilate”, Ellen Shapiro (2000) comments on the extent that fashion imagery has gone to present a perfectly hairless plastic body (with the exception of the head full of hair, of course). The author deplores the extremes to which fashion imagery has stretched in order to denaturalise body hair - a very conspicuous absence of body hair from any remotely, though naturally hirsute areas is the prevalent sensibility in fashion's iconography. Although apparently harmless, it is so alarmingly unattainable that we see the repercussions in younger generation, such as the fourteen-year-old that asked for permission from her mum “to shave off her pubic hair” because “the poor, misguided...girl thought there was something wrong with her body because no one has hair down there in ads or catalogs.” (Shapiro 2000:104). Mythologies in fashion photography have transformed the woman, who against her natural process of maturation, is turned back into a child through waxing and dieting (Levy, 2000:101).

Feminist scholars such as Susan Bordo, as referred to in Radner (2001:183), claim that consumer culture oppresses women by holding them to impossible, unattainable standards, which are qualified perverse in their impossibility by Levy (2000:101). One of these is slenderness, which is discussed next.
Implications of the Slender Body: The Social Disorder of Anorexia

Perhaps the most easily recalled incidence of fashion on body ideals is the perception of body size/thinness by women; in the West, the culture of slenderness dominates social discourse and fat has a negative connotation as remarked by Bovey (cited by Gamman, 2000:62). Craik (1994:85) suggests that the pressure to manipulate and actively control body shape stems from the emphasis on appearance as the hallmark trade of contemporary Western femininity.

Women identify over-thin models as their body shape ideal and have a tendency to overestimate their own body size (Craik, 1994:67) and while there are numerous other factors that are associated to the rise in the number of women suffering from eating disorders, Craik (ibid) cites the “voracious consumption of images of ideal bodies” as one of the factors, amongst others, that have led to such an increase. This demonstrates the potential power of fashion photography to influence perception of body ideals - which contribute in inducing the pursuit of an idealised physical weight or shape where body management such as diet and exercise and induced disorders such as anorexia or bulimia become a means of normalising the body in the process of reproducing gender relations and power relations (Bordo, 1998:215; Kaiser, 1997:215) through fashion identity.

According to Stearns (as cited by Gamman, 2000:62), contemporary obsession with fat ran parallel with the growth of consumer culture, women’s equality and changes in women’s sexual and maternal roles, all possibly mediated by fashion imagery which by also excluding larger women from representation, or “focusing only on extreme representations of fat women with all the negative grotesque associations, functions to keep the rest of the female population on diets” (Gamman, 2000:65). It must however be noted that whilst South African readers complain that fashion magazines promote unrealistic ideals, when fashion spreads feature “largely feminine” body types, readers complain again and demand to see thin, waif-like, “beautiful” models (Callow, 2005). This reaffirms that when it comes to body ideals, South African women are on par with Western standards. In this light we can say that if the fashion
model has a part in perpetrating thinness as an ideal, fashion photography cannot be promulgated as advocating anorexia (Jobling, 1999:127).

An overdeterministic and pessimist psychoanalytic reading into which total identity is produced in the media is therefore arguable as Judith Williamson (as cited by Walkerdine 1995:323) has stated, her students “deconstructed an advert at five paces, but insisted they liked the fantasies presented. They resisted her attempt to take away their pleasure.” Williamson elaborates her argument (ibid) by suggesting that audiences make active meanings in their consumption and are neither passive consumers nor allow their identities to be determined by fashion texts. Scholars such as Elizabeth Wilson (1985) emphasize that consumer culture and fashion particularly offer women the means of gratifying desires and pursuing pleasure. Although an endlessly debatable dialectic, this should be looked at from both perspectives. It is interesting to note Craik’s (1994:50) mention that academic interest in the content of women’s magazines has developed only recently. Citing critical writing spanning from 1970 to 1991, she concludes that most of these studies have noted the lack of fit between the ideals of femininity and the practical conduct of women (ibid).

2.5 FEMALE FASHION CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

Postmodernism expresses at one level a horror at the destructive excess of Western consumerist society, yet, in aestheticising this horror, we somehow convert it into a pleasurable object of consumption (Wilson, 1992:4). Consumerism and commercialism rest on the individual’s desire to get ahead of the pack (Ilyin, 2000:33).

Inextricably linked to this is the system of capitalism which relies on producers’ vested interest in selling more than can be consumed, through advertising, to stimulate the demand for more (Rodaway, 1995:264). “As we make more images and consume them, we still need more images; and still more” (Sontag, 1999:93). To consume means to burn, to use up – and,
therefore the need for replenishment. This need lies in the very logic of conspicuous consumption itself (ibid).

2.5.1 A Culture of Commodification

The role of commodities as forming a linkage of symbolic social meaning between economics and culture is discussed by Lee (1993:20-21). This author who draws from the writings of Marx promotes a view that the true essence of all consumer goods lies not in function, economic value, physical and aesthetic appearance, contextualisation in advertising or marketing, but in the fact that they are commodities – that is the fact that they are produced to be exchanged for profit that gives them their distinctive character or ‘soul’. As observed by Lee (ibid), even though the ‘fetishistic’ appeal of products appears to draw from ‘nature’, the commodification of products serves therefore primarily as an exchange for profit.

Baudrillard’s formulation of commodification, as cited in Evans (2000:94) departs from Marx’s version by positing commodity fetishism ‘at the level of the sign’ in post-industrial societies, and therefore making it more connotative – meanings invested in the objects of everyday life for example the prestige or sign value of a new sports car (Kellner, 2000:733). While this departure is on par with technologies of the image and their impact upon culture, it is useful to treat the commodity as having both use and exchange value and sign value – the expression of style, prestige, luxury or power (ibid). From this perspective, Baudrillard claims that commodities and the phenomenon of sign value has become an essential constituent of consumption in the consumer society.

Fashion photography and advertising have, in a taunting, teasing play on consumers’ yearnings for the perfection of their own being, seduced the audience in a quest for more (Arnold, 2001:71); the questions on whether female consumers are active or remain passive,
and the categories of meaning at these different levels of consumption are addressed in the following sub-section.

2.5.2 Cultural Kamikaze or Cultural Jujitsu? : Ideology versus Pleasure in Fashion Magazine Consumption

"Women continue to buy and enjoy fashion magazines although they know about the falsity, exploitation and stereotyping of advertising and fashion features" (Craik, 1994:9). While Craik's statement assumes that these women are 'in the know' (therefore necessarily entailing 'knowledge' of this ideological level of connotation), hegemony is "the power or dominance that one group holds over another" and assumes that women are normatively marginalized (Real, 1996:149). They are therefore not necessarily aware of such manipulative ideological forces: Hegemony is a situation assumed when positions of dominance and subservience are legitimised so that they appear natural and proper, not only to those in positions of dominance but also to those in positions of subservience (Barnard, 1996:40). If positions of dominance and subservience can be accepted, or consented to by both positions then this ensures the functioning of ideological systems such as mainstream fashion (ibid). Subsidiaries such as mainstream fashion photography sustain and reproduce positions of power, with women embracing the very tools of their own oppression.

It is the mainstream sex-saturated publications such as *Cosmopolitan* (Chang, 2005) which seem to enforce patriarchal heterosexual hegemonic standards (Vienne, 2000:91) that are the ones that have largest circulation figures. It is the same recurrent identities (Callow, 2005) or recurrent features revolving around sex (Chang, 2005) that are the selling points of such publications. Craik (1994:55) proposes that a reason why topics associated with techniques of constructing (Western) femininity recur – they provide popular education about cultural mores. In that way, women's magazines resemble oral cultures, "where the circulation of 'potted'
versions of certain topics is a way of reproducing skills and knowledges across generations and different cultural groups" (ibid). If as claimed by Barnard (1996:40), this could be potentially seen as a hegemonic, unconscious form of indoctrination promulgated for patriarchal ends, an attempt by Craik (1994:9) to reconcile this intellectual critique with the undeniable popularity of fashion magazines amongst women suggests that the hypnotic appeal of fashion has been the notion of female pleasure in women's magazines, soap operas, romantic fiction and other images of femininity, which offer women fantasies, identities and momentary escape from the contradictions of everyday life.

The effects of theories of pleasure raise the possibility that communication may have more consequences than the generation of meaning (Turner, 1996:110); To extend this, Fiske (1989a:76) identifies the body as hegemony's Achilles heel and posits popular pleasures as resisting and standing outside of the forces of ideology by generating 'illicit' pleasures and therefore subversive meanings.

The concept of resistance is primordial in establishing an argument that counters the oppressiveness of ideological assumptions – Hall and Jefferson (as cited by Turner, 1996:103), defines resistance as a position taken by contributing smaller groups or class fragments, social groups that develop their own 'distinct patterns of life,' giving 'expressive form to their social and material life-experience'. Turner (1996:104) further argues that when the emphasis is shifted towards the location of meanings in those who participate in the practice rather than the practice itself, the meaning of the text is allowed to be more provisional, perhaps contradictory, 'dethroning' the text and its determining authority and its ability to determine how it would be understood by its readers.

Mica Nava (1999:50-51) argues that the view that women are easily duped by advertisers and politically pacified by the buying of useless objects reflects a lack of mentality of ordinary people. "Consumerism is far more than just economic activity: it is about dreams and consolation, communication and confrontation, image and identity" (Nava, 1992:167). She
maintains that consumerism can provide women with the sense of identity, purpose and creativity through the complex ways in which the texts are understood, as well as the ambiguous pleasures they offer while women consume advertisements independently of the product that is being marketed (1999:54-55). This seems to require critical skills as opposed to 'unskilled consumption' which is predominantly passive and requires a minimum of creative effort on the part of the individual (Rodaway, 1995:262). Nava (1999:57) highlights the insights about the popular and imaginative appeal of consumption that combined with an exploration of the possibilities of political activism at the point of consumption, also gives a discerning power to the consumer.

The current state of theory lacks consensus on whether women respond to fashion imagery as modernist or postmodernist consumers, and whether they challenge, negotiate, or ultimately accept what fashion magazines have to offer (Crane, 2000:207). Researchers like Seyaki (2003) have however studied localised cases of female consumer responses to commercial influences, including fashion imagery. While Dia Seyaki (ibid) had initially assumed that young black college women consciously adopt Eurocentric hegemonic standards of beauty, she found that they hold fast to a more African-centered model and largely aspire to a standard of beauty more in keeping with their own cultural standards. Bobo (cited by Crane, 2000:208), expounds that responses to popular culture by African-American women are particularly complex, because of the difficulties experienced by black women in identifying with predominantly white images or with images of black women created by whites. This kind of research and its findings are critical to expand knowledge especially in a South African context where the dynamics between fashion imagery and a multicultural female consumer market are in a state of flux as a result of the need to overturn imagery deriving from South Africa's historical/political past.
2.6 THEORIES, THEORISTS: A SUMMATION OF RESEARCH

APPROACH

This section draws together the different theoretical viewpoints of this review and relates them
to the study focus. How fashion publishing experts see the construction of fashion identity and
how this may be expanded need to be considered.

2.6.1 The Politics of Interpretation

We are all restricted by both the viewing and the reading codes to which we have access and
by what representations there are for us to view and read; cultural forms do not have
determinate meanings (Dyer, 1993:2). This sub-section explores some of the polysemic
aspects of representation and interpretation and looks at some of the concepts of theorists
whose works have been referred to previously.

Reading Texts

While a deep semiological approach is disfavoured for this study because the sign system gets
very complex and abstract, images are worked with from levels of signification as proposed by
Roland Barthes (1993:21). He distinguishes the types of knowledge needed to comprehend
signification at two different levels – the denoted and connoted levels. Reading the denoted
image requires only linguistic and anthropological knowledge but for the connoted image the
reader needs further cultural knowledge and references which the theorist terms as 'lexicons'
version of shared interpretive structures, calling it a 'referent system'.
Barthes, as referred to in Fiske (1989b:103), makes a distinction between two kinds of texts - a 'readerly' text, which is a closed, easy to read and undemanding, inviting an essentially passive, receptive, disciplined reader who accepts its meanings as already made; and a 'writerly' text, which invites the reader to participate in the construction of meaning.

Interpreting the Popular

Barthes, (as cited by Kellner, 1995:238) provides examples of ideologies, or what he calls myths, that idealize contemporary values and institutions and thus exalt an established way of life. These can be illustrated through the function that popular media serves in providing models of identity in the contemporary world. However, the way we read and interpret culture as being activated primarily by the text, the reader or the context allows for our reading of messages to differ in either accepting, or opposing the preferred meaning encoded by dominant culture or finding some negotiated mix, all depending on the interpretive community to which we belong (Real, 1996:114). Hegemony over audience reception thus becomes debatable (ibid).

John Fiske (1989b) proposes that some texts are made into popular culture and others are rejected. Following Barthes' distinctions of texts as elaborated in the previous page, Fiske identifies the popular text as the readerly one, the denoted image, which is more accessible and does not challenge the reader to make too much sense of it (1989b:13). These procure popular pleasures in the form of evasion and productive pleasures (Fiske, 1989b:50). The evasion element centres on the body and it is akin to Barthes' jouissance as mentioned in subsection 2.3.2, and is a concept of resistance, "the evasion of ideology" (ibid). "Reading a text with the body," is an expression that Roland Barthes, quoted in Fiske (1989b:51), uses to explain the physical response of a reader to aspects of a text such as a play of words or images at the moment of reading when text and reader erotically lose their separate identities and, defying meaning or discipline, become a new, momentarily produced body that is theirs, and theirs alone. Popular pleasures that evade social discipline, turn to excessive body
consciousness to produce this jouissance - like evasion include rock and roll, that is played so loud that it can only experienced in the body, and forms of dancing such as 'head banging' (ibid).

Fiske (ibid) draws from Barthes to explain that plaisir, on the other hand, which is the productive pleasure, is more of an everyday pleasure and involves the recognition, confirmation and negotiation of social identity. There are pleasures in conforming to the dominant ideology and the subjectivity it proposes when it is in our interest to do so, as there are equally pleasures of opposing or modifying that ideology and its subjectivities when they fail to keep our interests (ibid). Instances of this kind of pleasure could possibly be exemplified by the conspicuous consumption of fashion magazines and fashion images by female consumers.

Fiske (1989b:56) adds that the mix of self-interested, self-produced meanings of issues such as gender relations, that a reader draws from a text are not necessarily linear, sequential or consequential on the politics of everyday life, but are multidirectional, non-necessary, dispersed and difficult to trace in specific instances. Pleasures, conclusively, result from this mix of productivity, relevance, and functionality, which is to say that the meanings a reader makes from a text are pleasurable when she feels that they are her meanings and that they relate to her life in a direct practical way.

**From Popular Readings into the Hyper-real**

If the study of popular cultures falls within the portmanteau of postmodernism, hyper-reality does also, but in an even more deconstructed and deconstructive sense than the former. Hyper-reality is a mode of signification wherein things are "no longer a question of imitation, nor of reduplication, nor even of parody. It is rather a question of substituting signs of the real for the real" (Baudrillard, 1983:4); in a society oversaturated with images we are no longer have the inclination to distinguish between reality and representation.
The hyper-real transcends the traditional power relations of representation and speculatively suggests alternative forms of the subject / object as simulation. "Whereas representation tries to absorb simulation by interpreting it as false representation, simulation absorbs the whole edifice of representation as itself a simulacrum" (Baudrillard, 1989:11). The hierarchy of word and image abolished, a space wherein meanings falter into each other and, where all signs are rendered insignificant; This drift into the quasi-autism of Baudrillard’s hyper-real scene entails the end of judgement, value, meaning, politics, subject-object oppositions (Hebdige, 1999: 110). It is an anti-system that may sound like ‘science-fiction or intellectual sophistry’ but post-industrial society, or media / consumer society becomes progressively ‘dehumanised and etherealised’ with the focus being around ‘information-and-image-as-product’ and ‘automation-as-productive-process’ (ibid).

Drawing on Kellner’s critique (1995:236) of postmodernist theory such as Baudrillard’s (1983) The Precession of Simulacra, that posit images and their supposed connotations are obsolete as a point of comparison and therefore meaningless, we have to ask ourselves, what sense would there then be in reading images as texts or distinguishing between ideology and the truth or true and false consciousness? Kellner (1995:236) advocates a cultural study which draws on both postmodern and critical theories in order to analyse both image and meaning, as well as the surface and depth of the politics of identity. Human experience is more visual and visualised in this postmodern era (Mirzoeff, 1998). While postmodernism is essentially anti-hermeneutics, form, surface and look remain important and interpretive analysis of image, narrative, ideologies and meanings continues to be key in analyzing even those texts taken to be paradigmatic of postmodern culture (Kellner, 1995:236).

2.6.2 Questions of Identity

Hall (1996:4) states that identities are constructed within discourse and we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive
formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies while they emerge within the play of “specific modalities of power”. Stuart Hall proposes that we should think of identity as a fluid production that is never complete, always in process by constant negotiation and rearticulation (1994:392). Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories and are subject to the continuous play of history, culture and power – identities are the names we give the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within narratives of temporality (Hall, 1994:394). The theorist suggests that cultural identities are the unstable points of identification or suture which are made with the discourses of history and culture (Hall, 1994:395).

Far from just ‘being’, identity is a process of ‘becoming’: It becomes, vis-à-vis both critical inscriptions of difference and common realities, a cultural play that re-sites the boundaries and resists a binary structure of representation (ibid). While Hall exemplifies this through an example of the play within the varieties of Caribbean music, we possibly have the local equivalent of kwaiito music to illustrate this. Bhabha has developed the concept of hybridity to describe the construction of such cultural instances that entertain difference within conditions of political antagonism or inequity, and without an assumed or imposed hierarchy (1994:4).

Liberalism’s deep commitment to representing cultural diversity as plural choice is often violated by the social subject of cultural hybridization (Bhabha, 1996:54). It is proposed for a country that is multicultural, such as South Africa, to explore those identities that refuse the binary representation of social antagonism in an attempt to subvert institutionalizing views, (such as that of apartheid or white supremacy) inherited from its political past. Homi Bhabha (ibid) posits that the process of symbolic interaction happening in the in-between hybrid cultural space prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities. This transformative practice seems more appropriate to contemporary relations of power and provides a space for creating alliances and interpelling different fractions of the population in different relations to power into the struggle for change (Grossberg, 1996:88).
Bakhtin, quoted in Bhabha (1996:58) describes the hybrid subject as double-linguaged, double-accented, with doublings of consciousnesses that “come together as the collision between differing points of view on the world, pregnant with potentials for new world views.” While this doubleness does not mean duality or binarism, it undermines cultural totalization (ibid) and therefore, cultural hegemony.

2.7 CONCLUSION

Wilson (1985:232) states that, “with dress the thesis is that fashion is oppressive and the antithesis that we find it pleasurable”. It could be assumed that the central problem of fashion imagery politics is not whether one validates or negates, but rather to account for the fact of existent discourse (Foucault, paraphrased in Jobling 1999:5). This would mean discovering who does the speaking, the positions and viewpoints from which they speak, the institutions which prompt people to speak about fashion and how what is represented is stored and distributed. While an attempt to demonstrate fashion imagery’s ambivalent dialectic and its categories of meaning has been made in this chapter, the research direction is one of playful resistance (Turner, 1992:110).

An oscillation between critical theory and postmodernist / populist stances does however allow analysis of fashion imagery politics, as well as insight into the ways in which these issues are put into fashion photographic discourse.
3.1 INTRODUCTION

Qualitative research requires strategic thought and action which combine intellectual, technical and practical concerns rather than compartmentalizing these (Mason 1996:2). It allows for an in-depth inquiry into complexities and processes (Marshall and Rossman, 1999:57).

This qualitative approach to social research rules out the use of the positivist paradigm which according to Keat and Urry (as cited by Neuman, 2000:66), holds that "there is only one logic of science to which any intellectual activity aspiring to the title of 'science' must conform." This study is based in the interpretive social sciences where facts are seen as fluid and embedded within particular meaning systems and are not impartial, objective or neutral (Neuman 2000:74).

This study therefore examines the ideological mechanisms that operate upon the production of fashion images, with consequent effects upon female fashion identity formation via consumption of these fashion images. Elite interviewing of three experts in the field of fashion publishing served as the primary source of information in part one of data collection and analysis. This informed a working brief in part two of data collection that directs the production of fashion images for the practical component of this study. Part two of data collection in this exploratory and interpretive endeavour includes participant observation in the conceptualising and execution of the fashion shoot.
3.2 PROBLEMATIZING CRITICAL QUESTIONS

The assumption underlying this research study was that engagement with political discourses in fashion photography in South Africa is relatively low compared to other fields of art and design, which seem very expressive of a politics of identity and the self.

In order to explore print media representations of the fashioned female body, critical research questions need to be problematized. They have been developed as methodological problems by means of the literature review in Chapter Three. The research problems are then as follow:

- Investigation of the significant categories of meaning in the process of identity construction in local fashion imagery

- Finding ways of combining the categories of meaning identified, into new propositions that challenge normative ones

- Finding ways of expanding the notions of South African politicised fashion identities

For the purposes of this study, fashion images are seen and read as texts as per cultural and visual studies perspectives (Turner, 1992:81; Fiske, 1989a, 1989b). Fashion imagery in fashion publications include advertisements, images used with articles and features, fashion illustrations and fashion spreads. Inquiry is concentrated on the magazine fashion spread because it forms a broad area of discourse in itself, while reference is made to fashion oriented advertisements which have a pervasive presence in fashion publications. While an in-depth inquiry into the perceptions of three experts in fashion publishing was carried out, it is acknowledged that data collected is subjective and does not reflect the views of the entire fashion publishing industry.
The research choice was to construct an exhibition catalogue of hypothetical politicised fashion identities. This exhibition explores politicised fashion narratives of identity and is subject to producers' positions of enunciation and vision. The aim of the exhibition is to posit politicised identity through selective fashion photographic tableaux.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

This section explains research design principles behind processes such as sampling, data collection and data analysis. I also look at how strategies were deployed to achieve design soundness that may validate knowledge claims.

An extensive literature review of secondary sources of data was performed so that current issues could be identified and questions could be formulated for primary data collection. A semi-structured form of interviewing was favoured because it allows depth and complexity to emerge (Mason, 1996:41) and because the flexible sequencing of this form of instrumentation allows research participants to contribute to the research agenda (Gillham, 2000:65). Open-ended questions were an option because the responses that they elicit are not restricted. Open-ended questions give good access to the spontaneous understanding that respondents have of a target object (Kronberger and Wagner, 2000:299).

3.4 DATA COLLECTION PART ONE

The sampling strategy was a form of non-probability sampling and is termed purposive sampling (Blaxter, Tight and Hughes, 1996:79-80) whereby interesting cases can be handpicked, where a probabilistic approach is not deemed adequate. This is because the data collected should be exploratory and detailed, for which smaller numbers of instances or examples which are seen as being interesting or illuminating, aim to achieve depth rather than breadth (Blaxter, Tight and Hughes, 1996:60).
“Elite” individuals are those considered to be influential, prominent, and well-informed in an organisation or community (Marshall and Rossman 1999:113). Selected for interview on the basis of their expertise in areas relevant, they present valuable information because of the position they hold. However, one disadvantage this technique presents is that of access – as Marshall and Rossman (1999:113) have warned, access to elite participants is difficult; in the case of fashion professionals it is difficult to book appointments with these elites because they tend to be busy, holding pivotal roles in their trade and almost always operating under time constraints.

3.4.1 The Pilot Study

A pilot study was undertaken as a precautionary measure to gauge if questions and instructions were articulated in a manner that was non-academic and therefore not intimidating, and conducive to eliciting interest and participation of interviewees. The pilot study was carried out with two respondents – a Durban-based South African fashion stylist, who had just completed an internship as fashion assistant at Elle Girl in the United Kingdom and a Durban-based photographer and writer, who has experience in fashion reviewing.

This enabled me as researcher to recognise shortcomings in structure and language: For example, it was imperative that the word ‘politics’ be explained in context of this study prior to questions being asked. I also found that some open-ended questions had to be unpacked and converted to semi-open ones to give more definition to potential replies. It was also found that some questions, even if formulated clearly, needed to be exemplified by reference to well-known fashion publishing cases. As an example, I introduced the phenomenon of ‘Heroin Chic’ and the protest from various parties that held that this trend promoted drug abuse.
The pilot study was geared to refine decisions made about what to observe, whom to interview, what to ask. It enabled me, as researcher to determine a more precise focus of the research from insights gained, as Marshall and Rossman, (1999:64) have advised.

### 3.4.2 Sampling and Instrumentation

Three participants from the fashion publishing industry were chosen for elite interviewing; Jillian Lochner, Dion Chang and Sara Callow. They are nationally prominent representatives of the clique that preside over image construction that is directed towards a large readership in the public domain. Their following profiles outline their status as elite research participants.

Jillian Lochner is a South African photographer who relays between Cape Town and London for her fashion photographs that are locally and internationally published in magazines such as *Cosmopolitan, SL, Womyn* and *Tank*. Lochner also produces fashion advertising work and her clients include brands such as *Adidas, Levi's* and *Black Coffee*. (www.jillianlochner.com; de Waal, 2003:1). This is a very valuable attribute of Lochner's research input because her insights stemming from local and European experience potentially provide primary data with from a wide perspective.

Dion Chang is currently based in Johannesburg but has previously freelanced as a fashion stylist in London and Paris. He subsequently moved back to South Africa and in the past ten years has held positions in fashion editorship and fashion directorship for magazines as varied as *Rooi Rose, True Love, South African Elle*, eventually rising to the position of Editor-at-large at *South African Elle*. His fashion journalistic contributions extend to *South African Marie-Claire, SL*, and have been published in *Elle, Australia, Germany, India and South America*. Chang is one of the most established and well-known figures on the local fashion scene and now works as a corporate fashion consultant and trend analyst (Chang, 2006). His broad and
comprehensive knowledge of fashion and the fashion publishing industry has a critical contribution to this study.

Sara Callow started off as fashion assistant at *True Love* followed by employment in the same position at South African *Elle*, where she was subsequently promoted to fashion editor. She moved to *Marie-Claire* to assume senior fashion editorship but then left to join *SL* as fashion editor. This was spurred by her desire to support local fashion through *SL*, a South African publication that targets a radical young market sector. Callow has risen to the position of creative director at *SL*. The numerous shoots under her editorship have shown her extensive experience in the conceptualising of images that politicise female South African fashion identity in what appears to be the only publication that ventures in this direction locally (Callow, 2006).

### 3.4.3 Access

The prospective elite participants, Dion Chang from Johannesburg, Jillian Lochner and Sara Callow from Cape Town, were contacted telephonically to first determine if they would be interested in contributing to this research. An email was then sent to them with a description of the area of study and upon confirmation of their interest in being interviewed I tried to schedule appointments with these experts. This proved to be a tricky situation as, being in key positions, they were always busy and because of their sometimes unpredictable schedule changes, were reluctant to commit to interview dates. A negotiated compromise led to Jillian Lochner and Sara Callow proposing to answer the interview questions via email; Dion Chang asked for an email of interview questions and suggested a personal interview while on a business trip to Durban.

All three respondents were open to further communication for more questions and clarifications so that although there was a discrepancy in collection methods, this strategy, (per
Bailey's (1987:175) counsel helped in overcoming the problem of the long stretch of time needed to perform interviews with respondents that are not geographically centralized.

3.4.4 Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

All three participants were asked to reply to the questions in a conversational, casual way and were told to feel free to change their minds whilst replying (see Appendices A, B and C for transcripts of these interviews). While this served to put participants in as much of a "free-range" zone of comfort as possible, it also helped to elicit a commensurate quality of the data coming in from the email interviews as compared to the personal interview. All three participants responded with confidence and assertiveness and seemed comfortable with research questions.

The first part of the interview questions were aimed at gaining some primary information about whether there was a technical hierarchy in the conceptual inception and creative direction of image production – in other words who comes up with the concept, who executes it and who validates the process. Subsequent questions were directed at establishing if fashion publishing experts considered the possibility that the ideologies behind the images they produce might be formative in identity formation of their readers, if they knew of instances where it had happened and in what ways they thought fashion imagery influences identity formation in consumers. Further questions were aimed at finding out to what extent fashion images produced locally were politicised. An attempt to investigate which issues they feel are considered taboo by the fashion publishing industry and for what reasons followed. Questions aimed at gauging the scope of exploring politicised notions of female fashion identity in South Africa ensued with a concluding part that sought their expert opinion as to what directions they felt local fashion photography could or should take.
Prepared interview questions allowed some standardisation of the interview conducted with Dion Chang, Jillian Lochner and Sara Callow. This also eliminated possible skewing of data that might have resulted if Lochner and Callow had time to ponder questions, while Chang had to respond without forethought.

3.5 APPROACH TO DATA ANALYSIS PART ONE

Interpretive analysis is defined by Bauer and Gaskell (2000:358) as "a hermeneutic process by which a human interpreter tries to find meaning (Verstehen) in qualitative data." The interpretive approach is the systematic analysis of socially meaningful action in order to discover how people construct meaning. Interpretive research seeks to know what is meaningful or relevant to the people being studied (Neumann 2000:71). Since the goal of the researcher is to share the subjects' perspectives, it is important to assume a neutrally receptive stance in data analysis of interviewees' responses. The researcher therefore tries to give the elite participants a voice, in empathizing with them by expressing what they feel and how they view issues regardless of the researcher's position of enunciation. Neumann (2000:72) also notes that the interpretive approach appreciates that people share a meaning system and that the "social world is largely what people perceive it to be." Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999:6) note that ontologically, the interpretive paradigm specifies the internal reality of subjective experience while its epistemology is empathetic, promulgating observer intersubjectivity. Its methodology, or how the researcher goes about studying what he / she believes can be known, is interactional, interpretative and qualitative (ibid).

The other paradigm judged necessary for data analysis is that of critical social science. This paradigm is identified by Terre Blanche and Durrheim (ibid) as socially constructed knowledge of a political nature. Critical social science, according to Neuman (2000:65), gives a range of debate over the meaning of social science. This study combines the interpretive approach with critical theory as methodological choice because critical social science, as posited by Bauer, Gaskell and Allum (2000:15) and Neumann (2000:76) presumably furthers hermeneutic
understanding in helping identify structures of power that operate in the material world. Critical theory could be labelled "ideologically oriented inquiry" because it includes neo-Marxism, materialism, feminism and other similar movements (Guba, 1990:23). The scope of this critical - interpretive method therefore allows for an exploration of political issues such as those of race, gender and identity construction while still retaining the flexibility that interpretive analysis proffers from its essentially relativist core. The necessity for this combination is also appreciated on consideration of the theoretical framework that combines both ideological and populist perspectives.

3.5.1 Generating Meaning

The interpretive / critical analysis of data collected for this research assumes the form of interpretation of literary material, with internal coherence rooted in the text. The steps used to generate meaning are as follows:

Coding

The transcript from Chang's personal interview and the email replies from Lochner and Callow were analysed by identifying salient themes, looking for recurring ideas and patterns of beliefs, and generating categories of meaning and themes (Marshall and Rossman 1999:154). As categories of meaning held by participants were identified, these were coded by highlighting the different themes (through abbreviated keywords tagged to text for easy indexing).

Triangulation

Miller (1997:25) describes triangulation as an approach to problems from more than one standpoint and this provides researchers with more comprehensive knowledge about the
object. Gaskell and Bauer (2000:345) further expand the concept by stating triangulation can be from two perspectives or with two methods while it requires the attention of the researcher in the form of pondering on their origin and interpretation. This may demonstrate that social phenomena look different as they are approached from different angles. When applied in the context of this study, triangulation is used when contrasting and comparing elite interviewees' responses. Foster (1996:91) remarks that triangulation also can be used for example to compare observational data and interpretive data. The dialectical approach from the ideological and the populist standpoints in the theoretical framework, uses triangulation as a way of institutionalizing contradicting or inconsistent reflections in the aim of achieving new understandings (Gaskell and Bauer, 2000:345).

Clustering

This process makes use of our cognitive frame that lets us clump things together. "Clustering is a tactic that can be applied at many levels of qualitative data: at the level of...processes, of settings / locales, of sites or cases as wholes" (Miles and Huberman, 1994:249). We are in essence trying to understand a phenomenon by grouping and then conceptualising objects that have similar patterns or characteristics (see Table 3.1 in section 3.6)

Making Conceptual / Theoretical Coherence

The preceding methods demonstrate a progressive move from the empirical trenches to a more conceptual overview of the landscape. This step involves identifying a corresponding construct to the findings obtained from the previous steps (Miles and Huberman 1994:261-262). While concepts without corresponding facts are hollow, and facts without concepts are meaningless, a connection of data with supporting or conflicting constructs from literature is deemed essential in articulating emerging findings (ibid).
3.6 DATA ANALYSIS PART ONE

Analysis of collected elite interview data is made in this section. While it was expected that concurrent sets of opinions and experiences would emerge through research interviews, data was varied. However, conceptual clusters deriving from data analysis, when seen together, provided a most interesting account of current thinking on identity politics in fashion photography. Closer inspection of commonalities and differences permitted some clear areas of meaning to emerge in terms of the different perceptions or parameters that guide female fashion identity production in South African fashion publishing.

A tabular display of interpretations of elite perceptions follows. This reductive process was useful and practical in establishing the criteria for the subsequent process of composing the working brief for the fashion shoot. Integrating theories of identity from the review of related literature in Chapter 2 was also pivotal in the formulation of these fashion identities.

**Table 3.1 Summary of Conceptual Clusters in Politicised Fashion Identity**

✓ : mentioned as desirable  ✗: mentioned as undesirable  -- : not mentioned

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Lochner</th>
<th>Chang</th>
<th>Callow</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Irreverence</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Parody</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Tongue-in-cheek</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Subversion with humour</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Non-stereotypical</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Conceptual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Thought-provoking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Subversion</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Controversially</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Politically</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Shock-value</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Art oriented</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Fashion imagery</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Commercial</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Sensibility with added</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Artistic flair</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.6.1 Discussion of Elite Interviews

Some Primary Information

Mainstream fashion and lifestyle magazines discussed or mentioned by elite interviewees are published in SA, specifically for female readership and include publications such as *Cosmopolitan, Marie-Claire, Femina*, and *Fair Lady*, all produced for a broad-band market whereas *Elle* is targeted at a more niche market, at a "slightly more intelligent, fashion-conscious woman" (Chang, 2005) and *SL* is for a more open-minded, edgy consumer. According to Callow, though, *Elle* is comparatively mainstream if judged against *SL*, the publication for which she was the fashion editor and now the creative director. *SL* (acronym for *Student Life*), is geared at a younger, student and unisex market, although the fashion editorial and fashion spreads are as elaborate and as substantial as those produced in the above-mentioned magazines. Lochner, on the other hand feels that all publications published locally have a mainstream sensibility and that none of them promote politicised fashion imagery.

Production of fashion spreads for magazines is orchestrated by the fashion editor who conceptualizes a visual idea to illustrate a current fashion trend, normally woven in a narrative that can be referent to different kinds of influences – stylistic (style decades such as the 40’s, 50’s etc), cinematic, literary, fantasy, simulacra…(Jobling, 1999). In South Africa fashion image production works in such a way that the fashion editor or director picks a team consisting of a freelancing photographer, a make-up artist, a hair stylist, and an in-house fashion assistant. Dion Chang and Sara Callow having both worked as freelance stylists and fashion editors / directors describe this process as the brainstorming of a concept followed by the assembly of other team members who they feel would be best suited to concretize that idea. Jillian Lochner maintains in the interview that in her experience as a fashion photographer for magazines in South Africa, her input towards most shoots she has worked on has been virtually nil.
The level of conceptual involvement of the main players (fashion editor/stylist, photographer) in fashion image production in South Africa differs from that of Anglo-American fashion production teams. The international publications seem to allow more flexibility between the parties by promoting less hierarchical dynamics for the conceptualisation and creative direction of fashion spreads - the actual shoots are often composed and conceptualised by freelance photographers, working with freelance stylists or in-house ones and under the editorship of a fashion editor / director. Fashion photographers are often granted a more creative status if not total creative control in the process (Cotton, 2000). In Jobling (1998), we see shoots from magazines such as *i-D*, *The Face* and *Vogue*, that are deconstructed and analysed and attributed a genre relating to the distinctive style philosophy of the fashion photographer. Therefore fashion photographers have a chance of getting recognised in the light of their work, and not necessarily in the context of having worked for different brands of magazines. It is possible, in that light, that Lochner, having worked both on local and international scenes feels that fashion photographers in SA “get treated like photocopying machines” as local fashion photographers are not really given creative control of fashion shoots in South Africa, unless they are commissioned by clients for advertising work.

**Fashion Photography and Identity Politics in South Africa**

From the elite interviews we see Lochner maintaining that female identity is not radicalized or politicized at all in South African fashion publications, while Chang and Callow propose that it is politicized, to a relative extent. Although Chang concedes that the radicalizing is not acute, such as one would see it in magazines like *i-D* and *The Face*, he feels that identity has been very definitely politicized in South Africa, especially with issues of race / ethnicity since 1994, or the start of democracy. Callow supports this view. Although the shift has been gradual, politicizing in the fashion photographic arena on the local scene has occurred with subliminal ways of introducing the concept of ‘other’ cultures and ‘other’ notions of beauty as opposed to a local cultural hegemony very much in line with Anglo-American standards of beauty. This is exemplified by the instance of the gradual introduction of coloured and black models on
fashion magazines covers, as noted by Chang, which resulted in a shift away from a
c stereotypically and hegemonic ideal white – blond hair, blue eyed model that have traditionally
been perceived as making best-selling covers.

Callow in her capacity as fashion editor / creative director at SL, has more scope for exploring
politicized concepts because she addresses a young, primarily student market. Fashion
editors working for more mainstream magazines publications are constrained by parameters
dictated by the general profile and the preferences of the consumer targeted by that magazine
as mentioned by Chang in the interview. However, he adds that fashion editors sometimes like
to throw "curve-balls", risking the wrath of the magazine editor and displeasure of readers.

In challenging norms, Lochner mentions that she got responses such as readers writing to the
editor saying that they “couldn’t see the garments,” and generally complaining that they were
not seeing a “pretty girl in a pretty dress, in a pretty photograph with every stitching visible.”
Callow echoes this sentiment by saying “The public / The reader demand to see thin, waif like,
‘beautiful’ models in fashion spreads and then complain that fashion mags propagate
unrealistic ideals etc / eating disorders. Then – when a mag shows pages full of ‘largely
feminine’ body types, the readers complain again,” calling that kind of cycle a “vicious circle”
(2005).

Lochner, Chang and Callow feel that in general, reader preferences dictate what genre of
images a magazine will produce. Chang links this to a commercial factor – circulation figures;
so in a somewhat cyclical relationship between readers and magazine producers the ideas
propagated are representative of existing desires in the consumers as they are being provided
with what they want to see as an affirming reflection of established identities (somewhat a
vicious circle too!). We see the example of Huisgenoot which although originally established to
promote Afrikaner identity has had to change its brand identity to a “profit-driven populism” to
survive on the competitive local magazine market (Viljoen and Viljoen, 2005).
It is paradoxical to note, however, that these same politicized avenues disfavoured by mainstream fashion publishing are actively being explored not only by fine artists, but also by advertisers, whose main concern is also revenue generated by sales. In his essay discussing advertising dilemmas in contemporary South Africa, Herbst (2005) deconstructs an advertisement from Dulux from their "Any colour you can think of" campaign, which he claims, engages viewers in a politicized debate. This advert featuring a pair of hands—a black man’s and a white woman’s, interlinked over the woman’s pregnant abdomen has been circulated extensively and was targeted at a very broad-band South African market (Herbst, 2005).

Furthermore, the caption “Any colour you can think of” along with a swatch strip of colour gradients between white and black invited the reader in participating in an ideology of racial interrelations while imagining what colour the expected child might be. The campaign won the AdFocus Awards in its year of production and was acclaimed as having all the hallmarks of greatness by Stafford (2003), who claims that while the concept pushed the creative envelope, it reflected the attributes and heritage of South Africa and succeeded at being highly effective in the marketplace. This seems to question the relative lack of thought-provoking, politicized fashion images in fashion imagery equivalent to the kind of ideology in the Dulux advertisement, which proved both creative and lucrative.

The Role of South African Fashion Photography in Identity Formation

Dion Chang believes that fashion imagery that is generated is not done so with any specific intent of influencing identity formation processes in their readers because what is diffused by magazines is already a proposed, set identity. He elaborates by explaining that at Elle, for example, stylists and other members of the team are given an “Elle Bible”. This ‘style bible’ comes from Paris and describes the taste and the fashion identities of the Elle woman. Chang adds that other publications, Fair Lady, Marie Claire, etc. follow a similar strategy and the fashion editors work within these parameters. Because these prescriptions define ‘who the consumers are and what they like’, this may explain the repetition of generally predictable and standardized fashion identities commodified by these fashion publications. Although citing SL
as an exception, Callow (2005) feels "bored with the monthly repetition of what seems like the same shoot," elaborating that "we are caught up in not offending and upsetting anyone."

Lochner (2005) supports this interpretation although in a more vehement way, saying that what do we do here in South Africa is "Listen to Tannie Sarie sitting in the middle of some god forsaken place." She also adds that local portrayal of fashion identity is just a bad copy of imported identities, criticizing archetypes of black female identity in local publications as being made to look like "skinny black American models with hideous wigs that make them all look like drag queens." She maintains that even the models themselves cannot identify with these portrayals of black female identity because "that's not what they look like in their comfort zones, in their homes; that's not who a truly beautiful South African black woman is." Callow (2005) shares this perspective to an extent, saying that "the use of black models in shoots often seems token, it sometimes doesn't feel honest." This is perhaps because a prescription of identities from the European 'style bibles' cannot possibly be honestly adopted by a South African market, whose local racial demographics and diversity in culture (and therefore cultural identities and dress) are obviously very different from European ones.

Chang states that younger and teen markets are more susceptible to peer pressure and wanting to fit in whereas the older market does not buy into a style if they don't like it or do not identify with it. While these might apply to transient trend or fads, it is important to look at how other trends get introduced in a fashion system whereby they are eventually integrated and become part of fashion myth.

Seyaki (2003) proposes that common access to commercial messages about beauty lessens the divide between distinct culturally based ideals. She exemplifies this by citing Becker who observed that Fijian culture which traditionally holds larger figures in high esteem has only had a drastic increase in eating disorders and general dissatisfaction with physical appearance after the arrival of television in 1995, medium dominated by American broadcast programs and movies – both men and women remain affected by this new amalgamated image (ibid). So it is interesting to ask ourselves - what is it exactly that is happening in South Africa as
commodified Eurocentric (white) culture is continuously and ironically being offered as an object of increasingly black consumption on the local fashion magazine market?

In a conflictual statement to Lochner’s and Callow’s perception of local fashion identities as not being genuinely indigenous, Chang argues that South Africa is developing its own fashion identity and that more and more indigenously South African fashion identities, not as much ethnic-african but more contemporary ones that are emerging, are being represented in local fashion spreads. However, he also says that it is the more sexualized identities that sell better and are therefore the ones that are favoured for popular distribution.

**Taboos and Other Politicised Identities**

South Africa’s Calvinistic history make issues like homosexuality and religious blasphemy taboo subjects to broach visually (Chang, 2005). Although there have been instances where such topics have been explored and published they have been targeted at a niche or younger student market such as SL’s readership.

Jillian Lochner’s book, *SNLV* containing a series of very politicized and controversial images, was published in South Africa in 2003. De Waal (2003) reports that book binders throughout the country turned her down because they found the images ‘pornographic’. Lochner (2005) refutes this perception saying, “men sniffing panties, girls’ portraits with mouths open. Where is the porn in that?” *FHM* shoots can be gauged to be far more explicit in their display of nudity and are mainstream commodity, yet, it is somehow Lochner’s photographs in *SNLV* that make the audience uncomfortable. The ‘portraits of female models with their mouths open’ in *SNLV* (2003) can be read as an incisive satire that Lochner makes of fashion images who ubiquitously commodify desire through models giving sexual cues such as “closed eyes, open mouth, legs spread,” as Myers states in Crane (2000:203). ‘Open mouths’ in fashion imagery are however contextualised in a composition and are just an aspect, not a focus. Lochner, however, provides a collection of images with an almost denaturalised, surreal lighting whose
subject and focus are the ‘open mouths’; images that are cropped in a way that they are stripped of context and humanity. The ‘open mouths’ therefore seem directly connotative of fellatio and in their directness, mock the ‘subtleness’ of implicitly subliminal sexual cue that fashion magazines commodify. Lochner’s images of men sniffing panties in SNLV (2003) are stigmatised because they imply body odours, body fluids, which are considered as ‘dirty’ and abject. The phenomenon of the sanitization of sex in print media is discussed in section 2.4.1; Lochner (2003) goes against the grain by connotating the abject and challenging the plastic hairless perfection of typical fashion. Other examples of her politicised, transgressive messages take form in photographs of body fluids such as fresh ejaculate, featured on her book cover, and the reality of the genitalia, glimpses of skin folds and pubic hair, “usually occluded by the fashionable underwear with their all-important logo on the waistband” (de Waal, 2003:111).

Elite interviewee Callow finds that with issues that are repudiated in fashion imagery such as body hair and being overweight, we are on par with other countries. According to Callow, magazines that claim to address these issues really just publish what people want to see. According to Chang (2005), scope for exploring these politicised identities can find a place in art magazines and publications targeted at a more intellectual market but not for most local fashion publications that target consumption by mainstream markets because “they get offended quickly because they don’t get it.” Lochner believes that the ‘general public’ and the system that diffuses fashion imagery in South Africa are not ready for any kind of subversive ideological play in images.

**Identities and Issues that Elite Interviewees would like to see being explored**

Jillian Lochner proposes that she would like to see images and identities represented move in a more conceptual, political direction, akin to the personal work she has been doing. Lochner’s personal work is deep with meaning and oscillates in an in-between space drawing on...
portraiture, documentary, is sometimes profane sometimes angry, but always thought provoking. Her exhibition in 2003 has been reviewed as "challenging...and exhaustive in the prolific scope and depth of expression" (Monson, 2003). Lochner is relocating to Europe to expand her scope for creative expression, having found the fashion photographic scene in South Africa too limiting and restricting.

Dion Chang speaks about the concept behind the T-shirt label called *Laugh it off*. He feels that South Africans should take political issues less seriously and be able to literally, laugh it off. In 2005, South African Breweries (SAB) filed a lawsuit against *Laugh it off* for a T-shirt that they had ‘ripped-off’ a SAB product, Black Label Beer, targeted at a black, mostly workers, market (Jones, 2005). In a parody of the beer brand and its producer, *Laugh it off* replaced the brand’s motto that read “America’s lusty, lively, Carling Black Label beer, enjoyed by men around the world” with “Black Labour White Guilt, Africa’s lusty lively exploitation since 1652, no regard given worldwide” (ibid). One of their arguments in *Laugh it off*s defence is that the aim was to parody, specifically the apartheid involvement of SAB in the past. SAB lost the case (ibid).

However, when asked of the possibility of a literal translation of such a concept into a fashion shoot, Chang says that such a concept would only work in the right publication, for example maybe SL because the fashion editor / creative director (Sara Callow) has scope for being irreverent without causing offence.

Sara Callow (2005) would like to see new identities that move away from old clichés. She would like to see more conceptual shoots, for example, “a fashion spread that is only a poem.” All of her work from the tear-sheets she provided to exemplify new directions in SA fashion imagery indicate a more thought-provoking approach to conceptualising female fashion identities. Callow would also like to see new identities that depart from the usual stereotypes. Her style is imbued with sardonic humour and is a definite, marked shift from the shallow,
decorative shoots that Lochner, in her calibre as one of the most creative South African fashion photographers, caustically criticizes in her interview for this study.

**Discussion of Elite Positioning towards Fashion Photography**

Lochner’s approach to fashion photography, as can be seen in her various fashion spreads and in her book SNLV (2003), is very clearly political and it is from this angle that her perceptions are appreciated in their significant contribution to this study. Her stance is very political and her position of enunciation as idiosyncratic artist, comes from a leftist perspective that deplores the perceived total absence from local publications of politicised fashion imagery. This view is relatively justified because her points of reference are both local and international, making her views comparative; Lochner’s input is extremely valuable for a study that aims at exploring politicised notions of fashion identity.

Chang’s experience as free-lance stylist and his experience as fashion editor in the production of fashion images from a creative realm becomes critical and somewhat transformed through the disciplining eye of magazine editorship (magazine main editor or editor-at-large as opposed to fashion editorship). This experience from a more generalised, less idiosyncratic role as main editor who has practical aspects such as income from advertisers’ to consider, perhaps accounts for his broadminded and tolerant vision that is accommodating of commercial sensibilities in image production. Chang is appreciative of the changes instigated by the end of apartheid on the philosophies of the local fashion publishing industry. He contextualises local fashion imagery as having been transformative because of its evolution towards issues such as the approach to the different typologies of beauty, that were democratised with change from South Africa’s political past. Although he admits that female identities in local publications are not radicalised per se if compared with European publications like *The Face*, politicising does happen on a relative, local context and as compared to past, pre-democratic instances.
Sara Callow conceptualises and produces fashion shoots for SL, a South African publication that is perceived by Dion Chang and herself as a publication that promotes political and controversial fashion spreads. Callow still produces shoots on a monthly basis under her editorship and is immersed in the conceptualising of fashion identities from a current on-going basis for a South African market. This makes her an active reader and interpreter of current sensibilities in the fashion photographic arena. The fact that she is irreverent in her styling but is still fine-tuned to the needs and demands of the local reader, demonstrates both acknowledgment and resistance to commercial demands. She operates in a sensibility of playful resistance, producing fashion identities imbued with a tension that one can visibly identify within her dialogic approach to fashion photography. Although this aspect was not known or anticipated when she was originally approached to contribute to this research, it gives a very welcome and desirable perspective on my enquiry.

This sub-section has discussed the follow-up to initial choices for elite sampling, with some anticipated and other unapprehended aspects that have come out of elite contribution. It sums up how an implementation of planning worked positively towards research objectives. The following display summarises the content of elite interviews with regard to views on politicised fashion imagery.

### 3.7 DATA COLLECTION PART TWO

The interpretive process that guided decisions in manipulating images digitally and the critical valuation of the decisions that guided the working process culminating in the final images is documented, while the final body of work for the exhibition is discussed last.

The data generated from elite interviews and secondary data from literature review foregrounds current thinking on identity politics in fashion photography in South Africa. This informed the construction of the working brief for the second phase of data collection.
motivated both by observation and theoretical viewpoints which guided the practical component of the research project.

At that stage, a collaborative fashion shoot with Durban-based photographer Peter Machen was conceptualised and executed. Reflexive documentation as participant observer of the researcher’s own process of art direction towards politicised female South African fashion identities provides a body of data for analysis.

3.7.1 The Brief

Construction of the working brief was based on a concept that explored politicised female identities in terms of issues of relevance in a South African context such as gender construction, and ethnic definitions versus cultural definitions based on political issues such as religion as proposed by elite participants. These were informed by contemporary theories of identity by influential cultural theorists, Homi Bhabha and Stuart Hall whose propositions of identity as fluid and potentially hybrid in multicultural societies seemed ‘politically adequate’ for a South African context because they draw from post-colonial theory but move beyond that as well, positing identity as potentially fluid and open to renegotiations and re-articulations.

Six different identities were composed according to the above-mentioned criteria fitting into a master narrative. This was subject to considerable changes at different levels of its development as different options and visions were weighed out and critically amended, transformed or rejected while there was an immediate and ongoing consensus on the idea that the hybrid identities would be fabricated by digitally manipulating the photographs. The styling aspect of the fashion shoot was referential to the identities being portrayed – the outfits, accessories, hair and make-up for each model were decided on the basis of the fashion identity each was portraying. I made up some of the outfits while the rest were borrowed from Durban – based fashion designer Amanda Laird Cherry, whose style philosophy revolves
around promoting contemporary African identities. This process is in line with the way fashion styling for fashion publications is directed.

**Rationale for Formulation of Brief**

One of the key objectives of this research looks at expanding politicised notions of fashion identity in South Africa. While the responses of elite regarding political content in South African fashion imagery is divided and inconclusive, as can be read in Table 1, closer inspection of the commonalities and the differences interpreted with the context of elite experience shed new light over possibilities.

Lochner (2005) who undertakes current international and local commissions to produce fashion imagery, gauges quality on an international level and finds a total absence of politics in South African fashion imagery; Chang (2005) and Callow (2005) who operate on a mainly local level, maintain that fashion photography in South Africa is politicised, if only on a local relative scale; post-democratic times having seen a gradual shift in race perceptions with the now current portrayals that equate colour with beauty as a norm. Since this aspect of ethnicity / beauty is already being explored in the local fashion arena, the practical does not try to implement this but adopts a point of departure from where beauty has no apparent link to ethnicity. The fashion spread uses models of different ethnicities without trying to compare or contrast beauty between them. Also, instances of non-stereotypical beauty are explored as per the suggestions of Lochner and Callow.

If Chang (2005) explains that fashion publications consult a ‘style bible’ (the Elle bible is from Paris and describes the Elle woman) that prescribes the identity they should depict then surely the fashion identities that are being circulated are not local but ones that are based on a culturally dominant Western sensibilities. The same can be said for fashion trends which are systematically copied and applied to the South African context every season (ibid). Those Eurocentric fashion identities are commodified on the local target market and therefore directly
suggested to the consumers who, looking up to these archetypes of desire assimilate and emulate a style, Westernized, de rigueur. That really, does not say much about their local identities.

This salient aspect of mainstream South African fashion photography is one that the brief tries to challenge by focusing on local cultural identities as mentioned by Chang (2005). This was done by favouring a stylistic approach that retains a specifically South African endemicity. A decision was taken to illustrate local cultural identities of the KwaZulu Natal as it would adhere to the former criterion and because both the photographer and I are familiar with the terrain explored in popular perceptions of Zulu culture and generally ‘Durbanite’ cultures.

If political content is relative in its measure and context (readership), Chang (ibid) suggests that fashion imagery in this era requires a softer, humoristic, irreverent twist rather than a shock-value one. He notes that the highly controversial style of shoot that characterised magazines like *The Face* and *i-D* belongs to the 90s when pre-millennium tensions were articulated in a shock-value sensitivity. Parody is a phenomenon, verbal or stylistic, that mocks an original through the use of humour has the general effect of casting ridicule on the private nature of specific stylistic mannerisms (Jameson, 1993:194). While this is a direction in which the practical ventured, it was also interesting to consider the postmodern practice of pastiche which Jameson (1993:195) describes as the imitation of a peculiar style, the wearing of a stylistic mask but without the satirical impulse, without laughter. Pastiche is blank parody, parody that has lost its sense of humour: the modern practice of a blank irony (ibid). So a sensibility of playful resistance (Turner, 1996:110) was adopted between parody and pastiche, playing between image and text.

Lochner’s (2005) style philosophy is cutting-edge and says she would like to see “Real” in local images, as opposed to the sanitized, idealized versions of everything in fashion spreads. Sara Callow (2005) would like to see “a new identity” that is a move away from “tired old clichés.” In this light, hybrids of identities as per by Bhabha’s (1994) concept of hybridity, were composed
for the brief. This was achieved by merging different and distinctive South African cultural identities - with gravitas similar to that of the 'shebeen queen' as mentioned by Chang (2005) - into new prospective ones. These were infused with the politics of gender, race, class and religion, interwoven into a 'pastiche-esque' fictional narrative, 'montage-style' (Bogdan and Taylor, 1975:125-134). This montage resonates between realities and constructs and the images and text, aim at questioning our knowledge and perceptions about political issues.

Hybridity as in the concept theorised by Bhabha (1994) plays a pivotal role in the inception of those 'new identities'. Bakhtin, quoted in Bhabha (1996:58) describes the hybrid subject as double-languaged, double-accented, with doublings of consciousnesses that "come together as the collision between differing points of view on the world, pregnant with potentials for new world views." While this doubleness does not mean duality or binarism in the composed identities it seeks to undermine cultural totalization by reflecting "the attributes and heritage of South Africa" (Stafford, 2003).

Chang (2005) elaborates on the concept of a 'rainbow culture' and how the different colours as individuals that form the spectrum is a more truthful rendition of South African identities – he suggests that this makes a more interesting illustration instead of the 'one big happy family' concept. This purposive sample of hybrid identities will take this idea a step forward by selectively crossing-over distinct South African identity markers and allegorising tongue-in-cheek versions of these new fictitious identities.

Next, are some rough proposed identities composed informally so that they are open to changes and can potentially evolve with working progress. The fashion shoot aims at being conceptual and thought-provoking and rejects the commercial sensibility normatively associated with the glamour and glossiness of fashion imagery. Instead, an artistic approach is favoured. Fake histories in the form of accompanying text to the images, are formulated and attached at a later stage to each individual identity in a slightly anthropological, off-beat style.
This should sound vaguely believable and interrogate our received knowledge about socially constructed definitions such as those of gender and race.

Identity 1 - Zulu / Indian Female Warrior

Amazonesque African identity: Contradictory in nature because in Zulu culture, women are strictly not warriors. This is aimed at questioning cultural boundaries and stereotypical roles of the woman such as a normative submissiveness.

Identity 2 - Poor Rich White Woman

The familiar sight of beggars on the roadside in Berea, Durban have taken a quaint twist with the addition of a cardboard prop that narrates captions playing on materialistic absences (an example is "no Honda, no BMW,...please help"). This identity is transposed onto that of a white woman, preferably a 'Musgrave-mummy' type and a narrative constructed around how she got there and what she would say on her cardboard prop. This plays on race class perceptions in a subversive but tongue-in-cheek way.

Identity 3 - Eve Apparition

If evolutionary theories posit that mankind evolved from an organic soup and that the first *Homo Sapiens* came from Africa, was Eve African? We try to give a twist to the story by playing on Biblical meanings of Eve coming from the Heavens versus one coming from the sea. Eve is a construct, par excellence, so this identity plays on such perceptions and offers a very alternative narrative as to how the first white woman got to Africa.

Identity 4 - Indian / Zulu Goddess

Multiculturalism in a democratic society is bound to generate overlaps in expressions of culture and identity. This identity is inspired by South African women who adopt traditional or features of traditional dress of cultures different to their own. This is illustrated by the vivid accounts of my fashion colleagues who rhapsodize about Zulu women in traditional Indian dress at weddings or of young non-black women who sport traditional African wax-resist fabrics in
contemporary or fusion-styled garments made by designers such as Durban-based Amanda Laird Cherry. Drawing from the Hindu God Shiva in terms of the deification of the identity, this image explores an instance of cultural hybridity in dress in South Africa.

Identity 5 - Male Madonna
This explores gender as a social construct. What is feminine identity and how is it constructed? Could female identity be constructed on a man? How would one interpret an image with obviously dual connotations as to gender and the role attributed to specific genders. For example: Female identity is equated to that of a mother biologically and socially. Haraway, quoted in Squier (1995:113) propose that identities such as those of a pregnant man are models that displace the binary constructions of modernist epistemologies. This identity will seek to apply this perception while the text attached to the image will be constructed in a tongue-in-cheek way.

Identity 6 - Cow Sangoma
Female identities are almost always portrayed in a sexualised way whereby sexual allure is a selling strategy for diverse consumer objects. The Cow Sangoma is a fictitious cultural local identity which teamed up with an abject element in the form of a cow’s heart aims at satirise the former concept. A narrative is constructed between this female identity and the ubiquitous sangoma in Zulu culture.

The narratives and the identities have been reformulated and rearticulated several times from the point of departure through the working process of refining and selecting the final images, process that is documented in the accompanying exhibition / dissertation catalogue. The final images and their narratives are presented before the narrative of the working process for layout / aesthetic / coherence reasons. Zulu terms for some of the identities were formulated so as to add to the endemic aspect of the identities and to also indigenise imported traditions of style and layout of fashion photographs.
While I designed and made the outfits for four of the six fashion identities, the remaining was borrowed from Amanda Laird Cherry. It must be noted here that although the garments were chosen specifically for these roles, they assume secondary roles in comparison to the narrative as a whole – that is this spread did not revolve around the merchandising of garments. This reflects current thinking in contemporary fashion photography where actual garments and design details become less relevant than the image as a whole, ideology supported by Jillian Lochner (2005), Dion Chang (2005), and also by one of the most influential international fashion photographers of this era, Nick Knight (as quoted in Stout, 1998:34).

Planning the styling side of the project required about a week for models, make-up artist and hairstylist bookings. The fashion shoot was styled and art directed by myself and photographed by Peter Machen at his studio in Morningside, Durban over a period of two days.

Field notes could only be made at the end of the day because such a project runs with time constraints. Digital manipulation of the images using Adobe Photoshop was done by Peter Machen while we both worked on analysing and choosing which combinations worked better and critically appraising different aspects of the construction of these images. This process took over a month and the collection was narrowed down to five options per identity giving a total of thirty images to work from. Parallel to this process, the text adjoined to the images was developed by Peter Machen and refined by both him and me.

**Participation Observation**

The methods of generating a category set reflect the type of data being analysed, and also the aims, inclination, knowledge and theoretical sophistication of the researcher (Dey, 1993:97). The theoretically-inclined participant observer may have quite difficult starting points and quite difficult resources upon which to call (ibid). Bogdan and Taylor (1975:80) recommend that the
participant observer seek to demonstrate the plausibility of her hypotheses rather than to test or to prove them. It is at the time of the post-fieldwork that she concentrates most on the analysis of data and examines under which conditions they hold true (ibid). In this case notes were made after each day of shooting but analysis began after a break was taken to create some distance in order to see data from a wider perspective. Bogdan and Taylor (1975:82) note that certain things are easier to recognise and to treat objectively after a period of time has elapsed.

Montage as Technique

Montage refers to the art or the process of composing pictures of miscellaneous elements such as other pictures or words or photographs (The Times English Dictionary & Thesaurus, 2000:766). While it is not often used to refer to research activities or the product of such enterprises, Bogdan and Taylor (1975:133) present it as a tool that can be used to further social understanding. They review Lesy's montage which consists of an arrangement of photographs and quotations from a small town from 1890-1910, through their Historical Society and newspapers. These capture the "structure of the experience of the people themselves, especially that aspect of the structure that might be regarded as pathological" (ibid). Some of the quotations presented are as follow:

"Henry Johnson, an old bachelor of Grand Dyke, cut off the heads of all his hens recently, made a bonfire of his best clothes and killed himself with arsenic."

"John Pabelowski, a 16 year old boy of Stevens Point was made idiotic by the use of tobacco"

"Billie Neverson's wife was a weirdie. They took over the old Creston place at the other end of the valley. No one knows what really happened. Some say it went back to Billie finding out about her having a kid before they got married. Anyway, she just stayed by herself. Once a year, maybe, someone would see her in town, but she wouldn't even nod her head to say hello. Acting like that nobody ever bothered to visit them either."

Michael Lesy, Wisconsin Death Trip, quoted in Bogdan and Taylor (1975:133-134)
The authors describe Lesy as an artist, an historian and a social scientist *par excellence*. They also note that the perspective and understanding that he brings to the data is more important than the method. Lesy's work provides an interesting technique of illustration which the practical component, in the form of the exhibition / dissertation catalogue will draw from.

Accompanying texts for the fashion identities were formulated in a sensibility similar to Lesy's work and they served the function of contextualising the images in a broader narrative. From a theoretical point of view, they acted as a bridge between the gap between the 'readerly' and the 'writerly' texts as per Barthes’ definitions, discussed in 2.6.1. This, to a certain extent makes the images accessible from both a popular and ideological standpoint.

### 3.7.2 The Making of the Fashion Images

A standard plain background and identical lighting were fixed as unchangeable factors for the actual shoot with all the models. This was decided because the narratives differed from each other and a common thread was needed to string the individual identities to each other. We decided to portray the identities in a retro-kitsch setting that would be reminiscent of the city of Durban or the province of KwaZulu Natal to give it an indigenous sensibility. We used a kitsch, cheap 'linoleum' that comes in a roll as flooring, and often utilised in the 60s – 70s, especially in photographic studios that specialised in portraits for the historically disadvantaged communities such as indians and coloureds. Photographs taken in that period in the studio settings have a slight anthropological undertone to them because the subjects often looked serious and stiff in sharp contrast to the painted set backgrounds which normally represented spaces for leisure of middle-class bourgeois settings such as manicured gardens with the obligatory water fountain or pastoral scenery with mountains evoking a life of leisure and travel.
However, we decided not to use that concept too literally so while keeping the lino as flooring/foreground, we decided to keep the background plain so we could 'photoshop in' different sceneries for the different options. We drew from the artificiality of the backgrounds in those retro studios and chose various images with post-card sensibilities to suggest the extreme idealising of a setting. While some were of nature, we also chose some that depicted urban life to give the spread a contemporary feel.

Kinesics and proxemics deal with movement and gestures and how they affect communication (Fourie, 1996); these ideologically interpreted elements operate with visual associations and are key notions which help manipulate the textual aspects of an image to communicate meaning. These are theoretical terms but used practically in art-directing and styling in routine aspects such as posture, body language and facial expressions.

To confuse the issue of race we initially decided to photoshop all the models' skin in a Tretchikoff Blue. However, as the different models were progressively photoshopped blue, it quite became apparent that this technique was not going to work for all identities so we had to scrap the idea of applying it to the totality of identities and experimented with the ones where it worked from an aesthetic or ideological perspective.

It must be noted that image modification and selection process was not necessarily linear or sequential but was rather mapped in an interconnective way that is narrated and illustrated visually and in the exhibition/dissertation catalogue which contains a synthesis of data analysis part two, which is a reflexive account of participant observation and its outcomes which led to selection of the final images of constructed identities.
Chapter Four

REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This study has attempted to track and to reflect on the factors that are influencing production practice in South African fashion photography and to investigate aspects of construction of politicised fashion identities in the same. This practice seems moulded by the major influence of commercial Anglo-American / Western fashion imagery with existent but negligible contemporary indigenous influence. This occurrence can be linked to cultural dominance of the West instilled by the country's colonial history and political past, acting with current zeitgeist driven by capitalism, consumerism and the inevitable influences of globalisation. Reviewing concepts of identity should be performed through multiple frameworks, and these should include populist as well as ideological ones which would activate debate on notions of politicised identities. The latter perspectives open dialogue on issues such as South African identity which seems to be a peripheral concept, still in its infancy in the local fashion photographic industry.

4.2 FASHION IDENTITY AS AREA OF INVESTIGATION

This study collected primary data and found results on fashion photographic generation in South Africa from the producers' perspectives. This was correlated with data from secondary sources reviewing theories and praxis of identity formation and consumer perceptions from a global but Western perspective. Literature searches have indicated a lack of theory and minimal research – past or current on female fashion identity formation in South Africa. It is essential that research be
carried out on South African female consumer perceptions of fashion imagery and how it affects their processes of identity formation with methodologies involving focus interviews of participants exemplified through attempts such as Crane’s (2000:212-234) and Seyakii’s (2003) research. Part of the enquiry could possibly be directed into the impact of the predominantly Eurocentric culture of fashion on non-white women in South Africa. This would be in order to investigate the extent of appropriation of imported Western fashion identities – if they are drastically transformative or whether that segment offers aesthetic resistance to standardising Western norms such as those of beauty (such as slenderness) and dress.

4.3 FASHION IDENTITY AS AREA OF EXPERIENCE

Fashion identity in the context of this study can be as Arnold (2001:3) points out, a form of stylistic appropriation by a viewer (of fashion images), who imbibes the images, the ideals in her understanding of a trend, a look and the potential identities. This information is assimilated and regulated by her individual set of values and subjective understandings and they are projected as interpretations of the archetypes of desire that she is constantly being barraged with through the media – advertising, fashion imagery etc. While this vast reservoir of meanings is manipulated and reconstructed so as to “enhance a person’s sense of agency” (Crane, 2000:2), Arnold (2001:13) describes it as an endeavour that can be “aspirational or subversive.” This illustrates the empowering potential of fashion identities as an area of experience.

Kellner (1995:232) suggests that the modern self is aware of the constructed nature of identity and that one can always change and modify one’s identity at will. Women, as individuals are also anxious concerning recognition and validation of their identity by others (ibid). The author also suggests that identities can stagnate, become superfluous or be no longer socially validated and even trap an individual in a web of social, sometimes conflicting roles so that there is a loss of the sense of who one really is.
In these senses discussed, fashion identities, as an extension of the cultural self are important while it is equally important to understand which factors govern identity formation and to what extent they do. Fashion magazines and the fashion press form part of the 'image industries' and directly or indirectly provide individuals with material in building their sense of 'self'.

4.4 POLITICISED FASHION IDENTITIES AS DESIGN CHALLENGE

Research data suggests that South Africa's fashion photographic scene has only really been emancipated in terms of its philosophies regarding racial variances and the canons of beauty since it became a democratic country. Political emancipation in that area has happened, but at a very slow pace as compared with Europe, from where South African fashion faithfully draws most of its trends season after season.

While it is clear that fashion publications in South Africa do not intentionally generate and diffuse specific ideologies, most local mainstream publications (such as Cosmopolitan, Marie-Claire and Elle) are sister branches of multi-national Anglo-American fashion periodical titles, operating under their flagship and thereby following their basic formulae which is predictably Eurocentric. The fashion publishing industry's imported use of prescriptive European systems, such as 'style bibles', to direct construction of fashion images for their readership in South Africa (Chang, 2005) does not promote local cultures or identities. It glamourises a utopian vision of patriarchal, Western ideals. This 'celebratory' style of mainstream fashion journalism is criticised by McRobbie (cited by Church Gibson, 2000:358), as being a major force which helps maintain the "marginalised, trivial image of fashion". This only serves to keep women in the "ghetto of femininity," while in almost every sector of public life, femininity and gender issues are increasingly coming to occupy the political centre stage (ibid).
Commercial fashion imagery caters for a popular market. And whilst acknowledging the value of the pleasure it provides through a utopian, escapist and popular approach (Dyer, Lovell and McCrindle, 1993) in producing and interpreting identities, one must recognise the potential unrealism and distortion effects they could have in creating myths about female identity, both fashion and cultural.

Experts on the South African fashion publishing scene appreciate the importance of political play in fashion identity formations but are limited creatively by parameters from their publication's 'style bible' or specific formulae of "profit-driven populism", term used by Froneman (as cited by Viljoen and Viljoen, 2005:91) that they have to adhere to. Elite interviewees maintain that they would like see more politicised fashion identities and the adoption of new directions in female fashion representation in South Africa, such as a shift in a more indigenous but contemporary direction.

4.5 CONCLUSION

Luce Irigaray (as cited by Church Gibson, 2000b:354), philosophises on the assumption that, women's thoughts, economic, social, moral and sexual values have still to be created because all we know of women's thoughts and women's values thus far is that they have emerged in, and been determined by, a world dictated and constructed by men. Braidotti, cited in Church Gibson (2000b:355), suggests that there is a need for a qualitative leap on behalf of women, into believing in the empowering force of political fiction, to find new images and new modes of thought as a way out of old totalizing ones.

While revolutionary voices echoing these sensibilities might find it hard to find a voice in mainstream fashion publishing and media, South Africa boasts an excellent art publishing circuit who, according to Chang (2005) would be interested in providing a platform for discursive topics such as the politicised notions of female fashion identities.
The challenge to South African production of fashion identities lies in moving beyond stereotypes of imported Eurocentric identities and stereotypes of local cultural identities (as touristic, curio-clichés) by engaging with contemporary discourses of identity in a critical and political way. One way of achieving it lies in exploring the sense of a national identity, in promoting the indigenous in a contemporary way and in indigenising the imported. A successful example of the latter is seen in the identity of Shweshwe as an ‘African’ fabric. Shweshwe is a wax-resist printed fabric that is supposedly ‘Dutch’ but is in fact, originally Javanese (Pepys, 2005). The other suggested way – the promoting of the indigenous, could lie in representing the potential hybrid identities that emerge with contemporary culture as reflected in fusion in fields as various as music, art, food and interior design.

The exhibition/dissertation catalogue, as a final point of this research, is a manifesto of hybridity that endeavours to illuminate politicised reflections on local female identities by proposing candid representations of South African diversity in female fashion identities. Some of them reveal an anxiety of contemporary ambivalent identities (see Identity 2: Poor-rich white woman and Identity 5: Male Madonna) and some speak of a politicised utopia (see Identity 4: U-Shiva), while all strive to challenge the traditional iconography of fashion photography. The possibilities for exploration are as expansive as the multiculturalism and inter-culturalism that exist in daily, ordinary aspects of life in South Africa and are there for harnessing; possibilities that through their capacity to challenge and expand thinking and understanding, could be potentially catalytic in the already mobilised transformation processes of the New South Africa.
LIST OF REFERENCES


Callow, S. (sara@intelligence.co.za) 15.06.2005. *Interview by N.D. Madhoo-Chipps*. E-mail to Madhoo-Chipps, N.D. (milkmaid@mailbox.co.za).

Callow, S. (sara@intelligence.co.za) 14 February 2006. *Profile*. E-mail to Madhoo-Chipps, N.D. (milkmaid@mailbox.co.za).


Chang, D. (imagine@netactive.co.za) 13 February 2006. *Biography*. E-mail to Madhoo-Chipps, N.D. (milkmaid@mailbox.co.za).


Lochner, J. (info@jillianlochner.com), 27.04.2005. Interview by N.D. Madhoo-Chipps E-mail to Madhoo-Chipps, N.D. (milkmaid@mailbox.co.za).


APPENDIX A

ELITE INTERVIEW

Email interview of fashion photographer Jillian Lochner by researcher. Received 27.04.2005 from info@jillianlochner.com to milkmaid@mailbox.co.za.

Please note that italicized text denotes questions by interviewer followed by elite interviewees' response in regular text in a different paragraph denoted by their initials.

This study investigates aspects of the construction of politicized female identities in South African fashion photography.

The term ‘politics’ refers to the articulation and negotiation of relationships between the self and others, and in the context of this study, is interpreted via symbolism in dress and body language as depicted in fashion photographic imagery.

(In academic terms, this is how my proposal is worded – which is a necessary evil of masters study, but, I am trying to find: what is the link between fashion photography and female identity formation in South Africa and what is SA fashion photography saying about SA female identity?)

Please would you type your replies to the questions 'off the top of your head' or as you would in a conversational way. It can be difficult to articulate fashion photographic image as identity, so please feel free to formulate replies in a loose and unpacked way, and to change your mind if you like.

1. As an editor/photographer/stylist in the SA fashion publishing industry, you are involved at the core level of the production of fashion spreads. Where do you come in (what is your input/contribution), in the construction of a brief for a fashion spread?

JL: in this country - photographers get treated like photocopy machines. They give you a picture and expect the exact same result down to the angle of the toe!!! Unfortunately, fashion spreads / magazine editorials, are the same as shooting a catalogue. It has been dictated by the general public (and I definitely don't need to explain the 'general public' mentality in this country!) . When I started off 8 years ago - I was doing some amazing editorials - pushing the boundaries. People wrote into the magazines saying they couldn't see the garments. They want to see a pretty girl in a pretty dress in a pretty photograph with every bit of stitching visible. (now, doesn't that sound like catalogue to you!) . . . . and what do we do here in SA! Listen to Tannie Sarie sitting in the middle of some god forsaken place I very sad. That is why you see all the magazines looking the same. They are keeping their readers happy to the expense of the countries development.

So to answer your question on my input - ZERO! That is why I have stopped doing them (only do the odd one as a favour for the people I am very close to). Even if you try and put input - they
slaughter it with bad edits and bad printing. It is a no win situation! This is a big reason why I turned to advertising. A lot more rewarding. I get to give my 100 percent imput around concepts, techniques, tones etc. I love it! A lot of the advertising work I have gotten has come from my personal work. I am respected and appreciated. Especially the work I do out the country. There are still too many limitations in SA with advertising - a large part of that is budget. People are cheap here, and most don't see the difference.

I don't mean to put SA down in anyway. I love the country. but it has a lot to learn.

I am moving to London in 6 months. i will not close my doors here - I plan to live back here one day - just need to get out there and express myself where I am appreciated. Don't you find it sad that South African's have to leave their country first before SA spots their talent. Look at Nadav Kander , Charlese Therson, Kendal Greers ( can't spell his surname now ) . and then they are all very quick to say - they are from South Africa. I know I sound cynical , but it has been tough. I have really had to demand my respect . I think we have a huge amount of talent here, I would just love to see it be more supported.

2. Other than the intent of displaying a product what are the things you try to propose to the consumer? (trends, moods, make-believe?)

JL: I personally don't believe in trends and what is in fashion. I never try and put that across. A lot of my personal work, you will see there is ' no style ' no particular time. This came about after many frustrating shoots I did where the stylist brought awful clothing. badly made, badly tailored, badly styled clothing. The quality of our garments in this country is shocking. Once again - on the cheap. So I would rather have no emphasis on style when their isn't any style. Style is simple.

Style is quality. people forget that. They think the more shit they throw together - the more stylish they are. This is where I turned my work into a more conceptual based approach. This has benefited me enormously in my work. It has pushed me to find a direction i am very comfortable with.

3. Fashion spreads, through their imagery, present a visual narrative that, generally, propose a desirable 'way of being' to its consumers.

   a) Do you present these 'ways of being' to your target market as a source of identity-shaping ideal?

   b) Or would you say these ideas are representative of existing desires in your consumers – that is, are consumers are being provided with what they want to see as an affirming reflection of established identities?

JL: I find it hard to answer this question - it gets my bad senses going ..... but I think the above will explain why. I don't like to box ideas and have pre-conceived ideas on anything. I like to draw out of a situation as I see fit. For me, it is all about the exact time you shoot. So many people look over that because they are so wrapped up in their pre-conceived ideas on anything. I like to take what is in front of me and draw out what I find there and then. If a model has big ears - I am not going to hide it because the brief said bushy hairstyle. I would rather slick her hair back and show the most beautiful part of her - what most people see as flaws - I see as perfection. I don't feed into target markets. That is unfair on the viewer. I am true to myself and want to express a way of seeing things most people look past everyday of their lives.

A striking example that expresses the effects that fashion photography has had on the formation of identity is that of the 'heroin chic' trend in 1993, sparked off by the work of fashion photographers like Corinne Day. In her portrayal of realistic images of her personal friends in fashion magazines, the 'wasted look' became fashionable. In response to this shift from a cluster sub-cultural identity to a mainstream fashion one, there was much protest from those who claimed that there was a direct link between fashion photography and the incidence of drug abuse.
4. Have there been instances when local fashion photography has had a similar cultural/social impact in SA?

JL: Unfortunately - I don't think SA is that advanced mentally yet. Both from the photographers supplying the images and the viewer looking at them. One day ! ! !

5. To extend the previous question, in what ways do you think female social identity in SA is influenced by fashion photography?

JL: Now I would love to see a big black woman with a big black arse in our magazines. For me - that is true woman ! that is true Africa ! That is true beauty ! But what do we get - skinny black American models with hideous wigs that make them all look like drag queens ! Who can identify with that ! Those models themselves don't even identify with that ! bet they look a lot more beautiful at home and within their comfort zone. They look like planks in our magazines and adverts. No expression. No life.

6. Which overseas magazines do you find most political and/or controversial in the fashion photographic arena?

JL: Controversial - well, I am a big fan of Tank Magazine. I have had quite a few of my stories published in there. The cover a lot of different subjects and often their pages are filled with artist works. Why does it all have to be about photographs ? Drawings really speak to you ! more so than what most photographs can. I often feel envious towards people that are genius in illustrating / painting / sculpture / music - I also want to sweat and scream in an image !

7. In what ways is female fashion identity politicized in South African fashion photography? In other words, do you think that fashion photography in SA has represented new or alternative ways of relating with others?

JL: sorry - you know my opinion on this already

8. In your opinion which local publication radicalises female fashion identity?

JL: none !

9. In some societies, some topics such as nudity and bodily functions are considered taboo and abject - 'abject' being a term that can be understood as repulsive, or causing disgust (for example body hair is repudiated in general contexts for beauty).

a) What would you say are the identities and the issues that are considered taboo/abject and therefore not portrayed in the SA fashion photographic realm?

b) Is there scope for exploring these taboo issues and issues of abjection in any current local fashion publications on the SA market?

JL: I will give you a general answer here - not exactly what you are asking for. but draw out of it what you will.

Definition for PORNOGRAPHY is. . . . what give a judge a hardon. That pretty much sums it up for me. You know - I couldn't get my book bound because all the book binders across the country were saying it was pornographic. Now where do they get that ? People are fine looking at penetration - but when they have to use there brain intelligently for once - they can't cope. Men
sniffing panties. girls portraits with mouths open. Where is the porn in that!!?? but what is going on in their minds is too much for them. I love real. I love people. I love skin. I love touch / smell / FEEL . Feeling is the most important thing to me. What are we without feeling ( I refer to emotional feel ). I want people to feel when they see an image. Why put something out there that is going to keep people cold. I want people to feel as much as I do. Even if it is hate, love, anger, happiness. I don't care! FEEL! that is the only thing that confirms we are living. This answers your number 11.

10. What are the specifically SA fashion identities you think are being represented in SA fashion imagery?

11. What are the identities and/or issues that you would like to see represented in SA fashion imagery?

12. Do you have examples – references or tear-sheets of shoots (or images that you can describe) that you consider politicised or important to the direction that local fashion photography could or should take?

JL: Please look at my website - and tell me which images you would like me to e-mail you. I am guessing most of the advertising work.
This study investigates aspects of the construction of politicized female identities in South African fashion photography.

The term 'politics' refers to the articulation and negotiation of relationships between the self and others, and in the context of this study, is interpreted via symbolism in dress and body language as depicted in fashion photographic imagery.

(In academic terms, this is how my proposal is worded – which is a necessary evil of masters study, but, I am trying to find: what is the link between fashion photography and female identity formation in South Africa and what is SA fashion photography saying about SA female identity?)

Please would you type your replies to the questions 'off the top of your head' or as you would in a conversational way. It can be difficult to articulate fashion photographic image as identity, so please feel free to formulate replies in a loose and unpacked way, and to change your mind if you like.

1. As an editor/photographer/stylist in the SA fashion publishing industry, you are involved at the core level of the production of fashion spreads. Where do you come in (what is your input/contribution), in the construction of a brief for a fashion spread?

DC: It varies from person to person. Each editor will work very very differently. I normally come up with a concept or a story then choose a team to work with – a photographer to execute the image and a make-up artist. For a shoot sometimes a photographer will pitch in an idea. But I always choose who will be on the team carefully – being very aware of the psychology of the group – the mindset of the people on the team.

- So you have the fashion editor that does the styling and not a stylist as such?

DC: You find that often when a freelance stylist is sick of just freelance styling they just move in to be an editor.

2. Other than the intent of displaying a product what are the things you try to propose to the consumer? (trends, moods, make-believe?)
DC: I started my career in the 20th century and we’re now in the 21st century. It’s a really different ball game in the 21st century. Its so much more life-style based. I think its facile to sort of say, pink is in this season. If I look at just the past decade of working in magazines — military trends have been repeated 3 times and everyone is so excited because animal prints are in again — and I think, but I’ve done that 3 or 4 times already... There is a recycling happening that has me losing faith in prescriptive fashion. So I think you try and show products first and foremost but I always show a fantasy, a story, a lifestyle. And I always prefer shooting a narrative. I just don’t like shooting 8 different pictures... I like the stories going through it — the story — and almost, the clothes become secondary and the story / narrative for me the most important.

3. Fashion spreads, through their imagery, present a visual narrative that generally, propose a desirable ‘way of being’ to its consumers.

a) Do you present these ‘ways of being’ to your target market as a source of identity-shaping ideal?

DC: I think the fashion stories themselves are not really geared to suggest a specific way of being but the identity comes in with the publication you’re working with. Say for example when I first started with Elle, you always had an Elle Bible — a style bible that you got from Paris. And that was the Elle woman. You know the Fair Lady market, the Elle market, the SL and what have you... I think the editors work within those parameters. So the editors’ stories even though they might show different lifestyles or different ways of being, essentially, the title of the magazine dictates those limitations so you are dictated by that.

b) Or would you say these ideas are representative of existing desires in your consumers — that is, are consumers are being provided with what they want to see as an affirming reflection of established identities?

DC: Yes but now and again you can still throw a curve ball at them as well. Sometimes you get the wrath of the editor because obviously you know when stylists first come out from free-lancing they’re used to doing whatever they want and all fantastic things. Sometimes there’s some restrictions in the client’s brief; once you move into a magazine... People get very excited because “Oh! They’ve got a position at Elle magazine” or something like that but you actually find out that you are far more restricted with in that you have to play that game because linked to your editorial is advertising revenue... all that kind of stuff that comes in with it, that as a freelancer you don’t really think about.

A striking example that expresses the effects that fashion photography has had on the formation of identity is that of the ‘heroin chic’ trend in 1993, sparked off by the work of fashion photographers like Corinne Day. In her portrayal of realistic images of her personal friends in fashion magazines, the ‘wasted look’ became fashionable. In response to this shift from a cluster sub-cultural identity to a mainstream fashion one, there was much protest from those who claimed that there was a direct link between fashion photography and the incidence of drug abuse.

4. Have there been instances when local fashion photography has had a similar cultural/social impact in SA?

DC: Not really because it is a South African context... I think specifically pre-1994 and around in the 90s as well because of SA’s political past the only thing that was really really a sensitive spot and had cultural impact was the race issue. So you know because of the political climate where you’d still have these things like where if you put a black girl on the cover of a magazine its not going to sell as much as if a blond girl were on it or whatever. It was, in a sense, quite exciting working in the 90s especially in SA you were pushing things that you were never previously allowed to do... or you had to deal with prejudices and editors had to sort of work with strict
guidelines. I worked first with Rooi Rose magazine which is an Afrikaans magazine and I'd just
came from London and had quite a radical styling book and was quite confused at why they'd
hired me because my work isn't really for an Afrikaans market. But I learnt very quickly that you
had to deal with that. I kept going back to other things – you throw curve balls – and started
putting darker skinned girls in. It was quite a radical thing for them to accept. I think just generally
I came across a lot of editors that if I've picked a model and she's too skinny – the anorexia thing
– that was very prevalent – I think it was because of the whole Kate Moss thing...if you chose a
girl for a swimwear shoot and her ribs showed it would be like "Oh my god get a girl with more
meat on her". So there were all these issues but I think race was the main thing.

5. To extend the previous question, in what ways do you think female social identity in SA is
influenced by fashion photography?

DC: I think in a younger market people are affected. In an older market – that's why editors get so
skittish about things. In older markets if you try and sell to say a Femina or a Fair Lady kind of
market, if you try and put something there the readers will reject that. They are not going to say
"Oh my god I'm going to buy into that style, or that image or whatever," they're going to say "that
heroin chic looks disgusting"...whereas in a younger market, teen mags – that kind of thing,
people are more susceptible to peer pressure and wanting to fit in. So its definitely an age thing
there.

6. Which overseas magazines do you find most political and/or controversial in the fashion
photographic arena?

DC: I think mostly the British ones. Quite way back when you had iD, Face, those were ground-
breaking and they really pushed the boundaries. I feel a lot of the magazines that have come
after those use shock tactics and there's not really social relevance to those ones. The closer you
got to the threshold of the new millennium, people tried to push things because they had to be
very extreme to shock people but it didn't have the same gravitas as the previous ones – there
wasn't anything serious to it.

7. In what ways is female fashion identity politicized in South African fashion photography?
In other words, do you think that fashion photography in SA has represented new or
alternative ways of relating with others?

DC: I think it is completely politicised. I think specifically people think fashion photography,
fashion magazines are quite frivolous and everything but I think it had a definite role and a strong
role in shifting people's perspectives on stereotypes and things. So if you had for example in an
Afrikaans magazine where you never ever saw a black woman or the closest you even got was
maybe a very very light skinned coloured lady. But that was it you know. So, because you portray
lifestyle in fashion shoots as well, if you start introducing different cultures into that and you start
mixing that...it's a very subliminal thing. So, yes, I definitely think its there...SA specifically is
politicised and it is a very slow and subtle way of creating change. You're not hitting people full-on
force with something radical, you introduce it very subliminally so it does work.

8. In your opinion which local publication radicalises female fashion identity?

DC: Radicalise such as you and I would understand it, not really in SA but it is a very relative
thing. What you and I might think something is quite radical, or not radical at all – for an old
Afrikaans woman in a rural place to suddenly see a black woman on her magazine is a complete
shock to the system. So people like Sara Callow – her shoots are quite edgy and push
boundaries. On a completely flip side with the male magazines like the FHM its sad in a way that
they're so successful in the UK and specifically in SA...they're kind of tabloid magazines...to be
blunt, tits and ass, and it still goes back to objectifying women. So at the bottom line whatever you
are talking about, advertising, magazines, whatever, sex sells, sex, sex, sex; that's it! Elle in this
country was a very different magazine to launch. For the first time, Elle, in South Africa started
doing a very niche market whereas before, even at Cosmo, it was quite broad spectrum. Cosmo had its formula; each magazine has that sort of formula; for Cosmo it is if you’re looking for sex tips, find the g-spot, that kind of thing. And then Elle came into the market. It was very difficult to sell it to the advertisers because it has a smaller circulation, so you’re speaking to a slightly more intelligent woman or a fashion-loving woman and advertisers were used to counting numbers and they saying “okay, you sell 100,000 copies and suddenly you have a magazine that sells under 50,000...well, no it can’t be that good,” so it took quite a while for the advertisers to get to grips that a small magazine with a small circulation is just as powerful within that market as something that is just very broad-band.

In some societies, some topics such as nudity and bodily functions are considered taboo and abject - ‘abject’ being a term that can be understood as repulsive, or causing disgust (for example body hair is repudiated in general contexts for beauty).

a) What would you say are the identities and the issues that are considered taboo/abject and therefore not portrayed in the SA fashion photographic realm?

DC: In SA because we have a Calvinistic history you got a lot of people who will leap up to their horses very quickly and stand on moral highgrounds so I think your taboo subjects stand around morals or cultural insensitivity. So if its contradictions about Xhosa women or a Zulu person or something but also homosexuality which is a shock-horror kind of thing; which is why Sara at SL would do 2 girls kissing or 2 boys holding hands and you can push it in a younger market. And you have religious blasphemy - no, no, no, you couldn’t do that. I did a shoot for Elle about Joan of Ark called Firestarter. It was a whole story about Joan of Ark - a modern day one and it was a little bit tense because there was religion and stuff. I think those kinds of things are not normal to do in SA.

b) Is there scope for exploring these taboo issues and issues of abjection in any current local fashion publications on the SA market?

DC: I think mostly your fine art, or those kinds or more intellectual magazines. The more you go mainstream the more you dumb down to your reader...which is no coincidence that FHM has got a circulation and you’re talking at that kind of gross-base level. But you can push more of these things in a more intellectual; - I don’t mean intellectual in a stuffy way – but if you try and twist something and subvert something, its more easily understood than if it goes to a completely mainstream level because they get offended quickly because they don’t get it...So more in art magazines but not really fashion magazines.

10. What are the specifically SA fashion identities you think are being represented in SA fashion imagery?

DC: We’re in exciting times in SA so for the first time we finally have an indigenous identity which is not based on copying international trends and it’s also not a curio-content mindset so when we talk - we’re talking more South African, we’re talking less Africa, we’re talking less ethnic/traditional, we’re talking a lot more street, township, contemporary. Cultural roots, ‘proud in Africa’...are things that are being represented and, the strength of women, role of women; African pride and specifically cultural roots – but more a modern interpretation of that.

11. What are the identities and/or issues that you would like to see represented in SA fashion imagery?

DC: I think the ideology of the rainbow nation but I don’t think the ads on TV where everyone is one big, happy family, all the races are mixed and we singing along – I think we’re getting there, that it’s a nice ideal but if we try and express a more indigenous South African thing; not a rainbow nation as such but a colour spectrum of the rainbow. We call it a rainbow nation but we
should look more at individual colours that make up the whole thing and not try and have this whole rainbow perfection because it's not perfect so it's not true.

12. Do you have examples – references or tear-sheets of shoots (or images that you can describe) that you consider politicised or important to the direction that local fashion photography could or should take?

DC: The concept behind the Laugh it Off T-shirts for example. That for me, is where we should go because I think, for too long...it's a slow healing process...but South Africans take things too seriously. It takes more intellectual minded people that are more sussed to get it if you're poking fun at them and the whole thing with the Ts, it's more what we need and it is an expression of our political past and that's why labels like Stoned Cherry are so successful. Because they didn't tap into a traditional ethnic value system, they tapped into a political past. So Steve Biko shirts, that kind of thing, shebeen queen. Local cultural identities..we need more of that stuff and we need to laugh at it and say ok well,...

13. If the concept behind the Laugh it off t-shirts was translated literally into a fashion shoot, do you think it would go down well?

DC: In the right publication. What Sara (Callow) does – she does that kind of thing and sometimes Chris Viljoen pushes it a little bit and he does some nice things but its not as tongue in cheek. Sara / SL can do things tongue in cheek. Chris is with FHM and he has struggle with that line between tits and ass and...doing stuff that's quite sophisticated, sort of L'Uomo Vogue kind of thing and he puts a bit of...but I don't think he can be as irreverent as Sara because Sara is talking to a student market; and students get it, an older market doesn't.
APPENDIX C

ELITE INTERVIEW

Email interview of fashion editor / creative director Sara Callow by researcher. Received 15.06.2005 from sara@intelligence.co.za to milkmaid@mailbox.co.za.

Please note that italicized text denotes questions by interviewer followed by elite interviewees' response in regular text in a different paragraph denoted by their initials.

This study investigates aspects of the construction of politicized female identities in South African fashion photography.

The term 'politics' refers to the articulation and negotiation of relationships between the self and others, and in the context of this study, is interpreted via symbolism in dress and body language as depicted in fashion photographic imagery.
(In academic terms, this is how my proposal is worded – which is a necessary evil of masters study, but, I am trying to find: what is the link between fashion photography and female identity formation in South Africa and what is SA fashion photography saying about SA female identity?)

Please would you type your replies to the questions 'off the top of your head' or as you would in a conversational way. It can be difficult to articulate fashion photographic image as identity, so please feel free to formulate replies in a loose and unpacked way, and to change your mind if you like.

1. As an editor/photographer/stylist in the SA fashion publishing industry, you are involved at the core level of the production of fashion spreads. Where do you come in (what is your input/contribution), in the construction of a brief for a fashion spread?

SC: My input and contribution starts with personal brainstorming, I decide on a fashion trend that I wish to focus on, not just any trend but one that is appropriate to the local market. From there I conceptualise a visual idea, a story to illustrate that trend. I then decide which photographer / hair and make-up artist would be right for the shoot – to visually interpret the idea I have in my head. Thus, overall – my input is huge! I brief the team I am working with, and then on the actual shoot I allow the team to be creative, to play and express their ideas. A shoot is nothing without a great team.

2. Other than the intent of displaying a product what are the things you try to propose to the consumer? (trends, moods, make-believe?)
SC: Fashion trends, emotions, story telling techniques, aspirational / desirable and thought provoking imagery.

3. Fashion spreads, through their imagery, present a visual narrative that, generally, propose a desirable 'way of being' to its consumers.
   a) Do you present these 'ways of being' to your target market as a source of identity-shaping ideal?
   b) Or would you say these ideas are representative of existing desires in your consumers – that is, are consumers being provided with what they want to see as an affirming reflection of established identities?

SC: I'd say that it is a combination of the two; firstly, I do not intentionally attempt to shape / re-shape identity but by presenting images as 'ways of being' I guess the suggestion of identity shaping is valid. Images as ideas are also existing consumer desires and ideals that fashion photography reaffirms, especially in the more mainstream publications such as ELLE or marie claire. As fashion Editor at SL, my shoots are far more unusual and blatant, concept driven. I am lucky to be supported and encouraged to promote diversity, the models I use do not fit the traditionally 'beautiful' traits that are associated with models, they are more unusual. The same with the photographers I use, they lean towards the more mad and creative and together we create a spread that is original and not obviously derivative unlike other magazines where the spreads are predictable.

A striking example that expresses the effects that fashion photography has had on the formation of identity is that of the 'heroin chic' trend in 1993, sparked off by the work of fashion photographers like Corinne Day. In her portrayal of realistic images of her personal friends in fashion magazines, the 'wasted look' became fashionable. In response to this shift from a cluster sub-cultural identity to a mainstream fashion one, there was much protest from those who claimed that there was a direct link between fashion photography and the incidence of drug abuse.

4. Have there been instances when local fashion photography has had a similar cultural/social impact in SA?

SC: Fashion photography in SA has had an impact on our perceptions of race. The assumed cultural and social norms have been challenged and questioned.

However, with regards your example, 'heroin chic' – I feel very strongly that we do not take sufficient responsibility for self. The public / The Reader demand to see thin, waif like, 'beautiful' models in fashion spreads and then complain that fashion mags propagate unrealistic ideals etc / eating disorders. Then – when a mag shows pages full of 'largely feminine' body types, the readers complain again. A vicious circle. No magazine can force you to take drugs or be incredibly skinny. We need to take responsibility for ourselves and stop passing the blame.

I also passionately believe that fashion is a cultural barometer reflecting wants, needs, desires etc. Fashion can tell us a lot about a society or culture's mood, whether it be more optimistic due to a rise in the economy or other.

5. To extend the previous question, in what ways do you think female social identity in SA is influenced by fashion photography?

SC I'd like to believe that female social identity in SA is enhanced and widened due to fashion photography, that norms and perceptions have been challenged.
6. Which overseas magazines do you find most political and/or controversial in the fashion photographic arena?

SC: - DAZED
THE FACE
ITALIAN VOGUE
TANK
ANOTHER MAGAZINE
POP
i-D
FLAUNT
SCENE
SLEAZENATION

7. In what ways is female fashion identity politicized in South African fashion photography?
In other words, do you think that fashion photography in SA has represented new or alternative ways of relating with others?

SC: Absolutely.

8. In your opinion which local publication radicalises female fashion identity?

SC: SL on the left and FHM on the right. Two extremes.

9. In some societies, some topics such as nudity and bodily functions are considered taboo and abject – ‘abject’ being a term that can be understood as repulsive, or causing disgust (for example body hair is repudiated in general contexts for beauty).

a) What would you say are the identities and the issues that are considered taboo/abject and therefore not portrayed in the SA fashion photographic realm?

SC: Sadly, I guess generically – that is, over the majority of local magazines, weight – being ‘overweight’ is the most obvious. Body hair etc. I’d say that we are on par with other countries in this regard.

b) Is there scope for exploring these taboo issues and issues of abjection in any current local fashion publications on the SA market?

SC: Yes and No. There are magazines that ‘claim’ to address these issues, but magazines put out what people want to see and vice versa.

10. What are the specifically SA fashion identities you think are being represented in SA fashion imagery?

SC: To be blunt – in SA fashion imagery we often see the tired, commercial and expected stereotypes – that African print fabric is representative of Africa etc. The use of black models in shoots often seems token, it sometimes doesn’t feel honest. We see a lot of fashion spreads that reinforce the concept of ‘uniforms’ – like office wear etc.

11. What are the identities and/or issues that you would like to see represented in SA fashion imagery?

SC: I’d like to see a new identity, I’d like to see what people think our future could look like, create a new identity instead of repeating the tired old clichés. I get so bored with the monthly repetition of what seems like the same shoot. We are caught up in not offending or upsetting anyone. I'd
like to see a whole wide mad range of stuff, a swimwear shoot which has no swimwear, a fashion spread that is only a poem – whatever.

12. Do you have examples – references or tear-sheets of shoots (or images that you can describe) that you consider politicised or important to the direction that local fashion photography could or should take?

SC: I can send you copies of SL – let me have an address.
Aspects Of The Construction
Of A Politicised Female
Identity In South African
Fashion Photography

Volume 2
Dissertation Exhibition

Forgotten Herstories
of KwaZulu-Natal

Nirma D. Madhoo-Chipps
Few are aware of Firoza Zulu, the woman who lead a brief but dramatic uprising against Shaka. Written off as a witch by both the Zulus and the British, Firoza nonetheless managed to garner intense loyalty and obedience from her small band of seditionists. Quite how she rose to power has never been established. She appears like a violent exclamation mark on the pages of history, and part from her failed coup - in which Firoza died at the hands of Shaka himself - all that is known is that she escaped from an indentured labour camp at the age of 5 and was adopted by one of Shaka’s more recalcitrant wives.
I have chosen to explore these proposed aspects of politicised female fashion identities because they have emerged as representational reference points in discussions (during my dissertation) with experts in the fashion publishing arena. ‘Forgotten Herstories of Kwa-Zulu Natal’ proposes images and accompanying texts that strive to represent hypothetical South African female fashion identities in a politicised light and it endeavours to challenge the Eurocentric female fashion identities that normatively find expression in the majority of fashion spreads published locally.

This is a follow-up to my research dissertation which explores and investigates aspects of construction of female fashion identities in fashion imagery. Aspects of identity construction revolve around kinesics and proxemics which are theoretical terms that deal with movement and gestures such as posture, body language and facial expressions and how they affect communication. These ideologically interpreted elements operate with visual associations such as appearance and background which are all key notions that help manipulate the textual aspects of an image to communicate meaning. These aspects – kinesics/proxemics, appearance, and background are experimented with, and explored in their capacity to generate meaning in the construction of politicised female fashion identities in fashion imagery. This process of construction is illustrated and explored after the following six local female fashion identities.
In Durban’s Musgrave Road, there’s a sight that causes disbelief in the eyes of tourists. Older white women with resplendent hair styles – nearly always blonde – and laden with jewellery, are seen begging at the various traffic lights in the area. Referred to as the *izicebi ezimpofu zabafazi abamhlophe* [poor-rich white woman] by the locals, these women are begging for money for their next hairstyle. Mostly divorced, their alimony payments have not kept up with inflation and begging is the only option if they are to obtain the level of glamour to which they have become accustomed. On a good week, their takings are sufficient to fund another elaborate hairstyle and an afternoon of cappuccinos and pastries in the local shopping centre.
No husband!
No cash!
No Dior!
No Calvin Klein!
No Gucci!
Divorced!
Please help.
More than a century before the first European explorers and missionaries landed on the shores of what would eventually become KwaZulu-Natal, a white woman walked out of the sea. Named Abafazibolwandle (woman from the sea) by the local people, she was initially revered as a prophet. She illegitimately took a powerful cabbalistic chief as partner and gave birth to the first coloured son for which she was stoned and drowned in the sea. Current myth excludes this history and postulates that the now cannonised Abafazibolwandle gave birth to an immaculately conceived son and walked back into the sea where she came from.
Identity 3: Abafazibolwandle
(woman from the sea)
**U-Shiva** is the only deity who has been incorporated from Indian theology into the traditional beliefs of indigenous Southern Africans. Hundreds of years before Indians were brought in as indentured labour by the British to Kwa-Zulu Natal, statues of Shiva had already begun to appear mysteriously at sacred Zulu burial sites. The local people invariably presumed that the many arms of this new god would help to ease the passage of the newly dead into the afterlife. Over the years, Shiva, who was originally decidedly Indian in her physiognomy, slowly came to resemble the women in the area.
The existence of the Male Madonna has floored sociologists for decades, since the white Steve Simmons was first discovered breastfeeding his black daughter in Empangeni in the 50s. For decades, Simmons remained adamant that he had given birth to the girl in this picture, despite the fact that medical examinations repeatedly proved the absence of female reproductive organs in his body. His breasts appear to be a genetic abnormality but Simmons is evangelically dogmatic that after a visitation by God, his stomach began to swell and after eight and a half months he gave birth to Nokwela. Simmons and his daughter were separated by the apartheid government in the last 50’s. He was consigned to a lunatic asylum while Nokwela’s fate remains unknown to this day.
While Chris Barnard is credited with the first heart transplant, Zulu sangomas have been doing it for centuries. When an especially well-endowed bull is nearing its final years, the isangoma senkomo (cow sangoma) will be fetched, along with a calf who has just reached maturity. In the space of a few seconds, the cow sangoma, who is always a woman, puts each of her hands into each of the beasts’ ribcages, pulls out the heart and swaps them around. As she does so, she keeps the hearts beating with a brisk pump of her hand. The old bull gets a new lease on life and the young calf is sacrificed the following weekend, providing tender but slightly acidic meat for the whole community.
Identity 6: iSangoma senkomo
(cow sangoma)
Firoza Zulu - identity 1

Kinesics/Proxemics: Two different poses were selected for this identity and the model was directed to suggest anger, even contempt through facial expressions, and aggressiveness in her posture, feet solidly planted apart so it looked like she was ‘standing’ or ‘defending her ground’. It was important that she clenched her props, in this case, a Zulu spear and / or shield to suggest this aggressiveness. The model’s eyes, naturally that colour, seem ablaze in demonstrating her supposed fierceness.

Appearance: Her outfit is made with leather and fur, traditionally used in Zulu dress and also by Zulu warriors is symbolic of Africanness while her hair, originally soft and wavy is teased to achieve volume, which suggests wilderness. Her eye make-up is applied in blotches to almost look like mud splodges while her nose-ring is reminiscent of tribal Indian piercings and jewellery. No attempt is made to digitally correct any aspects of her figure or her complexion.

Background: Different options are considered – those depicting sugarcane fields or more contemporary settings such as the one featuring houses in the township of KwaMashu and the one of a snapshot of activity in the Grey Street area in central Durban. While the sugarcane fields suggest issues of land in concordance with her identity as warrior, those of KwaMashu and Grey Street bring in a less abstract dimension by positing society in the visual discourse. The cane fields however, found to be more concordant with the narrative - issues of land being very politically prevalent in Africa at the moment.

General composition: The props – Zulu shield and spear were included to reinforce Zulu identity and the warrior aspect of the fashion identity. The images with the shield were however debated in the meanings it brought to the image. While they were both authentic props, the shield in particular brought touristic associations to the composition. Africa is stereotypically represented by such cliché curio-symbols - these connotations were found to divest the image of the aura of genuine sovereignty that we were trying to project so the idea of the shield was scrapped in favour of the less assuming spear.

This fashion identity is a cultural hybrid – of Indian and African influence, of past and contemporary contexts which depict woman in a stereotypically (and culturally in Africa) male role that subverts normative passiveness associated to femininity. Firoza Zulu, as we shall call her, is not a passive object of desire to male gaze. She embodies power and assertiveness and a characteristic anger, emotion that is rarely explored in the construction of female fashion identities.
Kinesics / Proxemics: Two different poses were selected out of the range photographed. The two different ones varied from each other with one depicting the model holding the cardboard prop up and the other shows her holding it down, with her bag on the ground. It was finally decided that on the basis of the realities of South African crime statistics, that she should rather be holding her bag up. Also, even though she is begging, she retains some of her dignity, so her proposing the text to passer-bys would retain some form of assertiveness and she would definitely be holding it up. The model was requested to facially express some form of ‘feeling lost’ but not of total destitution because she is still a ‘lady’, impression also suggested by a tense neck and ever so slightly lifted chin.

Appearance: Her outfit is styled to incorporate artefacts from a past life of opulence that borders on tacky-ness because of its obsolete feel. The use of a fur coat and lace re-enforce that impression while her hair looks over-bleached, as if damaged from being high-maintenance to having to switch to cheap products.

Background: Two options were considered; a post-card looking sunset urban background and a contemporary urban one with taxis/kombies and cars in the background. A third option was generated from these two by merging them through Photoshop – it was decided that although the sunset scenes worked well with the colour scheme in general, they drew attention away from the identity being depicted. The scene with the taxis however gave the image a certain solemnity that comes with the core of such a social identity while it also looked like a more realistic backdrop to the reality of that identity.

General Composition: This image is meant to be thought-provoking in the way it satirises desire for consumer culture luxuries.

This fashion identity illustrates conflicting ideas of class and race specially in the context of South Africa’s historical/political past. This superimposition of identities politicises those class and race relations. This identity is removed from straightforward connotations of sexuality and also of the normative sensibility of fashion images that evokes desire in the lives of consumers. It is rather, thought-provoking in the way it satirises desire for consumer culture luxuries.
Abafazibolwandle
[woman from the sea]

identity 3

Proxemics / Kinesics: The singular pose chosen to represent this identity in all the different options worked because her posture is almost prophetic, arms outstretched, eyes drawn up towards the heavens to signify, as in a lot of Biblical paintings of divinities like angels or saints looking upwards in divine ecstasy or martyrdom. She looks like a spiritual messenger or some kind of modern-day messiah standing in that pose. Almost like the giant statue of the Christ in Rio, Brazil.

Appearance: The model was sprayed in a mixture of oil and water from head to toes so that she looked like she had just emerged from water and upon closer inspection her eye make-up is styled to look reptilian – painted in free-hand by the make-up artist. This can be seen as connotative of the evolutionary narrative mentioned before. Her outfit consists of a contemporary styled pleated silver lamé dress which acts as a metaphor; with the pleats ruched at the centre-front so she looks like she’s “wearing a star”, again, re-enforcing her potentially celestial origins.

Background: The backgrounds chosen included those representing a skyscape with sunset rays, a seascape recognisably from a Durban beach and one of Durban harbour that could potentially give a contemporary twist to the textual accompaniment suggesting the identity constructed.

General Composition: The instance of the seascape that is turned red digitally, this time offers a darker rendition of the identity, in connoting apocalypse rather than salvation. Religious connotations are used in the construction of this identity. The narrative seeks to give it a contemporary hybrid African identity text reference to the ‘coloured sun’ is potentially transgressive in its depiction of social history and reality of South Africa.

This identity plays on religious iconography. This could be potentially taboo and is not normatively acceptable in South African society, because of its Calvinistic past. It must however be noted that reader interpretation here is totally subjective as the symbolic connotations are not directly obvious and this identity could potentially be interpreted into a number of non-religiously affiliated ones if presented without any kind of deterministic text.
U-Shiva - identity 4

Kinesics / Proxemics: This identity inspired by Shiva, is photoshopped from three poses of different arm positions. Shiva sometimes assumes the 8-armed incarnation in Indian religious iconography. The resulting super-human entity looks best with her eyes turned up to signify some form of spiritualness.

Appearance: Shiva is depicted as a blue-skinned God in Hindu mythology. Photoshopping of the model in blue proves to be the most legitimate version for this hybrid identity. The brown skinned versions were also considered because we wanted to portray African identity as well. U-Shiva wears about four layers of wrap-around silk skirts, while the fabric is typically Indian in feel and print. The model herself is still distinctively Zulu thereby displaying the hybridity desired for this image. Her make-up is the result of free-hand painting by the make-up artist, inspired by iconic representations of the blue-skinned God. U-Shiva is photographed topless in the sensibility of ancient Indian marble carvings of goddesses (on temple walls) who typically wore only a draped skirt and a heavy piece of neck jewellery, akin to the antique silver one that the model is wearing.

Background: Two versions of a Hindu temple, the one with crisp colours and the other with filtered light to suggest mysticism were considered as potential backgrounds. But because they emphasized the Hindu-ness as religious identity instead of indianness as cultural identity, a background featuring sugarcane fields with the mystical motion of the elemental force of wind was favoured over the former background. Also, this specific image of cane fields suggested the history of indentured Indian labourers brought in to work in the fields and whose descendents integrated into local culture and now constitute a considerable section of Durban South Africans.

General Composition: The final image consists of the model with nipples photoshopped out. This detail, although very small, carried connotations that could potentially make the image into two different identities. The nippled version looks distinctly human and does not seem to transcend to the deity-like state that the nipple-less version achieves. This combination of nipple-less only worked in the blue version of the model, though, while the brown nipple-less version looked it was missing a part, in a visually disturbing, incoherent way.

U-Shiva is from a technical and production point of view, a real hybrid identity. She is also conceptually a double-visioned, double-accented entity that articulates not only dual identity but articulates the integration of an immigrant identity in a local one to culminate into an indigenous South African one.
Male Madonna - identity 5

Kinesics/Proxemics: The one pose with the doll used throughout the whole group was judged the most adequate in terms of the posture of the model – he looks comfortable with the doll /baby. He was instructed to look directly at the camera because looking in any other might suggest uneasiness, passivity which would be contrary to his identity as a possibly legitimate, lactating 'mother' of the baby. His eyes carry the (understated) confidence of someone comfortable with this role.

Appearance: His outfit is a creation of Amanda Laird Cherry and consists of a men's pleated kilt in a strong green 'fasco' fabric, type used by Zulus to make traditional outfits, with pants in the same fabric worn underneath. The model’s torso has been photoshopped so that he has breasts - that totally confuses the issue of gender. The reasons for picking this model plays a lot on his individualistic hybrid look, characterised by his natural Afro hairstyle on a contrasting white body giving him a totally idiosyncratic identity, one that possibly incarnates a glimpse of a less racially differentiated future. The model was photoshopped blue in an instance to further confuse the issue of his race but besides looking incongruous it did not work as a combination.

Background: The Grey street 'trading store/herbalist' scene was considered for its 'local' appeal, its brightness and its typical depiction in central Durban. Other options that were also considered were the image of a typically Durban bus with an air-brushed image of the Sai Baba. The main reference is intended to the similar hair type. Like the model, the Sai Baba also looks like a hybrid identity. The 'industrial area' background and its smog haze filter suggests the threat of pollution and health hazards, genetic abnormalities from chemical irradiation that could consequently tie in with the abnormality of the pregnant. The final option which represented a 'take-away' or 'tea-room' gave a really indigenous, KwaZulu-Natal feel to the whole composition and seems to amplify the rural aspect of the identity that the text suggests.

General composition: The whole combination of hair, posture, and tea room background gives a really local cultural feel to the image. The black baby raises inter-racial issues, in this case a parent – child relationship.

The construction of female identity on a man is very political especially because it is not sexual ambivalence that is suggested but biological female body parts - in the form of breasts that are clearly made part of the package. This composition challenges normative construction of gender by society by articulating a more emancipatory model of the human subject and human relations.
iSangoma Senkomo
[Cow Sangoma] - identity 6

**Kinesics/Proxemics:** Two poses were chosen for this identity, one in which the model was asked to hold out the cow's heart in a pseudo-suggestive manner. This was done in an effort to parody the suggestive poses and sexual allure of women that are used as a selling strategy for diverse consumer objects. She was also directed to look 'wickedly' at the camera. This suggestive look, teamed up with the object of desire she offers is a very transgressive rendition of female identity. The other pose however seems to illustrate the Cow Sangoma identity that is derived from Zulu culture where sangoma stands for witch doctor which is a form of spiritually and hierarchically superior social position.

**Appearance:** The outfit that the model is wearing is a vintage dress from Amanda Laird Cherry. It accentuates the feel of 'high-priestess' in the construction of the fashion identity. The final image alters the dress' original colour from red to turquoise so that the cow's heart stands out from its background. The model's make-up is kept as natural as possible but with contrasting red, luscious, high-gloss, lips which are distinctively a point of focus in competition with the bloody, organic, reddish mass of muscles that is the cow heart. This acts as subversion to normative iconography of the woman's mouth as feature expressing desire and lust.

**Background:** Two backgrounds were considered as viable options — a post-card sunset one and another one of a typical KwaZulu-Natal scenery where one often comes across paw-paw trees. However the sunset with bubbles floating around gave more gravitas to the identity as it emphasised its mysticism.

**General composition:** The model looks like a 'high-priestess' and her posture and closed eyes might suggest some kind of ritual involving offerings with suggestions of the abject through animal sacrifice.

This fashion identity is constructed to incorporate elements that cause disgust or repulsion such as the cow's heart, the dripping blood and the blood smeared on the models apron making her look like a butcher(-ess), but a sublime one. The idea of a woman who could be a priestess or a butcher has a dualistic, politicised appeal to it. It is a hybrid identity by all means, symbolically but also with the transposition of a Zulu definition onto a non-Zulu person.
The set of images presented with accompanying discussion formed part of data collection part 2 - reflexive documentation through participant observation, during the styling and direction of the photoshoot. Analysis of that data forms part of the process of illustrating the working and reasoning processes via discussion and the conceptual maps that led to each final option of the politicised female fashion identity.

The working process demonstrated the necessity of presenting those politicised female identities as intertextually linked in a master narrative with accompanying text, as opposed to just images. This was in order to orientate the reader towards the concept behind its production which revolves around the production of indigenous South African female fashion identities. These hypothetical fashion identities propose to expand traditional South African fashion imagery by incorporating recommendations of elite participants in their suggestions for desired future directions of politicised fashion imagery in South Africa.
Credits