

**"Raw" girls?
A gender study at an urban
co-educational high school**

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree by full dissertation: Doctor of Philosophy, Faculty of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban.

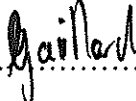
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DECLARATION

I Claire Gaillard-Thurston declare that:

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DEDICATION

**Dedicated to my sons:
Jaden David, Alaine Michael & Erin Leigh Thurston**

**Her children shall arise and call her blessed
(Proverbs 31:28)**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

During the latter stages of my study, I experienced a traumatic pregnancy that almost ended tragically. During that period, I also became a single working mother with two toddlers. Because of the huge mental, emotional and physical strain that my work and studies placed on my home life, and *vice versa*, there were many occasions where I felt that I needed to choose between the welfare of my children as well as my (then) unborn child and working towards the completion of this study. As a mother, my decision leaned towards focusing on my children and my pregnancy, and abandoning the study. However, as an individual wanting to pursue my personal ambition to achieve a PhD, I felt that whatever I decided, I would still be at a loss - since I was in the last stages of my study. Whilst deliberating over whether or not to continue with the study, I had an “Aha!” (epiphany-like) moment, and realized that the path towards achieving my PhD was distinctly similar to the stages of my pregnancy. I therefore drew on how I approached my pregnancy as a working model for how I would approach the final stages of my doctoral studies.

Of course, my pregnancy occurred over a much shorter period than my doctoral studies. However, in both instances there were often feelings of discomfort, emotional turbulence, aggression, frustration and tears. Thoughts about the due date evoked feelings of anxiety. Closer to delivery date, the labour became increasingly and painfully difficult. The pressure mounted. My visits to the specialist became more frequent and nerve-racking. As with my pregnancy, some (administrative) emergencies arose, subsequently requiring intensive intervention. Eventually, however, something awesome emerged; and as I look on in pride at what I have produced, it all becomes worthwhile. The pain and trauma: almost forgotten; and the achievement: beyond description. In gratitude for the emotional support, intellectual guidance and friendship during the “gestation period” of my thesis, I extend my most heartfelt thanks to my “antenatal” (PhD) team:

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ABSTRACT

This study contributes to existing research on teenage schoolgirls and femininities.

Located in a co-educational working-class high school, where learner dress codes are prescribed by the school and regulated by dress rules, this case study probes why 10 girls dressed for school in a manner which I, at the time, considered as being an inappropriate way for schoolgirls to dress. To gain insight into the girls' reasoning behind their clothing choices, their styles of dressing and their overall outward appearances, I probe their reasoning behind their clothing, undergarments, jewellery, make-up and accessories, and how they wear these for school, as well as their presentations of their hair and fingernails.

Purposive sampling was used to select both the school and the core research participants. Qualitative methods of data collection were employed. Research data were gathered over a two-year period. Data presented in the study were analyzed using content analysis and hermeneutics. Feminist theories relating to the female body image and dress develops the theoretical foundation guiding the analysis. The findings uncover a variety of similar and dissimilar perspectives among the participants concerning their clothing choices, styles of dressing, perceptions of their outward appearances and associated assumptions. At a broader level, however, the study draws attention to how - when knowledge about schoolgirls is derived from outward appearances alone - erroneous assumptions can be made about particular girls and their intentions behind how they dress, how they see themselves, and what they may or may not do in a context of poverty, sexual violence and risk.

PREFACE

This study focuses on teenage schoolgirls whose outward appearances exemplified my personal understanding of “rawness”, and this Preface serves to outline what I understand the term “raw” to mean, describe how this understanding was shaped, and provide insight into what sparked my choice to embark on a study about schoolgirls and (what I describe as) “rawness”.

I recognize that others might not share my understanding of the term “raw”, and that some may even be uncomfortable with my use of the term in the study - considering that it is generally used in many contexts in a derogatory way. However, I further point out that this study is not about establishing a single definition for the term; and therefore is not about offering a proscriptive label for girls who dress in a way that I describe as “raw-looking”. Rather, this study challenges this construction. The question mark used in the title of the study indicates this intention. Furthermore, throughout the study I enclose the term in inverted commas in order to remind the reader of this intention.

Conceptualizing “Rawness”

My early conception of “rawness” was shaped by my childhood observations and experiences in the townships in which I grew up. For the earlier part of my childhood I lived in Wentworth, a township¹ located south of Durban. When I was 10 years old my family relocated to Newlands East, which is also a township, situated east of Durban. It was in these historically constituted contexts that I first became aware that (when used among township dwellers) the term “raw” denoted one who was wild, loud, vulgar,

¹ The term “township” is used in South Africa to describe the regions where poor “non-White” South Africans were housed. Appendix A provides a map illustrating the geographic location of the areas mentioned in this preface. Both townships which I refer to here were designed during apartheid under the Group Areas Act, No. 41 of 1950 - an apartheid housing law prescribing where people should live and work, and the kind of structures in which they should be housed (Bowker & Star, 2002). Govender & Selohilwe (2007), for example, provide a recent description of one of these townships (Newlands East). This description and a description of Wentworth that Anderson’s (2009) study provides, is characteristic of all three townships (Wentworth, Newlands East and Marrianridge).

physically aggressive, crude, uncouth and uncivilized. Additionally, I became aware from conversations overheard among the older people that other racial groups associated this term specifically with “Coloured” people (male and female), because this is how they perceived “Coloured” persons² generally, at the time. Interestingly though, I also recognized the self-ascription of the label “raw” by “Coloured people” living in Durban. In particular, I noted that among Durban “Coloureds” the label was specifically ascribed to males and females who lived in Government-owned flats³ and Government-subsidized housing located in the poorer “Coloured” areas (Wentworth, Newlands East and Marrianridge). “Rawness”, it seemed, was regarded among “Coloureds” by and large as being “a culture of lawlessness” that evolved over time among the township dwellers.

I further noted how township dwellers imputed the label on males and females in the township who met a specific set of criteria; except that the criteria used to assess “male rawness” and “female rawness” differed. For township males, it seemed, the label “raw” was ascribed to loud, vulgar, wild and dangerous looking males (those usually with tattoos, scars, missing teeth). These males, I observed, were able to defend themselves if they (or their families) came under physical threat. They were thus also described as being “streetwise” – which I learnt at an early age was a necessary skill for males to survive in a community plagued with gangsterism. When such a man fought in a loud, vulgar and wild manner and won the fight, his ability to protect himself and his family was revered in the township. Therefore, even though “raw” in its broadest sense is a derogatory label, being described as “raw” in the township implied a sense of

² Erasmus (2001) explains how this thinking emerged during apartheid as a result of “Coloured” people (as a racial group) being stigmatized during apartheid by other races. She points out also that during apartheid, being “Coloured” was about ‘living an identity ... clouded in sexualized shame and associated with drunkenness and jollity’ (p. 13). Thus ‘among “Coloureds” *respectability* and *shame* [became the] key defining terms of the middle class “Coloured” experience’ (Erasmus, 2001, p. 14).

³ In Wentworth and Newlands East families were settled in either flats or houses. The “flats” that I refer to are three-storey high blocks comprised of six apartments, each approximately 50 square metres in size; with two apartments located on each floor; and with the entrance doors of each facing each other. In Appendix B I provide a photograph illustrating “flats” in Wentworth including a personal photograph showing the house that I grew up in, in Wentworth. Regarding houses in Wentworth, I refer specifically to the area where the privately owned houses were located – those not owned by the local government. In Newlands East I refer to the houses that were built by the local government in the early 1980s in what is today known as “the new section”. Govender and Selohilwe’s (2007) writings provide a detailed description of the social, economic and structural differences between the “old section” and “new section” parts of Newlands East.

community respect for a male - albeit in a fearful way. For this reason, in the township it was ironically perceived as flattering for a male to be called “raw”; and perhaps was not simply necessary but desirable as well for males to be regarded a “raw”.

For township females, I noted that “rawness” was determined more by expressions of sexual aggression (instead of physical aggression). Outward appearances were what implied sexual aggression. More specifically, a “sexually suggestive, untidy-looking” appearance seemed to be the primary measure against which “female rawness” was decided. I observed, for example, that females who were considered to be “raw” were those seen in shared public spaces (the local food store, for example) with uncombed hair, or wearing a stocking⁴ on their hair and fringe in a hair curler, a sleep-shirt with a petticoat worn underneath that was usually longer than the sleep-shirt, and bedroom slippers (at any hour of the day). In my view, dressing in this way (compounded by an “unladylike” manner of walking and sitting) portrayed such females as being unsophisticated, unhygienic and immoral. The fact that they seemed not to care about their underwear showing in the way in which they dressed, walked and sat, in my view portrayed them as promiscuous as well. When dressed up such girls would ordinarily wear a range of items at once, and would thus appear over-decorated. They would then be described among community members as “looking like Christmas trees”.⁵

When in school uniform such girls would ordinarily reduce the length of their school skirts by rolling them up at the waistband, and would conceal the waistband with the hemline of their tight-fitting school blouses. In addition, they would wear scant undergarments beneath their blouses. The buckles of their school shoes would usually be unfastened and their school socks would not be neatly rolled down at the ankle (a general expectation for all “Coloured” schoolgirls at the time).

⁴ This is pantyhose where one of the leg parts was fitted over the head – resembling a swimming cap.

⁵ This description is currently a widely used colloquial expression among South African “Coloured” communities for anyone who wears numerous and multi-coloured items of clothing and accessories (e.g. two earrings in the same ear, a nose stud, a tongue ring in the form of a stud, facial make-up). While it could be that girls who dressed in this way may have desired to look “presentable”; over-adorning oneself (whether male or female) caused one to be described as “looking like a Christmas tree” in the township.

Guarding against “rawness”, my parents carried out close surveillance of my dress code and behaviours as a child, and simultaneously, instilled in me the notion that “rawness” leads to teenage pregnancy, fewer opportunities to be employed, and eventually a series of dysfunctional relationships with abusive men (beginning early in one’s adult life). From my own childhood observations of the life-path of particular females in the township, I believed these to be the consequence of “rawness”. I thus spent most of my childhood dodging “rawness”.

Dodging “Rawness”

In dodging “rawness” as a child I conceded to my parents’ view that receiving an education and adopting the culture and values of the (White, English, Christian) middle-class South African community was what held the promise of a better life as an adult. I therefore chose to resist “rawness” and willingly succumbed to their “civilizing plan” for me.

At the core of my parents’ “civilizing plan” was choosing which schools I would attend. The chosen schools were semi-private,⁶ co-educational Catholic schools. Even though the school fees at such schools were significantly higher than at “Coloured” Government-funded schools and my parents were not wealthy, it seemed that “dodging rawness” was worth the many sacrifices that they made to pay for my education. In the chosen schools girls were taught to speak with eloquence and to walk with poise. Ballet, ballroom dancing and piano lessons were offered. Even though I didn’t enjoy any of these at the time, the school reinforced the notion that someday as adults we would recognize the given skills as being essential to advance socially in middle-class arenas.

The schools also ensured that our families worked collaboratively with them to reinforce Catholic values and lessons on appropriate gender and sexual behaviour. Therefore, what was taught at school was affirmed at home by my parents’ constant reinforcement

⁶ I refer to schools co-funded by the Government and the parent body.

of the notion that only through acquiring traditional Western middle- (and upper-) class values, rejecting “rawness” and receiving a tertiary education would I be able to navigate my way out of the crime- and drug-infested community in which I lived and up the “Coloured class ladder” into the suburban areas where the affluent “Coloured” people lived.

Another tier of my parents’ “civilizing plan” was choosing whom I associated with as a child. This becomes evident when I consider the long distance that I travelled between school and home. The distance restricted any opportunity for me to associate, outside of school, with other township children (other than those who attended the same schools as I did), lest they influenced my values in some way. However, in spite of my parents’ efforts, and having learnt from the age of 6 to 14 years how to successfully negotiate my identity as a working-class “Coloured” girl in (orthodox middle-class European) Catholic schools, I found myself completing my schooling in a Government-funded school: a school that I had by then come to know as “a school for the raw children”. It was only then that I directly confronted “rawness”. On account of not wanting to conform to “rawness”, I was forced to find ways of negotiating the (conservative, Christian, middle-class) feminine identity that I had adopted in a way that would not lead to me (probably) being victimized by other learners.

Confronting “Rawness”

Unlike the Catholic middle-class schools that I attended, the working-class school in which I completed my schooling did not serve as an escape from the socio-economic challenges faced at home by most of the children who attended the school. The school was overcrowded, dirty and poorly resourced, but despite these infrastructural challenges there were emotional gains from attending the school. Had I not attended that working-class school, I might never have come to realize how prejudiced I had been against other girls whose families were less privileged than mine. I also realized what an

arrogant teenage snob my former schools had turned me into - and the extent to which I colluded in that construction of myself.

On the other hand, what I failed to comprehend was why the learners in that school (girls especially) chose to dress in a way that I thought implied that they were unsophisticated and sexually aggressive. In my view, portraying such an image of themselves would, as adults, entrap them in the same cycle of poverty in which they grew up. I therefore wondered what kinds of men they would attract when they grew older. My own heterosexual expectation for them at the time was that they would attract men who were violent, alcoholics, drug addicts, and similar. That school was therefore where my initial interest emerged to understand why some girls portrayed themselves in a “raw-looking” way through their dress, and also to understand how such girls perceived their own outward appearances and the associated consequences of presenting themselves in that way.

Troubling “Rawness”

Nineteen-ninety-two saw the end of my schooling and the beginning of my journey towards my career as a teacher. This coincided with the collapse of apartheid system and the simultaneous unfolding of democracy. At the time, democratic policies began to afford children the latitude to express their identities in more ways than previously during apartheid. It seemed that some girls used this political shift as an opportunity to express themselves in a way that I had spent practically my entire childhood escaping. I noticed that during the first decade of democracy “rawnness” was expressed not only by “Coloured” teenagers who lived in the “Coloured” areas - instead, at the advent of the millennium “rawnness” seemed to have taken root among “Coloured” teenage girls who moved from the township into the (then former) “Coloured” suburbs of Greenwood Park and Sydenham. Furthermore, it appeared that “rawnness” amongst this “new” (post-apartheid) generation of teenagers was increasingly becoming a normalized expression of femininity.

Upon choosing what to study towards my PhD degree in 2003 I decided to address my curiosity about this “new” generation of “Coloured” girls, and of the girls that I had grown up with who (in my view) dressed in a way that expressed “rawness”. I decided this after noticing 10 girls in the school where I was teaching, at the time who dressed in a manner that I, by then, had come to identify as “raw-looking”. I was aware that I could easily have used the school rules and my authority (as an older female and school teacher) to punish the girls and force them to conform to my dress expectations – in the same way that my Catholic teachers had done to me when I was a scholar. Instead, through my research I wanted to gain an understanding of why the girls dressed for school in (what I describe as) a “raw-looking” manner, and how they rationalized their outward appearances, against my pre-existing assumptions about what such a mode of dressing implies about the intentions and self-perceptions of these girls.

Therefore, apart from this study being conducted in fulfillment of requirements for my PhD, in an oblique way it disrupts my personal beliefs, assumptions and prejudices about teenage schoolgirls whose expressions of femininity go against my perception of how schoolgirls should present themselves in terms of dress. My research is structured in this thesis as follows:

- **Chapter One** introduces the study by situating the research within the locale, stating the key question which is probed, and outlining the contribution that the study intends to make to related gender research.
- **Chapter Two** begins with a broad review of literature relating to schoolgirls and dress. The chapter proceeds with a discussion of theories from which the theoretical framework guiding the analysis and theorization of the research data is developed.
- **Chapter Three** offers a description of the research methods and methodologies which this study draws upon. Also provided are insights into the advantages,

disadvantages, challenges and limitations I experienced as a consequence of choosing the school at which I was employed as my research site.

- **Chapter Four** responds to the critical research question driving the study by presenting an analysis of the relevant research data.
- **Chapter Five** concludes the study with an overview of the thesis, and a discussion of the main findings and broad implications of the study for educational stakeholders and further related research.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONTENTS	PAGE
Preface	i-viii
CHAPTER ONE	
Introduction to the Study	
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Contribution to gender scholarship	10
1.3 Theoretical orientation	11
1.3.1 Why “politics of the body”	12
1.4 Concluding remarks	19
CHAPTER TWO	
Literature review: Identity, Vulnerability and the Politics of Dress and Outward Presentation	
2.1 Introduction	21
2.2 Literature review	
2.2.1 Part 1: Dress and identity	22
2.2.2 Part 2: Sexual vulnerability	27
2.2.2.1 Sexual vulnerability and dress	27
2.2.2.2 Sexual vulnerability: Beyond dressing	32
2.2.3 Part 3: Politics of the body, dress and outward presentation	37
2.3 Concluding remarks	45
CHAPTER THREE	
The Research Design	
3.1 Introduction	50
3.2 Research approach	50
3.3 Research paradigm	55
3.4 Data production process	57
3.4.1 Gaining access	57
3.4.2 Selection of participants	60
3.4.3 Ethical considerations	63
3.4.4 Challenges and limitations	66
3.4.4.1 Establishing an enabling research relationship	66
3.4.4.2 Death of a participant	70
3.4.4.3 Unavailability of teachers to participate in the study	72

3.5 Research sources and instruments	74
3.6 How data is analyzed	78
3.7 Concluding remarks	81

CHAPTER FOUR

Troubling “Rawness”

4.1 Introduction	82
4.2 Data Presentation and Interpretation	83
4.2.1 Part One: “Rawness”: A personal construction	84
4.2.1.1 Constructing “rawness” through clothing	85
4.2.1.2 Constructing “rawness” through fingernails	90
4.2.1.3 Constructing “rawness” through adornments	92
4.2.1.4 Constructing “rawness” through styles of dressing	95
4.2.2 Part Two: Disrupting “Rawness”: Clothing Choices, Outward Presentations and Meanings that 10 schoolgirls Attach to a Dress Code	97
4.2.2.1 “Nice” skirts	98
4.2.2.2 “What do nails have to do with schoolwork?”	100
4.2.2.3 “It’s got school colours in it!”	103
4.2.2.4 “They say we look like streetkids!”	105
4.2.2.5 “It’s just fun!”	107
4.2.3 Part Three: Outward appearance, desirability and vulnerability	111
4.2.3.1 “Boys shouldn’t look!”	111
4.2.3.2 “Boys assume that they know everything”	114
4.2.3.3 “...they make it hard for us to say we are virgins”	116
4.2.3.4 “Them and their imaginations”	117
4.3 Concluding remarks	120

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

5.1 Introduction	122
5.2 Thesis synopsis	122

5.3 Discussion of key themes	125
5.3.1 Youth culture versus an adult's generational expectations for teenage girls	125
5.3.2 Mainstream demands versus marginal cultural demands	127
5.3.3 Agentic power versus power of agency	129
5.4 Implications of the study	131
5.4.1 Uncovering the iceberg below: Individual level	133
5.4.2 Uncovering the iceberg below: Institutional level	135
5.4.3 Uncovering the iceberg below: Societal level	140
5.5 Conclusion	142
REFERENCES	145

APPENDICES

- Appendix A Maps of South Africa and Durban
- Appendix B Photographs showing "flats" and the house in Wentworth that researcher lived in as a child
- Appendix C Participant Consent Form
- Appendix D Ethical Letter
- Appendix E Valley Highs' School Rules and Dress Code for Learners

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE		PAGE
1.1	Photos showing girls' skirts	05
1.2	Photos showing girls' tops	05
1.3	Photos showing girls' adornments	06
1.4	Extract taken from Valley High's dress code and uniform rules	07
3.1	Table showing the profile of my chosen research sample	62
3.2	Template to record observations	75
3.3	Schedule of group interviews	77
4.1	Personal reflection on participants' clothing	84
4.2	Personal reflection on participants' fingernails	90
4.3	Personal reflection on participants' hairstyles, make-up and jewelry	93
4.4	Personal reflection on participants' outward appearances	95
5.1	South African newspaper report on the outward appearance of a female, and the attention attracted by her appearance	140

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

At the turn of the twenty-first century, the sexual vulnerability of South African schoolgirls received heightened concern among educational stakeholders. Numerous accounts of sexual violence enacted against girls, both within and outside of South African school borders, gained international publicity (Human Rights Watch, 2001). Sexual coercion of girls from impoverished contexts also came under the research spotlight (Dunkle *et al.*, 2004).¹ National statistics indicated further that teenage pregnancy figures were on the incline (Eaton, Flisher & Aaro, 2003). Sexual risk-taking behaviours of teenage girls became a key concern as well. Such concerns sparked widespread interventions from several non-governmental organizations, (NGOs) such as Komanani, Lovelife, Soul City and Tetha Junction. NGOs and educational authorities jointly campaigned in schools against the sexual violence against girls, and attempted to reduce the incidences of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and unwanted teenage pregnancy by raising awareness among girls about personal and sexual safety (e.g. Khoza, 2002; Panday, Makiwane, Ranchod & Letsaolo, 2009). Concerns and interventions such as those outlined here were also evident in the high school where I was teaching at the time (2001 - 2006).

In this school (hereafter referred to in this study as Valley High²), teachers became particularly concerned about the increasing number of girls falling pregnant. In 2001, 20

¹ Dunkle *et al.* (2004) document how schoolgirls from economically disadvantaged families became involved in consensual arrangements of “transactional sex” with men who the authors refer to as “roll-ons”. Dunkle *et al.* (2004) explain further that *transactional sex* is as a secretive relationship in which girls have consensual sex with older boys and men. Girls are said to engage in transactional sex with roll-ons in exchange for gifts, drugs, ongoing emotional and/or financial support. The gifts which girls in their study received from “roll-ons” are reported to have ‘provided an incentive for [the] young women to both have sex and eschew condom use’ (Dunkle *et al.*, 2004, p. 3).

² In the study the name of the school that I refer to as well as members of the research community are replaced with pseudonyms.

out of approximately 500 girls enrolled at the school were visibly pregnant. However, it was not just the number of pregnant girls per se and how these figures could be reduced that I found to be personally concerning - I was also concerned about what the pregnancies suggested. On the one hand, 20 pregnant girls out of an enrolment of 500 reflected only 4% of Valley High's total population of girls, and thus may be seen as little reason for concern. It was also possible in some instances that the pregnancies could have been an indication of a forced or coerced sexual encounter (Cunningham & Boulton, 1996; Jewkes, Vundule, Maforah & Jordaan, 2001). On the other hand, the pregnancies could also be construed as a tangible indication that there were consensually sexually active girls attending the school, and that they engaged in unprotected sexual intercourse despite national widespread NGO and Governmental exposure to information on the health risks associated with risky sexual practices (Macintyre, Rutenberg, Brown & Karim, 2004). If that was the case, then the pregnancies further suggested that girls were engaging in risky sexual behaviours at a younger age, since most of the pregnant girls were in the junior grades (Grades 8 and 9).

Given the latter possibility, I personally (at the time) conflated risky sexual practices with promiscuity. From this perspective, an unplanned pregnancy could then be construed as a negative consequence of such behaviours (Erasmus, 2001). Further still, I felt that girls who dressed in styles that I personally considered as being sexually provocative³ were more likely to be promiscuous and engage in sexual risk-taking. However, from my engagement with this study I now acknowledge that linking (perceived) sexually provocative clothing to sexual violence, as a cause thereof, is a view which is highly contested in the gender literature (Russell, 1984; Mokwena, 1991; Vetten, 1997; Ascensio, 1999; Lamb, 1999; Human Rights Watch, 2001; Morrell, 2003; Rape Crisis Cape Town, 2007).

³ I recognize that what is considered to be "sexually provocative" dressing is a relative viewpoint, and thus a contestable description. I thus highlight that, in this study, when the description sexually provocative is used, it represents my interpretation thereof. This interpretation is represented in the photos (Figures 1.1 - 1.3). To remind the reader of this, in some instances I enclose the term in inverted commas.

I am cognizant also that such thinking may receive harsh criticism, as it could be seen as an argument which absolves moralizing citizens and sexual offenders of their negative actions towards teenage girls who dress in sexualized styles. I further acknowledge that there is an ever-growing body of gender literature arguing that addressing sexual vulnerability and sexual risk factors facing young girls in South Africa cannot be narrowly reduced (if at all) to altering clothing choices or styles of dressing; but instead is linked to broader social realities such as gender hierarchies, patriarchy, poverty and construction of violent masculinities (Wood & Jewkes, 1997; Wood, Maforah & Jewkes, 1998; Jewkes *et al.*, 2001; Jewkes, Levin, Mbananga & Bradshaw, 2002; Jewkes, Penn-Kekana & Rose-Junius, 2005; Jewkes *et al.*, 2006).

I recognize that this burgeoning body of literature therefore provides adequate evidence to support the argument that restricted choices and gendered power of young women and girls (like the girls in my study), and not simply dressing, is what predisposes young females to sexual risk factors – irrespective of what they wear. I realize also that more recent research shows that young women and girls dismiss beliefs that particular (sexualized) styles of dressing predispose them to sexual violence, and actually describe such thinking as being “mythical” (Rape Crisis Cape Town, 2007). I also emphasize that my study does not wish to reinforce such a view. In fact, in keeping with feminist theories from which this study largely draws (see Chapter 2), the study will show how this highly contested view has been disrupted in my study as well, with this view that I entered the study with being altered. The personal thinking that I have thus far described (conflating “sexually provocative” clothing with sexual risk factors) is, rather, meant to declare the premise from which I began the study.

As outlined in the Preface, such knowledge was deeply entrenched in my psyche as it was shaped during childhood as a result of growing up in contexts that negatively stereotyped particular girls on account of their manner of dressing. In that community, like most societies across the world (Thomson & Scott, 1992), steps were taken by the older people to control teenage fecundity. Erasmus (2001), for example, describes how teenage fecundity is controlled by and large among the “Coloured” community of South

Africa. She recounts in Afrikaans: '*Hou jou linne binne ... Hou jou koek in jou broek ... Vroeg ryp, vroeg vrot ...*' (Erasmus, 2001, p.13). Translated into English, this means '[k]eep your linen hidden ... Keep your fanny in your panties ... Early to ripen, early to rot...'. She further claims that in the present day too such lessons about "appropriate" dressing for "Coloured" girls, and the associations of dressing with sexual behaviour, resound throughout South African "Coloured" communities irrespective of geographic, religious, linguistic, physical, socio-economic and individual disparities between and among people classified as "Coloured".

Furthermore, Thomson and Scott (1992) have earlier asserted that generally in the Western world, in social arenas such as the family and schools, 'much of the time young women learn not about sex and sexuality, but about the boundaries of femininity ... with the threat of damaging one's reputation being an early lesson for young women' (p. 24). Likewise, the early lessons that I gained as a "Coloured" teenager, within my family and at school, about sex, sexuality and consequences for "inappropriate" expressions of femininity, echoes what Thomson and Scott (1992) and Erasmus (2001) describe.

I was raised in a community where girls' dress codes became the "barometer" against which their sexual activity was measured; where girls' dressing was a gauge by which it was decided whether or not she would be treated with *respectability* or *shame* (Erasmus, 2001); where becoming visibly pregnant (and not instead discreetly terminating or concealing one's pregnancy) was perceived purely as a deserving, shameful outcome for promiscuous teenagers.

Accordingly, before embarking on this study, when I noticed schoolgirls who adapted their uniforms into a particular style that I saw as being intentionally sexually provocative, it immediately raised an alarm within me for urgent personal intervention to force such girls to conform to conservative dress standards. I was therefore troubled by the outward presentations presented below, Figures 1.1 – 1.3, of 10 girls who enrolled for Grade 8 at Valley High in 2003:

Figure 1.1 – Photos showing girls' skirts

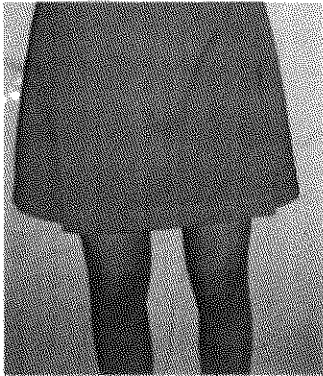


Fig. 1.1a Example of a girl's skirt length

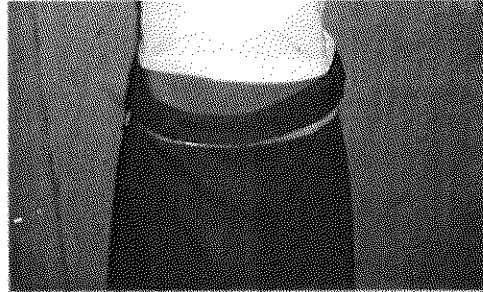


Fig. 1.1b Example of how a skirt's length was reduced

Figure 1.2 - Photos showing girls' tops

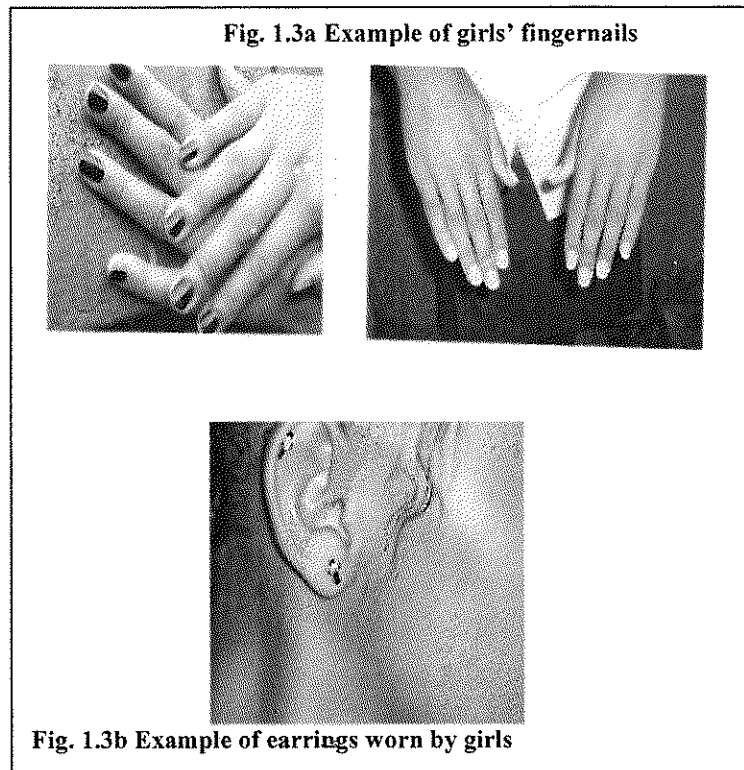


Fig. 1.2a Example of a blouse revealing halter straps of a costume top



Fig 1.2b An example of types of the camisoles worn beneath tracksuit jackets

Figure 1.3 - Photos showing girls' adornments



The above photos were taken by me during the early stages of fieldwork, and capture my personal observations. In some social and cultural contexts what is shown in the photographs may not be considered to be sexually provocative at all (Hastrup, 1993). However, drawing from my personal knowledge of femininity, I at that stage felt that the “short” (above knee) length of the girls’ school skirts, the “seductive” nature of their school blouses and the underwear that they wore beneath their blouses and tracksuit jackets, and their long, painted fingernails coupled with their fancy hairstyles and the manner in which they wore their jewellery, made them look untidy. I also interpreted the girls’ manner of dress as a sign of them being troublesome; hence as an explicit sign of defiance against the school leadership structures (Brunsma, 2004, 2005). Considering this view, it alarmed me that as the Valley High school teachers began to enforce Valley High’s official dress rules against the girls, their outward appearances became increasingly (in my view) “sexually provocative” and “untidier-looking”.

Viewing the girls' outward presentation (as shown above in Figures 1.1 – 1.3) at a broader level, I felt that the styles of dressing also suggested disrespect for the other teachers within the school who enforced what was perceived amongst them as a “modest” styles of dressing, in line with a teacher interpretation of the official Valley High dress code and uniform document. That document in Figure 1.4 states the following:

Figure 1.4 Extract taken from Valley High’s dress code and uniform rules

SUMMER: (January, February, March, April, May, September, October, November, December)

GIRLS: Knee-length school shirt (air-force blue)
 White blouse (short or long sleeves)
 Tie worn with a dress shirt (optional)
 Black school shoes
 White ankle length socks
 School jersey/Tracksuit jacket (optional)/royal blue anorak if it is raining
NO TRACKSUIT PANTS
NO STOCKINGS
 NB.: If t-shirt is worn under the blouse, it must be plain white in colour and sleeves shorter than shirt (no fancy prints)

WINTER: (June/July/August)

GIRLS: Tracksuit or knee-length school skirt and a school jersey
 White blouse
 Black school shoes
 White ankle length socks/black stockings

NB. RULE FOR T-SHIRT APPLIES IN WINTER AS WELL

**Girls may only wear one pair of earrings (studs only).
 Hair braides tide up neatly and out of face.
 Nails must be short. No nail varnish.**

The document shown above in Figure 1.4 was meant to officially impose a standardized style of dressing within the school. As one of the teachers who enforced these rules, from a Valley High teacher point of view, I personally felt that the document appeared to be written in a clear and unambiguous manner that would officially ensure that girls would dress in a regular manner if they followed what the document stated. For example, concerning skirts, the rules states that knee-length skirts are to be worn. The “knee-length” part of the skirt rule shows that length is not open to interpretation: it has to be knee-length. Thus, irrespective of how tall a girl is, the length is standardized. Furthermore, the rules distinguish between the summer uniform and the winter uniform. It stipulates the kinds of socks, the colour of the blouse and what can be worn

underneath. Therefore, from a Valley High teacher perspective, any deviation from these would be seen as a violation of the dress code. The rules relating to jewellery (from a Valley High teacher point of view) seem also to be written in a way that stipulates clearly the number and style of the earrings that girls are permitted to wear. Relating to hair, the rule also appears to stipulate exactly how braids should be worn.

On the basis of this interpretation of the school rules, and also on my personal knowledge of “appropriate” femininity for schoolgirls at the time, I felt that the styles of dressing shown previously in the photographs (Figures 1.1 - 1.3) portrayed girls in a way that implied what I understood to be an indication of “rawness”: lack of sophistication, immorality, lack of hygienic practices, and promiscuity. In my view, this would consequently lead to older males seeing them as being easily coerced or forced into having unsafe sexual relations (see Preface). My concern about the sexual safety of girls whom I considered as dressing in a “raw-looking” manner intensified on noticing how some of Valley High’s boys pulled at their underwear, squeezed their breasts, pinched their buttocks and made sexual comments as they passed by during class change-overs. On observing these incidents, I interpreted the boys’ behaviours as a response to a sexualized interpretation of the girls’ dressing (Mokwena, 1991; Ascensio, 1999).

Further yet, because the girls were “Coloured” like me, I expected them to be aware of “the damning consequences” in traditional “Coloured” communities (like the one in which the school was situated) for “Coloured” girls who presented their outward appearances in the manner in which they did (see Preface; Erasmus, 2001). Thus (although a highly contested view), on initially observing them I viewed the girls’ styles of dressing as being a factor that contributed to national problems such as sexual coercion and sexual violence enacted against teenage girls, and also as a factor that contributed to Valley High’s inclining pregnancy figures.

On the other hand, considering that my study does not want to reinscribe stereotypes such as those I outline above, but seeks instead to challenge these, I question then how we are really to understand what girls like those shown previously in the photographs

were expressing by adapting their school uniforms into “sexually provocative” styles? Against national concerns highlighted at the beginning of this chapter regarding sexual vulnerability and sexual risk factors facing South African teenage schoolgirls, what can we learn from 10 teenage schoolgirls who wore their uniforms in a way that could be interpreted as being intentionally sexually provocative? Given also the highly contested view that links sexual vulnerability to outward presentations that are considered by some to be sexually provocative, my study places this manner of dressing under scrutiny and probes how girls who dress in this way explain, debate about and rationalize such outward appearances.

In the light of the above outlined concerns, my study probes the following critical research question:

- What meanings do teenage schoolgirls who dress for school in a manner seen by a female teacher as being “raw-looking”, attach to their clothing choices, styles of dressing and overall outward appearances?

In keeping with the interpretive research paradigm in which this study is situated (see Chapter Three), the 10 teenage Valley High schoolgirls referred to above were purposively chosen to facilitate a co-creation of understanding (Henning, van Rensburg & Smit, 2004; Creswell, 2009) with me (the researcher) into this. Being a small-scale case study, the girls’ views are not meant to represent those of all South African girls of their generation, or even of the girls in the research site. However, they do offer some understandings into how 10 teenage girls growing up in contemporary South Africa rationalize and perceive their own outward presentations, against traditional negative stereotypical assumptions (such as those outlined earlier) associated with girls who dress in the ways that they do. In keeping also with the feminist insights driving the analysis of interview data, this report will reveal how the girls’ explanations have also served to disrupt the subjective views that I held before embarking of this study, of teenage girls who dressed in a similar way as they did.

1.2 Contribution to Gender Scholarship

In its broadest sense, this study adds to research on teenage femininities. I particularly contribute to the local and international literature (see Chapter Two) that disrupts existing negative stereotypical assumptions around girls whose outward appearances are “sexually provocative”, and are unfairly treated as a result of assumptions associated with such dressing (e.g. derogatory labels, punished in school, presumed to be promiscuous). It is, however, my finding that in much of the gender literature relating to schoolgirls, they are portrayed as objects against which violent forms of masculinity are affirmed and contested (Connell, 1987; Wolpe, Quinlan & Martinez, 1997). The problem with studying girls in this way is that it portrays girls as weak, passive and submissive in dealing with the vulnerabilities that they face. My study offers an alternative, is supported by empirical data and, by allowing the girls to share their reasoning on the phenomenon under study, disrupts notions of the weakness, passivity and submissiveness of schoolgirls.

My survey of the relevant gender literature has suggested also that girls in South African schools have thus far been under-researched. Although research (Bhana, 2002, 2005; Pattman & Bhana, 2007; Moletsane, 2008) on local girls as active agents in the making of their own femininities is becoming notable, this kind of work is limited in terms of quantity. This is also, however, mostly epidemiological or survey work around HIV and violence. These studies are often conducted on a large scale, allow for generalization, and do not shed much light on the girls themselves and how they negotiate their lives in the context of school. My study, on the other hand, was conducted on a small scale; it is a case study researching only 10 girls in a single school. As pointed out previously in the chapter, while their views do not represent those of all teenage girls in contemporary South Africa, they nevertheless provide some understanding of how they (as working-class teenagers living in an era of poverty, sexual vulnerability and risk) express and negotiate “sexually provocative” expressions of femininity.

Furthermore, considering that I am a “Coloured” female researcher studying girls who are likewise “Coloured”, my study contributes to the literature of “Coloured” authors on understanding Coloured identity in South Africa (e.g. the writing of Zimitri Erasmus (2001), Mohammed Adikhari (2005, 2009) and Zoe Wicomb (2000, 2006), among others. My study represents the thinking of an older “Coloured” female who grew up in a distinctly different historical context to that of the “Coloured” girls in my study. However, by engaging with the girls’ views about “appropriate” dressing, my study aims also to present the perspectives of young “Coloured” girls growing up in the contemporary South African historical context.

In addition, while much of the existing related literature provides valuable insight on thinking about “Coloured” identities, very little is written about schooling contexts. Although Anderson’s (2009) recent study, conducted in a historically “Coloured” school in Wentworth, Durban, responds to a gap in the literature, she focuses on boys and constructions of masculinities. Broadly, Anderson’s (2009) study on masculinity in schools contributes to a field that has burgeoned in the last two decades, threatening to eclipse studies on girls and femininities. Masculinities theorist Weaver-Hightower (2003) has termed this phenomenon as the ‘boy turn’ in educational research. My study, instead, contributes to studies on girls. Therefore, whereas my study intends to draw from and contribute to the scholarship of understanding “Coloured” identities in South Africa, I have particularly chosen to research girls. This sustained focus on girls responds, in a way, to a need for a ‘girl turn’ in school-based research.

1.3 Theoretical Orientation

Considering that this study focuses specifically on girls and femininities, the theoretical framework driving the data analysis has been developed largely from “politics of the body” feminist insights; and not instead from the dominant body politics feminist discourses. Consequently, my insights into feminism and feminist philosophies have deepened during the course of research. I am now aware that “body politics” and

“politics of the body” are sometimes used as interchangeable terms when used more generally. However, I realize also that when “body politics” and “politics of the body” are used to describe *paradigms* in feminist writings, the interchangeable use is deliberately avoided. Hence, if one is to develop the theoretical framework for one’s study from feminist theories (as I have done for this study), it is then crucial to be mindful of this difference; specifically taking into account that one’s choice of theories on either “body politics” or “politics of the body” (or even both) makes inferences about one’s theoretical orientation. More importantly, one’s preference does not just make suggestions about one’s orientation towards feminism per se, but about a particular feminist school of thought. Bearing the above in mind, in this section I provide a brief explanation as to why I deliberately and exclusively have drawn on contemporary second-wave⁴ and third-wave⁵ feminist theories relating to “politics of the body” (and not instead from dominant second-wave feminist “body politics” discourses).

1.3.1 Why “politics of the body”?

On the one hand, when used more generally as terms, both “body politics” and “politics of the body” denote historical liberation movements in patriarchal societies whereby women have protested against the objectification of the female body by men. The only difference in this instance is that “body politics” refers to such movements by “second-wave feminists” during the late 1970s until the early 1980s, and “politics of the body” describes the movements that occurred in the historical period thereafter. Thus, when used as terms to describe women’s liberation movements in general, *body politics* and *politics of the body* are very similar in meaning and therefore might be seen as synonymic and could possibly be used interchangeably. On the other hand, as pointed out earlier, when used to describe paradigms in feminist writings, “body politics” and

⁴ The term “second-wave feminists” predominantly describes feminists who supported women’s liberation movements during the 1960s until the early 1980s. However, there are still feminists in the present-day who are also known as second-wave feminist and their feminist views are aligned with their second-wave feminist counterparts of the 1960s to early 1980s.

⁵ “Third-wave feminists” is a category of feminist supporters of women’s liberation movements from the late 1980s and onwards, but more importantly also whose works respond to criticisms that they make of the views and works of second-wave feminist of the 1960s to early 1980s.

“politics of the body” are distinctly different from each other. To separate the paradigmatic strands that distinguish feminist “body politics” discourses from “politics of the body” discourses, I consider particularly what contemporary second-wave and third-wave feminist theorists such as Susan Bordo (1993), Sandra Bartky (2000) and Deborah Siegel (1997) have written about these differences. I have drawn from their works primarily because my survey of the relevant feminist literature has revealed that they are among the few feminists whose contemporary writings have explicitly made a paradigmatic distinction between “body politics” and “politics of the body”.

Bordo (1993), Siegel (1997) and Bartky (2000) have in separate works similarly sketched out the differences between second-wave feminist “body politics” discourses and the related contemporary feminist “politics of the body” works. Bordo (1993, p. 188), for example, asserts that she:

...would only highlight now how very different it [“politics of the body”] is from the dominant feminist discourse on the body of the late sixties and seventies. “That” imagination of the female body was of a socially shaped and historically ‘colonized’ territory; not a site of individual self-determination ... [contemporary feminist discourses have] converted the old metaphor of the body politic found in Plato Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca, Machiavelli, Hobbes, and many others to a new metaphor: “politics of the body”. In the old metaphor of the body politic, the state or society was imagined as the human body, with different organ or parts symbolizing the different functions, needs or social constituents, forces and so forth - the head or soul for the sovereign, the blood for the will of the people, the nerves for the system of reward and punishments and so forth. Now [contemporary] feminism imagined the human “body” as itself a politically inscribed identity, its physiology and morphology shaped and marked by histories and practices of containment or control – from foot-binding and corseting to rape and battering, to compulsory heterosexuality, forced sterilization, unwanted pregnancy, and (in the case of African-America women) explicit commodification.

Bordo (1993) further criticizes the second-wave feminist “body politics” discourses for (according to her) reducing the social regulation of the female body image to an ‘antithesis view of men wielding power over women and women being utterly powerless’ (p. 23). Siegel (1997) concurs by stating that such discourses construct men as power-wielding oppressors who control the body image of women, while positioning women as powerless victims of a patriarchal social order. Siegel (1997) goes on to label “body politics” discourses as a “victim feminism” approach (p. 64). Bartky (2000) describes the “body politics” theories as an “alienation paradigm” (pp. 324-325), and justifies this by claiming that one can closely align the way that second-wave feminists of the 1960s and 1970s wrote about American women’s liberation movements at the time with the Marxian theories of “alienation”.

Given the view that “body politics” discourses focus more on how women are oppressed by men and pay less attention to how women challenge this oppression (Bordo, 1993; Bartky, 2000), it is my perception that drawing on “body politics” discourses in the analysis of my research data could discount the agency that the girls in the current study have to challenge Valley High’s gender regime (Bordo, 1993). This could then lead to them being portrayed as “powerless victims” of Valley High’s patriarchal system of school governance (Bordo, 1993; Siegel, 1997), and could further screen out how some of the participants might at one and the same time collude in upholding the status quo whilst resisting against it. In light of this, “politics of the body” provides a theoretical framework ‘which reconceptualizes the body from purely biological form to an historical construction and a medium of social control’, as Bordo (1993, p. 181) highlights and Bartky (2000) later affirms.

Bartky (2000) proceeds to criticize “body politics” discourses for being biased, and goes on to describe these works as racist, class-biased works that privilege essentialist notions of femininity. Her criticism is justified by her observation that second-wave feminists who wrote on “body politics” were ‘white, upper-middle class and heterosexual’ (Bartky, 2000, p. 324); and thus argues that they wrote about women’s movements of the 1960s and 1970s from that biased vantage point. I do, on the one hand, acknowledge

that the essentialist (Western, “White”, upper-middle-class, heterosexual) perspective from which the “body politics” discourses are said to be written (Bartky, 2000) would assist in theorizing the essentialist notions of femininity with which I entered the study. However, on the other hand, it is my perception that developing my theoretical framework from the “politics of the body” theories will match my primary research goal, which aims to avoid reinscribing essentialist views of “appropriate” femininity and to rather disrupt this thinking by taking into consideration also the perspectives of the “working-class Coloured” teenage girls in my study, with regard to why they dress for school in ways that may be seen as undermining essentialist notions of “appropriate” dressing for teenage schoolgirls (Payne, 1980; Bettie, 2003).

Bearing in mind also the biographical differences among the “working-class Coloured” girls in my study (outlined in the section below), as well as differences in their personal worldviews, my preference for “politics of the body” is influenced by the fact that being *sensitive to differences among women* is described as also a defining characteristic of “politics of the body” discourses (Bordo, 1993; Siegel, 1997; Bartky, 2000) – as compared to “body politics”. Drawing from “politics of the body” discourses would therefore result in the insights provided by the girls in my study being analyzed in a way that would not merely regard their views as a homogenous perspective from a group of “working-class Coloured” girls who dress in a similar way. Instead, personal differences among my research sample (Bartky, 2000) that could possibly be influencing how they dress and their perceptions of their outward appearances will also be considered. On account of what I highlight above, I have chosen to develop the theoretical framework that will guide my data analysis from “politics of the body” feminist discourses – and in particular, the writings relating to dress and outward appearance.

1.4 A Glimpse into the Research Participants’ Lives

This final section of the chapter offers a brief glimpse into the lives of my chosen research sample. This information has been extracted from the first (single separate)

interviews that I held with each of them in February, 2004. During the period in which these interviews were held, all of the participants were in grade nine and were all fourteen years old. They all dressed in a similar manner, as described earlier in this chapter. These were the visible similarities among the sample that lead to the teachers perceiving them as a homogenous group and collectively labeling them as “raw” girls. However, the glimpse into their personal lives provided here illustrates the layering of identities taking place in my sample and offers insight into the less visible similarities and differences between them (e.g. dealing with parents’ divorcing, choosing between parents, absent fathers, the death of a parent death, abandonment, sibling rivalry, and so forth). It is from *this* disclosed information about their personal lives that one might extrapolate the many other contending forces at work in these schoolgirls’ lives that are not visible to their teachers by merely observing their physical appearances.

Trish is an only child. Her parents are divorced. Her father is remarried. She lives with her mother. She is frequently in trouble with the teachers for disrupting lessons. However, she says that the reason for getting into trouble frequently is related to the fact that it is her father who comes to school to address disciplinary matters regarding her. As she does not live with him, she knows that she will not be punished by her mother. In view of this, she further explains that getting in trouble is her primary way of upsetting and inconveniencing her father. She articulates that these are the only occasions that she gets to see him and, further, that it is “the least that he can do” for her.

Ash is a “middle-child”; which she describes as “being sandwiched” between her older sister and a younger brother. According to Ash, she does not have a favourable relationship with either of her siblings as she feels that her brother is ‘spoilt’ and ‘can do whatever he wants’ on account of being her parents’ only son; and further, that her sister is also favoured more than her on account of being the eldest. Both siblings attend Valley High and Ash feels that they use their mother’s “preference” for them over her to lie about what she does at the school in order to get her in trouble. Although her parents are married, she explains that her father works away from home for most of the year. Thus, according to her, she does not have regular contact with him. However, despite

this, she mentions that she prefers her father over her mother because, as (in her description) he ‘spoils’ her by giving her ‘lots of money’ and buying her ‘lots of things’ when he comes home.

Roxy is the youngest of three children. She has an older brother and an older sister who have matriculated from Valley High. Her sister works at a food store and her brother is a police officer. They live together in a council flat. Her parents are divorced. Her step-father has also moved in with them. She explains that she does not get along with her step-father and her mother; and that, instead, longs to stay with her biological father. She explains however that she has lost contact with him after he remarried and relocated to another province. She blames her stepmother for the break down in the relationship between her and her father and jokingly mentions that she wishes to go and stay with him in order to ‘break them up’ so that her stepmother can ‘feel what it’s like’. She states that her mother ‘could have worked harder at the marriage’ and points out that this is the main reason why she does not have a very good relationship with her mother.

Kenny is an only child. She lives in a flat in central Durban with her grandmother. Her grandmother is a nurse in a government hospital close to where they live. According to Kenny, her mother abandoned her as baby and has no contact with her or her granny. Her father is deceased. She claims to have a close bond with her grandmother.

Jade is an only child. She lives with her grandmother. They share a room on the premises of the school where her grandmother works as the cleaner. According to Jade, she does not like living with her grandmother because her grandmother is “too strict”. Like Kenny, she does not wish to speak of her father or her biological mother. Their refusal is respected.

Delia lives with both parents in a council flat. She has older sister who attends Valley High and younger brother who attends a nearby primary school. Her parents are married. She says that she has a positive relationship with both her parents and siblings. Her father is an artisan (welder) and is often unemployed. Her mother works in a clothing

store as a saleslady. According to Delia, although her mother's job does not pay much, it is just enough to make ends meet when her father is unemployed.

Fadiah is an only child. She lives in a rented flat with her unmarried mother. Her mother works as a saleslady in a clothing store. According to Fadiah, she shares a close relationship with her mother and admires her mother for what she does to provide for her needs. Fadiah mentions that whilst she knows her father's name, she has chosen not to contact him as she is aware that he has denied being her father.

Tia is the elder of three siblings. She has a younger brother. She also has a younger sister who, she explains, was diagnosed with cerebral palsy after contracting meningitis shortly after birth and. Her parents separated whilst she was still very young. Her mother remarried. She lives with her grandparents in a council house (also commonly referred to in South Africa as RDP houses)⁶.

Tash lives with her grandmother in a room in the backyard of one of the houses nearby Valley High. She has an older sister who also lives with them and who had also previously attended Valley High, but had left on account of falling pregnant. Her parents are divorced. Her mother has remarried. She expressed that she does not have a favorable relationship with either of her parents and feels that, by sending her to stay with her grandmother, her parents have chosen their respective partners over her.

Bell is an only-child. Originally from South Africa, she spent much of her early life in China before returning to South Africa in 2003. Her parents were among several "hopefuls" who responded to advertisements by recruitment agencies offering an opportunity for South Africans to migrate temporarily in search of a better income. Subsequently her parents entered into a working contract with a hope that the funds received from this opportunity will enhance their lifestyle when they return to South Africa. Whilst living in China, Bell attended a private international school in which the

⁶ RDP houses are part of the South African governments' Reconstruction and Development Programme to provide housing for low-income households.

medium of instruction was English and functioned independently of the Chinese curriculum. Children of English-speaking migrant laborers working in China from various global locations attended this school. Therefore she is only able to speak English; significantly has also retained the accent in which English is spoken in the “Coloured” community in which her South African family resides. Bell explains that the year just before she returned to South Africa, her parents divorced. Soon afterwards, her father died in a motorbike accident. Being unable to afford to pay school fees, her mother sent her back to South Africa to live with her aunt and her aunt’s teenage son. Bell’s mother, on the other hand, remained in China and intended for Bell to return to China after matriculating to live with her until her working contract expired⁷. Bell articulates her unhappiness at her mother’s family for refusing to allow her to keep contact with her father’s family whom, according to her, she ‘loves’ and that she cannot wait to return to China. She views this as being used by her mother’s family as a means to ‘get back at’ her father for taking her mother overseas and (according to them) making her mother miserable in a foreign country.

1.5 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has emphasized my intention not to reinscribe (via this study) age-old arguments that attribute blame for sexual vulnerability and risk to particular (“sexually provocative”) styles of female dressing. I have in this chapter also highlighted my awareness that the personal view that I entered the study with both reinforced such notions and is a highly contested view in South African academic circles. Having acknowledged this, this chapter has also introduced my participants, provided a brief glimpse into their lives, and indicated that I have an over-riding goal, via this study, of challenging negative stereotypes associated with girls from similar social contexts and who dress in similar ways as the girls in my study do. To facilitate this intention, the

⁷ Regrettably, Bell passed away the year following the interview in which she shared the details of her life presented here. She was diabetic. Bell’s death and, in particular, the impact of this on the study is discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.

next chapter provides a review of related studies concerning young women and girls, clothing and outward appearance.

CHAPTER TWO

IDENTITY, VULNERABILITY, AND THE POLITICS OF DRESS AND OUTWARD PRESENTATION

2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter it was highlighted that a goal of this study is to contribute to gender scholarship on schoolgirls and femininities by researching why 10 schoolgirls dressed for school in a manner that I personally found to be intentionally provocative, and also to uncover the girls' rationalizations of their outward appearances against my concern (in the initial phase of the study) that their appearances would not only attract the sexual attention they desired but also undesired sexual attention. Accordingly, this study draws on youth and cultural studies relating to dress and the meanings behind these, gender and masculinities literature on sexual vulnerability (both the association with school dress codes and generally in South African society), and contemporary feminist "politics of the body" insights on female dress and physical appearance.

These insights are presented in this chapter in three parts. The first provides a review of the literature that responds to my research goal to understand why 10 teenage "Coloured" high school girls dressed for school in a manner that I saw as "provocative": particularly considering that the school they attended was governed by rigorously enforced dress rules meant to ensure that girls dressed conservatively. I look at the gender literature on teenage styles of dressing, which provides some ways of interpreting anti-establishment styles of teenage dressing.

The literature reviewed in the second part of the chapter relates to my concern for the safety of the girls in the study, after observing the sexual manner in which some of Valley High's senior boys behaved toward them - and my subsequent thoughts that the girls increased their sexual vulnerability by dressing in a way that I saw as being

sexually provocative. My further presumption was that the boys who harassed them shared my thinking that promiscuous girls can be identified by the manner in which they dress. In light of this perspective, I provide a broad review of the gender scholarship that considers how sexual vulnerability has been addressed in places like schools, and that unveils factors other than clothing that should be considered if South African society is to address the sexual vulnerability¹ of young women and girls adequately.

The literature reviewed in the third part of the chapter relates to my curiosity about how the girls in my study viewed their own outward appearances against my personal view that their clothing choices and manner in which they dressed portrayed them as “raw girls” (see Preface). Accordingly, I consider theoretical insights which reveal how young women and girls (who dress in ways thought by some to be “sexually provocative”) may rationalize their own dressing.

2.2 Literature Review

2.2.1 Part 1: Dress and identity

Much of the early writing (1970s and 1980s) on teenagers’ dress portrays adolescence as a time of rebellion, often described as anti-generational, and more particularly expressed against the authority of adults, and emphasizes the significance of fashion and style in expressing this rebellion.² Payne’s study (1980), for example, documents her personal experiences as a working-class girl in a middle-class English school. She

¹ As mentioned in Chapter One, my decision to embark on this research was motivated by my observation in 2003 of the increasing interest in the sexual vulnerability of schoolgirls (both nationally and in the locale); hence my reason for considering relevant literature that was published at around that period.

² Considering that my study looked at girls, I drew more on early works which focused specifically on schoolgirls (Fuller, 1980; Payne, 1980; McRobbie, 1991). Schoolgirls, it seems, have evoked the interest of many feminist researchers (such as Irene Payne and Angela McRobbie, for example) because the manner in which such girls wear their uniforms is seen to be “unlady-like” and challenges a range of assumptions about how schoolgirls should and should not dress. Like the school in which my research is conducted, these are usually schools in which the behaviours of girls are governed by a Western upper-middle-class value system that subscribes to “essentialist” notions of femininity. In such schools uniforms are the compulsory dress code and there are rules prescribing how these should be worn.

describes in detail how female working-class and racial minorities enacted rebellion against school leadership by 'smoking, being rude to teachers, sporting bouffant hairstyles, wearing fishnet-stockings, make-up, sticky-out underskirts'. Payne (1980, p. 15) describes these behaviours as 'the hallmarks of rebellious girls'. McRobbie (1991) describes a similar form of rebellion expressed through clothing among American schoolgirls. McRobbie (1991) affirms what Payne (1980) asserts by stating that dressing in an 'anti-establishment' manner is one way in which 'girls reject school without violently confronting it' (p. 54). In an earlier study Fuller (1980) asserts a similar view about girls who express their femininity in a way that Payne (1980) describes, with the underlying intentions that McRobbie (1991) outlines. Like Payne (1980), Fuller (1980) explains that among working-class females and racial minorities expressions of rebellion against orthodox styles of femininity come to the fore because these girls cannot achieve or maintain middle-class social standards due to limited finances. Therefore, as Fuller (1980) explains, they resist the hegemonic (middle-class) norm in schools by deviating from these.

However, in contrast to what Payne (1980) proposes, Fuller (1980) asserts that the appearance of these girls has less to do with being rebellious or undermining the authority of the teachers, and that even though dressing in unconventional styles involves some degree of deviation from the hegemonic norm, this is not always primarily motivated by oppositional intentions. What Fuller (1980) asserts is again argued in Dwyer (1998) and Leblanc's (1999) works published shortly before the onset of my study. Both Leblanc (1999) and Dwyer (1998) offer insight into popular post-war subcultures such as the Teddy Boys, Mods, Punks and Skinheads, arguing that even though there is a variation between the styles of dress of the different subcultural groups, common between all of them is the eccentric and colourful way in which they wear their clothing, hair and make-up - and *this* is less about being rebellious than about attracting attention with the intention to promote a subculture in the teenage generational context. Adding to this, drawing from the findings of research conducted among teenagers in the 1990s, Dwyer (1998) and Leblanc (1999) assert that (for the generation of teenagers in their studies), dressing in an anti-establishment manner was

not solely (and in most cases, not at all) about expressing rebellion, but was instead merely an expression of affiliation to subcultural identity. Rather, Dwyer (1998) recognizes that among the studied sample, dress was used as 'a contested boundary mark between different group identities' (p. 54). Similarly, Leblanc (1999), whose research focuses on girls only, also recognizes that the dress styles of the "punk girls" in her study were not motivated by an underlying intention to be anti-authoritarian or anti-generational; instead, their "punk" style of dressing was centred particularly on challenging the gender order among their own generation with regard to how teenagers generally expected girls to dress.

Much gender research that I surveyed, published in the decade before I embarked on my study and likewise conducted among high school learners, concurs with the view outlined above: that group membership within various gender-relational arenas is often based on similarities in age, aspirations, attitudes and behaviour (e.g. Connell, 1987; Thorne, 1993; Mac an Ghail, 1994; Connell, 1995; Dwyer, 1998; Blackman, 1998; Bettie, 2003). There is consensus among these theorists that while one cannot easily determine age, aspiration and attitudes by simply looking at physical features, similarity of age, aspiration and attitude among youth can be located in similarities of dress (and behaviour).

Echoing what Dwyer (1998) and Leblanc (1999) assert, Thorne (1993), Blackman (1998) and Bettie (2003) similarly report in separate writings on how anti-establishment teenage dress is often erroneously and narrow-mindedly construed as a sign of intentional rebellion against authority in schools. For instance, Blackman (1998) asserts that dressing in anti-establishment styles in schools (that may be seen amongst the school community as anti-authoritarian behaviour) may merely be a way of girls 'reinforc[ing] their own female solidarity' - and in so doing, challenging notions of female passivity (p. 208). Thorne (1993) and Bettie (2003) concur that for some learners expressing gendered and sexual identities in ways that deviate from the school-prescribed norm is more about: (i) contesting particular versions of dominant masculinity and femininity in schools; (ii) wanting to "fit in"; or (iii) belonging to a

group. It is less about rebelling against the school leadership and its structures – if at all. Illustrating this, in her study Thorne (1993), for example, explores the construction of gender identities among girls (and boys) in two elementary American schools. She documents how learners actively participate in construction of their own knowledge and identities in arenas beyond the gaze of the school authorities. However, Thorne (1993) goes on to point out that - unfortunately for such learners - because their appearance and behaviour happen to transgress the expectations of their teachers, the expressions of such children are often seen by those teachers as rule-breaking activities. Consequently they are punished, as a result of their teachers misinterpreting the intention behind such learners' expressions of their personal identities.

Considering my own interpretation of the outward appearances of the girls in my study, and what I perceived to be their intentions behind these (Chapter One), I reviewed studies concerning the images of girls that are interpreted among some as being intentionally sexualized. Valerie Walkerdine, for instance, has written extensively about a sexualized physical appearance expressed by young girls (e.g. Walkerdine, 1997, Walkerdine, 1998; Walkerdine, 2001). In *Daddy's Girl* (1997) and again in 'Popular culture and the eroticization of little girls' (2001) Walkerdine recounts how young girls dress in ways which are interpreted as sexualized, and terms this "eroticised femininity". She labels young working-class girls whose physical appearances express "eroticized femininity" as "Little Lollitas". However, significantly Walkerdine (1997, 1998, 2001) does not affirm this perceived intention among such girls but points out that the "eroticized" way in which these girls dress is not intended by them to attract the attention of older men. Instead, she claims that the childhood innocence of "Little Lollitas" is exploited by the media, beauty and fashion industries that (as a marketing strategy) seem to believe that they will thrive if little girls are portrayed in this way. Unfortunately these industries seem to capitalize on heterosexual male sexual fetishisms by imaging young girls in popular culture in a sexualized way since, according to Walkerdine (2001), eroticization of these girls is at the same time conjured up in the imagination of older men, who satisfy their sexual perversion by viewing how "Little

Lolitas” dress in the same light that they would view sexualized images of the “raunchy” women that Levy (2006) describes.

Likewise, in a later study Bettie (2003) discusses a similar form of “eroticized femininity” (Walkerdine, 2001) enacted among girls in American high schools. According to Bettie (2003), the girls whom she studied wore ‘plunging necklines, too short miniskirts and too heavy make-up’ (p. 29); hence initially she based her description of these girls as “vulgar” on this observation of them. However, her finding was that, according to the girls, their dressing was ‘less often about boys, if at all, than about sharing in rituals of traditional femininity’ (p. 64). She further explains that ‘[s]ome of the girls whose physical appearances were (in her view) most sexualised actually claimed to be least interested in heterosexual relationships, marriage or children [Instead] it was a kind of friendship bonding among girls’, and that the girls’ ‘exaggeration of codes of feminine appearance and mannerism that crossed over into an overt display of feminine sexuality [was] aimed at subverting adult authority’ (pp. 64-65).

Adding to this, a study conducted by Willet (2008), in which she probed the relationship between teenage girls’ choices of particular clothing, revealed how teenage girls are pressurized to conform to popular cultural norms that are promoted in the media, and how this leads to self-monitoring of their body images. However, Willet found that many girls who chose to dress conservatively claimed that, on account of feeling comfortable, they felt self-confident and thus their levels of self-esteem were boosted and their styles of dressing made them feel empowered.

On the other side of the coin, a local study by Hastrup (1993) looks at girls who barely conceal their bodies, and points out that contrary to what the above Western studies highlighted, the complete absence of clothes in Zulu culture does not signify a display of vulgarity and seduction but instead symbolizes purity; that ‘in this traditional context, the women’s bodies and female sexuality become prime symbols of female identity, bodies of young girls are often displayed in the community so that men may admire

them' (Hastrup, 1993, p. 42). If a young Zulu female in this traditional context conceals certain parts of her body (such as her breast and thighs), it is understood that she is no longer "pure" and has thus defied cultural expectations for Zulu females.

The section below looks at how girls in South Africa become prone to sexual violence and how this violence is justified against the revealing manner in which targeted girls dress, and how schools (both locally and abroad) respond by policing dress codes away from revealing styles.

2.2.2 Part 2: Sexual vulnerability

2.2.2.1 Sexual vulnerability and dress

Since the early 1990s in South Africa a change in political governance initiated a growing concern about the sexual vulnerability of girls, particularly girls from impoverished contexts - girls like the 10 in my study. Of the vulnerabilities that girls like these face, the greatest include rape, sexual assault, unwanted/unplanned pregnancy, contracting HIV and being labelled with derogatory terms (Truscott, 1994; Wolpe, Quinlan & Martinez, 1997; Human Rights Report, 2001). The extent of this vulnerability can be measured against high rape, sexual assault and teenage pregnancy figures, and high rates of HIV infection (see Cunningham & Boulton, 1996; Jewkes *et al.*, 2001). Schools have been regarded as key spaces where these concerns have been addressed since they are perceived (universally) among educational stakeholders (e.g. government officials, school leaders, teachers and parents) as powerful social arenas for reinforcing socially endorsed gendered and sexual behaviours via the curriculum (Lees, 1986, 1993; Martino, 1995; Mac an Ghail, 1994; Epstein & Johnson, 1998).

However, by the turn of the millennium a report by Human Rights Watch (2001) highlighted that many working-class South African schools are not safe spaces for girls, pointing out that it was not just older men (teachers) but also males of younger age who

by then had begun to perpetrate sexual violence against schoolgirls. Thus South African schoolgirls now also had to be wary of their male classmates. Findings of related international studies published during the preceding decade suggested that in order for girls to be sexually safe in places like schools, they had to assume responsibility for their own safety by dressing conservatively. Separate works by Holly (1989) and Paechter (1998) highlight a shared perception among American schoolboys during the 1990s that when girls dress for school in a way that is considered among them to be sexually provocative, then “inviting sexual attention” was seen among boys as the girls’ sole intention underlying their dressing. Hence they justified their sexual harassment of girls against such an interpretation of the girls’ dressing.

Holly (1989) goes on to outline the many forms that sexual harassment took in the American schools in which she conducted her study. According to Holly (1989, p. 138), this included girls’ ‘breasts, buttocks and thighs being leered at, groped and felt-up as they walk through corridors’, but done in subtle and less noticeable ways. The inference is that the boys in that school were aware that their responses were inappropriate and hence they were discreet. Holly (1989) points out that sexuality in such schools became ‘not just a hidden agenda of schooling; ... [but] part of the school curriculum ... [with] rules which regulate sexuality and the way it can be presented or expressed in school’ (p. 5). The problem with rules focusing on “presentation” and “expression” (in my view) is that, in addressing sexual vulnerability in this way, the responsibility is placed by school leaders on girls, who are expected to abide by rules regulating how they dress and behave, instead of boys rather being taught to be more respectable – perhaps by their responses being regulated.

In addition to schools officially regulating dress codes and uniform rules, a range of other approaches adopted by schools over the decades, that are meant to regulate the behaviours of girls in particular, are identified in the literature (Thorne, 1993; Mac an Ghail, 1997; Paechter, 1998; Epstein & Johnson, 1998; Skelton, 2001; Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman, 2002). These methods are hostile and are intentionally carried out overtly with the aim of being subordinating. In this way they are, on the one hand, seen as a

noble intention to force girls (and boys) to conform to school-sanctioned, gendered norms out of fear of being publicly humiliated (e.g. Holly, 1989; Holdstock, 1990; Thomson & Scott, 1992; Segal, 1994; Paechter, 1998; Wolpe *et al.*, 1997; Morrell, 2001), but on the other hand, in my view they can also be seen as condoning the sexual and demoralizing responses of learners and teachers.

For example, the local literature reveals how corporal punishment was primarily used in South Africa during apartheid school governance to regulate the physical appearance of schoolgirls (Holdstock, 1990). Significantly however, it is revealed that in research conducted in South African schools, after six years of democratic governance and despite corporal punishment being abolished and the ruling government's attempts via the South African Schools' Act (1996) to promote learner participation and equality in schools, corporal punishment is still regarded among teachers as an effective means of maintaining/addressing issues of discipline, poor performance and deviant behaviour in schools (Wolpe *et al.*, 1997; Human Rights Watch, 2001; Morrell, 2001). Further to this, Morrell (2001) asserts that even in schools where corporal punishment is not practised, authoritarianism remains and has taken on a different guise - for example, derogatory labelling, the rigid enforcement of dress rules by teachers, and teachers publicly humiliating learners who do not conform to teacher expectations (Porteus, Vally & Ruth, 2001). In fact, the research shows that derogatory labelling is perceived among teachers and learners alike as an effective method used in schools to force particular girls to conform to conservative styles of dress and behaviour (Thorne, 1993; Skelton, 2001; Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Paechter, 1998; Epstein & Johnson, 1998; Frosh *et al.*, 2002).

Paechter (1998) asserts that in American schools girls whose physical appearances defy teacher expectations 'are seen by teachers as discipline problems' (p. 27). This view among school teachers is revealed in similar studies in American schools (Holly, 1989; Bodine, 2003; Brunnsma, 2004, 2005). However, these also draw attention to a claim among teachers that resorting to forms of humiliation is done in the hope of promoting school-sanctioned dress norms, and thus it is expected that girls will conform to these standards in order to escape being humiliated (Holly, 1989; Schofield, 1994; Paechter,

1998). Likewise, Porteus *et al.* (2001) claim that in the South African schooling context, after the use of corporal punishment was banned in South African schools many South African teachers also adopted public humiliation as one of the ways to force girls to conform to teacher expectations of how girls should present themselves in terms of how they dress and behave at school.

In addition to the above, the literature also reveals that among learners labels such as “slag” (Schofield, 1994), “tart” (Paechter, 1998) or “slut” (Ascensio, 1999) are attributed to girls in Western societies who do not conform to dominant social dress standards. However, Schofield (1994), on the other hand, asserts that ‘a girl can earn the label “slag” by any aspect of her behaviour, her tone of voice and not just her choice of clothes’ (p. 16), and further points out that ‘because of the power of a label and the comprehensive way in which it is applied, it is impossible to argue against it’ (p. 17). The permanently damaging effect of “derogatory labelling” on a girls’ reputation is thus highlighted by Schofield (1994). Derogatory labelling can thus be seen as one of the major risks facing girls who dress in ways considered among their peers to be intentionally sexualized (Richmond-Abbot, 1992; Schofield, 1994; Paechter, 1998; Ascensio, 1999). Interestingly though, while Richmond-Abbott (1992) concurs with a view that ‘the possibility of a bad reputation can still be used as a social control’ (p. 166), she also claims that among American teenagers ‘[s]exual behaviour for girls is not as stigmatizing as before’, and further points out that, among them, the limits according to which one gets a bad reputation have changed (Richmond-Abbott, 1992, p. 166). This draws attention to the loss of the “effectiveness” of derogatory labelling among American teenagers in the early 1990s when her study was conducted.

Adding to American and local insights, it is evident in the international literature that the rigid enforcement of school dress rules and the humiliation of learners who transgress these have also been two widely adopted methods of school discipline used for decades in European schools (Payne, 1980). Concerning dress codes, Payne (1980) points out for example that over the decades school leaders in middle-class schools in England have claimed that dress codes are an effective way of dissolving class lines among working-

class and middle-class schoolgirls. However, Payne (1980) criticizes enforcing teacher interpretation of dress codes on girls via dress rules as an attempt to foster attitudes of docility and passivity among working-class girls. She justifies her view by drawing from her personal experience as a scholar in such schools. Based on that experience, she describes the school's dress rules as 'part of a process of destroying the individual and class identity' and ensuring that 'pupils would submit unquestionably to school authority and what it represented' (pp. 14-15).

Based on the literature review thus far, it is evident that across the globe there are schools in which girls like those in my study (whose appearances are considered among teachers and other learners to be sexually provocative), face negative consequences. The review also uncovered harsh and hostile means which school authorities resort to in order to ensure that girls' physical appearances are conservative. It thus appears to be a trend in many schools, both locally and internationally, to use dress codes and uniform rules (and the hostile forms and harsh way in which these are imposed on girls) to teach girls that sexual advances and sexual violence may be dodged if they dress conservatively. Hence, as the reviewed literature infers, when girls do not conform to conservative standards of dressing then this is viewed as a behavioural problem - as intentional defiance, as an expression of promiscuity - and not a social one. In such schools, it appears, sexual vulnerability is seen as a behavioural problem that can be addressed if girls' dress codes and behaviours are regulated and if girls too police how they dress and behave. Thus, in such contexts conforming to dress standards is construed as a way of reducing sexual vulnerability; with non-conformity seen as defeating this goal. As my engagement with the works published during the period in which my research project unfolded, I came to recognize this as a narrow-minded view. But it did, however, reflect the view that I entered the study with - and during that time was also the view historically widely supported among teachers in schools universally.

However, review of local research that evolved in the period thereafter (from the 1990s onwards) in South Africa provided an alternative way of thinking about the sexual vulnerability of the girls in my study. These studies argue that sexual vulnerability in

South Africa cannot erroneously be reduced to a behavioural problem which may be curbed simply by regulating girls' dress codes. Instead, it becomes evident in the local research that if one is to adequately reduce sexual vulnerabilities that young South African women and girls face, then one has to look beyond dress codes - and when does, one will recognize that sexual vulnerability is a social problem. These studies argue that one therefore instead has to identify, and deal with, social factors that cause some girls to dress in ways that may be considered in some contexts as intentionally sexually provocative. Furthermore, one has to unpack social factors that cause certain males to relate to such girls in ways that compromise girls' sexual safety, and not simply make assumptions about styles of dressing and homogenously link particular styles of dressing to sexual intentions and outcomes. In line with this, the literature shows that in South African society the construction of violent masculinities, gender inequalities, unequal power relations and poverty are key factors that need to be addressed if society is to become a sexually safe space for young women and girls. Some of these studies are discussed below, which shows how these factors exacerbate sexual vulnerability.

2.2.2.2 Sexual vulnerability: Beyond dressing

In the local literature, repeated sexual harassment by known perpetrators has been recognized as often being the forerunner to rape incidents; sexual offenders often justify incidents of harassment with the sexual interpretation that they associate with victims' styles of dressing (Mokwena, 1991; Vetten, 1997, Human Rights Watch, 2001; Rape Crisis Cape Town, 2007). However, masculinity theorists Mokwena (1991) and Ascensio (1999) argue that the primary underlying cause of young males enacting violence against females is not how such females dress, but the bolstering of a "macho" image of masculinity. Similarly, they assert that in constructions of "machismo" images of masculinity male domination relies on female subordination, and one of the ways of showing this to other males is through acts of sexual violence against females. Illustrating this argument, Mokwena's (1991) research among urban township South African Black youth uncovers a practice known among them as "jackrolling", where

potential rape victims are “identified” and abducted by sexual offenders (known as “jackrollers”). However, Mokwena (1991) points out that “jackrolling” is specifically about establishing a macho image among other township males, and not about being unable to control their sexual lust.

A similar study was conducted by Ascensio (1999) among Puerto Rican/Latino males from inner-city New York. Even though conducted in a different geographical and historical context from Mokwena’s (1991) study, Ascensio’s (1999) research similarly reveals that sexual violence is not solely (if at all) about lust or about how a girl dresses, but instead has more to do with masculine power and reinforcing an image of machismo by violent means. These studies therefore suggest that girls are vulnerable not so much because of what they wear, but because of the constructions of masculinity. Hence, sexual vulnerability of young women and girls can be seen as primarily an effect of patriarchy and the aggressive, predatory behaviour of some males, and has more to do with masculinity and the “entitlement” that some heterosexual men feel to have sex in order to construct particular images of masculinity (e.g. machismo masculinity) than with what females do or suggest by the ways in which they dress.

Even though this may also be identified as a point that feminists have argued for at least a century, Mokwena (1991) and Ascensio’s (1999) research in a way significantly indicates that in South Africa and abroad it is not just a feminist enterprise to challenge this “blame the victim’s clothing” mentality and associations with clothing, and instead has become a goal among masculinity theorists as well and furthermore a collaborative effort of feminist, gender and masculinity theorists (e.g. Morrell, 2003; Jewkes, Morrell & Christofides, 2009) at around the period during which my research project unfolded.

Adding to the above, the local literature also shows how gender inequalities between South African males and females at a local level continue to render South African girls vulnerable to all forms of sexual violence - contrary to overriding national democratic goals to make South Africa free for all citizens. Hence, in addressing the sexual vulnerabilities that girls face, if society is to become safer for girls then gender

inequalities between men and women and factors fueling sexual violence (such as those highlighted in the literature) also have to be addressed. Further strengthening this argument, there is now a large body of gender literature about children in South Africa that confirms the same. For instance, Rachel Jewkes with others (Wood & Jewkes, 1997; Wood *et al.*, 1998, 2001, 2002, 2005) have initiated a fast-growing literature arguing that in understanding rape/forced sex on girl children, it is also important to understand gender inequalities. Adding to these works, reports by non-governmental organizations in South Africa also highlight a similar goal of dispelling this “blame the victim’s clothing” thinking relating to sexual offences.

Separate reports by the Human Rights Watch (2001) and Rape Crisis Cape Town (2007), for instance, both promote three other points of consideration (other than clothing) that have become minimized by this “blame the victim’s clothing” mentality. These organizations assert in their reports that if the sexual vulnerability of South African schoolgirls is to be addressed adequately then the spotlight needs to turn away from regulating dress codes and towards addressing: (i) organized gang rape; (ii) the myth that sexual intercourse with a young virgin will eradicate an HIV infection or cure an AIDS sufferer; and (iii) belief that sex with a young girl is safer than with older women because younger girls are less likely to be infected with HIV (Human Rights Watch, 2001; Rape Crisis Cape Town, 2007).

Adding to the above insights, a gender study conducted by Jewkes *et al.* (2001), drawing on descriptive research data collected among teenage girls from townships and informal settlements in Cape Town, South Africa, provides a deep understanding of social factors that contribute to forced sex. This study focused particularly on power between these girls and their partners within sexual relationships, and revealed that:

The high risk associated with forced sexual initiation ... is mediated through inequalities in power relations within the relationships. For teenagers who become pregnant, their lack of power in the relationship may be heightened by the substantial differences in the ages of the partners, the greater likelihood that the man is working and a home

environment of greater poverty. Within the relationship the boyfriends assert control through coercive sex, both initially and subsequently, and frequent beatings. (Jewkes et al., 2001, p. 743)

A later study by Jewkes *et al.* (2005) concerning rape of girls confirms the view that 'rape is often an act of punishment, used to demonstrate power over girl children and manufacture control' (Jewkes *et al.*, 2005, p. 1809).

However, despite the above literature locating sexual vulnerability with male power and the construction of violent forms of masculinity, gender and power inequalities, and poverty (and not with clothing), there still seems to be an awareness among young women that how they dress *does* signal something about who they are and what they might or might not do in a culture of male sexual entitlement. In South Africa it is therefore easy to see why some women have responded to this by urging abstinence and purity, including not wearing sexually revealing clothes. It also provides an understanding into why schools are driven to preserve dress codes forcing girls to dress conservatively, rather than wanting boys to behave respectfully.

These responses reinscribe the narrow-minded view that erroneously links sexual vulnerability to a particular dress code – a link that contemporary gender, masculinities and feminists jointly strive towards breaking. It is also easy to understand why some girls from impoverished contexts seem to capitalize on this thinking by intentionally dressing in ways that attract the attention of particular males, who in turn use girls' clothing to justify their sexual responses towards such girls. Illustrating this, Dunkle *et al.* (2004), for example, indicate that not all men and young boys who show an interest in girls for sex are harassing or inclined to rape them; also, not all teenage girls who have experienced sexual intercourse have been raped. Instead, they reveal how some girls from poor backgrounds intentionally dress in sexualized styles to consciously evoke a sexual interest in particular boys (and men) who they feel can fulfil their financial, material or emotional needs. In turn, boys and men who become involved with these girls see the relationship as mutually beneficial by receiving sex in return.

Although the risks associated with these negotiated consensual sexual relationships are the same as those associated with forced sex - namely, unplanned pregnancies and contracting STDs, largely because these relationships often involve consensual unprotected sex (Leclerc-Madlala, 2002; Hallman, 2008) – these risks appear to fade in comparison to the girls’ desires to escape the cycle of poverty. These girls seem to have learnt the subtle meanings attached by society over time to certain kinds of dress, and thus appear to have learnt to navigate between the social and cultural order; they use to their advantage the stereotypical beliefs attached to particular styles of dressing, which they recognize to be fostered among certain men, and do indeed intentionally attract such men. Weber and Mitchell’s (2004) work, which looks at women’s dress in particular, offers an in-depth exploration of how meaning is attached to certain styles of dress in particular social contexts, reporting on individual women who have used dress to either ‘reinforce or resist social structures or cultural expectations’ (p. 300).

It therefore seems that despite gender theorists urging for the spotlight to move towards male power, gender inequality and poverty (and for dealing with these issues), *revealing dress codes* seem to remain the barometer by which girls are seen by particular men (men seeking sexual relationships with schoolgirls) to be looking for attention. Drawing from Dunkel *et al.* (2004), these dress codes also seem to be recognised by some schoolgirls as a viable means to attract desired males. My further engagement with feminist (“politics of the body”) literature draws attention to a further argument among females in contemporary society: females who themselves acknowledge that their outward appearances may fulfill particular male sexual fantasies around female body image, but who argue that how they present their bodies has nothing to do with attracting heterosexual attention. The “politics of the body” literature highlights an argument among such women that what they project is a reflection of many other factors at play in their lives - unrelated to a desire to attract sexual attention - that influences what they wear, how they dress and their overall body images.

I discuss these factors further below by drawing on a selection of feminist (“politics of the body”) theories relating to outward appearance and dress.

2.2.3 Part 3: Politics of the female body, dress and outward presentation

The “politics of the body” literature upon which I draw in this study (Wolf, 1991; Bartky, 1998; Bordo, 2003; Levy, 2006) asserts that in the Western world *femininities*, although expressed in many forms in different cultural contexts, are primarily constructed on middle-class standards as to how a woman should present herself, both physically and in terms of behaviour. The dominant social order is thus learnt and upheld by specific behaviours and body images for women being either affirmed, endorsed or rejected in society. Bartky (1998, p. 95) explains:

We are born male or female, but not masculine or feminine. Femininity is an artifice, an achievement, a mode of enacting and reenacting received gender norms which surface as so many styles of the flesh.

Further to this, the literature reveals how in Western society standards of femininity are built on and measured against “patriarchal standards”, against which it is expected that the “ideal” outward presentation for women should reflect either a “Barbie doll-like” image, with long, sleek hair and a thin, toned body with firm breasts (Chernin, 1994; Mazarella & Pecorra, 2001; Urla & Swedlund, 2007), or a body image such as described by Bartky (1998): ‘taut, small-breasted, narrow-hipped, and of a slimness bordering on emaciation ... a silhouette that seems more appropriate to an adolescent boy or newly pubescent girls than to an adult woman’ (p. 95). Whichever bodily form women chose to portray, there is consensus that a fat body image, “cellulite”, “thick ankles” and “saddlebag thighs” (Bartky, 1998, p. 95) are ultimately rejected. A “tyranny of slenderness” results from such gendered knowledge (Chernin, 1994). As Bartky (1998, p. 95) points out, ‘since ordinary women have normally different dimensions, they must of course diet’ in order to meet dominant social expectations of how the female body image should “ideally” be presented (Wolf, 1991; Bartky, 1998; Bordo, 2003; Levy, 2006).

The “politics of the body” literature (Wolf, 1991; Bartky, 1998; Bordo, 2003; Levy, 2006) further draws attention to the many practices that women undertake to achieve a body image that is socially endorsed as appropriate for females, such as cosmetic surgery (Wolf, 1991) and dieting (Barky, 1998; Bordo, 2003). Wolf (1991) also describes how women resort to self-surveillance in order to achieve the dominant social standards for female body image, and refers to self-surveillance as a “a self-undermining” practice. Relating to this, Bartky (1998) draws on Foucaultian views of the social regulation of body image,³ and explores the ‘disciplinary practices that produce a body which in gesture and appearance is recognizably feminine’ (p. 95). She goes on to explain in detail how self-surveillance is used by women wanting to meet socially dominant gender expectations in terms of physical appearance, and in line with Foucault’s related views she explains how power, in the form of self-surveillance, becomes anonymous yet effective. According to Bartky (1998), in Foucault’s works he describes how, through a mere gaze, the panoptical view of prison inmates by the prison authorities causes the prisoner to self-monitor his behaviour after internalizing, through observation, the consequences of conforming with or defying the instructional expectations. Congruent with this, she asserts that against the public gaze:

[T]he woman who checks her make-up half a dozen times a day to see if her foundation has caked or her mascara has run, who worries that the wind or rain may spoil her hairdo, who looks frequently to see if

³ Here I draw attention to the limitations that Bartky (1998) highlights in using Foucaultian interpretations of the body politic when applied to works (such as mine) that look at how politics of the female body orientates with the politics of female dress and physical appearance. Therefore I have chosen not to draw directly from Foucault’s works but instead have relied on the aspects that Bartky (1998) points out are relevant to the feminist “politics of the body” theories. Bartky (1998) claims that ‘Foucault tends to identify the imposition of discipline upon the body with the operation of specific institutions, e.g. the school, the factory, the prison. To do this however, is to overlook the extent to which discipline can be institutionally unbound as well as institutionally bound’ (Bartky, 1998, p. 95). Alternately, Bartky (1998) asserts that ‘Women, like men, are subject to many of the same disciplinary practices Foucault describes. But he is blind to those disciplines that produce a modality of embodiment that is particularly feminine. To overlook the form of subjection that engenders the feminine body is to perpetuate the silence and powerlessness of those upon whom these disciplines have been imposed. Hence, even though a liberatory note is sounded in Foucault’s critique of power, his analysis as a whole reproduces that sexism which is endemic throughout Western politics theory’ (p. 103).

her stockings have bagged at the ankle or who, feeling fat, monitors everything she eats, has become just as surely as the inmate of the Panopticon, a self-policing subject, a self committed to a relentless self-surveillance ... a form of obedience to patriarchy. (Bartky, 1998, pp. 106-107)

Adding to the above, Bordo (2003) draws attention to the dangerous levels which self-surveillance practices have evolved to, placing under scrutiny the behaviours of women who, out of desperation, adopt drastic, obsessive dieting, obsessive exercising and so forth in order to transform their physical appearance to that which is socially accepted. She points out how this obsession has (dangerously) led many of these women eventually to exceed the socially standard requirements of physical shape and size to become life-threateningly thin.

The “politics of the body” works (Wolf, 1991; Bartky, 1998; Bordo, 2003; Levy, 2006) also point out how, although modelled on patriarchal standards, it is not just middle-class men who cause women to alter their body image to meet with dominant middle-class expectations, but also the media, fashion, beauty industry and other women as well. These authors similarly recognize that by depicting women in a way that satisfies the heterosexual desire of middle-class men, the media, fashion and beauty industries effectively reinforce patriarchal notions for how the female be should be presented. Adding to this, these theorists equally draw attention to the social pressure placed on women to conform to popular culture norms depicted in the media, which prescribe not only how women should look, but also behave and dress.

Wolf (1991), Bartky (1998), Bordo, (2003) and Levy (2006) concur that as a result of Western women religiously following fashion trends, undergoing cosmetic surgery, dieting and so forth, they internalize these body-image stereotypes depicted in the media. They point out further how these (fashion and beauty) industries capitalize (financially) on the social pressure that the media place on women to present a particular body image, and further highlight how social pressure leads to self-surveillance practices

by women wanting to achieve these middle-class standards of physical appearance. Thus, according to Wolf (1991), the self-worth of many women is diminished as a result of being unable to conform to the popular culture norms of physical appearance for females promoted in the media. Wolf (1991) further recognizes that it is mostly working-class women who are unable to attain the socially dominant (primarily heterosexual, Western, patriarchal, and middle-class) standards of how a woman's body image should "ideally" be presented.

Relating to the above, Wolf (1991) draws further attention to the financial expenses involved in keeping abreast of fashion and beauty trends to maintain the popular culture norm for female body image promoted in the media. She recognizes that it is usually working-class women who cannot afford particular items of clothing, make-up, cosmetic surgery and so forth, and who fail to achieve the dominant social expectations for women in terms of physical appearance. In contrast, she points out that it is middle-class women (usually White) who can financially afford to resort to expensive self-modification practices in terms of dress, body sculpting and bodily adornment. She therefore asserts that in Western society the notion of what is "appropriate" (whether conventional or modern) is upheld by White middle-class women who image their bodies in a way that primarily satisfies how heterosexual middle-class men expect the female body to be presented. In this case Wolf (1991) draws attention to how "class" as well as the media, beauty and fashion industries plays a role in both determining and upholding Western patriarchal notions of how the female body should "ideally" be presented.

In addition to the aspects of one's social class identity discussed thus far, racial identity is also a significant focus of the study - in particular, the racial identity of my participants and the researcher (me). Therefore, I consider in this review also how the racial identity of a female orientates with the politics of how she dresses and with her overall physical appearance. As my study is located in South Africa, I found it necessary to gain a theoretical understanding of how "politics of the body" intersects with dress and outward appearance of women in South Africa. Furthermore, considering the racial

identity of my participants, I consider how politics of the body orientates particularly with “being Coloured” in South Africa. Relating to this, I found the insights of South African academic Zimitri Erasmus (2001) to be particularly useful here. Even though she does not describe herself as a feminist, her works relate to the body images of “working-class Coloured” South African females, and are therefore relevant in theorizing how the “working-class Coloured” girls in my study viewed their outward appearances.

Erasmus’s (2001) reflection of her personal experiences of growing up as a “Coloured” girl in South Africa during apartheid recalls the social pressures experienced by her from other Coloured people in terms of how she should present herself. These expectations, according to Erasmus (1991), were modeled on an image of “Whiteness”, still regarded as the “ideal” way to image one’s body. She describes this “Whiteness” as being measured against the apartheid (Western, conservative, Christian, upper-middle-class, patriarchal/essentialist) model of femininity for White females. Recognizing that apartheid has ended, she claims that these expectations as to how one should ideally look remain in place among “Coloured” girls.

Furthermore, in contrast to what Wolf (1991), Bordo (2003) and Levy (2006) highlight about Western females, Erasmus (1991) points out that for South African “Coloured” females, achieving the “ideal” body image is not a practical matter of dieting, following trends of popular culture promoted in the media, losing weight, undergoing cosmetic surgery, using beauty products, and so forth – instead, for “Coloured” girls to achieve the “perfect” physical appearance they are required to be born resembling a “White” person. Erasmus (2001) clarifies that in this racial context having a “flat” nose and coarse hair - which she describes as *‘boesman korrels’* or *‘kreos’* (pp. 13-14) - are rejected physical features, associated with “Black” South Africans, and thus viewed among “Coloureds” as subordinating features. She further describes how even though hairstyling and texturing have become ‘key beautification practices in the making of womanhood’, among young South African “Coloured” women such practices nevertheless ‘carry a stigma of shame’ (Erasmus, 2001, p. 13) on account of one’s

textured hair not being representative of the normative form. Therefore, in this racial context, where notions of ideal body image are aligned with inherent physical attributes such as fair skin colour, sleek hair texture and shape of nose, she points out that a girl's worth diminishes as her overall physical appearance moves away from an image of "Whiteness" towards resembling a "Black" female.

Adding to the above insights, a distinguishing feature of the "politics of the body" works is that these not only focus on how women's bodies are used as a form of patriarchal dominance over women (see Chapter One), but are more concerned with women's claims to be challenging these constructions. Hence, these works specifically focus on women who claim that their outward appearances are deliberately meant to challenge the patriarchal social expectations for women in terms of dress and behaviour. However, these theorists observe that despite what they claim, such women image their bodies in ways that mirror the middle-class heterosexual male desire of how women should do so. In relation to these claims, there appear to be competing views among the "politics of the body" feminist theorists about whether or not women essentially do in fact challenge or reinscribe patriarchal standards.

For example, concerning the drastic measures to which many Western women will resort in order to achieve the dominant social notions of how a woman should present herself physically, Wolf (1991) points out a claim among such women that their motivation to image their bodies in a particular way (by dieting to lose weight, exercising, undergoing cosmetic surgery, and so forth) is underpinned by a desire to display self-obedience and control over their own bodies. Wolf (1991) views such behaviours as a sign that many women (erroneously) continue to equate success as a woman with achieving the dominant social expectations for women's body images while claiming to reject these. Arguing this point, she asserts that as dominant social expectations are modelled on patriarchal standards, by transforming their bodies in ways that essentially satisfy patriarchal expectations such women collude (albeit inadvertently) in upholding patriarchal standards as to how a woman should present herself physically - as opposed to challenging these, which they claim to do.

Furthering her argument, Wolf (1991) claims that for many women the images that they strive towards are unattainable, and attributes to this why many women self-loathe and begin to feel like failures when they do not achieve desired body images. Alternately, Wolf (1991) urges women who claim to challenge patriarchy to instead move towards dressing uniquely and in whatever way they personally desire. However, Wolf's (1991) work is controversial and has received much criticism in many circles (social and academic) for such an assertion. Broadly, her call on women to reject dominant middle-class patriarchal constructions in particular contexts is seen as being unrealistic. On the other hand, equally her work has been applauded in feminist circles for nevertheless raising consciousness among women of how images that they portray in historically male-dominated contexts (e.g. the workplace, religious contexts, sexual arenas, contexts of violence and poverty) to show their emancipation from patriarchal dominance actually mirror patriarchal expectations of how men expect women to image their bodies within such contexts.

Adding to the above perspective, in a later "politics of the body" works, Levy (2006) discusses how young females in contemporary Western society uphold patriarchal dominance by conforming to male definitions of "perfection" in terms of how a women's physical appearance should be presented. Levy (2006), like Wolf (1991), criticizes the claim made by many of these women that the "raunchy" presentation of their bodies (seen by many as being aggressively sexualized and eroticized-looking) actually in their view symbolizes female strength and emancipation from dominant patriarchal standards for femininity; and is thus not an attempt to attract heterosexual male attention. Instead, Levy (2006) argues that such body images nevertheless fulfill the perverted sexual fantasies and fetishes of many males (young and old), who deem "raunchy" images of females as sexually appealing; on this account, Levy views "raunch culture" as ironically upholding Western middle-class patriarchal standards for femininity.

However, my literature survey also revealed that not all "politics of the body" theorists dismiss the above highlighted claims among women who say they reject patriarchal

notions of femininity but present their bodies in a way that upholds such expectations. Bartky (1998) for example, whose study looks at dieting and exercise among women, likewise criticizes these as behaviours imposed upon their bodies under the “tyranny of slenderness” (Chernin, 1994). Echoing what Wolf (1991) asserts, she posits that body sculpting through cosmetic surgery and other “spot-reducing” practices is ‘both scientifically unsound and cruel, since the pattern in which fat is deposited or removed is known to be genetically determined’ and therefore ‘raises expectations in women that can never be realized’ (p. 96). However, Bartky’s (1998), unlike Wolf (1991), validates the claim among the women in her study that their body sculpting is not motivated by a desire to meet social expectations. Correspondingly, she asserts that such women demonstrate a form of self-discipline, and ‘dieting disciplines the body’s hunger’ (p. 96).

In a later study Bordo (2003), on the other hand, both criticizes and praises such women who image their bodies in ways that appear to satisfy patriarchal expectations, in spite of arguing that they do so for personal reasons. On the one hand, like Wolf (1991) and Bartky (1998), Bordo (2003) recognizes how other women (and not just men) place pressure on Western women to satisfy expectations for femininity, and furthermore recognizes that these are ultimately modelled on patriarchal standards. She also points out that even in the most remote African countries dominant notions of the “appropriate” female body image are modelled on Western middle-class patriarchal expectations.

On the other hand, however, Bordo (2003) views such women as both - at one and the same time - upholding and challenging patriarchal expectations. Illustrating this, she argues that by losing weight young traditional African women have begun to collude with their Western counterparts in upholding dominant Western patriarchal standards whilst challenging traditional African patriarchal expectations. Illustrating this, she draws attention to African societies where traditional African men (unlike middle-class Western men) endorse “voluptuous” and “fat” images of women, where the weight loss of young African females challenges traditional African male expectations of them. She asserts that young African women in effect bolster dominant Western middle-class

patriarchal notions of what the “ideal” female physical appearance should be. Hence, whereas Wolf (1991) views these obsessive behaviours solely as an erratic attempt to meet the social “ideal” in terms of their physical appearance, and criticizes women accordingly, Bordo (2003) instead argues that what these women are actually expressing may also be construed as a rejection of dominant expectations (of African men, Western men, and other women) regarding how women should present their body.

Apart from the above highlighted discrepancies in the “politics of the body literature reviewed in this section, I find these studies useful for theorizing the responses that the girls in my study gave concerning how they rationalized their outward appearances against a view of these as being intentionally sexualized. Significantly, the theories on which I draw – in line with the literature reviewed in the previous part of the chapter – also consider how gender expectations, social pressure, self-surveillance, class, racial expectations and generation factors orientate with the female body and the politics of female dress and physical appearance (see Chapter One). Further to this, these “politics of the body” studies underscore a view among women that these factors - and not a desire to attract sexual attention - are what give rise to what they choose to wear. Considering how the girls in my study rationalize their outward presentations against this perspective may also uncover the extent to which these factors influence the way in which they dress for school, and how they perceive their overall outward appearance.

2.3 Concluding Remarks

This chapter presented a synopsis of the feminism, masculinities and gender literature relating to young women and girls and manner of presentation of body image. Considering that this study aims to understand underlying reasons behind the “anti-establishment” dress code of 10 schoolgirls, drawing from youth and cultural studies, this chapter began with a general review of literature concerning anti-establishment teenage dressing and some meanings that teenagers attached to these. Then, in view of my own assumptions about the underlying intentions behind the styles of dressing

among the girls in my study, I proceeded with a review of works which explore the sexually related assumptions made of girls whose styles of dressing are likewise thought to be sexually suggestive in some contexts. Significantly though, much of this literature reports on research that has been conducted in the Western world, in middle-class contexts (mainly schools) and among working class Black teenagers and racial minorities. My study extends to this scholarship by examining the dress codes of teenagers from a different geographical and social setting: teenage South African girls from a working class school.

Bearing in mind that my research sample comprises schoolgirls and that their outward presentations are studied within a schooling context, the second part of the review looked at studies exploring how schools carry out surveillance of learners' conduct and girls' dress codes, based on a belief that "deviant" dress codes signal troublesome demeanor, also borne out of a concern that particular dress codes may invite unwanted sexual attention. However, the reviewed literature revealed various (and competing) discourses around the sexual vulnerability facing young females and association of this with particular styles of dressing. In that part of the chapter I considered local studies that nullify the "blame the victim" perspective, positing instead that sexual violence is located with many other factors - and not (if at all) with uncontrollable lustful desire (such factors including poverty and affirming of violent masculinities). Significantly, it becomes evident that - in contrast to the presumptions that I entered the study with (see Chapter One) - if one is really to address sexual vulnerability among young women and girls in society adequately, then one has to move away from categorizing and labelling girls according to what they wear, moving beyond these constructions to address underlying factors that cause sexually violent males to behave as they do towards girls, as well as considering what causes some girls to make particular choices of what to wear.

However, an apparent limitation in the literature reviewed in part two of the chapter is a tendency among the theorists to primarily – and in some cases solely – consider views of boys and older people (e.g. teachers) pertaining to girls who dress in a revealing way and

the negative treatment that they receive on account of how they dress. This, in my view, allows for boys and older people to justify their negative responses to such girls against how girls dress; whilst silencing the voices of girls who dress in this way. My study, on the other hand, considers also what girls who dress in such a way have to say about their own dressing in light of the treatment they receive from boys, as well as teachers, who respond to them in a judgmental; thus giving the girls also a voice.

The review presented in part two of the chapter highlighted the research promotes awareness that not all males who express a sexual interest in females who dress in a sexually suggestive manner are inclined to rape them; they might merely be seeking a consensual sexual relationship, and approach such girls since they perceive the girls' "sexualised" physical appearances as suggesting that they are sexually experienced. In my view, these awarenesses raised by these studies may inadvertently reinscribe age old arguments that attribute sexual violence to particular ways that girls dress in that they may bolster campaigns in schools which see sexual vulnerability as a problem that can be eradicated by teaching young girls to dress in a "modest" ("safe") way. Whereas I concur with a point made by these studies that factors such as poverty, gender inequality and power may in fact result in some school girls wittingly dressing in a revealing way to "seduce" desired older men for financial benefits; my study points out that this is not the intention of all girls who dress in such a way. It is my view that against such stereotyping – coupled with a "blame the victim" mentality - all girls who dress in a revealing manner are vulnerable to the negative treatment of sexual predatory males and moralizing citizens (whatever the girls' reason may be for dressing in the ways that they do). My study thus contributes to gender scholarship – not just by focusing on the clothing of such girls – but by disrupting also stereotypical views and a "blame the victim's clothing" mentality used by sexual predators and moralizing citizens to condone their negative responses to girls who dress in a revealing manner. In this study, I am the moralizing citizen and it is my own judgmental thinking that is placed under scrutiny.

In its broadest sense, therefore, my study supports view among theorists (as highlighted in part two of this review) which holds that: in curbing sexual licentiousness, risk factors

and violence facing South African teenage girls, if the focus among teachers and others (e.g. parents, NGOs) is sustained on correcting schoolgirls' dress codes, then our society will never be rid of a "blame the victim mentality" that condones the violent actions of sexually predatory males and moralizing citizens expressed towards girls who dress for school in the way that the girls in my study do (as shown previously in Chapter 1). I concur also with a further view promoted in these studies that, in addressing sexual vulnerabilities that schoolgirls face, the focus of interventions should centre on addressing poverty, power inequalities, gender inequalities, etc, faced in their daily lives. The problem in my view, however, is that these studies attempt to shift away from the "blame the victim's clothing" mentality by dismissing this thinking as a myth and in so doing tend to ignore clothing as being among the factors that need to be addressed in efforts to exacerbate sexual vulnerability that schoolgirls face enroute to and from, as well as within, schools; dispelling clothing as a factor contributing to girls' sexual vulnerability also as a myth. My study addresses this limitation by showing that clothing should not be altogether ignored as a factor that increases the sexual vulnerability of young schoolgirls (such as gender inequality, power inequalities, poverty). However, as pointed out earlier, my study does not simply look at how girls dress *per se*; but instead places *perceptions* associated with particular styles of dressing under the research lens.

In the light of the above debates, in this study I align my thinking mainly with the argument promoted among feminist "politics of the body" works which argue that even though young women recognise that their outward appearances may bear sexual connotations in particular contexts, their personal motivations behind their dressing is unrelated to sexual intentions. This study is designed to understand 10 girls' motivations and reasoning behind their clothing choices and styles of dressing, against a view that they dressed in an intentionally sexualized way.

On the other hand though, the review ended by looking at some of these works and it became evident from the reviewed "politics of the body" literature that this scholarship focuses predominantly on middle-class women and offers a critique of expensive body modification practices to which such women resort. The practices of these women, and

the interpretation thereof, are viewed against the gender expectations of middle-class women and men. Whilst my study contributes to this scholarship by considering how females who come under such criticism rationalise their own outward presentation, my focus is on working class “Coloured” girls who come from impoverished contexts with limited resources available to them to modify their outward appearances in the way that they do.

In the next chapter I present the research methodology which facilitated the process of collection of my research data.

CHAPTER THREE

THE RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research approach, research paradigm, and processes of data collection and analysis employed in this study. Bearing in mind that I conducted the research in the school where I was appointed as a teacher during fieldwork, my discussion considers the influences, challenges and limitations of that identity on the research design, and how I addressed these aspects.

3.2 Research Approach

This study employed a qualitative approach to research. To broaden my insights on qualitative research, I drew on several writings which describe what qualitative research is and what it entails. Of these, I found what Creswell (2007) defines as qualitative research to aptly describe the process that my research undertook. According to Creswell (2007, p. 37), qualitative research is an approach which:

begins with assumptions, a world view, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to enquiry, and data collection that is inductive and establishes patterns or themes. The final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, and a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and it extends the literature or signals a call for action.

Congruent with the above description, throughout my research project I too remained mindful of the premise from which my study began (see Chapter One); and at the same time was cognizant also of my research goal to reconsider (via the study) these prior assumptions. Also in line with what Creswell (2007) points out, I too chose to reconsider these assumptions against my participants' explanations about their clothing choices and styles of dressing, and the meanings that they attached to these aspects. Accordingly, in this study I draw on research data which captures my own thoughts and assumptions about my research participants as well as participants' voices. These data are presented and analyzed in Chapter Four of this study. Furthermore the manner in which data are presented and analyzed corresponds to what Creswell (2007) outlines above concerning researcher-reflexivity in qualitative research. As the next chapter will demonstrate, they are presented and analyzed in a way that expresses my goal to be reflexive as a researcher about the assumptions that I entered the study with, as well. Accordingly the data analysis unfolds in a way that shows how my participants' explanations about their dress codes and body images served to challenge and disrupt (and in some cases alter) my initial perceptions about them and my assumptions about why they dress for school in the way that they do.

However, before embarking on collecting the research data I refer to above, it was necessary for me to think of the qualitative research methodology and methods that would be most appropriate for my specific study. My review of the literature on qualitative research methods and methodologies (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Merriam, 1998; Anastas, 2004; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Creswell, 2009) revealed several different approaches to qualitative research from which one could choose. These included case studies, retrospective studies, snapshots, longitudinal studies, ethnography, grounded theory, biographies and phenomenology. Of these, Cohen *et al.*'s (2007) description of a case study best described what my study was about (methodologically speaking), and therefore matches the approach that I chose. Cohen *et al.* (2007) define a case study as an 'investigation into a specific instance or phenomenon in its real life context' (p. 170).

Creswell (2007), in addition, points out that researchers need to also determine whether a case study approach is appropriate to the research problem; asserting further that ‘a *case study* is a good approach when the inquirer has clearly identifiable cases with boundaries and seeks to provide an in-depth understanding of the cases...’ (p. 74). Matching what Cohen *et al.* (2007) and Creswell (2007) similarly point out above, my study was to be conducted on a small-scale in a narrow research context: in a single school and among only 10 girls of whose dress codes I sought an in depth understanding. Viewing my study against what these two theorists highlight, my preference for the case study approach seemed to be an appropriate one.

My further engagement with Creswell (2007) and Silverman’s (2010) writings on using the case study approach also drew my attention to the fact that there are various types of case studies from which a qualitative researcher can choose. According to Creswell (2007. p. 74), the various types of case studies may be distinguished from each other in the following way:

by the size of the bounded case, such as whether the case involves one individual, several individuals, a group, an entire programme or activity. They may also be distinguished in terms of the intent of the case analysis.

Creswell (2007) in addition, identifies and discusses three variations of case studies: namely, the single instrumental case study, the collective or multiple case study, and the intrinsic case study. Of these, the variant that I chose for my study matches what Creswell (2007) refers to as the single instrumental case study. Creswell (2007) explains that ‘[i]n a single instrumental case study, the researcher focuses on an issue or concern that exist and then selects one bounded case to illustrate this issue’ (p. 74).

Adding to the above insights on case study approach, Silverman (2010) clarifies that a *bounded case* may be understood as:

a case [that] has boundaries which must be identified at an early stage of the research (e.g. if you are studying a school, whether this includes classroom behaviour, staff meetings, parents-teacher meetings, etc).

My research thus exemplifies Creswell (2007) and Silverman's (2010) above descriptions of a single instrumental case study in that it focuses on one bounded case. a dress code of 10 teenage schoolgirls, in a single school during a specific period within the school when the girls' dress codes were of primary concern among their teacher.

A further engagement with Lindegger's (2010) writings on the case study approach drew attention also to some limitations that a qualitative researcher may encounter when using the case study approach. Lindegger's (2010) claims that 'there may be problems with the validity of information, causal links are difficult to test, and generalizations cannot be made from single case studies' (p. 461). Adding to this insight, a limitation that I experienced in using a case study approach was the fact that I chose also to conduct the study in a site in which I was already a member (i.e. a Valley High teacher). I found that choosing this context made it very difficult to conduct the research in an unbiased way. This experience echoes what Edwards & Talbot's (1999) writings point out where they acknowledge how '[t]he researcher can become so immersed in the case that data analysis becomes difficult' (p.57). Similarly, I felt at the time of fieldwork as well as the data analysis phase and write up of the study that my position in the school as a teacher would result in it becoming difficult for me to avoid privileging my personal views and pre-existing assumptions in the research process.

On the other hand though, I also found that it was difficult to avoid acknowledging my existing notions altogether in my research. In fact, gender theorists Ezzy (2002, p. 150) and Wildey (2003) had experienced a similar challenge. In Ezzy's (2002) works, she criticizes those researchers who 'pretend to be objective ... as a consequence of studies being written in the third person, as if the author had no influence on the text that was presented' (p. 150). Similarly, Wildey (2003) contends that 'rather than acting like an impersonal manipulator of techniques, the researcher can be portrayed as intimately

involved in the process, with values, preconceptions, preferences and frailties' (p. 115). Taking what Ezzy (2002) and Wildey (2003) point out into account, I chose rather to be mindful during the process of research of my personal thoughts about the school and the participants that I carried into the study. In keeping also with feminist theories on which this study largely draws (see Chapter Two), I acknowledge my personal identity as part of the research process – and not apart from it. Rather than pretending to be objective, I have chosen to use my assumptions of the participants (see Chapter One) as the premise from which the research was conducted, and to use the study as a tool to interrogate/challenge (and perhaps even alter) such notions. Confirming my decision, Nieuwenhuis (2010a) asserts that 'one of the greatest strengths of qualitative research is...that the researcher becomes the instrument through which data is collected and analyzed' (p. 60).

A further limitation that I experienced in using the case study approach was that fact that I was the only person conducting the case study in the research site. I recognized how this created an opportunity for me to present the data in a way that would reinforce the preconceptions I had of the girls in my study prior to conducting this research. However, given my conscious effort to avoid doing this, my approach (I believe) has taken cognizance of what Creswell (2009) in a later work cautions about ethics and 'suppressing, falsifying or inventing findings to meet the researcher's or audience's needs' in writing up research. Creswell (2009) terms this 'a fraudulent practice' (p. 92), and further points out that this is not accepted in professional research communities and such practices are considered to 'constitute scientific misconduct' (p. 92). In my study there is no falsifying of the research by using findings to reinforce the initial ideas that I held of my research participants before embarking on the study. Instead (as pointed out above), from the onset of the study it was one of my goals to use the study as a tool for reflexivity and to interrogate these preconceived ideas through the course of the research. I therefore (Chapter One) exposed what I thought about teenage girls such as those in my study, who (in my view) appeared to be sexually active, explained how I

reached such an assumption, and declared how my assumptions shaped my approach to this study.

3.3 Research Paradigm

Henning *et al.* (2004), Jansen (2010) and Nieuwenhuis's (2010a) similarly point out that choosing an appropriate research paradigm is key in guarding against the data collection and analysis processes being distorted by a researcher's personal views about the phenomenon under study. I considered what they assert in light of the previously outlined limitations that I experienced in using the case study approach. From a further engagement of what these theorists have written about research paradigms, I found that what these authors describe of the interpretive paradigm best matched my research intention. Henning *et al.* (2004) for example assert that qualitative research which intends to understand constructions of reality is best situated in an interpretive worldview. Jansen (2010) concurs by describing interpretivism is a research paradigm which 'foregrounds the meaning that individuals or communities assign to their experiences' (p. 21). Nieuwenhuis (2010a, p. 61) contends by claiming that:

[it] is the ultimate aim of interpretivist research to offer a perspective of a situation and to analyze the situation under study to provide insight into the way in which a particular group of people make sense of their situation or phenomenon the encounter.

Thus, my primary goal for the study (see Chapter One) resonates with what Henning *et al.* (2004) and Jansen (2010) and Nieuwenhuis describe as interpretivism in the sense that my study too intends to understand the sense that 10 girls make of how they express their gendered and sexual identities through their outward presentations in a schooling context.

In order to deepen my insights into this “framework for understanding” and to furthermore evaluate its suitability for achieving the research goals outlined above, I drew also on what Denzin & Lincoln (2005) and Cohen & Crabtree (2006) have written on the subject of interpretivism. Denzin & Lincoln (2005) explain that studies which draw on the interpretive model consist of ‘a *relativist* ontology, *subjectivist* (knower and respondent co-create understandings) epistemology and a *naturalistic* (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures’ (p. 24). Similarly, but in more detail, Cohen and Crabtree (2006, p. 1) explain that:

Relativist ontology assumes that reality as we know it is constructed inter-subjectively; through meanings and understandings developed socially or experientially. Subjectivist epistemology assumes that we cannot separate ourselves from what we know. The investigator and the object of investigation are linked such that who we are and how we understand the world is central to part of how we understand ourselves, others and the world ... [I]nterpretive positions are founded on the theoretical belief that knowledge is socially constructed and fluid. Thus what we know is always negotiated within cultures, social settings and relationships with other people.

The interpretive paradigm thus seemed also to be a suitable choice when I considered the above descriptions in light of my recognition that my personal identity would inevitably influence a subjective research lens. I felt that framing my study in the interpretive model would serve as a safeguard against privileging my personal views in the research. Jansen (2010) likewise recognizes that “intersubjective meaning” is a feature of interpretivism which ‘is crucial to achieving understanding and meaning’ (p. 21). Taking into account what Denzin & Lincoln (2005) and Cohen & Crabtree (2005) point out above, I personally felt that the ontological, epistemological and methodological positions of the interpretive model would force me to conduct the study in a way that would co-create with my research participants an alternative understanding of why they express their gendered and sexual identities in the way that they do; at one and the same

time also acknowledging my own thoughts about such expressions (Henning *et al.*, 2004).

3.4 Data Production Process

Henning *et al.* (2004), furthermore, points out that: as the interpretive paradigm assumes a discursive qualitative approach, it would in turn ‘inform a specific methodological framework in a logical coherent way’ (p. 16). In line with this explanation, in this section I discuss how I implemented each step of the logical and coherent methodological framework that informed my research process.

3.4.1 Gaining access

Gaining access to the research site is the first step of fieldwork. However, before actually arriving at the research site and beginning data collection within the chosen site, an official process had to be followed in order to gain access from the ‘gatekeepers’. Kelly (2010) define gatekeepers as ‘people who have a say who is let in and who is not’ (p. 312); and further point out that ‘these are usually parties who have vested interest either in the issue at stake or in the wellbeing of the potential respondents (p. 312). Additionally, Creswell (2007) sees “gatekeepers” as being also the “participants” - which he describes also as the ‘key informants’ (p. 71) – including those like the girls in my study whose parents consent to their involvement in the study on their behalf.

Whereas the official requirements to gain access from gatekeepers may differ between institutions (and may even change over time in an institution), at the time of writing this report it was mandatory for studies like mine that are registered at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) and which intended to conduct research within a public school, to approach the following ‘gatekeepers’: the UKZN Social Science & Humanities

Research Ethics Committee, the local Department of Education, the school principal of the chosen research site, the members of the school community who will participate in the project, and in the case of participants like mine who are under the age of eighteen “gatekeepers” would include participants’ legal guardians as well as the participants themselves.

Permission is achieved from the UKZN Social Science & Humanities Research Ethics Committee by applying for ‘ethical clearance’. Similarly, on application, the local Department of Education will provide successful candidates with an official letter which permits the candidate to access the chosen school for research purposes¹. However, even though official written permission may have been given by the Department of Education and University of KwaZulu-Natal’s committee to access the school, it is also courteous and respectful to formally request access from (and to briefly outline one’s research intentions with) the principal of the chosen school.

I found that being a teacher in the school in which I had chosen to conduct my research essentially placed me at an advantage over an outsider when it came to gaining the principal’s approval to collect data within the school and was also at an advantage as I had local knowledge of Valley High’s racial, religious, socio-economic and cultural dynamics, and unrestricted access - not just to the physical site - but also to the learner records. On the other hand, I recognized that the fact that I was a teacher in the research site prior to embarking on my study did not mean that I could go about gaining access to the school community or to use the school records and for research purposes any differently to an “outsider”. Therefore, whilst I was already a teacher in the site that I had chosen to conduct my research and had physical access to the school and school records, “gaining access” as a researcher involved officially accessing the community within that context as well for research purposes. In fact, as the data collection phase

¹ At the time when my study commenced, it was registered under what was then known as the University of Natal. At the time, I was not aware of these requirements. However, following the merger of university campuses in KwaZulu-Natal (which then collectively became known as the University of KwaZulu-Natal), these requirements became mandatory for all members who intend to undertake research projects within South African public schools. Accordingly, applied for ethical clearance (retrospectively) and was granted expedited approval. See Annexure D.

proceeded I found that my position as a teacher in the school that I had chosen as my research site was actually a limitation to the study when it came to gaining access to the research community for research purposes as well. On this account, I found that throughout the study I had to continuously reflect on both my teacher identity and researcher identity during the research process, and be watchful that one identity did not overshadow the other in the research process.

In light of what I point out above, I had to decide on a strategy to balance my teacher-researcher roles in the research site during the initial stages of fieldwork. On doing this, I recognized that it was crucial to be upfront about my intentions to access the school community as a researcher. Similarly, Babbie & Mouton (2009) recognize that 'it is necessary to identify [oneself] as a researcher to those you want to study' (p. 525); and advise further against a researcher deceiving the research subjects. Apart from being unethical, Babbie & Mouton (2009) highlight that "deception" will produce inaccurate data and distorted findings. This was also my concern. I therefore had to declare my intentions to record (in the write-up of the study) any form of information that I received from the Valley High school community which I found useful for the study. Being up front with the Valley High community about my research agenda also would give them a fair opportunity to decide how much they would tell me about the phenomenon under study and how much of this information they would be willing to let me use for my study.

Declaring my research intentions to the Valley High school community began by making an appointment with the principal.² The purpose of that initial meeting was to discuss my study in detail. In that meeting she expressed her enthusiasm about my choice to conduct my research in Valley High. However, from her further discussion with teachers about the study in a staff meeting later that day, I realized that her goals for the research were

² Usually "as teacher", if I needed to discuss something with her during the course of the day, I did not need to make an appointment.

very different to mine. Whereas she listed the benefits of my study for improving the discipline in Valley High, that (improving discipline) was not my primary goal for embarking on the study. At the time my intention was *not* one of an action researcher hoping to effect change broadly in Valley High. I had personal goals for the study: I wanted to demonstrate my academic knowledge as doctoral candidate: to challenge existing knowledge and ideologies, and to do so by conducting a study in the area of gender research. I also (as pointed out previously in the study) wanted to use the study to interrogate my personal thinking on particular constructions of femininity. Therefore, to ensure that I did not mislead the principal I scheduled a subsequent meeting with her in order to clarify my intentions. It was thus clarified that if discipline did in fact improve during fieldwork as a result of the study, it should be seen as an additional benefit - and not as something that should be expected.

3.4.2 Selection of participants

The next step in the fieldwork process was to select the participants. My decision for selecting my research participants and the process of selection that I employed corresponds with what Creswell (2006), McMillan & Schumacher (2006), Babbie & Mouton (2009), Durrheim (2010), Kelly (2010) and Lindegger (2010) have similarly written on the subject. Durrheim (2010, p. 49) defines 'the selection of research participants from an entire population, [which] involves decisions about which people, settings, events, behaviours, and/or social processes to observe', as *sampling*. They go on to identify three kinds of sampling: convenience sampling, random sampling and purposive sampling. Of these the most applicable to my study was *purposeful sampling*; which is also referred to amongst qualitative researchers (e.g. McMillan & Schumacher, 2006) as *purposive sampling*. Similar to Durrheim's (2010) description of purposeful sampling, McMillan & Schumacher (2006) define purposive sampling as 'a strategy to choose small groups or individuals likely to be representative and informative about the topic of interest' (p. 126). Creswell (2006, p.125), in addition, explains that:

Purposeful sampling means that the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study.

Babbie & Mouton (2009) likewise recognize that it is sometimes appropriate that researchers choose their own sample ‘on the basis of [the researcher’s] own knowledge of the population, its elements, and the nature of [the] research aims’ (p. 166). Purposeful (purposive) sampling was thus employed to select my research participants. In line with what the theorists outline above, the 10 chosen girls on whom my study focus were intentionally chosen from within the research site, as the key informants (Creswell, 2007), to provide insight on the topic under study. As teacher in the chosen research site before embarking on the study, I already knew that it was only 10 girls who dressed in the manner which this study places under scrutiny; hence my selection of a small sample of key informants.

Having already known the girls as a Valley High teacher, I knew that even though they were among the youngest girls in the school, they were also similarly very lively, verbally expressive and generally extroverted individuals. I therefore was reassured that they would be able to rationalize their clothing choices, the styles in which they wore these and their overall outward presentation; and to share their reasoning with me in an uninhibited and articulate manner in the formal interviews that I had planned to conduct with them. Their ability to do so became evident in the group interviews which I held with them - as the extracts from that interview data, as documented in the following chapter, will demonstrate.

Figure 3.1 presents the profile of my chosen research sample (overleaf):

Figure 3.1 – Table showing the profile of my chosen research sample

Pseudo-nym	Age	Grade	Race	Gender	Persons living with	Parent or guardian's occupation
Trish	14	Nine	Coloured	Female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mother (participant is an only child)	Mother: Sales lady (Clothing Store)
Ash	14	Nine	Coloured	Female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mother • Father • Younger brother • Older sister (participant is a "middle child")	Mother: Unemployed Father: Welder
Roxy	14	Nine	Coloured	Female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mother • Mother's fiancée, • Older brother • Older sister (participant is the youngest child)	Mother: Sales lady (Clothing Store)
Kenny	14	Nine	Coloured	Female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grandmother (participant is an only child)	Grandmother : Nurse
Jade	14	Nine	Coloured	Female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grandmother (participant is an only child)	Grandmother: Cleaner at a local school
Delia	14	Nine	Coloured	Female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mother • Father • Younger brother • Older sister 	Mother: Sales lady (Clothing Store) Father: Welder
Fadiyah	14	Nine	Coloured	Female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mother (participant is an only child)	Mother: Sales lady (Clothing Store)
Tia	14	Nine	Coloured	Female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grandmother • Grandfather 	Grandparents: Unemployed
Tash	14	Nine	Coloured	Female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grandmother • Older sister 	Grandmother: Unemployed
Bell	14	Nine	Coloured	Female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aunt • Fourteen year old male Cousin (participant is an only child)	Aunt: Sales lady (Clothing Store)

The above table was compiled at the sampling stage of my study. The recorded information was retrieved from school records. More specifically this information was taken from the biographical details section of Valley High's learner enrollment document - which is a document that parents or guardians complete when learners are enrolled at Valley High. Viewing that table at a glance, several similarities between my participants are apparent. For example, the table clearly shows that all participants were "Coloured" girls who were 14 years of age at the onset of data collection. Whereas the table shows slight variations in their family dynamics (i.e. the number of siblings, parents that they live with and their position in the family), it is also evident that they come from working class families. From the table, it is also clear that that of those whose parents are working, their fathers and mothers are in similar kinds of employment respectively.

However, in spite of the visible similarities among my sample shown on the table, a further separate interview held with each of them about their family backgrounds³ (as discussed later on in the chapter) exposed less apparent differences among them. That information has been used to compile a brief snapshot into each of the participants' lives (see Chapter One).

3.4.3 Ethical considerations

A further step prior to data collection was to plan how I would address ethical issues that might crop up during the process of fieldwork. Like all site-based research, the ethical issues that I needed to consider included issues around consent, preserving the anonymity of the informants and the school and issues around confidentiality. However, as my research participants were teenagers it was also necessary for their parents to give permission for their participation in the study. Like most letters of consent for research participants, the letters also offered a brief description of the project (see Annexure C),

³ A detailed discussion of these interviews is provided later on in the chapter (section 3.4.4).

highlighted the importance of confidentiality, my agreement to preserve the participants' anonymity, and emphasized their right to withdraw their participation at any point of the research, without consequences.

In addition, since my chosen participants were also girls who were often in trouble with their school teachers and parents (for absconding, smoking and fighting), and were thus generally seen among the teachers as rebellious and troublesome girls, I had to consider the possibility that during the course of fieldwork they might land up in trouble with the law as well. This placed me in a tricky situation in the sense that I had to consider what my ethical duty was and how I would respond if they expected me to protect them from school disciplinary action and the law. I had to plan how I would respond ethically if they told me something in the interview that I should have told the police, for example, if one of them had been harmed or was in danger, and did not want me to tell anyone. Babbie & Mouton (2009) propose ways of addressing concerns such as those I was faced with. For example, they draw attention to the intrusive nature of qualitative social research, pointing out that it involves deep probing into the lives of the participants, and therefore a researcher must ensure that s/he does not bring harm to the research participants, whether or not they have volunteered to take part in the project. However, I was not just a researcher, but also the participants' teacher. As a teacher, I was aware also of how in schools context and policy intersect in a way that informs how schools are managed, what learners do and how teachers respond to them. Whereas I acknowledge that issues like those I describe in the previous paragraph (absconding, smoking, and fighting) produce useful research opportunities, I was also mindful of the rules which governed (and restricted) how I could respond to such situations as a teacher. I had to also keep in mind that my ethical duties as a teacher were not always the same as those as a researcher.

To address this ethical dilemma I drew on my experiences with a previous study that I conducted in Valley High for my Masters degree three years earlier. That research was also conducted among learners in Valley High, particularly those whom the teachers described as "troublesome". From that experience I learnt that among "troublesome"

learners there is a huge concern over trust. In particular, I learnt that the main concern among such learners is how much the principal would come to know about what they reported during the group interviews. Drawing from that experience, I also anticipated concerns among participants in the current study about whether the staff would gain access to the recordings of the discussions. From my Master's degree fieldwork experience I learnt how participants can work together to restrict what and how much "the group" wants to share with a researcher about particular incidents (particularly when the informants are construed among the teachers as "troublesome learners"). Therefore, although the consent letter for the current study shows that the research participants' confidentiality would be protected, I felt that it was necessary in the first group interview to emphasize the legal implications associated with my involvement in the project, and the trouble I would be in if I breached my agreement to protect their confidentiality. Addressing dilemmas such as what I highlight here, Wassenaar (2010, p. 76) points out that:

The researcher cannot guarantee that all group members will treat the information of other persons with the respect that it deserves. This should be pointed out in the consent forms...and the researcher should undertake to make group members aware of the importance of confidentiality. All participants should be encouraged to maintain confidentiality and be briefed about the confidentiality risk in advance.

Whereas I did not include what Wassenaar (2010) suggests above in the consent form that I issued to my participants, I did however discuss with them in the very first interview that I held with them the negative consequences that could arise if they did not keep confidentiality amongst each other as well, specifically with regard to the information that they disclosed in the group interviews. Fortunately, breach of confidentiality did not become a problem during (and after) my fieldwork; suggesting therefore that my participants had taken the seriousness of our discussion relating to confidentiality into account.

3.4.4 Challenges and limitations

The fact that I was both a teacher and a researcher in the same research site also presented major challenges in implementing my chosen research approach. Of these, in this section I discuss the challenges of establishing an enabling research relationship with my participants, the death of a participant, and getting the Valley High school teachers to participate in the study.

3.4.4.1 Establishing an enabling research relationship

Best & Khan (2003, p. 252) advise that:

The relationship of researchers to their subjects is based on trust and confidence. Researchers must not allow themselves to be aligned to either authoritative figures or subjects. A position of neutrality is essential...

Assuming a position of neutrality in this project was not feasible, considering that I had chosen a research site in which I was also a member of the school's leadership structure. Therefore, from the onset of the project I anticipated that my participants would sense what they shared with me during fieldwork. As pointed out in Chapter One, before embarking on the study I represented teachers who, as Bhana *et al.* (2008) describe, 'find it difficult to override their own beliefs around generational hierarchies, reproduction and gender' (p. 82), despite a national goal to make schools more enabling environments for all children.⁴ Consequently I held a subjective view of how schoolgirls should dress and accordingly related negatively to anti-establishment dressing such as that exhibited by the

⁴ Whereas Bhana, *et al.*'s. (2008) study (unlike mine) specifically focuses on teacher attitudes towards pregnant and parenting girls in schools, their insights are useful in that they raise awareness of how, in spite of what educational policies prescribe, teachers such as myself (at the time, before embarking on this research) constructed schools as spaces in which they reinscribed their own gendered beliefs among learners (Morrell, 2003; Bhana *et al.*, 2008). This is usually done by reacting negatively to girls whose behaviours appear to infringe on these beliefs (Porteus *et al.*, 2001).

girls in my study. On the other hand though, as also pointed out earlier in the study, rather than feigning neutrality (Ezzy, 2002; Best & Khan, 2003; Wildey, 2003) through the research project I planned to reflect on my subjective views about particular constructions of femininity. In addition, I wanted to reconstruct my own identity within the school so that, beyond the research process, the learners would see me instead as a teacher who cared for their general well-being (Bhana, Morrell, Epstein & Moletsane, 2006). For the girls in my study this meant that the group interviews would provide an enabling space for them to share information about themselves (Morrell, 2003) without being fearful of being chastised or seen in a negative light.

However, I found that establishing the desired research relationship with my participants initially proved challenging. This was particularly demonstrated in the first month of fieldwork. For instance, in the first group interview I probed into the details of the participants' lives outside of school. Apart from what the school documents showed (as captured in figure 3.1), I wanted to see if living in similar environments and having similar experiences within their families (e.g. large families, absent or working parents, etc.) might be a factor that influenced them to assert their feminine agency in a similar anti-establishment way within their school. Unfortunately, none of them responded to my questions. At the time I thought that it was possible that they were shy, uncomfortable and nervous. Discomfort and nervousness of participants to speak in front of others has been recognized as a limitation of discursive methods of data collection (Dawson, 2009).

In a further attempt to establish an enabling research relationship with my participants, I decided in the (first) group interview to share personal information about my life outside of school with them instead. From my experience as a teacher I have found that, for some reason, children are curious to know about teachers' ages, family lives, where they grew up, and so forth. I found that the Valley High learners often probed into these details of teachers' lives during the course of the school day. However, in sharing my personal details with my participants, I also had to consider the associated consequences. I had never before discussed details of my private life with any of my learners, since I was afraid

of the risks of so doing. For example, in Valley High there were “undocumented rules” regarding how learner-teacher interpersonal relationships should be conducted. In my experience I had witnessed how some of Valley High’s teachers’ decisions to discuss their personal lives with learners often resulted in an attitude of familiarity between them and their learners. While the learners often enjoyed listening to stories about those teachers’ personal lives, I noticed that the shared information became playground gossip; this was often conducted in a negative way and had, in many cases, led to damaging consequences for the reputation of the teachers involved. I had also noted how, following such discussions, teacher authority in the classroom becomes undermined, and furthermore how the learners’ altered perception of the teacher as “one of their friends” created discipline problems for the teacher concerned.

Taking the above outlined risks into consideration, I nonetheless hoped that by sharing personal details of my life with my participants I would initiate a relationship of mutual trust, confidence and respect between us. As expected, I found that when I proceeded to disclose my personal details to my participants, they questioned me extensively. There was a shift in roles, whereby they became the researchers of the life I led outside of the school. Disappointingly though, none of them revealed any more than their age and where they lived, the number of siblings they had and whether they lived with their parents or not. When I probed their feelings towards their siblings and parents further, they once more became silent. At the time I began to regret how much I had shared with them about myself. I felt both betrayed and exploited by them. However, the literature on qualitative research points out that fears such as mine are not unusual (e.g. Behar, 1996; Ellis, 1999; Rager, 2005), and that in fact many researchers claim that meaning is added to the research if they acknowledge their own emotional vulnerability during research, and how the research has affected them emotionally.

In a second attempt to establish an enabling research relationship with my participants, I approached them separately and asked them to complete an open-ended questionnaire. These questions were solely meant to probe further into the information about their family

backgrounds and thus included the same questions that I had previously asked them in the group interview. I hoped that by filling in the questionnaire privately, they would provide a more successful response than they had in the initial group interview⁵. However, this attempt was also unsuccessful. Not one of them completed or returned the questionnaire in the week that I had given it to them, in spite of several requests and the fact that they all promised that they would (nor did they return the questionnaires thereafter). By then I became anxious about their silence as I felt that they were reluctant to participate in the project and possibly were being forced to do so (e.g. by their parents or the principal).

Alternatively, Morrell (2003) proposes two further ways in which “responses of silence” by South African schoolchildren (to a researcher’s questions) may be interpreted:

In the first instance, [silence] is a social phenomenon experienced collectively... Silence is a result of prohibition and policing. Understood in this way, silence is a suppressed discourse. It is thus an effect of power. Dominant discourses permit and legitimate certain vocabularies and values whilst marginalizing others. The second meaning in which silence takes on ... involves the personal. A person who feels unable to talk about certain subjects or emotions or is unaware of certain aspects of his or her history suffers from silence. (Morrell, 2003, p. 44)

Whilst the above statement specifically concerns the disclosure of HIV and AIDS-related issues by schoolchildren, Morrell (2003) nevertheless offers a way of understanding my participants’ sudden silence when I questioned them in the initial interview on personal details of their lives, their parents, siblings and so forth; and furthermore why they did not complete my questionnaire probing the same questions. In light of what Morrell (2003)

⁵ During the fieldworks stage of my research project, the participants consented verbally to my request (which I made individually to them) to complete the questionnaire which I refer to here. However, during the data analysis and write-up stage of my research project I became aware (through my engagement with my PhD supervisor and the relevant literature) that by asking participants to complete a questionnaire without their parents formally consenting to this would be a breach of the formal ethical agreement that had been made between the participants and me (via the initial consent forms). This questionnaire is therefore not included in the study (neither as an appendix); but is merely mentioned here to show the difficulties I experienced in the initial stages of data collection as a result of the initial silences I experienced from my participants, and how I rationalized and attempted to overcome this challenge which they presented.

highlights, it is possible that my participants' "silence" did not merely suggest mistrust (of me or of each other) per se, nor signal discomfort and nervousness, as Dawson (2009) suggests. Drawing on Morrell's (2003) assertion (as outlined above), it was possible that my participants' "silence" suggested that the unequal teacher-learner power relations existent within the research site had filtered into the research and were constraining my efforts to construct my desired researcher-participant relationship with the girls in my study. Taking further into account what Morrell (2003) highlights, another factor for my participants' "silence" could have been the fact that my questions (being personal in nature) probed an area of their lives that they could (either) not easily discuss or lacked full knowledge of the details thereof.

In a further effort to encourage my participants to share details of their personal lives, I held separate single interviews with each of them. The single interview approach was successful. Each of the single interviews lasted an hour, and the participants spoke at length about themselves, their families, their experiences of school and their relationships with their family members and friends. From the interviews I discovered that what I perceived as their lack of trust had very little to do with issues of trust and confidence (Best & Khan, 2003); nor was it about nervousness (Dawson, 2009) or issues of unequal power relations (Morrell, 2003). Rather, from the single interviews I found out that although their lives were similar in many ways and filled with equal amounts of pain and disappointment, they were aware of the similarities among them. They also pointed out that, as a teacher, I could have retrieved the information I requested from the school documents. Instead, I noted from the interviews that they similarly constructed Valley High as an arena where the painful details of what went on in their homes were not ordinarily discussed with teachers or their peers.

3.4.4.2 Death of a participant

Despite a claim among some researchers (Behar, 1996; Ellis, 1999; Rager, 2005) that acknowledging one's emotional vulnerability in one's research adds meaning to a study,

I personally found that if one allows oneself to become too emotionally involved in one's research it could also impact negatively on the study. This became apparent when one of the participants (Bell) passed away unexpectedly and I wanted to replace her in the study.

Although I acknowledged the possibility that one of the girls might leave the project or even the school during the proposal stage of the study, I had not considered that one of them might die. Unfortunately, Bell passed away at the end of April 2005, close to the end of fieldwork. I discovered that she was diabetic and her death was associated with this condition. However, her passing occurred after two years of close interactive involvement with the participants. It was a time when I had begun to understand them better, and my goal to establish an enabling research relationship with them had by then been achieved. By the time of Bell's death I had therefore developed a deep knowledge of and sense of sympathy for the social challenges that each of the respondents faced in their personal lives. As her death was so sudden and tragic, it took me by surprise and presented further emotionally related research challenges that I had not anticipated.

The first challenge relating to Bell's death was my reaction. Of course I was saddened by her death - as I would be with any of my learners because of my close daily interaction with them in the classroom. In the case of Bell, my sadness was compounded by the fact that I arrived at the hospital just minutes after she had died, and was in a state of shock to see her in that way. However, what shocked me more than what I saw, was how badly I took it. I became aware that my deep depression that followed Bell's death and my inconsolable crying (both at home and at school) was directly a result of her passing. As a teacher, reacting in this way produced positive results in relation to how my learners behaved towards me following this period; it was the first time in Valley High that the learners ever saw me cry. It seemed that, by the learners witnessing my emotional vulnerability, this facilitated my desire to reshape my identity with the school to that of a caring teacher who was genuinely, and beyond the classroom, concerned about my learners' well-being (Bhana *et al.*, 2006). However, at the same time I had to consider

how my vulnerability, coupled with the responsibility that I felt to the remaining participants and my sympathy about their personal lives, would influence how I would portray them in the study.

An additional challenge presented itself when the need arose to provide emotional support for my grieving participants. The principal asked me to offer counseling at the school for all of Bell's friends - and not just the participants; and because of my close interaction with the participants as a result of the study, she requested that I personally conduct the counseling sessions. However, the problem was that I was not a trained counselor and therefore did not have necessary counseling skills, nor experience. I also felt that personally providing counseling on a large scale would be unethical, given also that I was just as affected by Bell's death as her peers were. I overcame this challenge by seeking help from the local social service providers. However, my unexpected experience of Bell's death nevertheless draws attention to the need for a researcher to plan in advance for the necessary emotional support (for both the participants and the researcher) that might become necessary during the research process. The researcher also has to ensure that the necessary support structures are in place if it should happen that the research process affects both the researcher and participants emotionally and psychologically.

3.4.4.3 Unavailability of teachers to participate in the study

A further limitation of the study was unavailability of the Valley High teachers to participate in the study.

In the conception stage of the study, I had not planned to represent my own thoughts about my participants on account of how they dressed; but instead wanted to present a shared perspective among the Valley High teachers about the girls. From informal conversations held with the teachers (as a teacher in the school, before embarking on the

study), I became aware of other teachers within the school who shared the assumptions that I made of the girls in my study, on account of how the girls dressed. These teachers were also my personal friends, all female, “Coloured”, of a similar age as me and had grown up (and attended similar) schools as I did (see Preface). However they declined participation in my study. A common explanation for their refusal therefore was on account of being “just too tired” to be interviewed.

Studies on South African education (e.g. Phurutse, 2005; Olivier, 2003; Ortunga, Serem & Kindiki, 2008) identify factors depleting teachers’ levels of energy, encroaching on their personal time outside of schooling hours as well, and leading to their lack of enthusiasm to take on further tasks (such as participating in my study). Those studies reveal that large enrolment numbers, overcrowding of limited (small) classroom space, administrative demands and deadlines from the national Department of Education contributes greatly to stresses and challenges facing South African teachers in coping with their teaching duties. Therefore, as a teacher myself I did not view the Valley High teachers’ refusal to participate in my research project as a personal slight against me; instead I could empathize with their levels of stress and fatigue and the demands which their teaching duties placed on their time.

In retrospect I realize that, in a subconscious way, at the time I wanted to “hide behind” these teachers by presenting the personal view that I foreground in this Chapter One of this study as “a shared Valley High teacher-perspective”. In so doing, I now realize that I inadvertently was trying to justify the negative assumptions that I made of the girls in my study at the time, by wanting to use teacher’ voices in order to prove that the assumptions that I made about the girls was generally how the other Valley High teachers - who were of a similar age and upbringing as me – would see them. In retrospect, I recognize that not only would this be generalizing, but I would have been guilty of what Wildey (2003) describes as ‘an impersonal manipulator of techniques’ (p. 115). Whereas some teachers refused to allow me access into their classes for data collection purposes (explaining that they were uncomfortable with being observed by a colleague), all were occupied with

extra-curricular duties during break and after school. In light of this awareness, I now view the non-participation of the teacher as actually being both a the benefit to the study as well as a personal benefit; in the sense that it forced me to unpack and disrupt, and to some extent alter, my own prejudices that I held towards girls who dress in the way that the girls in my study do.

3.5 Research Sources and Instruments

The fourth step of my qualitative research process involved deciding on the sources of data that I was going to use that would best suit the nature of my study, and how I would put this into action.

One source of data was school records. By “school records” I refer specifically to the school documents which I specifically use in this study: Valley High’s learner-misdemeanor file and Valley High’s official dress code and uniform rules documents. The purpose of perusing the misdemeanor file was to determine if any incidents concerning the participants’ manner of dressing for school had been recorded in the disciplinary file by their teachers. Apart from my own observations and thoughts about how the girls dressed, I used the recorded incidents to initiate the group interview discussions that I held with them. The school code of conduct and uniform rules, and my interpretation thereof as a teacher before embarking on fieldwork (Chapter One, Figure 1.4), was the marker against which I judged my participants’ dressing. However, during fieldwork and my engagement with the views of my participants’ in the group interviews, as well as during the data analysis phase of my study, that document also became the marker against which I interrogated my initial (biased, teacher, older female) understanding of that document, when I reconsidered it from the vantage point of a working class teenage schoolgirl.

Another source of data was a research journal. In that journal, I recorded my observations, and subsequent reflections thereof, of ‘the setting or physical environment and social interactions, physical activities, nonverbal communication, planned and unplanned activities and interactions’ (Best & Kahn, 2003, p. 255) among the participants and in and outside of the classroom. The format in which I recorded my observations is similar to what Nieuwenhuis (2010a) proposes, as illustrated in Figure 3.2. Nieuwenhuis (2010a) likewise suggests that field notes should be simultaneously recorded whilst observations are made, in the manner shown in Figure 3.2 above.

Figure 3.2 -Template to record observation

Date and time	Situation	Participants	Actions observed	Reflection

My observations are also captured in the form of photographs taken of the participants in the initial stages of fieldwork (Chapter 1, Figures 1.1 – 1.3). The use of these in the study intends to offer the reader the opportunity to, in some way, see what I literally saw during my fieldwork observation with regard to how the participants dressed for school. For ethical reasons the faces of the persons in the photographs are not shown.

Additional sources of data that I used included interviews. According to Edwards & Talbot (1999), ‘interviews, if well done, allow the voices of the participants to be heard, and so to direct the analysis and interpretation of events’ (p.101). As it was also a primary goal of my study to let the voices of my participants also be heard, it was essential to decide on what kinds of interviews I would use, and what the purpose of the interviews would be. I decided to use individual and group interviews. The individual interviews were meant to produce data which I would then use to construct a brief biography of each of my research participants (see Chapter One). However, as Edwards & Talbot (1999, p. 101) further highlight that for this purpose such interviews ‘can be time-consuming; they can be an

intrusion into the lives of the participants as [a researcher's] probing may go too far'. They suggest therefore that for such purposes, one may very well get such information from a questionnaire. They perceive this method to be less intrusive for the participants and less time consuming for the researcher. On the other hand though, as pointed out previously in section 3.4.4 of this chapter, I did in fact attempt to use a questionnaire to collect such information; but apart from the ethical reasons that would have prohibited me to use those questionnaires in the study, the participants also did not complete the questionnaires either.

I conducted group interviews with my participants over a two-year period. These were primarily meant as a way of engaging with the participants' views regarding the research data collected from my daily observations of them that I recorded in my diary. I met with the girls every alternative week over the two-year period and discussed a range of issues not directly related to the project. My reason for this was to retain unbroken contact with them during the two-year period. Unfortunately the interview process was often affected by other factors beyond my control, such as school holidays, school functions and the participants' absence from school. Confirming what Edwards & Talbot (1999) outline about the frustrations for researchers who use interviewing as a data collection method (as previously outlined), I too found that the interviews, and transcriptions thereof, were time-consuming. Hence, the data from 10 of the group interviews that I held with the girls were not the only group interviews that I held with them, but were those most relevant to the study. On the other hand though, as Edwards & Talbot (1999, p. 101) also acknowledge, there are benefits too for researchers who choose to collect data via interviews. Congruent with what they highlight, I found too that my interviews yielded good rich data; and furthermore as my participants enjoyed the interviews, I received a 100 percent response to [my] questions; was able to probe and explore meanings and interpretations held by participants; and managed to hear the language and concerns of the participants.

Figure 3.3 shows when the chosen group interviews were held and what was discussed in each.

Figure 3.3 - Schedule of group interviews

INTERVIEWS	MONTH AND YEAR	PLANNED TOPIC FOR DISCUSSION
Interview 1	February 2004	Getting acquainted; assumptions and stereotypes relating to the shape of the “perfect” body for teenage girls
Interview 2	March 2004	The participants’ styles of clothing; the reactions they received from the Valley High community
Interview 3	April 2004	Understandings of the term “raw”; participants’ views on being labelled in society by and large by moralizing citizens
Interview 4	May 2004	The school skirt
Interview 5	August 2004	“Rollercoasters” and “Freewheelers” (descriptions given by the participants to girls who did not wear underwear to school)
Interview 6	September 2004	Lacy bras, bikini tops and white vests
Interview 7	October 2004	Discussion of two of Valley High’s “sexual harassers”’ views about their observations of the participants’ body images
Interview 8	November 2004	Accessorizing the uniform: Jewellery, hair accessories and make-up
Interview 9	May 2005	Participants’ perspectives on teenage sex and risks involved (loss of sexual purity, pregnancy, derogatory labelling, HIV/AIDS)
Interview 10	October 2005	How the participants reacted to Valley High boys’ sexual advances

Lindegger (2010) recognizes the usefulness of audio tapes as a method of recording interviews as, according to Lindegger (2010), keeping audio tapes of interviews assist in overcoming the ‘problems with validity of information’ (p. 461); particularly in case study

research – such as those pointed out earlier in section 3.2 of the chapter. Lindegger (2010) clarifies that ‘because of the importance of checking the original data from which the case study is drawn, contemporary case studies often use methods such as video or audio tapes, which provide data that can be analyzed by other researchers’ (Lindegger, 2010, p. 461), should the need arise. In line with this understanding, I too used a dictaphone to record the group interviews onto audio tapes.

The recoding of the interviews for my study took place during break times (recess), in the school library. I chose the library as this venue was situated in an area of the school that was out of bounds for learners during breaks. Therefore the high level of noise experienced in the school during breaks would not affect the recoding of the interviews. Being undisturbed by outside factors, it seemed that as the group discussions progressed, participants forgot that they were being recorded. The participants began to speak more freely with each interview. They seemed to have become more trusting of me and of each other. The latter interviews seemed to evolve into a conversation among the girls, rather than a formal interview. Although they often went off the topic, I elicited rich data from these conversations.

3.6 How Data is Analyzed

Data analysis began during the process of data generation and continued after the process was complete. The two methods of analysis that I used were content analysis and hermeneutics (and in particular, Nieuwenhuis’s (2010b) description of hermeneutics).

In light of my key research questions, I employed content analysis - a method widely used by social science researchers to arrange and rearrange transcripts of recorded interviews with participants in a way that they become relevant to the key research questions. In particular, I drew from Cohen *et al.*’s (2007, pp. 477 - 482) suggested content analysis process, which includes:

- deciding on the codes to be used in the analysis;

- constructing the categories for analysis;
- conducting the coding and categorization of data; and
- conducting the data analysis.

Below is a brief explanation of how I applied these guidelines to my data analysis in order to condense and make sense of the huge amount of qualitative research data that I collected.

I identified the core categories before I began with the group interviews. Because my categories were predetermined, I knew the kinds of questions that I would ask the participants in later group interviews; hence the group interviews were generally conversational. Given the fact that I had used qualitative data-gathering methods, and taking into account the two-year period of regular group interviews held with the participants, I collected a huge volume of data – all of which seemed relevant. I initially transcribed and coded the content of the group interviews as soon as I had conducted them and generated preliminary analysis categories. However, once all the data had been collected, I was faced with the task of not only condensing the data, but also making them more meaningful by rearranging and analyzing further (Cohen *et al.*, 2007).

Cohen *et al.* (2007) suggest that when using the content analysis method, data can be coded in two ways: [1] once all data are collected, by going through the data and identifying similar categories and then coding data into those categories; or [2] by first choosing broad categories and then rearranging the data into categories. I chose the latter approach because I found that it was easier and also helped to structure the group interviews according to my preselected categories.

The next step was to interpret the data. At this stage I drew on what Nieuwenhuis (2010b) describes as hermeneutics. Nieuwenhuis (2010b) acknowledges that “hermeneutics” is usually associated with research philosophies, but further outlines its dual purpose as a philosophy and as a mode of analysis. In light of this, Nieuwenhuis (2010b) explains that:

As a philosophical approach to human understanding, it provides the philosophical grounding for interpretivism. As a mode of analysis, it suggests ways of understanding or making sense of textual data, whether this is done through hermeneutics or critical hermeneutics. Analyzing data in the hermeneutic tradition is based on the idea of a hermeneutic circle that refers to the dialectic between the understanding of the text as a whole and the interpretation of its parts; in which descriptions are guided by anticipated explanations (Nieuwenhuis, 2010b, p. 101).

Similarly, once all interview data had been coded and reassembled into categories, I analyzed data for both the obvious meaning and ambiguities, which Nieuwenhuis (2010b, p. 101) describes as “apparent meaning” and “hidden meaning”. According to Nieuwenhuis (2010b), in analyzing data in this way the intention is to ‘unfold the levels of meaning in the literal meaning of the texts’ (p. 101). This is particularly demonstrated in the following chapters where I analyze interview data, how these can be interpreted at a glance and what other (less obvious) interpretations could be uncovered from a deeper analysis.

To test the validity of my interpretation of the data I drew on McMillan & Schumacher (2006), who describe validity as ‘the degree to which interpretations have mutual meaning between the participants and the researcher’ (p. 324) and suggest that, to test for validity, a researcher should question whether they ‘actually observe what they think they observe’ and whether ‘they hear the meaning that they think they hear’ (p. 324). In light of this, to verify my interpretations of fieldwork observations as well the sense that I made of interview data, at various stages of the research process I shared my interpretation of data with the participants and asked them to comment on these formally (at the start of each group interview) and informally during discussions held with them in the course of the school day, as Nieuwenhuis (2010b) suggests.

3.7 Concluding Remarks

This chapter provided insight into my research design in light of the challenges I encountered during fieldwork on account of being both a teacher and a researcher in the research site. The challenges are discussed in detail. The insight provided in this chapter concerning how I addressed these is particularly useful for teachers who, like me, intend to conduct qualitative research among learners in the school where they teach.

The chapter that follows presents an analysis of the research data. The analysis responds to my critical research question by probing why, in 2003, 10 Valley High schoolgirls dressed for school in a way that I interpreted (at the time) as being sexually suggestive; and how they perceived their overall appearances against the assumptions and consequences I personally associated with outward presentations such as theirs.

CHAPTER 4

TROUBLING “RAWNESS”

4.1 Introduction

The introductory chapters of this study have underscored the negative connotations associated with styles of female dressing that are considered in certain contexts to be intentionally sexually provocative. More particularly, a review of the relevant literature provided in Chapter Two has highlighted how, in such contexts, when girls' dressing is seen as intentionally sexually provocative they become prone to all kinds of derogatory treatment by individuals who forge connections between styles of dressing and promiscuity. It was pointed out also in Chapter Two how such assumptions and responses give rise to broader concerns for the sexual vulnerability and related sexual risk factors that face girls who dress in this way. Drawing from these studies it seems, however, that whilst there historically has been a trend in places like schools to “police” the dress code of girls, there recently has been growing concern among gender researchers about that approach.

Among gender researchers, there is a view that if addressing sexual vulnerability, risk factors and risk-taking sexual behaviours of South African girls from impoverished communities continues to be narrowly reduced to policing outward appearances, then the real underlying issues that need to be addressed (such as poverty and social, gender and power inequalities, for example) will be undervalued and may even be ignored (see Chapter Two). Taking cognizance of this point, it is also a goal of this study to contribute to the scholarship by uncovering how such factors influence the choices that the working-class girls in my study make about what they wear and how they dress for school; and also to uncover how they perceive their overall outward appearances in light of derogatory constructions of - and concerns associated with - outward presentations such as theirs. Towards addressing this focus, the previous chapter provided a

description of the methodology and methods employed to gather research data documenting the meanings that the 10 teenage schoolgirls in my study (who dress for school in a way that I initially saw as being intentionally “raw-looking”) attach to their clothing choices, styles of dressing and overall outward presentations. This chapter presents an analysis of those data.

4.2. Data Presentation and Interpretation

The presentation and interpretation of the research data in this chapter responds directly to the critical question driving the study:

- What meanings do teenage schoolgirls who dress for school in a manner seen by a female teacher as being “raw-looking”, attach to their clothing choices, styles of dressing and overall outward appearances?

However, before I unpack data that directly addresses the above question, I find it necessary to clarify what, in the first place, is considered in this study to be “raw looking”. To facilitate this intention, the chapter has been divided into three parts. In the first, I present and analyze research data which captures what “rawness” (in my personal understanding thereof) entails. I furthermore outline how I judge “rawness” from a mere observation of a female’s outward appearance. Then given my initial impression of the girls in my study as being “raw” on observing their outward presentations and my desire to disrupt that construction of them in this study, the second part of the chapter presents an analysis of data concerning choices of clothing that the girls in my study wore to school in relation to their body images, and specifically considers their explanations for dressing in the manner in which they did. Part Three considers their rationalizations of their overall outward appearances.

4.2.1 Part One. “Rawness”: A Personal Construction

This part of the chapter presents an analysis of reflective field notes that I recorded during the initial stages of fieldwork. The analysis of these data serves to sketch out my personal understanding of “rawnness” (in the way that it is used in my study). It reveals what I understand “rawnness” to entail, shows the origins of that understanding, and indicates how that gendered knowledge influenced my construction of the young ladies in my study as “raw girls”, on the basis of their physical appearances.

4.2.1.1. Constructing “rawnness” through clothing

The following extract (Figure 4.1) relates specifically to clothing items that my participants wore to school.

Figure 4.1 - Personal reflection on participants’ clothing.

These girls are so raw! Besides wearing such short skirts, they have the audacity to wear colourful and lacy vests and camisoles beneath their blouses. Even on cold mornings when they wear tracksuit jackets to school, when they take them off during breaks what I have seen is shocking. Like the other day: Bell wore a tracksuit jacket to school and was sent home - not because she wore a tracksuit jacket to school, but because it became hotter and she refused to take it off when her teachers instructed her to. Eventually when she did, I found out that she *only* had on a lacy camisole underneath her jacket. I also noticed that Jade, Kenny and Fadiyah wore bikini tops underneath their blouses; and Ash, Tash and Tia had on lacy bras beneath theirs. Because their blouses are so tight, I could easily see the pattern of the lace on their bras and the design of their bikini costume tops. This, together with such short skirts, makes them look “cheap”. It’s no wonder why boys pass sexual comments at these girls. Look at them! They look vulgar! Furthermore, the untidy manner that they wear their clothing makes them look more raw than sluttish. This is not how young Coloured girls should dress; and is especially inappropriate for school. As a teacher, I think that dressing in this way is blatantly defiant because this goes against, both the principles of the school and how “decent” teenage Coloured girls should dress. When I was at school, I would never have been allowed to leave the house looking like this. If I did manage to, I would have been sent away at the school gate.

Figure 4.1 records an initial impression of the girls in my study as being “so raw”, on scrutinizing their clothing choices during a fieldwork observation. “So” suggests there are intensities of “rawness” against which girls whom I call “raw” are judged, and indicates further that levels of “rawness” are specifically determined by me on the basis of what such girls choose to wear. Consequently, by describing my participants as “so raw”, I infer my personal view of them as being not just “raw girls” in my understanding of the term (see Preface); but rather that I see them as being “extremely raw” girls on account of observing that they wear clothing which barely conceals areas of their bodies such as breasts, thighs, and buttocks - which I felt they should have covered up. The implication therefore is that I understand “extreme rawness” as wearing scant clothing like that of my participant (Figure 4.1), in a manner that I interpret as a deliberate way of using clothing to emphasize one’s sexual availability.

Also recorded in Figure 4.1 is my further description of such dressing, as being “vulgar” and “cheap” looking. The extract reveals my understanding of “cheap” and “vulgar”. That understanding is apparent in the associations that I forge in Figure 4.1 between “vulgarity”, particular choices of clothing that my participants make, and the subsequent assumptions that I make of their sexual licentiousness. Implicit therefore in this link is that I see vulgarity and cheapness as being synonymous with promiscuity; and furthermore that a promiscuous nature can be determined from how a girl dresses. A similar connection between clothing and promiscuity is evident in Bettie’s (2003) account of the American teenage schoolgirls in her study, and the subsequent assumptions that she makes about their sexual behaviours when she assesses their dress codes against her personal view that their styles of dressing such as theirs express an “eroticized” form of femininity (Walkerdine, 2001). On scrutinizing girls’ clothing, like Bettie (2003) I too forge a connection between what I view as “eroticized” dressing and the assumptions that I make about the sexual licentiousness of girls who dress in that way (such as my participants). As specified in Figure 4.1, of girls who I generally describe being “raw”, it is not just wearing revealing clothing that leads to my further assumptions about some of them being promiscuous. Rather, I reach that assumption when I notice that girls whom I initially see as being “raw girls”, on close inspection

appear to be intentionally wearing short and tight fitting clothing in a way that would reveal scant undergarments and expose specific parts such as breasts, thighs, and buttocks. Hence, in addition to my view that dressing in this way portrays one as being “extremely raw”, I further deduce that girls who dress as such are promiscuous. It is therefore in line with such thinking that I scrutinize my participants’ clothing, deduce that they are “extremely raw”; and hence arrive at the conclusion that they are not just sexually active girls, but are in fact promiscuous.

Figure 4.1 records a further judgment that I make of the girls in my study as being “more raw than sluttish”; thus suggesting a criterion that I use to distinguish “raw” girls (in general) from other girls who dress in a similar revealing way (girls who I describe as “sluts”, for example). The term “sluts” in the way that I understand it in this extract, resonates with American author Ascensio’s (1999) description thereof, and furthermore with what Schofield (1994) points out is described in the European world as a “slag”. However, adding to these insights in Figure 4.1 I reveal the distinction that I make between the terms “raw” and “slut”, and how I distinguish between what the two terms imply. Whereas “raw” and “slut” are in some way similar in meaning as both terms are derogatorily ascribed to girls who similarly wear scant clothing, Figure 4.1 further indicates a visible distinction that I make between “raw dressing” and “sluttish dressing”. This distinction becomes apparent in the way that I describe the girls in my study as being “more raw than sluttish” and then immediately forge a connection between the (perceived) sexual nature of their dressing and an untidy outward appearance. The inference therefore is that, of girls who generally dress in a scant manner (“sluts” and “raw girls”, as I describe them in this extract), I see (un)tidiness as distinguishing one category from another. I thus refer to “raw girls” as those whose overall outward presentations appear sexually provocative on account of them dressing in a scantily way, but I consider them to look untidy as well; whereas “sluts” in contrast are seen as being girls whose overall outward presentations appear sexually provocative on account of dressing in a scantily way, but in my view look neat as well. The suggestion therefore is that if I was to refer to girls as “sluts” (in my understanding thereof), it would imply my view that a sense of sophistication is expressed through the way that such girls wear

revealing clothing. In my opinion, the overall outward presentations of girls whom I refer to as “sluts” may therefore be understood to exemplify what Connell (1987), for example, defines as “emphasized femininity”, as well as what Levy (2006) describes as “raunchy”. Drawing from what Connell (1987) and Levy (2006) describe, I therefore perceive that outward appearances of “sluts” would be admired and sexually appealing to both financially viable men heterosexual men (Connell, 1987) and possibly homo- (or bi-) sexual women (Levy, 2006) in modern middle-class American and European contexts, respectively. In contrast, I see “rawness” as denoting the exact opposite and would thus be rejected in such contexts. Therefore, by calling the girls in my study “raw” suggests my view of them as lacking sophistication and also being unrefined and crude in their behaviours; and thus view their outward presentations as one which will be shunned in contexts such as the ones described above.

Additionally Figure 4.1 reveals a further connection that I forge between “decency” and clothing, on observing how the girls in my study dress. This link suggests my view that a girl’s level of self respect may also be determined by how much of her body she exposes through the kinds of clothes that she wears. This perspective resonates with a shared teacher-thinking prevalent in the English middle-class school that Payne (1980) attended as a scholar. Echoing that thinking, Figure 4.1 documents how - on observing the schoolgirls in my study - it was similarly my assumption that they lack self-respect; since I too interpreted the revealing manner in which they wore their uniforms as a clear sign that they lacked self-respect.

Figure 4.1 furthermore exposes the cultural roots of my thinking. As recorded in Figure 4.1, the origins of my gendered knowledge about how girls should dress emerged from my childhood lessons of femininity that I received in the unique historically constituted context that I was raised (see Preface). The influence of that knowledge on how I assess teenage girls’ dressing as an adult is evident in my comparison (in Figure 4.1) of my participants’ dressing to my own manner of dressing for school when I was a teenager. Furthermore, the fact I immediately draw on that knowledge as even an adult to judge schoolgirls attests to what Thomson and Scott (1992) and Erasmus (2001) similarly

point out about how childhood lessons on appropriate gendered and sexual behaviour can become so deeply entrenched into one's psyche as a child that it, if it is undisrupted, it may continue to subconsciously influence what one - even as an adult - perceives to be (in)appropriate gendered and sexual behaviours. Hence, as Figure 4.1 reveals, I justify my view of the girls in my study as being promiscuous, unsophisticated and indecent girls when I assess their choices against the lessons for "Coloured" girls that I received during my childhood; and thus confirm what Thomson and Scott (1992) and Erasmus (2001) likewise assert.

Further revealed in Figure 4.1 is that even though this cultural knowledge that I draw on (to justify my view of girls in my study as being indecent) was learnt as a working class "Coloured" girl, it is based on Western middle-class value system. This middle-class Western influence on how "Coloured" people (such as myself) understand "decency", is confirmed in Erasmus (2001) works. Therefore, despite the fact that the girls in my study were working class, on the basis that they were "Coloured" and the cultural lessons that I expected they would therefore receive within their families, I assumed that they too subscribed to the traditional Western middle-class value system dominant in South Africa at the time. I thus felt that they should have been aware of the dominant middle-class social order in South African middle-class context such as what the Valley High teachers represented; and therefore should have dressed "more appropriately".

Furthermore, I further felt that they were taught within their "Coloured" families of the broader consequences in society by and large for dressing in the particular way that they did (Erasmus, 2001). It was therefore on the basis these assumptions that I made about the cultural knowledge held among the girls (as Figure 4.1 records) that I attributed blame solely on girls like them for the harmful sexual ways that boys may responded to them; and justified that view against the manner in which such girls dress. The implication therefore is that at the time of recording this reflection, I subscribed to the "blame the victim's clothing" mentality - in spite of my awareness that such thinking had began at the time to gain much criticism at the time among the gender theorists (Mokwena, 1991; Vetten, 1997, Human Rights Watch, 2001; Rape Crisis Cape Town,

2007). Instead, at the time I resisted such arguments and (as Figure 4.1 suggests) relied on my own cultural lessons to absolve the Valley High boys of any sexual responses that they may have expressed to my participant.

Figure 4.1 furthermore documents the shame that I personally felt as a “Coloured” female when I observed how the girls in my study dressed for school. The racial interconnections between my feeling of shame and my observation of how my participants dressed is consistent with what fellow “Coloured” female authors Erasmus (2001) and Anderson’s (2009) writings underscore with regard to a fear among “Coloured” people of being negatively stereotyped by members of other racial groups on account of distinctive ways that some “Coloured” people (male and female alike) dress and behave. In my view, the girls in my study exemplified a distinct mode of female dressing that Erasmus (2001) recognizes as being perceived among “Coloured” communities to be a shameful way for a girl to present herself. Being “Coloured” and thus aware of dress standards of some that “Coloured” people consider as causing them to be generally negatively stereotyped by other racial groups, I feared that the outward presentations of the girls in my study could entrench negative stereotypes about “Coloured” females, which were (possibly) fostered among the other racial groups within Valley High.

In summary, the extract that has been presented in Figure 4.1 and analyzed thereafter, has served to highlight my view that there are levels of “rawness” and to furthermore point out that “cheapness” and “vulgarity” are characteristic of what I consider to be “extreme rawness”. As my understanding of “cheap” and “vulgar” is synonymous with what “promiscuous” generally denotes, it echoes what I imply about the sexual behaviours of girls (like the girls in my study) when I describe their appearances as being “cheap and “vulgar” looking. The analysis has also revealed the connections that I forge between these descriptions of girls (“so raw”, “cheap”, and “vulgar”) and the clothing that girls wear; hence explaining why I initially constructed the girls in my study as being indecent, unsophisticated, promiscuous girls on observing items of clothing that they wore to school. The analysis has furthermore exposed the cultural and

religious origins of that gendered knowledge and its influence on the negative way that I constructed the girls in my study, at the time of writing the above reflection.

4.2.1.2. Constructing “rawness” through fingernails

In this section, I present and analyze a personal reflection that relates my participants’ fingernails.

Figure 4.2 - A personal reflection on participants’ fingernails

“Cleanliness is next to Godliness”. This is what I learnt at the Catholic primary school that I went to in the early 1980s. As children, we were taught that one of the ways in which we could show God that we were close to Him was by keeping our nails short and clean. Our teachers made sure we did not stray away from God by inspecting our nails at least once a week. I remember how, during this inspection, we placed our fingers on the edge of our desk lids for checking; and if our fingernails extended beyond the tips of our fingers, we were hit across the knuckles with the edge of the ruler. This was also the practice at the Catholic high school that I attended thereafter. But, the difference here was that we were taught as teenage girls that our closeness to God was not only shown by keeping dirt from getting under our nails. Instead, the nuns placed emphasis on nail varnish and what this symbolized about our sexuality and our morals. They taught us that long nails and nail varnish signaled vanity and lust; and associated these with prostitutes and “gold-diggers” (women who desired to attract wealthy men by transforming themselves into something that men would find sexually appealing) – all unchristian attributes; not something that we would find on the Catholic nuns; and not how they raised us. The lesson that I gained in this school was that: long nails and nail varnish signaled a loss of innocence, promiscuity, a desire to become a woman and a move away from Godly virtue. As a teenager, my experiences in these Catholic schools shaped my knowledge about nails and what is appropriate for teenage girls. However, as a young adult, I discovered that with money, the correct shade of nail varnish and a professional manicure, long nails could actually enhance a female’s image of cleanliness, sophistication and professionalism – irrespective of her age. However, this was not the image that I constructed of the participants, when I looked at their nails. On the one hand, I thought of their nails as an attempt to portray themselves as sexually appealing women, I noticed also that their nails were not just long and painted; but also chipped, uneven in length and poorly manicured. Their nails made them appear untidy - far from sophistication and not sexually appealing at all; but “raw”.

Figure 4.2 records additional negative assumptions that I made about the characters of the girls in my study, following an observation of their fingernails during the early stages of fieldwork. As reflected in Figure 4.2, (as when I scrutinized the girls' clothing) on observing their fingernails I once again drew on my childhood knowledge about appropriate femininity to interpret what their fingernails implied about their characters. Figure 4.2 reveals lessons that I learnt as a child specifically about the symbolic meaning behind how one presents one's fingernails. In Figure 4.2, I recount how I was taught as a working-class girl that in middle-class contexts, well manicured fingernails are symbolic of one's good hygiene practices. Such lessons echo what Kang's (2003) writing highlights about fingernails; and furthermore, how working class women perceive that they would be seen in middle-class contexts on account of having manicured fingernails. As documented, I was socialized into these traditional Western middle-class values as a working class "Coloured" girl, via my middle-class schooling experience. That experience echoes what Payne's (1980) describes about her schooling experience of how working class girls were socialized into conservative middle-class values via a schooling system that upheld such value systems.

At a local level, the data again serves to confirm Erasmus's (2001) insights into how conceptual understandings of values such as "chasteness", "morality" and "decency" are entrenched in the psyche of young South African "Coloured" females by the "Coloured" elders such as their parents and teachers. In light of this, the reflection in Figure 4.2, therefore suggests that my response to my participants' nails as a Valley High teacher was not only about imposing school rules; but rather was also about imposing my personal culturally informed middle-class notions of how all schoolgirls' nails should be presented – irregardless of what may be an acceptable standard among their generation and social contexts from which they came. Consequently, on observing my participants' fingernails during fieldwork, I immediately forged a link between their nails and my personal knowledge about nails. Owing therefore to what I considered to be a display of "poor manicures" (flaking nail polish, nails of uneven length), I therefore saw the girls in my study as being girls who practiced poor hygiene.

Furthermore, the exposed link that I forge in Figure 4.2 between fingernails and “Godliness” reveals the extent to which my Catholic schooling experience influenced my conception of “morality” - specifically how “morality” may be expressed by the manner in which one’s presents one’s fingernails. As documented, it was on the basis of my middle-class Catholic education, and what I learnt about the connections between morality and fingernails as a child, that caused me - at the time of this reflection when I observed female’s fingernails to - even as an adult - associate short and clean fingernails with images of chasteness and goodness (like a nun); and long nails in contrast with images of worldliness (for example, fabricated beauty, wealth, and lustful desire such as the prostitutes and “gold-diggers” - to draw from my childhood memories of Catholic nun descriptions). It is thus on account of this interpretation that I considered the girls in my study to be immoral as well, on observing their “poorly manicured” fingernails.

To summarize, the analysis of the data presented in Figure 4.3 has exposed a connection that I forge between hygiene, nails and “Godliness”. Implicit in my discussion relating to this is that my conception of “morality” is deeply rooted in religious knowledge and is defined particularly by biblical expectations for how one cares for one’s body, in terms of cleanliness (such as caring for ones fingernails). Hence it was my view at the time of writing this reflection that if physical attributes such as fingernails do not suggest that hygiene is practiced, then one may be perceived as being “ungodly”, is thus seen as being immoral, and is consequently may be described as being “raw”.

4.2.1.3 Constructing rawness through adornments

The following extract relates to an observation that I made of the ways in which the girls in my study adorned themselves.

Fig. 4.3 – A personal reflection on participants’ hairstyles, make-up and jewellery

What are these girls thinking? They look like Christmas trees; wearing all different colours in their hair, and nose-rings, tongue-rings and a whole lot of earrings at once. This is no way that a schoolgirl should dress - on the weekend, maybe; but definitely not to school. They make the school look so untidy – and make their uniform look worse than it already looks with their poorly done nails and short skirts, colourful tops beneath their blouses. Infact, the other day in class, when I asked Tia about her red lips, she tried to convince me that she is actually wearing lip-gloss that is red in colour and makes her lips look red. Then there is Bell who shaved her eyebrows and pencils them in with an eye pencil and draws further attention to her eyes by wearing mascara and eyeliner – trying to alter the shape of her eyes. Kenny and Jade do the same; but because they are darker in complexion than the others, their make-up is not as obvious as the others’.

Over-adorned dressing by teenage girls (including what I describe in Figure 4.4 above) is widely documented in the Western youth and cultural feminist literature, is expressed in many styles of dressing, and is associated with several intentions (see Chapter Two)¹. I am thus aware that what I saw as being an “exaggerated” way in which the South African girls in my study adorned themselves (as described in Figure 4.3), was not unusual if one considers their outward appearances against their ages and what the related Western literature outlines about how teenagers use adornments to construct their identities against the public gaze. Adding to insights on “Coloured” identity (Erasmus, 2001; Anderson, 2009) and the meanings attached to styles of dressing this extract (Figure 4.3) offers some understanding why the exaggerated methods of beautification in the way that it is done by the girls in my study are so harshly rejected by and large in “Coloured” contexts. Illustrating this, it is evident in Figure 4.3 that I view wearing more than one earring in an ear as being untidy in appearance, and therefore see such as being an inappropriate way for girls to dress. This perspective is influenced by my childhood knowledge. Hence, viewing how the girls in my study wear their earrings from that vantage point caused me to feel at the time of observing them that their styles of wearing

¹ For example: as a symbol of resistance (Fuller, 1980; Payne, 1988; McRobbie; Dwyer, 1998; Brunnsma and Rockquemore; 1998; Leblanc, 1999); as a symbol of group membership and affiliation (Connell, 1987; Connell, 1995; Thorne, 1993; Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Blackman, 1998; Bettie, 2003); as an expression of individuality (Thorne, 1993); as a generational expression (Richmond-Abbott, 1992); as a means of attracting desired and undesired sexual attention (Connell, 1995; Walkerdine, 2001; Bettie, 2003).

earrings defied what I considered at the time to be an appropriate way for any female to wear earrings. This knowledge - and my subsequent perception of how the girls in my study wore their earrings - thus reinforced an existent negative construction that I held of them as being girls who lacked sophistication.

Furthermore, in Figure 4.3 it is recorded that the observation that I made of my participants' hairstyles, make up and jewellery - and their wearing of these items in an over-adorned manner - called to mind an image of a Christmas tree; hence describing them as "looking like a Christmas tree" on observing the accessories that they wore to adorn themselves for school. The reflection also outlines the origins of the analogy. As recorded, what I understand "looking like a Christmas tree" to denote originates from my memories of the Coloured community where I grew up; in particular memories about Christmas trees, how they were presented and what the décor symbolized². Thus, by wearing a range of items at once (two earrings in the same ear, a nose-stud, a tongue ring in the form of a pill, facial make-up), I felt that the participants looked over-decorated and, in my view, exemplified a Christmas tree. It seemed that, by adorning themselves in a similar colourful and decorative way that one might decorate a Christmas tree, they desired to appear attractive; but appeared untidy on account of being over decorative by wearing numerous and multi-coloured accessories. However, as Figure 4.3 further reveals, whilst I reflect on the suitability of the participants' hairstyles, accessories and make-up for celebratory functions outside of schooling hours, I disapproved of them dressing "like Christmas trees" for school; and particularly – as a teacher as well - viewed their manner of adornment as being misrepresentative of Valley High's image.

² In that community, displaying a Christmas tree in one's home symbolized to other community members that a family was part of the community's annual festivities. To add to the festive atmosphere, some families participated in competitions judging the most attractive tree. In an ironic way, in such competitions, the "attractiveness" of a Christmas tree depended displaying a variety of decorations on it. At night, the tree was lit up – showing off the different colours of the lights; and the more colours that were added to the tree, the more attractive it became. At the same time, however, this also made the tree appear untidy.

4.2.1.4 Constructing rawness through styles of dressing

The data presented and analysed in this section reveals further assumptions that I make about the girls in my study being “rough” and “easy”; and how I again reach that conclusion from a mere observation of their outward presentations.

Figure 4.4 - A personal reflection on participants’ outward appearances

In my view, the ideal physique should resemble those of swimwear models – slender and toned. From what I can see, none of these girls meet these criteria. Furthermore, I don’t think that any of them have the “correct” shape to wear short skirts and tight blouses. Roxy, Kenny and Jade’s, buttocks are big; and this causes the backs of their school skirts to stick out - making the skirt appear even shorter and their underwear can thus be easily seen. Fadhah, Tash and Ash have large breasts, but the rest of their bodies are untoned. The fact that they wear lacy underwear, and sometimes, bikini costume tops, not only draws attention to the size of their breasts, but also shows their flesh. Tia and Bell have both big buttocks and large breasts. One also notices their underwear as this can easily be seen by the way that they dress. Trish and Delia on the other hand, have neither; and appear emaciated. These girls look crude, unsophisticated. I think that they look rough and easy; as though they want to “advertise” to boys that they are sexually available but, in the process, end up looking crude and unlady-like.

As recorded in Figure 4.4, I see “rough” and “easy” as denoting one who uses one’s body - and how one dresses it – to express a desire for sexual attention. Implicit in Figure 4.4 is that in my understanding being “rough” is synonymous with being “sexually aggressive” and “easy” is synonymous with my understanding of “promiscuous” (or “vulgar” and “cheap”, as I described it in a previous section of the chapter). I therefore, in this account, attribute my negative view of the girls in my study as being sexually aggressive and licentious to the fact that I perceived their clothing choices to intentionally expose and accentuate parts of their bodies such as thighs, and buttocks and breast size.

However, it is also documented that I saw the clothing they wore to (assumably) achieve this, as being unsuitable for the shapes of their bodies. Figure 4.4 reveals also

that this perception of my participants is further justified when I assess their overall appearances against traditional Western standards of beauty that Wolf (1991) and Bartky (1998), for example, outline in their works. Accordingly, I compare my participants' physiques to the that of swimsuit-models: physiques which in this case I see as being akin to the Barbie-doll figure that, according to Chernin (1994), Urla & Skewlund (2000) and Mazarella & Pecorra (2001), was the dominant physique which young Western women aspired to at the time that this reflection (in Figure 4.4) was recorded. Considering that I personally subscribed to these standards as well, provides some insight into why I felt that physiques of the girls in my study did not exemplify the slender, toned images of a "Barbie-doll", on observing them during fieldwork. Instead, I saw their "unshapeliness" as becoming more pronounced as a consequence of them wearing clothing that (according to dominant Western standards against which I assessed them at the time) was unsuited to their physical builds. I thus felt that dressing in such a way made them appear untidy.

Furthermore, on account of my perceived mismatch between my participants' clothing choices and physical shapes, I concluded that they lacked sophistication. This observation therefore confirms my view of them in an earlier observation that I made of their choices of clothing (see Figure 4.1) - that these 10 girls did not exemplify "sexual sophistication" expressed by Levy's (2006) "raunchy" females though their sexualized manner of dressing. In this observation of their clothing choices in relation to their physical builds, it was my view that the "awkwardness" of my participants' body shapes and the "unsuitable" way in which they dressed, served to exaggerate their "untidiness" - whereas the physical builds of "raunchy" females (Levy, 2006) exemplifies the "swimsuit-model criteria" which allows one to wear clothing in the way that appears "sexualized" yet sophisticated as well. Viewing my participants' body shapes against such criteria, I therefore saw the revealing way that they clothed their bodies as making them appear untidy than sexually appealing; and thus interpreted their outward presentations as a signal that these girls lacked knowledge of how to dress elegantly - irrespective of whether or not it was their intention to look sexually appealing.

From the analysis of data presented in this part of the chapter, it is evident that “rawness” in my understanding (when applied to females), denotes one who is scantily dressed and generally appears untidy. It has been further established that I interpret this distinct appearance as being suggestive of an unhygienic, sexually immoral, unrefined, and crude demeanour. In retrospect, I recognise the prejudice contained in this thinking and the harmfulness in constructing girls in this way. I realize also that such assumptions cannot be made from a mere judgement of how girls dress and measuring their choices against my personal dress standards for females. The purpose of this section therefore has been to expose and unpack the roots of this harmful thinking that lay deeply entrenched in my psyche (prior to embarking on this study) and subconsciously influenced the negatives constructions that I made of girls like the girls in my study, and affected also how I related to them. Having exposed and reflected on the roots of this thinking in this part of the chapter, the analysis presented in the next part of the chapter serves to further troubles this negative view that, by reconsidering my initial assumptions about my participants reflexively in relation to how they rationalise their own clothing choices and styles of dress.

4.2.2 Part Two. Disrupting “Rawness”: Clothing Choices, Outward Presentation and Meanings 10 Schoolgirls Attach to a Dress Code

As pointed out above, data presented and analyzed in this part of the chapter serves to disrupt my negative construction of the characters of 10 schoolgirls in my study on account of how they dressed (as outlined in the previous part of the chapter section). To achieve this, in this part of the chapter, I present and analyze interview data produced during fieldwork with the girls, which captures their responses to my questions concerning their choices of particular items of their clothing, and why they wore these in the styles in which they did. I particularly focus on items such as skirts, blouses and undergarments and other aspects of their outward appearances, such as their presentation of their hair and fingernails, as well as the make-up and jewellery items that they wore to school.

Drawing on the framework provided by the related studies reviewed in Chapter Two, the analysis will show how factors such as generation, class, poverty and power influenced the girls' choices of clothing and how they wore items to school. However, in keeping with feminist theories (see Chapter Two) and hermeneutics (see Chapter Three), on which works this study draws, I here point out that also in this chapter - as the findings from the interview data unfold, and in light of the girls' explanations - I come to reconsider my initial observations and thoughts about the physical appearances of the girls in my study, their clothing choice, how they wore these items, and what the school rules prescribe.

4.2.2.1 "Nice" skirts

The way in which generation influences the clothing and dress choices that the girls in my study made for school is apparent in their conversations about their skirts, fingernails and hair accessories in relation to what the school officially prescribed. The discussion captured below relates to skirts.

Bell: *I think the right length for your skirt should really be above the knees. Not extremely above the knees, but just a nice length.*

Kenny: *As long as the skirt looks nice on you. It fits nice. I have no problem.*

Bell: *Well obviously if you fat, you can't wear a short skirt - unless you feeling comfortable.*

Ash: *I think that bigger size girls should wear the pleated skirts. Because then it doesn't shape you. Imagine you are big and you have this big behind and you coming to school with a straight skirt.*

Bell: *No, but still you know what happens with the pleated skirts. Have you seen some of the fat girls? The pleats actually open. It opens. It's not a closed pleat.*

Kenny: *Miss I've got a pleated skirt. It's not nice. Did you see me on Monday? I couldn't wait for the school to come out 'cos I don't like pleated skirts, it*

doesn't look nice on me. It's long. It's big. Miss I like my plain skirt. Nice and short. It's not very short, but.

Bell: *No, but it's like you know if you looking nice you feel good about yourself.*

In the above discussion it is apparent that in the girls' understanding, two types of skirts can be worn as part of the Valley High school uniform: a "straight skirt" and a "pleated skirt". Whereas it is evident from my observations that an above-the-knee skirt is preferred by all of the girls in my study (see Chapter One), the discussion reflects that decisions to reduce the length of their skirts are not motivated by (what I assumed to be) a desire to appear "sexy", nor by a particular desire to defy the school rules. Instead, drawing from the discussion, it seems that "fit" rather than length is a deciding factor in the choice that these girls make about which of the prescribed skirts to wear to school, and how it should be worn.

It further becomes evident from the above conversation that there is a common desire among the girls in my study to wear a skirt in a way that it looks and feels "nice" to wear. Although their skirts are worn at an above-knee length, a "nice" skirt, it seems, is not only defined among them in terms of (a moderate above-the-knee) length per se; rather, drawing from their explanations, a "nice" skirt is seen among them as one that is suitable for girls' physical shapes and sizes. Whereas they do not reach a consensus on whether or not big-sized girls should wear a skirt in the length that they do, and there is also a debate on the style of skirts that fat girls should wear, the benefits and limitations of the pleated skirt for big-sized girls (especially when the pleat is open) are weighed among the participants. However, the consensus is that for "fat" girls as well, the choice should be what is suited for one's shape and size.

This explanation exposes a view among these girls that the ultimate choice of skirts, and decision on how it should be worn, should be influenced by how one personally feels in a particular skirt, and thus should not instead be chosen or worn in a way that is driven by a wish to satisfy the opinions of others. A "nice" skirt, among the girls in my study, is

therefore seen as a one which induces feelings of comfort and confidence, and not necessarily a short one. This confirms Willet's (2008) findings and at the same time therefore refutes also my assumptions. Rather, in contrast to what I assumed, it is revealed that the styles in which the girls in my study wore their skirts had nothing to do with wanting to look sexy or overtly defiant.

It could then be that the way in which Valley High's official dress rules prescribe that the school skirt should be worn was uncomfortable and impacted negatively on their levels of self-confidence, which therefore possibly explained why they rolled the skirt up at the waistband to reduce the length. Wearing their skirts in this way, it seems, was more comfortable and made them feel self-confident. Upon viewing their skirts and how they shortened them in light of this underlying motivation, one will also recognise that the reduced length of their skirts is a temporary act – perhaps for occasions when they are among their peers, away from the gaze of their teachers. They are therefore able to unroll the skirt and return it to the prescribed “knee-length” if instructed to do so – therefore suggesting that there was no underlying intention in this behaviour to be defiant against their teachers.

4.2.2.2 “What do nails have to do with schoolwork?”

A further conversation among the girls in my study concerning the length of their fingernails uncovers their views as teenage girls about the length of girls' nails that should be permissible in Valley High. An extract from that discussion is captured below.

Ash: *What do nails have to do with schoolwork? I don't see why nails interfere with our schoolwork. I mean it's just there on your fingers, Miss, it's not doing anything.*

Bell: *But I think I see why they complain about nails.*

Ash: *Why?*

- Bell:** *I mean you get those nails that are long and then you know you get those girls who come to school and it's just all black under their nails. Then there's the issue with nail polish!*
- Jade:** *What's wrong with being dirty?*
- Bell:** *What's wrong with being dirty? You tell me what's wrong with being dirty?*
- Jade:** *It doesn't influence your schoolwork. You won't fail a test because your nails are dirty.*
- Ash:** *It doesn't matter, because I don't see anything wrong with it. If my nails are long they gonna be long and they gonna be clean. The shorter your nail is, the easier it is for the dirt to get in. So if your nails are long they not going to be dirty. If you really like your nails, then hell no you don't want it to be dirty. So Miss I don't see why it has to be a problem.*
- Researcher:** *So you don't see a connection between long nails and schoolwork if you can keep them clean. They don't have to be painted?*
- Ash:** *Yes Miss. I don't like nail polish. Only if it's a manicure, but I don't like to paint my nails because it stains the nail. I don't do it.*
- Researcher:** [To Ash] *How do you explain the Cutex [varnish] on your nails?*
- Ash:** *The school rules don't say nothing about Tippex on your nails and black marker pens.*
- Researcher:** *Let me see your nails. [To Delia] You, you also got black pen on your nails?*
- Delia:** *Yes, Miss.*
- Researcher:** *Let me see.*

The above conversation suggests “innocence” amongst the girls in my study about how they presented their fingernails for school. This finding is dissimilar to a view that Bartky (1998) and Kang (2003) likewise highlight to be existent among American women: of fingernails, against the public gaze, as being key in constructing an image of one's social, financial and moral status. In contrast, these young women in my study instead locate their debate about their own fingernails purely in issues around hygiene.

Although they disagree about which lengths of nails harbour germs, it is evident from their debate that their personal decisions on whether to grow their nails or not centers solely on which lengths of nails they personally view as being potential spaces where germs reside. Interesting also is that they view “hygiene” also as being a reason why teachers monitor their nails - and thus do not see their nails as a possible concern among the teachers - that their long nails may contribute to them portraying their bodies in any other way.

If one considers the above outlined explanations against the official Valley High dress rules relating to girls’ fingernails (see Chapter One), then the hidden meaning (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006; Nieuwenhuis, 2010b) in these rules comes to light. Looking at the rule in light of the girls’ explanations (relating to hygiene), one could then argue that the “nails must be short” part of the rule does not clarify what is meant by “short”. Measurements are not given, nor are there photographs attached to the rules for girls to see exactly what is meant by Valley High teacher standards. Furthermore, the “no nail varnish must be worn” stipulation of the rule could also imply that girls may not apply nail varnish like those manufactured by cosmetic/beauty houses (e.g. Revlon, Max Factor, or Elizabeth Arden). The fingernails rules place emphasis on what girls cannot do, instead of on what they should actually do.

In light of the vagueness and ambiguities highlighted in the rules, the data reveal further how the girls in my study rescripted the rules from the perspective of working-class teenage girls in way that allowed them to express their creativity in terms of how they presented their fingernails. This is evident in the conversation above. Ash claimed not to be wearing nail varnish, although I observed the contrary (see Chapter One). However, as revealed in her explanation, what appeared to be black nail varnish and a French manicure was actually black fibre-tip marker pens and Tippex (white correction fluid) that the girls in my study substituted for nail varnish. Furthermore, Ash’s argument about the school not restricting them from wearing Tippex or black marker pens on their nails demonstrates their ability to use the school rules to rationalize their reasons for not

adhering to the rules about nails by highlighting the disconnection between nails and schoolwork.

Their conversation highlights their creative thinking with respect to the ways in which they interpreted the dress rules. Hence, in this instance the limitations of the “nails rule” are identified and exploited by the need of these young girls to be trendy or fashionable; as a result of the vague and ambiguous way in which the rules are written, they locate “loopholes”, which provide an opportunity for girls like them to dress for school in a way that expresses their unique creativity as teenage girls.

4.2.2.3 “It’s got school colours in it!”

A similar innocence in the girls’ thinking is shown in an explanation provided by one of them about her decision to wear a colourful hairband to school, despite this having received a negative response among the school community. An explanation about this, captured below, again reveals a perspective among the participants, as teenage girls, concerning the kinds of accessories that they should be allowed to wear to school.

Researcher: *Jade, this week I noticed you are starting to wear these big, big, big headbands. Tell me about that.*

Jade: *You saw that Miss?*

Researcher: *How could I not see it?*

Jade: *Miss, in the morning when I came to school it [the tailpiece] was tucked behind my jacket and there was only a small piece and everyone was saying why don’t you chop it off, why don’t you chop it off?*

Researcher: *Firstly, I noticed that you not allowed to wear it at all and this one is blue with white dots.*

Jade: *Miss, it’s got school colours.*

Researcher: *School colours? Now you going to get into trouble eventually so why did you start this new fashion?*

Jade: *Not really starting a new fashion, I just put it on 'cos it's blue and white and yellow. Miss, we got like yellow in our uniform.*

Researcher: *You feel that you should be allowed to wear those colours on your hair?*

All: *Yes.*

Being told by “everyone” to cut off the long tailpiece of her hairband, as recorded in the above account, suggests that the manner in which the participants’ hairband was worn went against dress standards endorsed (generally) among the Valley High school community. However, Jade’s explanation for wearing it simply because it had school colours in it suggested that her primary motivation for wearing the band was to wear accessories that complemented the colours of her school clothing – and not to be defiant or to promote a “sexy” look (as I, at the time, assumed). Jade’s justification of her hairband as being “tucked behind [her] jacket”, further suggests that she did not desire to overtly challenge school-sanctioned dress expectations in Valley High; she expressed this by reducing the tailpiece length of her hairband in a similar (impermanent) to which she and the other girls in my study reduced the lengths of their school skirts (see Chapter One). In this way Jade was able to wear the hairband differently when out of school, if she so desired. Adding to this, Jade’s further description of the hairband as having “school colours in it” confirms her intention not to overtly oppose the school-sanctioned dress norms in Valley High, but only to accessorize her dressing. Furthermore, if her statement “it got school colours in it” is further considered against her claim that she was not trying to be fashionable either, then it becomes apparent that her decision to wear the hairband was not only to accessorize her uniform, but in her own thinking was actually legitimized as part of her schoolwear.

The remaining participants’ responses to the hairband under scrutiny and discussion also exposed a shared view among them, as teenage girls, that they should officially be allowed to wear accessories (such as this participant’s hairband) if such items matched the school’s official colours. In light of this unanimous view among the girls, if one again considers what they assert against the school dress code document (Chapter One, Figure 1.4), it becomes apparent that the school rules neither prohibit nor prescribe

which hairbands girls may or may not wear. Against this observation it becomes clear that technically, this participant did not violate any of the dress rules by wearing the chosen band to school. It also supports the suggestion that the way in which she wore it (although rejected by “everyone”) was also not aligned to an intention of wanting to be fashionable, but instead demonstrated her own individual style of how she preferred to wear the hairband, in a style and design that complemented her school uniform.

4.2.2.4 “They say we look like streetkids!”

So far, the data relating to skirts, fingernails and a participant’s hairband uncovered perspectives among the teenage girls in my study of what they felt should be permissible in Valley High’s official dress code in relation to these aspects of dressing. Whilst nothing in the data could be found to confirm my view that their choices were motivated by a similar desire among them to attract sexual attention, to be overtly challenging of the school dress code document, and to undermine the authority of their teachers, analysis of their explanations did, however, reveal an attempt by them to be non-confrontational towards (and where possible to avoid) disapproving teachers. Adding to this, an analysis of the girls’ explanations relating to further items of their uniforms, however, revealed how they were constrained by socio-economic factors from wearing prescribed items of uniform to school. This was particularly apparent in their explanations about the tops that they wore to school, captured below.

Ash: *Bell and Roxy like to wear very bright tops under their school shirt. Even if it’s white, there’s a dark print on their t-shirts.*

Roxy: *All my white t-shirts were in the wash this morning.*

Trish: *I only have colourful clothes. My mother only bought me two white t-shirts.*

Jade: *Sometimes we want to swim after school. Okay, well today my t-shirt is wet but some girls wear it to show they are rich. They wear expensive costumes.*

Kenny: *I have a friend. She wears nothing. It’s [wearing a bikini top] better than wearing nothing under your shirt.*

Bell: *The teachers say t-shirts mustn't go past the sleeve or they say we look like street kids! Untidy! When we roll our sweaters up at our sleeves, they tell us to take it off.*

In the above account Jade justifies her wearing of a costume top such as the one shown in Chapter One by providing a simple explanation. However, it becomes apparent from her explanation of “other” girls’ costume tops, that tops are regarded among Valley High girls as symbols of financial status. Explanations among the participants about their tops (having insufficient plain white t-shirts” and “only have colourful clothes”) suggests, therefore, that their tops indicate neither a desire to be “sexy” or defiant or even to imply financial wealth. Rather, from such explanations, their tops could actually be interpreted as an indication that they are among the poorer of Valley High’s learners.

A further description provided by Bell, of how particular teachers respond to particular t-shirts, underscored the unequal power relations in Valley High (between learners and their teachers), and how teachers use this power in a way that causes girls to (ironically yet unintentionally) dress in a way that the teachers see as being sexually provocative. This, in an oblique and ironic way, exposes the contradictory disciplinary practices among certain teachers within the school, in that those teachers at one and the same time give rise to styles of dressing which they reject. This is clarified in Bell’s explanation of how scant undergarments are revealed as a consequence of the instructions of the teachers being obeyed by girls; they are instructed to remove t-shirts covering their scant undergarments simply because the teachers view the sleeve length as unsuitable and “untidy”. This infers that it is the actions (disciplinary agenda) of teachers that causes the physical appearance of girls like Bell to, in this instance, become revealing. Such appearances should therefore not be seen as primarily a deliberate choice among all girls to dress in such a way that reveals scant undergarments. In this way, it seems that Bell sees girls like her as being “innocent” (insofar as their dressing is concerned); blame for girls’ seductive lingerie being exposed is attributed purely to the teachers. The exposure of girls’ scant lingerie could furthermore, thus actually be interpreted as an expression of obedience to the Valley High teachers, as opposed to an act of defiance.

This behaviour seems ironic when one considers that Valley High, as highlighted in Chapter One, is actually a context where teachers generally as an entity rejected revealing styles of dress. However, it does serve to confirm what Morrell (2001) claims about how - with corporal punishment being officially prohibited (Department of Education, 1996) - authoritarianism has taken different guises. Furthermore confirming what Porteus *et al.* (2001) underscore, it also draws attention to a non-physical (yet equally demeaning) means to which some South African teachers resort, basically driven by a desire to promote a particular standard of dressing among learners.

4.2.2.5 “It’s just fun!”

Contrary to my own thinking at the time of fieldwork, further explanations about their appearances (articulated by two of the girls) also revealed how their “flamboyant” hairstyles (Payne, 1980) and wearing of make-up and jewellery also suggested obedience towards their teachers, as well as a concerted effort not to be confrontational towards disapproving teachers. The following explanation provided by Kenny, relating to her frequently changing hairstyles, reveals this.

Researcher: *Kenny, I noticed you change your hairstyles often.*

Kenny: *No Miss see, sometimes you in class and one teacher ... there's a particular teacher who keeps on nagging about your hairstyle. Every time you ask her a question, Miss, she'll look at you in that way and you don't feel comfortable in that teacher's class, but I'm gonna [going to] get a new hairstyle.*

One could interpret the above account as Kenny’s way of testing her teachers’ patience. However, she points out that she hoped that one of her hairstyles would be agreeable to the teacher “who keeps on nagging about hairstyles”. Her account, like that of Bell regarding the t-shirts, exposes the unequal power relationship between Valley High girls

and their teachers, and yet another non-physical yet nevertheless hostile approach used by certain teachers towards aspects of girls' dressing (in this case Kenny's hairstyles).

If one reconsiders Kenny's explanation about her hairstyles and the teachers' responses in light of the what the school rules officially state (see Chapter One), then one will recognize that hairstyles are not prescribed for natural hair; nor do the rules prescribe the appropriate colour for braids and nor are girls restricted by the rules from dying their hair in colours that differ from their natural shade. In addition to being ambiguous, this serves as yet another example of the vague manner in which the rules are written, which leaves a gap for Kenny and other girls in Valley High to wear their hair in styles that they choose. However, it seems that this is restricted by the teachers' personal expectations. This highlights that although Kenny's hairstyle may be against what certain teachers personally consider as appropriate for school, technically she has not violated any of the rules. Furthermore, her attempt to change her hairstyles demonstrates her obedience in conforming to the personal expectations of her disapproving teachers.

However, a further explanation articulated by Bell concerning her nose ring uncovered her way of (unlike Kenny) not succumbing to teachers' personal dress expectation, while at the same time consciously avoiding openly challenging disapproving teachers.

Researcher: *Bell, I've noticed that you like to plaster on the mascara and have all these fancy styles.*

Bell: *Miss! Look at me nicely. If I take this eyeliner off, you know how sick I'd look? I was like looking at that in the mirror in the morning. I was like, what is happening to me. Before I used to have such nice skin and everything and I used to glow, now it's just like ...! That's why I do that.*

Researcher: *That's why you do that. The nose ring, it's not allowed. And you've been told a lot of times.*

Bell: *A thousand times.*

Researcher: *But you'll still carry on - you and Roxy.*

Bell: *And you know what's funny, the only people that we really scared of like with the jewellery and all is Mr. J, Miss F and obviously Miss M. So every time we see them we like [covered her nose] hold our nose and just run past them. It's fun, I dunno [don't know] why. If we take it out nothing will happen, but I dunno why. I dunno why we don't take it out. It's just fun.*

The above extract reveals Bell's awareness that (unlike Kenny's hairstyles) the nose ring could easily be removed; yet she chose not to do so. This could be construed as intentionally defiant behaviour. Furthermore, Bell's description "I dunno why ... it's just fun" also signals naughtiness; a naïvely mischievous, inexplicable expression of a teenage schoolgirl. On the other hand though, whilst the risk of being "caught" by a teacher and the success of not being caught seem to delight Bell, her account suggests that she has deliberately found ways to avoid such teachers. Although remaining in compliant with the expressed expectations of three teachers, by "blocking her nose and running past the teachers" she found a way of leaving the nose ring on; but did not expose it to them.

However, Bell's make-up cannot be easily removed and reapplied, or concealed like her nose ring. If one then reconsiders her explanations about these aspects of her appearance (make-up and nose-ring) against the official dress rules of the school (see Chapter One, Figure 1.4), then one could argue that since the rules neither prohibited nor allowed these items, Bell's make-up and nose ring were not technically a violation of the school's official uniform rules. These silences in the rules create uncertainty about whether or not such items are permitted, and if they are, how these items should be worn. Moreover, Bell's nose "ring" was a stud, and thus suggests an attempt to abide by the only rule prescribed in terms of jewellery (the earring rule which states that "studs only" should be worn). If one considers Bell's nose stud in the light of the rules, it becomes apparent that the rules also do not state how or where a single pair of studs should be worn. Bell, in effect, was free to wear these in the manner in which she did and (like Jade's hairband) her wearing of her nose stud could be legitimized against

Valley High's official uniform rules document. Retrospectively, this also provided some explanation of why the participant (shown in Chapter One, Figure 1.3) may have interpreted the rule in a way that allowed her to wear a single pair of studs in one ear (as opposed to one stud in each ear).

Analysis of the data presented so far in this part of the chapter has, in all instances, refuted my initial assumption that the girls in this study dressed for school in the way that they did in order to attract sexual attention, undermine the school's official dress code, and challenge the dress expectations of their teachers. Instead, the analysis has uncovered how generation-, class- and power-related factors influenced the decisions that the girls in the study made as to what to wear and how to dress for school. Similarly, this became evident in the girls' discussion of what they considered to be "nice" skirts, in another's questions about the connection between fingernails and schoolwork, in their justification of their nail length and adornment, and wearing of hairbands against school dress code. Relating to these items, they shared their views of how what they felt should be permissible for Valley High girls in terms of dress and hairstyles is regulated by the responses of their teachers, thus revealing how the generational perspective influenced choices of clothing, hairstyles, nail adornment and accessories and how they wear these.

The girls' explanations about their unique clothing choices and styles of dressing analyzed thus far also revealed how girls like them become limited by their socio-economic backgrounds from fully abiding with what the rules prescribe. Despite their "non-compliance" to teacher dress expectations being seen as intentionally defiant, the data further revealed ways in which the girls in this study attempted to comply (as much as they could) with their teachers' dress expectations. The data also uncovered to some extent how some teachers were liable for girls (unintentionally) presenting themselves in a "sexually provocative" manner.

Thus, drawing from the data analyzed in this part of the chapter, the finding is that clothing choices and outward presentations which may be interpreted as being driven by intentional sexualized motives can very well have nothing to do with such intentions.

Instead, what girls who dress in this way may be expressing could merely be a generational perspective of how teenage girls should dress, and how limited resources and creativity can be used to make such dressing possible for working-class girls, and how in a context of unequal power relations teachers may use their position to respond to styles of dressing which they personally reject in demeaning and hostile ways.

In the next part of the chapter I present and interpret data uncovering the sense that girls in this study made about their overall outward appearance.

4.2.3 Part Three: Outward Appearance, Desirability and Vulnerability

In this part of the chapter, the girls' views presented and analyzed are considered in the light of my own thoughts about these as suggesting "rawness" (as previously outlined in Part One of the chapter) – even though, in retrospect, now acknowledge this as being a highly contested viewpoint. Furthermore, whereas I now also recognize that without having interviewed boys, assumptions about what boys (who harassed them) might have thought about these girls' outward presentations remain unfounded; at the time of fieldwork, however, it was an assumption that those boys saw them not just as being sexually active but also as promiscuous. Thus, in the interviews I probed the girls' views in relation to this perspective. Their responses, however, tended to disrupt such stereotypical thinking associated with girls like them, and in line with the interpretive research paradigm on which this study draws, instead allowed them to co-create (with me) an understanding of how they viewed their outward appearance (Henning *et al.*, 2004) against such negative views.

4.2.3.1 "Boys shouldn't look!"

The following presents an extract from a conversation among the girls where they shared what they considered (of girls' outward appearances in general) to be sexually appealing to boys.

- Kenny:** *Boy, when you have big breasts boys think you very sexy.*
- Jade:** *True.*
- Tash:** *Boys wanna put their faces in your titties. They jags! [Pronounced as 'jux', see below]*
- Researcher:** *So, when boys show an interest in your breasts, how does that make you feel?*
- Tash:** *It's uncomfortable because when you go somewhere ... I love attention. Especially in my chest; but if I go out, I won't wear costume tops and that. That's too cheap then you looking to get raped. At school, it's sexy.*
- Ash:** *Boys shouldn't look! We wear it for ourselves.*

It is evident from the above excerpt that for Kenny, Jade and Tash it is not breasts per se that boys apparently find attractive; rather, big breasts are thought to be preferred by boys. The label “jags” [pronounced “jux”] that Tash then attributes to boys who express a sexual interest in girls’ breasts is a colloquial term used commonly used among Coloured township dwellers to describe a male or female who is excessively sexually aroused. Tash’s description of such boys as “wanting to put their faces in [girls’] titties” implies that she views boys’ desires to touch big breasts as being motivated by an underlying self-fulfilling sexual motive. The suggestion therefore is that Tash views the interest shown by particular boys in girls’ breasts as being foremost based on their size. Therefore it seems that she does not view the interest of such boys in her as primarily being an expression of romantic interest or an attraction to her overall outward appearance, or purely a response to their dress (if at all).

A further description by Tash - of revealing dressing as being regarded as “cheap” in society and “sexy” at school - also suggests that she has knowledge of the symbolic meaning that particular styles of dressing bear in different social contexts. From her explanation it is apparent that how and where she chooses to dress in a revealing manner is regulated both by a fear of rape and recognition of the “blame the victim” mentality prevalent in society, which attributes the cause of sexual violence to the scanty manner

in which the female victim (may have been) dressed (Vetten, 1997; Lamb, 1999). Hence, in light of this view she describes how she adapts her dressing in different social arenas. As documented in the excerpt, Tash wants to attract attention to her chest, but at the same time reveals that she is cautious of being raped, and consequently monitors when she wears particular kinds of tops. She demonstrates knowledge of the dominant social order in terms of dressing, and thus in view of public scrutiny has learnt how to dress accordingly.

As a “self-policing subject” (Bartky, 1998), Bell can be seen as buying into the “social myth” that aligns scanty dressing with sexual attention-seeking (Human Rights Watch, 2001; Rape Crisis Cape Town, 2007). On the other hand, her description of scanty styles of dressing as “cheap” outside of school and “sexy” in school suggests intergenerational differences among South Africans with regard to notions of “appropriate dressing”. In spite of my observation that most girls in Valley High conform to teachers’ expectations of dress, drawing from Bells’ explanation it also seems that dress standards which are rejected in society at large are affirmed, and thus promoted, among the generation of Valley High learners, away from the (adult) gaze of their teacher (Thorne, 1993). It thus seems that the scanty style of dressing was endorsed among the learners in Valley High. However, the fact that Tash dressed in a revealing way for school in spite of linking such dressing directly to rape outside of the school, further implies that she considered Valley High a protective environment and thus a sexually safe space for girls to dress in the ways that she did (albeit that the teachers responded negatively to such dressing).

In light of the above, Tash’s claim (of not wearing “costume tops and that” if she goes out) and my observation that she wore such items to school can be interpreted as being driven by an underlying desire to be perceived as sexy at school. However, echoing Levy’s (2006) finding, Ash’s assertion that “boys should not look” locates such desires as personal. The dress of the girls in this study can therefore be seen as a sign that they are among girls who dress in ways that they themselves view as being open to sexual interpretation; however, they claim that their dress is not targeted at attracting male or sexual attention; and thus supports a viewpoint existent among women in contemporary

society, which the “politics of the body” literature (see Chapter Two) has brought to light.

4.2.3.2 “Boys assume that they know everything”

Adding to the above explanation, the girls in my study identified other parts of girls’ bodies that they see as criteria used among boys to assess girls’ virginity status.

Jade: *They can see the breasts; especially the Black boys. Nowadays, obviously girls got big breasts but also they [“Black” boys] say that they know the way the breasts are so you not a virgin. They can see if a girl’s a virgin by the back of her legs. That’s what the boys say. Especially Black boys, they say they know a virgin. They can see by our legs - the back of our knees, if it’s hollow.*

Ash: *Boys assume that they know everything. A boy judges if a girl’s a virgin by her bum. I don’t know how.*

Tia: *I have no thin thighs. I have thick thighs and cellulite. My thighs are not wobbly. So I can still wear a short skirt. I’ll never have thin thighs until I can afford lipo. So, when that comes [when I can afford it] I probably still won’t want it. I’m not fat so I can wear a short skirt.*

In the above extract the deep insight into indigenous cultural knowledge of one of the participants is evident. This knowledge relates particularly to traditional “Black” South African communities and how girls’ physical bodies are used in such contexts to assess her sexual purity. However, in such traditions virginity testing is a practical procedure in which girls’ vaginas are probed to determine the presence of a hymen or vaginal tightness (Leclerc-Madalala, 2001). Such physical invasion has in more recent years been protested against as a form of gender violence. On the other hand, confirming what Hastrup (1993) points out, Jade indicates that among such communities girls’ bodies have also become a way of testing sexual purity. As further accounted, it is Jade’s

understanding that it is not primarily the “size” of a girl’s breasts among “Black” boys that indicates girls’ virginity status, but rather the “form” of large breasts. On the other hand, Ash’s dismissal of this belief suggests that she views the erotic images and sexual capabilities that boys of her generation attach to girls’ bodies (in this case, “big” breasts, “big” buttocks and “hollow knees”) as being conjured up in their imaginations, and thus emerging purely from personal meanings that an “observed” associates with that which is being observed (Walkerdine, 1997, 2001).

It is apparent from the above that for the girls in my study, sexual attraction is not linked to clothing but instead to physical aspects of girls’ bodies, such as breasts. However, it is also apparent from Ash and Tia’s responses that they reject such notions. Furthermore, from Tia’s description of her thighs it is evident that she holds a contrasting view with regard to how certain aspects of a female’s body should be presented. As narrated, whilst Tia acknowledges that her thighs are not thin, she describes them as being “thick” – as opposed to being “fat”. She further draws a distinction between how “thick” and fat thighs appear. “Thick thighs”, in Tia’s understanding, denote thighs which are relatively firm but contain cellulite. On the other hand, she describes “fat” thighs as flabby – similar to what Bartky (1998) describes as “saddlebag thighs”. Such thighs are both relatively large in size and likely to contain cellulite. However, Tia’s description suggests that the more acceptable standard of thighs depends less on whether or not thighs contain cellulite; rather, whether thighs should be exposed or not depends on whether or not they are firm.

Tia’s assertion that her thighs will “remain thick” unless she undergoes cosmetic surgery further draws attention to the expense of that body-modification procedure. However, unlike many young, middle-class Western females who resort to cosmetic surgery – and working-class females who are said to self-loathe as a result of being unable to afford such procedures (Wolf, 1991; Bartky, 1998; Bordo, 2003), Tia seems to strongly reject such body-modification practices, and says she will continue to do so even at a time when she sees herself as being able to afford them. This explanation, viewed in the light of her decision to wear her skirt short despite having cellulite, suggests that she

represents what Wolf (1991) campaigns for: for young women to reject patriarchal standards and present their bodies in ways that they personally are comfortable with. Hence, even if they have “saddlebag thighs” like Tia, they should not hide them by avoiding wearing short skirts.

4.2.3.3 “...they make it hard for us to say we are virgins”

Although the leap from clothing to touching breasts to sexual intercourse is a highly challenged association, the following account provided by Tash reveals that such associations are prevalent in her thinking.

Tash: *A certain boy said to me I'm not a virgin. I said yes I am. He said you must have opened up a long time ago and I was offended. I am like big built and my chest and all that there, they say I'm not a virgin. To tell you the truth, I still am. My father knows that and he was proud of me because my sister just fell pregnant. Every single time I must explain to people that I still am a virgin. I even told my friend yesterday that most of the girls our age are making it bad for us and we being judged because it's in fashion now and everyone is having sex and falling pregnant and all that there and like they make it like hard for us to say that we are virgins.*

The above extract captures Tash's account of where a boy commented on the size of her breasts, and reinforces the view among the girls: that boys see female virginity as outwardly visible. For this reason Tash, it seems, expresses a feeling of being “betrayed” by her large breast size (in her view “misrepresenting” her as being sexually active). As articulated here, a schoolboy expressed his assumption about Tash being sexually active, based on what he observed about her breasts; he drew on his interpretations to justify his perceptions of Tash as being sexually active (“having opened up”), based purely on his observation of the size of her breasts.

Despite acknowledging the negative consequences that she could face from other girls by disclosing that she is a virgin, Tash reports her decision to disclose her virginity status to the boy concerned in the recorded incident. Implicit in this is Tash's view that virginity, among Valley High boys, remains highly prized; at the same time her explanation suggests that by and large she does not see it as being held in high esteem among girls of her generation. Therefore, declaring her status can be seen as an attempt to salvage her reputation among Valley High boys, in spite of the perceived risk of being ridiculed among other girls of her age for doing so.

4.2.3.4 "*Them and their imaginations*"

Adding to the participants' views that girls' bodies are used among boys as a marker of girls' sexual purity, in further conversation among the participants they proposed that in general promiscuity is expressed and determined among Valley High learners by means of a code of dress. This is revealed in the following extract in which a participant relates her view about boys in Valley High who touch girls in a sexual way, following an incident where a boy pulled at her bra strap during class changeover.

Tia: *Boys in this school are just simple. They think everything is for them. If you wear a short skirt, they think it's for them. You wear a long skirt it's like you don't want them to be interested. They think everything comes to them and their imaginations.*

The participant rationalizes the boy's pulling of her bra-strap against what she wore. From her explanation, there seems to be an unstated rule among Valley High girls of what this might symbolize to boys and how boys might subsequently respond to them. It seems that whether or not a girl seeks sexual attention from boys is signaled by how she dresses. It is evident that in Tia's understanding, a short skirt is used to signal a girl's desire for sexual attention, with a longer skirt in contrast signaling that she does not desire such attention. The length of girls' skirts and their choice of whether to wear a

long or a short skirt, it seems, is not only regulated by the school's official dress rules but also by an awareness among them of what this may imply among their peers. This confirms similar findings by Holly (1989) and Paechter (1999). Viewing the issue with Tia's bra-strap in response to this explanation, it seems that she dismisses a boy's pulling of her bra-strap on account of seeing him as presumptuous and stereotyping her in the light of this code of dressing among Valley High girls and boys.

Tia's account can also be interpreted as "self-blaming", on account of her choice to wear a short skirt in spite of her awareness of how the boys would react. Her dismissal of the boy's actions can thus be seen as taking full accountability for the boy's pulling of her bra-strap because she chose to wear a (short) skirt in a context where such skirts bear sexual meaning, and in this case implied sexual availability. However, Tia's explanation also suggests her rejection of this view, although it is seen by her as the dominant thinking at Valley High. This is suggested in her assertion that such assumptions (about girls' desires to attract sexual attention or not) are conjured up in boys' imaginations. This finding confirms what Walkerdine (1997, 2001) asserts about "little Lolitas". Likewise Tia asserts her view that short skirts do not reflect the sexual intention of all girls; but nevertheless that she is stereotyped as being licentious on account of wearing a short skirt and her knowledge of a broader perspective in Valley High that short skirts symbolize a desire for sexual attention.

Adding to what Tia asserts with regard to girls' sexual intentions being more conjured up in boys' minds than in how a girl dresses, further accounts of sexual harassment incidents experienced by the girls in this study uncover a view among them that some boys do not merely harass girls on account of how they dress, but rather because of what the particular shapes and sizes of girls' bodies imply to such boys. This is evident in Ash's description of an incident where a boy groped at Fadiyah's breasts.

Ash: *Like the one day, we were walking up the stairs. Luke's hand was hanging there, and he was touching Fadiyah's tit. So, she slapped him. I think the impact of the slap gave him such a shock that he stopped doing*

it. I said: "What was that for?" So he said that he just wanted to feel it. I said: "But why!" He said no, just because he never feel big breast before.

It seems that, as recorded above, by slapping Luke and demanding an explanation from him for his actions, Fadiyah and Ash (unlike Tia) do not dismiss Luke's actions. Whereas Ash attributes Luke's shock at being slapped to the impact of the slap; if one views his shock in the light of what the girls described earlier about breasts symbolizing virginity, it seems that Luke viewed Fadiyah as being sexually active. Drawing from Tash's earlier explanation about "jux boys", it could be that in the girls' understandings, Luke held a personal interest in Fadiyah's breasts because of their size. Although according to Tash it was Luke's first experience of touching "big breasts", it could further be that on account of the length of Fadiyah's skirt (to draw from the code of dressing among Valley High learners, as revealed earlier by Tia) that Luke was possibly shocked because Ash and Fadiyah's disapproving reaction contradicted his expectations of them as seeking sexual attention. Thus it was possible that the short length of Fadiyah's skirt suggested to Luke that she was seeking sexual interest, and therefore would not mind her breasts being touched. Luke being slapped also shows that the girls in this study were not trapped in a victim mentality in a way that Siegel (1997) describes, and did not condone actions such as Luke's. Instead, these girls were unafraid to fight back at boys who, for whatever reason, touched them in a sexual way that made them feel uncomfortable.

In this section, the data analysis uncovered the meanings that the girls in the study attached to their outward presentations. Several perspectives among them were revealed, but nothing in the data was found to suggest that the participants aligned their manner of dressing with sexualized intentions, once more refuting my own initial assumptions of the underlying motives behind their dressing. Whereas they see boys as viewing girls' bodies to determine girls' sexual status, and their styles of dressing to assess sexual licentiousness, the analysis uncovered several perspectives among the participants about how they view their own bodies, in relation to how they think that boys interpret these. Rather, the girls see boys as relying on specific physical features on girls' bodies to determine whether or not a girl is a virgin, and also to gauge girls' sexual appeal, by

particular forms and sizes of these physical aspects. However, there is still a thinking among them that boys judge the promiscuity of girls who exhibit such bodily features by the ways in which they dress. It was also apparent that the girls in my study rejected these notions and thus, in spite of their awareness of how their dressing may be interpreted, continued to dress in the way that they did purely for reasons such as the generational perspective of how they should be allowed to dress, poverty and personal choice.

Against this backdrop the data also highlighted a common attitude of indifference among the participants against people - in this case *boys* - who responded in threatening or undesired ways towards their outward appearances. Their dismissive attitudes of “I don’t care” and “I just don’t bother”, when viewed at a broader social level, can be seen as an indication that “new” standards of “acceptable femininity” are being defined and promoted among the participants’ generational group. Thus, in light of these “new” emergent standards of teenage femininity among girls and boys of their age, the participants’ do not consider their outward appearances or dressing as inappropriately presented. On the other hand, there also seems to be awareness that this is not the dominant social thinking among society at large, and that it is unsafe to dress in such a way. Hence, it seems from their explanations that they confined their dressing mode to the schooling context, thus inferring also that their school is recognized by them as a protective environment, and thus a safe space for self-expression. This also proposes another way of understanding why they continuously and overtly dressed for school in the way that they did, in spite of the negative responses they received from teachers at Valley High and boys alike.

4.3. Concluding Remarks

The data analyzed in this chapter was arranged in three parts. The first has outlined the premise from which the study began and, in light of this, has declared the negative perception of my participants that I held of them in the initial phases of fieldwork.

Honoring a goal of the study to disrupt that thinking, the second and third parts of the chapter presented interview data which captured how the participants justified their clothing choices and rationalized their overall outward presentations against negative view about girl who dress in the way that they do, respectively. Broadly, the analysis of interview data revealed that the girls were not a homogenous group of promiscuous girls who collectively expressed a deliberate intention to defy the school rules and attract sexual attention in the process. Instead, the data demonstrated that they were individuals who coincidentally dressed in similar ways for uniquely personal (and sometimes dissimilar) reasons; that these girls - seen as defiant, disobedient, crude, immoral and promiscuous by their teachers - were merely schoolgirls with many competing forces at play in their lives. Their overt outward appearances were thus a mere reflection of greater factors that impacted on what they wore and how they dressed for school (generational perspectives, social class and power relations).

The data have also drawn attention to a mismatch between the girls' perceptions of their dressing and overall outward presentation, and the interpretations of those (such as teachers and particular boys) who observe and respond to them in a negative way. Also revealed in the data is how this mismatch between intention and interpretation relating to how the girls dress, and a failure to recognize and deal with real factors that actually influenced their dress, has resulted in unfairness in the ways these girls are treated in Valley High purely on account of how they dress. In the next chapter I elaborate further on this.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter the key findings emerging from the data analysis were discussed. This final chapter concludes the study by first providing a synopsis of what the study set out to achieve and how that agenda has been met. The main findings and the implications thereof are outlined thereafter.

5.2 Thesis Synopsis

This study was driven by two sets of intentions: personal and academic. Personally, I sought to use the study as a means of engaging with my personal notions of how schoolgirls should dress, and to address my prejudices against girls who dressed in styles which I personally rejected. Accordingly, the Preface of this study outlined my personal conceptions of “appropriate” femininity and the origins of my personal knowledge about “appropriate” styles of dressing for teenage girls in general. Further outlined in the Preface was why I became more curious during the decade preceding the conception of this study (from the 1990s onwards) to understand why some girls dressed in styles that I considered at the time as being “inappropriate”. In Chapter One I explained in detail how I intended to meet my personally driven intention for the study, by conducting this research project into the dress codes and overall outward presentations of girls at a high school where I had been teaching at the time of the research.

Academically, I sought to contribute to gender scholarship on schoolgirl femininities by identifying and examining a particular (“sexually provocative”) schoolgirl dress code of girls within the research site, whose outward presentations I personally considered as

being inappropriate for school. However, by personally wanting to interrogate my own negative thinking and prejudices towards the girls' dress codes, I had a broader aim in mind: to use my study as a way of challenging, on a broader social scale, similar negative stereotypes associated by some with such styles of dressing. To this end, I engaged with the literature concerning the research that has been conducted among girls in South African schools. Gaps and limitations in the relevant literature were identified and, accordingly, in Chapter One it was proposed how my study intended to respond to needs identified. I also sourced insights from the gender literature that disrupts negative assumptions and consequences associated with styles of dressing that bear resemblance to that of the girls in my study. That literature and the theoretical insights from which I then chose to develop the theoretical framework for my study were reviewed in Chapter Two.

Considering that I also wanted to co-create with the girls in my study an understanding of their clothing choices and how they dressed for school, Chapter Three provided a description of the appropriate research methods and methodologies employed in the study. That discussion centred around the challenges, limitations and, in some instances, impediment of aspects of the research process, largely as a consequence of choosing to conduct research among a known research sample and research site. Further specified in that chapter was how I addressed those challenges. A researcher wishing to conduct a qualitative study in the same school in which he or she is teaching may therefore find the provided insights particularly useful.

A presentation and interpretation of the research data in Chapter 4 responded to the critical question driving the study: What meanings do teenage schoolgirls, who dress for school in a manner that I saw as being "sexually provocative", attach to their clothing choices, styles of dressing and overall outward presentations? In that chapter numerous individual and disparate explanations about my participants' clothing choices, styles of dressing and perceptions of their overall appearances were uncovered. However, from their insights it became apparent that their dressing was not driven by sexual or oppositional intentions – as I had initially assumed them to be. Instead it became

apparent how other less apparent factors in their lives (relating to generation, peer pressure, socio-economic status, self-surveillance, popular culture, gender expectations and power) colluded and collided in the choices that the girls made about what to wear and how to dress for school.

The inference that one can make is that the young ladies in my study were not a group of friends who dressed in a particular intentionally designed way to attract sexual attention and defy the official dress rules of their school (as I considered them to be, on initially observing them). Rather, they were merely individual girls who happened to be of the same race, similar ages and social class; who dressed in similar ways for personal reasons; but whose outward appearances inadvertently expressed a similar attitude of indifference towards people who are unreceptive and intolerant towards outward presentations such as theirs. The girls' outward presentations can therefore be interpreted as a small individual expression of how these less apparent factors (such as those highlighted above) play out on a daily basis in their personal lives, impacting on many areas of their lives - and not exclusively on how they dress for school.

Furthermore, the data have also shown how, if these factors go unnoticed, they can compete in a way that gives rise to avoidable problems within schools for teachers and for girls like those in my study. Illustrating this, the analysis in the previous chapter uncovered three competing forces within the research site at the point where these less apparent factors (generation, peer pressure, socio-economic status, self-surveillance, popular culture, gender expectations and power) intersected, giving rise to avoidable tensions between me and the girls in the study over how they dressed, revealing how they inadvertently dressed in a way that I erroneously misconstrued (before embarking on this study) as being underpinned by sexual and oppositional intentions. As highlighted in Chapter Four, these competing forces include:

- youth culture versus adults' expectations;
- mainstream demands versus marginal cultural demands; and
- agentic power versus power of agency.

I point out, however, that my discussion of the forces in the section that follows should not be misconstrued as an attempt to justify my initial view of the girls' dressing as being intentionally oppositional and sexualized. Instead, I intend to draw attention to such forces which may be prevalent in schools, and to outline how they can unnecessarily compete, and how the tensions that emerge (between teachers and girls like those in my study over how such girls dress) from this can be avoided if the focus, in addressing sexual vulnerability, is less on correcting girls' dress codes and instead is more on dealing with issues such as generation, culture, power and gender inequalities (and similar).

5.3 Discussion of Key Themes

5.3.1 Youth culture versus an adult's generational expectations for teenage girls

My research findings illuminate a tension within the research site between how the girls in my study expressed themselves as teenage girls and my own heterosexual expectations as an adult, concerning how teenage schoolgirls should dress. For instance, at the time of fieldwork I personally did not have any preference for (or even interest in) the kinds of music popular among teenagers; nor was I interested in teenage magazines and any other "propaganda" that was likely to have informed the girls in my study of contemporary beauty and fashion trends among girls of their generation at the time of research (Dolby, 2001) I therefore was neither abreast with fashion and beauty trends among teenage girls nor the meanings they attached to dressing in particular ways. On the other hand, as teenagers it was possible that the interests of the girls in my study may have (in line with youth culture) lay more in music and knowledge about sexual and drug-related experiences than in formal education (Gottfredson, 2001), whereas my focus as an older woman (mother, teacher, caregiver) concentrated on developing academic knowledge and skills, and promoting a particular set of values and morals among learners relating to such issues. However, the explanations that the girls in my study provided about their dressing and body images offers some insight into subcultural

dress norms among South African teenagers of their generation, and how this culture spills into schools in a way that may appear among some older people of my generation as being driven by sexual and defiance motives (but are not).

For instance, this was illustrated in the girls' explanations about the ways in which they adorned their fingernails and further discussions about aspects of their bodies. As revealed in Chapter Four, whereas I (as an older woman and teacher) perceived the long, embellished fingernails of the girls in my study as inappropriate for young girls and a blatant disregard for the "nails rules", the findings suggest that their fingernails, and how they presented these, were merely an individual expression by 10 teenage girls of a "new code of township teenage fashion". The way in which they adorned their nails (using Tippex and black marker pen) was also an indication of the limited resources needed to express that subculture. By applying Tippex and black marker pens to their nails in order to mimic a French manicure and coming to school in this way, they demonstrate how girls from impoverished contexts can use their limited resources to rescript school rules in a fashionable way that makes their "township fashion" seem upbeat and even *de rigueur* within the schooling context as well. Hence, from this perspective the girls in my study's nails can be interpreted as a demonstration of their knowledge and skills of using these resources in expressing "teenage township fashion".

If, on the other hand, one further considers the controversial view foregrounded in Chapter One (that the manner in which the girls in my study presented themselves could in the process attract undesired sexual attention, albeit as an expression of being "fashionable"), then the data expose a contrasting view among the teenage girls in my study. For these girls, sexual vulnerability and sexual risk factors are not conceived in relation to dress at all. Instead, they link negative sexually related assumptions about particular girls to specific physical attributes of girls' bodies, such as the size of breasts and buttocks. The inference is therefore that physical build and not clothing is seen among the teenage girls in my study as the primary factor that aggravates their sexual vulnerability among teenage boys with whom they interact. Furthermore, they see themselves as living in a time where virginity is not prized among girls, where becoming

pregnant is shameful, where being seen as promiscuous is viewed negatively, where derogatory labels are attributed primarily on account of wearing sexually suggestive clothing, and where aspects of girls' bodies (such as cellulite, for example) should be covered up on account of negative connotations that others may attach to them. Arguing further that they have no control over the size of such aspects of their bodies that (in their view) bear negative connotations, they choose rather to dress in ways that are driven by personal motives and factors in their lives. Therefore, even though they are aware that their dressing might inadvertently suggest to some that they are driven by sexual intentions, it is self-perception (what they think of themselves) that causes them to ignore negative opinions that they think that others might have of them on account of how they dress; and thus they dress in styles that they deem to be (personally) appropriate.

5.3.2 Mainstream demands versus marginal cultural demands

My findings also show how the ambivalence between mainstream demands and marginal cultural demands in the lived reality of our divided society played out in the daily lives of the girls in my study (impacting on them coming to school dressed in the way that they did). For example, at the time of this research there was (and still is) a national governmental expectation for South African girls - particularly girls like them (from impoverished contexts) - to break the cycle of poverty through accessing formal education (Andersen, Case & Lam, 2001). However, many barriers were identified that constrained girls' access to school (Human Rights Watch, 2001). At the time, the national spotlight seemed to be on gender violence as a key factor. Adding to this, my study throws up school uniforms as a barrier. Generally in South African State schools like Valley High, school uniforms are compulsory (Department of Education, 2006a). Unfortunately though, uniforms were generally expensive for working-class communities at the time of my research, and research shows that many South African girls who come from impoverished contexts (like that of the girls in my study) actually drop out of school for simply being unavailable to afford the school uniform (Fuller & Liang, 1999; Andersen *et al.*, 2001).

Viewing the outward appearances of the girls in my study in light of this finding suggests how they too have become entangled in the ambivalence between mainstream educational demands and marginal cultural expectations of their particular school. In the research site, this is clearly illustrated in the decision that the girls in my study make about their tops. The tops that Valley High girls should wear are clearly outlined in the school rules. And even though ambiguous and vague as to what girls should and should not wear (if one opens these rules up to scrutiny), the data reveal that, according to the girls in my study, teachers have a clearly biased view of how the rules should be interpreted, and impose their view on girls in unnecessarily harsh ways. To this end, the girls' explanations about their particular choices being based on having insufficient "prescribed" undergarments (and not at all being sexually or oppositional driven) exposes intra-class layering in their working-class school (in which they, it appears, are amongst the poorest). Whereas many South African girls from impoverished contexts are likely to drop out of school purely on account of being unable to afford school uniforms (Andersen *et al.*, 2001), the girls in my study made decisions to wear items of clothing available to them, even though they did not fit the school rules.

Significantly, however, the girls in this study pointed out that their "inappropriate" tops would remain concealed if not for certain teachers instructing them to remove layers of clothing (that did not comply with the rules) covering these undergarments. The implication therefore is that they do not intentionally flaunt their undergarments as they are aware of the negative treatment that they will receive. This awareness among the girls also suggests how school managers are implicated in this contradiction between mainstream demands and marginal cultural demands that girls like them face. In some schools school dress codes are arguably culturally biased (historically) and reflect a set of values from a particular (usually conservative Western middle-class) cultural source, yet are constituted in such a way that appears to reflect universal values. Hence, although school uniforms are meant to mask socio-economic disparities among learners by giving them a standard identity when in the schooling context, the problem arises in that dress codes are prescribed and regulated by school rules and in such hostile ways (Porteus *et al.*, 2001) that they actually, as Payne (1980) posits, are 'part of a process of

destroying the individual and class identity' by ensuring that 'pupils will submit unquestionably to authority and what it represents' (pp. 14-15).

In accessing education via historically middle-class schools like Valley High, it appears that the "working-class" girls in my study have become trapped between a national expectation to attend school and a teacher-sanctioned notion in such schools that education may only be accessed if learners are foremost dressed in a specific way. On the other hand, my findings suggest that what (through a conservative middle-class lens) may be interpreted as "sexy" choices of tops could actually be an indication of the measures that the some working-class South African girls from impoverished families (like the girls in my study) take to be able to access an education. Also, as the girls in this study point out, these items would remained concealed if the teachers did not focus on "correcting" girls' appearances; this implicates teachers in their outward appearances being "provocative-looking".

5.3.3 Agentic power versus power of agency

The findings also underscore the usefulness for school leaders to categorize expressions of personal agency in schooling contexts like Valley High, thereby avoiding narrowly (mis)construing behaviours of girls in my study and negative teacher responses as a "power-resistance" relationship. In doing so, unnecessary contestations and confrontations between girls and their teachers over girls' dress codes may be avoided. Drawing from Campbell's (2009) description, two expressions of personal agency being expressed in Valley High that gave rise to tensions between my participants' dress codes and their teachers can be identified as agentic power and power of agency. In distinguishing between these two forms of personal agency, Campbell (2009) asserts that agentic power is 'an actor's ability to initiate and maintain a programme of action' whereas power of agency refers to 'an actor's ability to act independently of the constraining social structure' (p. 407).

In the research site the teachers have the recourse (via school rules and dress codes) to assert personal agency in an agentic way. Thus, whereas some teachers may choose to use agentic power in productive ways, to motivate children in all aspects of their development, others could refuse to deal with socio-cultural problems and turn a blind eye to issues among learners other than education. Some might even use this form of power to assert their personal agency in a destructive ways. Agentic power may also be used among teachers to force personal value systems about morality and virtue onto young people formally through pedagogical practices. The problem is that when learners behave contrary to teacher expectations, it is construed as resistance and an undermining of and challenge against agentic power. However, my study shows that whereas the girls in my study may appear to be challenging their teachers' agentic power, they are in fact merely exercising power of agency, their personal agency. Hence, what may be interpreted as an "I don't care" attitude about the school dress rules among the girls in this study may very well be an indication of their awareness of national legal recourse to assert personal agency in all social contexts, including schools, and are thus exercising their power of agency.

To illustrate what I outline above, the girls in my study (for example) know what makes them an "it girl" and what it takes to make them stand out from the others. It appears that they use eccentricity as a means of standing out from the crowd. They also demonstrate an awareness of how to find loopholes in school rules (e.g. in their school's "skirt" and "nails" rules) to make the rules work for them. They also have the power to wear teachers down by (what may be construed among teachers as) "I don't care" attitudes by repeatedly dressing in a way that defies the teachers' dress expectations for them. However, in asserting their personal agency they are seen as being undermining of teacher authority, and in turn their teachers reinforce their authority by asserting agentic power in harsh ways. Interestingly though, Campbell (2009, p. 407) points out that:

[T]hese two conceptions of personal agency [agentic power and power of agency] possess no logical relationship with each other, it being perfectly possible for individuals to be possessed of considerable power of agency while lacking agentic power, and vice

versa. It is therefore concluded that it is important, in all discussions of human agency, to distinguish clearly between the two.

In light of what Campbell (2009) asserts, my research points out that what is instead at play in the research site is rather an expression of a different form of personal agency among the girls (power of agency) which, as the data revealed, is expressed individually by these girls among their peers for a myriad of personal reasons and with no conscious intention of undermining their teachers' authority or attracting sexual attention. In my study this is similarly illustrated in the ways in which participants shortened their school skirts and wore their hair and jewellery. As revealed in the data analysis (Chapter Four), rolling the skirts at the waistband suggests an impermanent shortening of their skirts away from the adult gaze of the teachers (Thorne, 1993; Blackman, 1998; Bettie, 2003); they were able to unroll their skirts in the presence of their teachers, parents, and so forth. Implicit in this act is that the girls do not intentionally want to be challenging of their teachers' (agentic) power; instead, in asserting personal agency, they devise creative ways of straddling the line between conformity and reactivity in their school. Hence, they (un)roll their skirts, run past teachers whilst blocking their nose rings, and wear their hair in styles they prefer, changing them to please disapproving teachers. These may all be interpreted as ingeniously creative ways that the teenage girls in my study have found to negotiate their gendered, sexual and personal identities in a context where expressing themselves may be simultaneously affirmed among their peers and rejected among their teachers.

5.4 Implications of the Study

The previous section has drawn attention to how school expectations, outside school elements and personal desires collude and collide in the choices that 10 South African working-class girls who attended an historically middle-class school made about how to dress for school. The broad finding is that the girls in my study seem entangled in the intersections of many diverse and competing pressures and discourses, and their overt

behaviour and choices in relation to dress codes are arguably a small reflection of this. Three competing forces in the research site were identified and discussed. On a broader social scale, however, my discussion of those forces draws attention to how schoolgirls like those in my study may be homogenized and negatively constructed with erroneous assumptions made about them, purely from an observation of their dress codes and overall outward appearance through a biased and moralizing lens. My finding in relation to this is that what one might see on the surface of South African working-class schoolgirls who dress in ways that suggest an intentionally designed form of defiance against traditional middle-class notions of how schoolgirls should dress, is not necessarily an indication of intentional defiance. Rather, drawing from what this study has found, their outward presentations may very well be purely a small reflection of the many contending forces at play in the lives of working-class schoolgirls, impacting on the choices that some make about what to wear and how to dress for school.

In the light of what I point out above, I argue that in addressing sexual vulnerability and risky sexual behaviours among teenage girls in places like schools - when knowledge about girls' character, sexual behaviour and value systems are derived from dress codes alone - then other knowledge, cultures and pressures at play in the lives of such girls that cause them to dress in the ways that they do can become undervalued and even ignored. I posit further that if one is to use (perceived) "sexually provocative" dress codes as crystal balls to look into girls' lives, judge girls' characters and confirm bleak predictions about certain girls' futures, then not only does this discount girls who dress in this perceived provocative way, but also those girls who do not. If dress codes are used to address sexual vulnerability, then the vulnerabilities of these "other" girls are also exacerbated - owing to them dressing for school in a way that pleases teacher-sanctioned ("modest") dress expectations. For such girls, being judged via their dress codes as "not being at risk" likewise undervalues and underscores the factors at play in their lives that predispose them to sexual vulnerability and risk factors. It is in this light that I recognize that the 20 pregnant girls I described at the beginning of my study (see Chapter One) did not dress for school in the same way as the girls in my study did. The girls in my study did not fall pregnant during the time of fieldwork (or during their

schooling careers, as I came to know). Hence, the pregnant girls described earlier can be seen as falling through the cracks of a problematic system used among Valley High teachers (like myself), who collapse particular styles of dressing with sexual vulnerability and risk. Because these pregnant girls dressed in a way that satisfied Valley High's prescribed dress norms, it resulted in them being ignored and really only gaining attention when their pregnancies became visible. Ironically, the spotlight turned onto the 10 girls in my study and how they dressed in order to prevent them from becoming pregnant.

Given these contradictions in practice, one may question then: in reducing sexual vulnerability, addressing sexual risk factors and curbing risk-taking sexual behaviours among schoolgirls, if the focus should not be on curbing "sexually provocative" styles of dressing, then how does one uncover other knowledge (the iceberg that lies beneath), cultures and pressures at play in the lives of girls? This study makes suggestions as to how this could happen at individual, institutional and societal level. The discussion below elaborates this further.

5.4.1 Uncovering the iceberg below: Individual level

My personal journey into "rawness" via this study has brought to light the injurious consequences that some schoolgirls may face from moralizing teachers as a result of merely dressing for school in a manner that defies teachers' personal notions of how schoolgirls should dress. In this study I was the moralizing teacher who, on account of 10 schoolgirls' outward appearances, initially imaged them in a particular, derogatory way (described in this study as "raw"). Purely on the basis of my observations, I made erroneous assumptions about their characters, and subsequently attributed a demeaning label to them collectively.

If one then further considers the origins of the thinking that I entered the study with (about "appropriate" dress standards for girls, and what particular styles of dressing imply) in conjunction with my teacher identity in the research site, then this study points

out too that is not just males (teachers and young boys) in schools to whom the construction of school environments as sexually dangerous places for girls (Human Rights Watch, 2001) can be attributed - the study has shown how females can be held equally accountable. Drawing from this study it becomes evident how the sexual vulnerability of girls may be exacerbated as a result of a female teacher, being in a position of authority, using the schooling context as a “self-fulfilling prophecy place” and school structures to meet her own ends. In perceiving schools as “self-fulfilling prophecy places”, the schooling environment is construed as:

- a place where one may use agentic power to promote one’s personal view among schoolchildren that adopting a particular value system (in my case, middle-classness) is the only way for girls to preserve self-dignity (particularly sexual purity);
- a place where one may, in addition, perceive dress codes as a primary indicator of girls’ conformity to such a value system (Payne, 1988; Brunnsma & Rockquemore, 1998; Brunnsma, 2004, 2005);
- a place where one then uses positions of authority, adult agency and legislation (via dress rules) to force girls to conform to the value system that one promotes; and
- a place where girls who dress in styles interpreted as being intentionally designed to challenge the hegemonic social order are marginalized, demonized and harshly punished (Porteus *et al.*, 2001).

Given what I highlight above, my study advocates at an individual level for ways to be sought to challenge (and perhaps alter) negative perceptions that some school community members may hold of others (like the girls in my study) on account of how they choose to dress. One way of doing so is if all individuals in schools are encouraged to interrogate personal value systems and engage personally with how and why we construct particular people in a negative way, to get to the roots of their personal thinking. A move away from policing schoolgirls’ dress codes and instead towards redressing how and why individuals personally respond negatively to particular people on account of how they dress might serve to destabilize dominant “myths” (Human

Rights Watch, 2001; Rape Crisis Cape Town, 2007) in our societies associated with particular styles of dressing. It might furthermore encourage sexually violent and moralizing citizens (who are inclined to respond in a violent way to girls whose outward appearances are seen by them as being “sexually inviting”) to take accountability for their own actions, and to police their own value systems and sexual desires instead, rather than acting on them and using girls’ dress to attribute blame for their negative views and violence.

In light of the above, from my research findings I anticipate further that if individuals are to interrogate personal conceptions of “normality” in terms of dress, then in places like schools (for example) teachers might recognize that notions of “appropriate” dressing among young members of our democracy in general have evolved away from traditional notions of “appropriateness”. It may therefore be noted that young members within our democratic society, like the girls in my study, might not rationalize (or even interpret) the uniform rules of their school in the same ways as their teachers might – as discussed in-depth in an earlier section of the chapter. However, if school teachers, on the other hand, persist in entrenching the “social myth” that sexual risk may be decreased by altering “sexual” styles of dress into “modest” ones, then our society will never be eradicated of sexual offenders who feel that their actions may be vindicated by attributing blame for their actions on girls for dressing in sexually suggestive styles of clothing (Vetten, 1992; Lamb, 1999; Renzetti, Edelson & Bergen, 2001). In a way, this explains why sexism is so rampant in our society, despite there being laws against its expression (Mahoney, Williams & West, 2001).

5.4.2 Uncovering the iceberg below: Institutional level

At an institutional level I advocate for transformation towards democratic governance to be effected in contexts such as schools as well, and accordingly agitate for school leadership, school-based policies and enforcement of rules by those in positions of authority to be done in ways that reflect sensitivity and respect for *all* learners,

irrespective of their gender, sexual orientation, race, culture, social class and how they dress for school (Department of Education, 2006a). One may then question: how will such transformation be effected? Who will make these decisions about how transformation will be effected? How could multicultural and multiracial beliefs coexist in demographically integrated contexts without undermining the personal beliefs of some and compromising the beliefs of others? I pose these questions in recognition that, despite what overriding national policies prescribe, many school leaders hold fast to personal ideologies about their roles in schools, especially in terms of regulating how schoolchildren dress and behave (Bhana, *et al.*, 2006, 2008).

Hence I acknowledge that in transforming schools to spaces of democracy, the question then might be whether or not school leaders will be willing to interrogate their personal beliefs. Will they be objective enough to recreate school policies and rules in a way that reflects the diversity of the generation of girls (and boys) they serve? Are they willing to incorporate “new” cultures and “new” thinking in the ways in which schools are run; or will this be rejected on the basis of being seen as self-compromising and self-undermining? Are school leaders critical enough to play these alternative roles?

My study does not claim to have definitive answers to the above question for all schools, since in a national landscape as diverse as South Africa, all schools have their own unique character. However, even though my study was conducted in a unique, historically constituted schooling context with varying levels of privilege and under-privilege, and the findings therefore cannot be generalized to speak for all schools, they do however suggest to other schools some ways of how transformation could be effected.

It is, for example, possible for transformation to be effected in schools if the primary business of teaching and learning is geared towards promoting democracy and not, instead, driven towards promoting personal value systems among learners by policing dress codes whilst undermining learners’ personal beliefs and value systems in the process. To this end, it is further suggested that teachers should consider what particular

styles of dressing (such as that of the girls in my study) imply among teenagers growing up in their uniquely constituted historical context (i.e. democratic South Africa). The girls in my study, for example, belong to a generation of teenagers who grew up in a uniquely diversified social context that reflects the exact opposite of the racially segregated one that I grew up in (which had a clearly defined social order in which particular social identities were revered and others harshly stigmatized). My participants, instead, belong to a generation of teenagers who are growing up in a context where every individual - in spite of the vast spectrum of diversities among them - is expected by law to feel an individual sense of respect, value and belonging irrespective of their cultural, racial and social differences and how they express themselves. These rights have been constitutionally legislated. Thus, for girls like those in my study, it can thus legally be argued that dressing in the ways that they do is a form of artistic creativity. Therefore, irrespective of whether or not such dressing satisfies teachers' personal notions of "appropriateness", teachers have an obligation to preserve this constitutional right of learners.

In using schools as places to address sexual vulnerability and risk facing schoolgirls, I then assert that as an intervention the focus among school leaders should rather be on constructing schools as spaces which reflect diversity, inclusivity and equality, and not on regulating and policing dress codes. Instead of policing "sexually provocative" dress codes, marginalizing girls who do not conform to teacher-sanctioned dress standards and consequently treating such girls in unfair ways for how they choose to dress, the focus then would be sustained on preserving the constitutional rights of all school community members irrespective of racial and cultural differences existent amongst them. This approach may in the long run serve to make schools safe places of self-expression for *all* learners – even those who, like the girls in my study, dress and behave in ways that may be seen by some as both making them sexually vulnerable and calling forth negative inferences about their characters and sexual behaviour. It is my belief that if school leaders respond to the national goal for schools to be constructed as spaces where attitudes of diversity, inclusivity and equality are encouraged, it may also serve to break stereotypical assumptions of individuals and groups (not just about girls like those in my

study, but about people in general) who dress in ways that are negatively stereotyped. This may eventually filter into greater society and could lead to a time where women and girls are allowed to express themselves in styles of dressing, and not be stereotyped or feel vulnerable for doing so.

Whilst what I assert might seem too idealistic a goal, it is not if one takes into consideration the most recent Slutwalk wave across America, reported on in the local and international media (Savage, 2011). Critics of the movement are concerned that by dubbing it the Slutwalk activists are actually reinscribing the labels that early feminist movements fought against; however, a counter-argument among “Slutwalk activists” is that by reclaiming the already assigned label of “sluts” for women who dress in (what these activist themselves describe as) a sexually provocative manner, a displayed in the walk, then the stigma attached to such dressing and the associated description thereof may be rendered powerless. However, while the debates around this current controversy ensue, my study agitates for schools not to be seen as spaces where these issues do not matter - especially in light of what my study has shown of how even the manner in which school uniforms are worn may, in some contexts, be lumped with sexually provocative styles of dressing and the negative connotations associated with them, as the “slutwalk activists” highlight. If one is going to deal with this “blame the victim” mentality in society insofar as “sexually provocative” dressing is concerned, then I assert that the opinions of our young generation on these issues are also valuable in unpacking and interrogating what designs of school uniforms and what particular styles of wearing these may imply among their generation (as I have done through this study).

Furthermore, in transforming schools into democratic spaces, my study highlights that diversities which are preserved in schools are usually those which are more visible and spoken about (e.g. race, language, and sexual orientation). My study also reveals body shape and size as a diversity issue - which the girls in this study point out is not considered when drawing up dress rules. In view of this awareness I then further question, should democracy then be learnt independently of how a school organizes itself? What opportunities are there in schools for girls to influence dress rules? Drawing

from my study I suggest that girls like those in my study should not be taken at face-value on account of how they dress, but rather be unbiasedly seen as also having insight and capacity to participate in decision-making aspects of school governance that directly affect them (such as the crafting of school dress code documents and dress rules, for example).

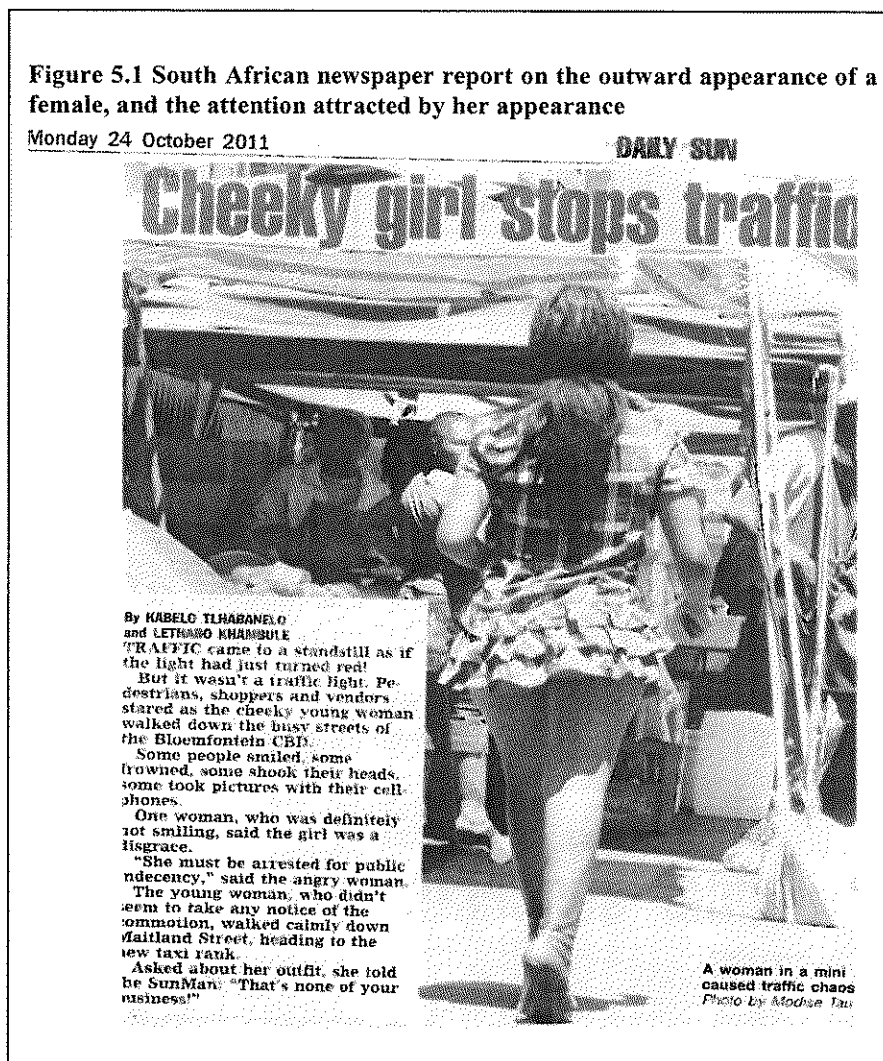
Officially, the South African Schools Act (1995) does call on schools to include learners in such decision-making, but to what levels do schools actually respond to this call? Which learners are chosen to represent the learner body on decision-making structures? Are the chosen learner representatives a mere physical representation on such structures? Further yet, are the chosen ones also those who are favoured by school managers and teachers because they epitomize the social standards and cultural values privileged in a particular school - and are thus seen as useful agents in educating other learners on “correct” and “appropriate” gendered behaviours and used as agents to marginalize “other” cultural knowledges among their peers which teachers do not support?

In light of these questions, my study draws attention to the importance of girls like those in this study *also* being given a platform in schools to interrogate, challenge (and perhaps alter) the thinking of older generations relating to how “working-class” teenage girls should present themselves. In this study, by choosing 10 girls in Valley High to offer insight into their dressing, I have demonstrated that girls who dress in a “sexually provocative” way can also offer invaluable points of consideration for conservative teachers (like me) who have sexually related and “transgressive” concerns about girls who dress in such a way. It is furthermore my view that there will be several gains in allowing such girls a platform also to share their views relating to the rules that govern their schooling environment. This will allow such girls an opportunity to understand why negative assumptions are made about them by some, purely on the basis of how they dress. It will also allow people who negatively stereotype particular girls a chance to locate the roots of their own thinking. Furthermore, it will draw attention to the ways in which the school and outside-school element collude and collide in the choices that girls make about what to wear and how to dress for school.

An awareness of these factors could lead to alternative ways being sought to help such girls to succeed at school, given the everyday challenges they face beyond the school boundaries as consequence of the economically disadvantaged social environments that they live in. Concerning the girls in this study, I may never have realized these factors without this study having been conducted.

5.4.3 Uncovering the iceberg below: Societal level

The article, shown below (Figure 5.1), appeared in a local newspaper during the final stages of the writing up of this study. The picture and responses equally illuminate the implications of my study at societal level.



As revealed in the article, the style of dressing of the woman shown in the picture provoked much attention from onlookers. If one considers this picture against the photographs I presented in Chapter One showing how the girls in this study dressed, one will see how more revealing dressing has become and how this is not confined to schooling contexts; women (like the one in the picture) are unafraid to go out dressed in this way in public. Despite this, the criticism following the onlookers' observations reflect a similar way of thinking that I had when I first looked at the girls in my study almost a decade prior. As recorded, one disapproving and angry onlooker similarly articulates a personal view (as I did of the girls in my study) that purely on account of how the woman in the picture looks, she "is a disgrace". Another onlooker suggests that she should be arrested for "public indecency". This woman – in a similar way as I saw the girls in my study - is constructed as a criminal, a rule-breaking citizen requiring harsh punishment and correction, purely on account of her physical appearance.

On the other hand, the response of the woman in the picture suggests that she is unperturbed by their comments and thus dismisses their curiosity as being "none of their business". Whilst her response leaves it open to several assumptions about why she chose to dress in the way in which she did, it also suggests that the attention that was provoked was more as a result of how her dressing was interpreted, even in the absence of any explanation of why she dressed in this way.

Drawing from my study, it is possible that the woman's dressing may not have been motivated by an intention to attract attention. If this was in fact the case, then against the explanations of the girls in my study, her dressing may be theorized in several ways. In light of her dismissive attitude and in the absence of her explanation, it illuminates how, from the onlookers' responses, constructions of femininity are fabricated in their own imaginations. Hence their comments are a reflection of their own reality and how they see such dressing, and not a reflection of how the woman who is being observed sees herself. It therefore becomes apparent from this that if society is to adequately reduce sexual vulnerability, then there has to be a move away from the "blame the victim" mentality, such as what the above article expresses. One cannot make assumptions about

why women dress in the ways that they do without engaging with them on this. I agree that factors such as those highlighted earlier in the study (patriarchal dominance, gender and power inequalities, poverty) that may emerge from such discussion should instead be the focus of interventions that aim to make these women (and all women) less vulnerable to sexual violence and other risk factors. In addition, from my study I assert further that in such interventions choices of clothing, how these are worn and how these look should remain a focus.

However, in conclusion of this study, I posit that rather than reinscribing stereotypes about women and girls who dress in particular ways and encouraging them to alter their dressing, instead we should encourage conversations about styles of dressing and the meanings that we personally attach to these (in a way that Weber and Mitchell (2004) have done, for example). Such interventions (conversations) should be used as a way of encouraging individuals to unpack and critically reflect on why they stereotype particular women and girls in particular ways. It is my desire that such efforts will initiate a wave in society where people will begin to move away from responding to such girls in moralistic and accusing ways (as I initially did to the girls in my study), and instead move towards dealing with the real issues that need to be addressed - in this case, not just patriarchy, poverty, gender, social and power inequalities but our own prejudices and assumptions that we make about particular people on account of what they wear and how they look. Then may we recognize that it is not choices of clothing or how these are worn that fuel sexual violence and exacerbate sexual risk in our society, but rather these incidences are fuelled by negative attitudes towards women who dress in particular ways simply because their dressing goes against our personal expectations and notions of how women should dress. It is then that we may also recognize that it is not just a social problem, but also a personal one - and thus see how it is our own moralizing assumptions, our own prejudices and intolerances (and not styles of dressing, such as those shown in Chapter One and in the above picture) that sustains this "blame the victim" mentality in society. Unless we address these, our society will never be free from the sexual vulnerabilities and risks facing women and girls.

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Statutes

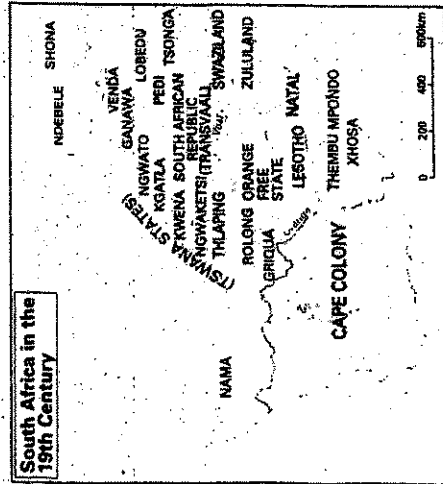
Group Areas Act, 41 (1950)

South African Schools Act, 84 (1996)

Constitution of South Africa, 108 (1996)

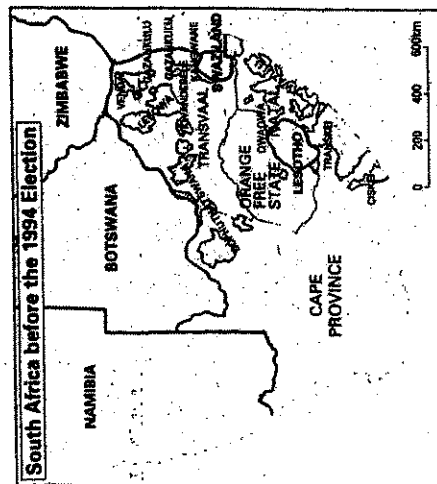
Children's Act, 38 (2005)

ANNEXURE A



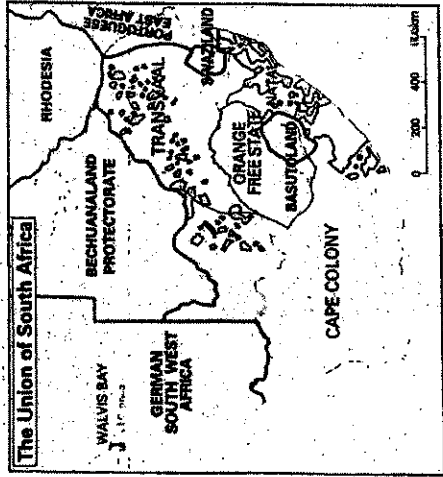
Key
 African State
 Boer Settlement
 British Territory

By the mid-nineteenth century, three centuries after white settlement, African kingdoms were still very powerful. After the discovery of diamonds and gold, British military intervention shifted the balance of power in favour of the white minority.



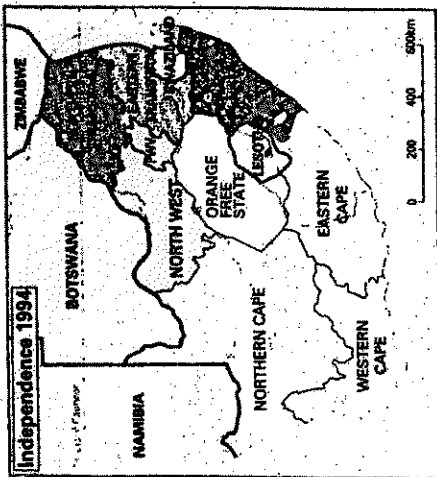
Key
 'Independent Homeland'
 Other 'Homeland'

The National Party came to power in 1948 and ruthlessly implemented its segregation policies. It divided the land set aside for Africans into ten 'homelands'. Four of these — Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei were given 'independence' not recognised beyond South Africa. Three



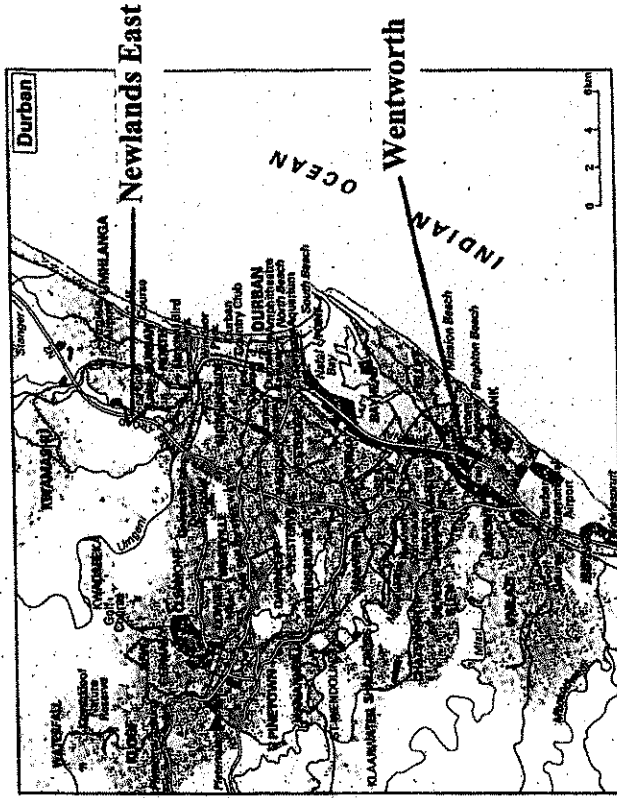
Key
 Union of South Africa
 Land Act Reserves

The Union of South Africa was formed in 1910. It consisted of four provinces — the Cape, Natal, Orange Free State and Transvaal. The Union was ruled by a white minority government. In 1913 this government passed the Native Land Act which set aside 7% of the land for 67% of the population.



The first non-racial, democratic elections were held in 1994 and South Africa is now ruled by a Government of National Unity. The 'homelands' have been dissolved. There are nine provinces in the new South Africa.

A Commission on Restitution of Land Rights has been set up. This commission will deal with claims from people



ANNEXURE B

Photographs of flats and a house in Wentworth

The following photographs were taken in 2010. However, the structure and the overall appearance of these reflect the original state of the flats and the house (described in the preface) that I (the researcher in this study) lived in as a child.



Photographs illustrating blocks of flats

A photograph of the house in Wentworth where I grew up



Source: Researcher's own

Consent form

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. You are made aware of the following:

- The study will involve a number of semi-structured interviews and group discussions over a period of two years. The interviews will be tape-recorded. Photographs of the participants may be taken as well as video footage.
- Participation in this study is voluntary and you are allowed to withdraw at any time without being forced to give an explanation.

KINDLY COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING BY TICKING THE APPROPRIATE BOX

My participation in this project has been explained to me by the researcher and I fully understand:

- the purpose and contents of this document. Yes [] No []
- my right to confidentiality with regard to the interviews. Yes [] No []
- my right to remain anonymous. (You may choose a pseudonym). Yes [] No []
- my right to refuse to answer any of the questions during interviews. Yes [] No []
- I will receive a copy of this consent form. Yes [] No []

I CONSENT TO BEING:

- Interviewed. Yes [] No []
- photographed (identity can be concealed). Yes [] No []
- videotaped. Yes [] No []
- directly quoted in the study. Yes [] No []

Name of participant: _____

I choose to use the following pseudonym: _____

Signature of participant: _____

I HEREBY PERMIT MY CHILD TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY:

Name of legal guardian: _____

Relationship to participant: _____ Date: _____

Signature of legal guardian: _____ Date: _____

Signature of researcher: _____ Date: _____

ANNEXURE D



RESEARCH OFFICE (GOVAN MBEKI CENTRE)
WESTVILLE CAMPUS
TELEPHONE NO.: 031 – 2603587
EMAIL : ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

6 October 2010

MS. C GAILLARD-THURSTON (991234180)
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT
EDGEWOOD CAMPUS

Dear Ms. Gaillard-Thurston

PROTOCOL REFERENCE NUMBER: HSS/0083/10D
PROJECT TITLE: "Raw Girls? A gender study in an urban co-educational high school in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal"

EXPEDITED APPROVAL

This letter serves to notify you that your application in connection with the above has been granted full approval through an expedited review process.

Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach/Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. Please quote the above reference number for all queries relating to this study.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.

Yours faithfully


.....
PROFESSOR STEVEN COLLINGS (CHAIR)
SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

cc. Supervisor - Dr. Nyna Amin
cc. Mr. N Memela

SECONDARY SCHOOL

SCHOOL UNIFORMS

SUMMER: (January, February, March, April, May, September, October, November, December)

BOYS:

School grey pants (not Dikkies, Collies, Yanks etc.)
Dress White Shirt (short or long sleeve)
Black school shoes

Black/White/ Grey socks
School tie

School Jersey/Tracksuit jacket (optional)/ anorak if it is raining
NO TRACKSUIT PANTS

NB.: If t-shirt is worn under the shirt, it must be plain white in colour and sleeves shorter than shirt (no fancy prints)

GIRLS:

Knee-length school shirt
White blouse (short or long sleeves)
Tie worn with a dress shirt (optional)

White ankle length socks
School Jersey/Tracksuit jacket (optional)

NO TRACKSUIT PANTS
NB.: If t-shirt is worn under the blouse, it must be plain white in colour and sleeves shorter than shirt (no fancy prints)

WINTER: (June/July/August)**BOYS:**

School tracksuit or grey pants (not Dikkies, Collies, Yanks, etc.) and a school jersey
White Dress Shirt
Tie

School Black Shoes
Black/White/ Grey socks

GIRLS:

Tracksuit or knee-length school skirt and a school jersey
White blouse
Black school shoes
White ankle length socks/black stockings

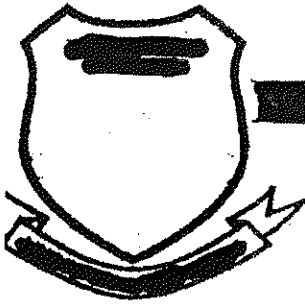
NB. RULE FOR T-SHIRT APPLIES IN WINTER AS WELL

SCHOOL

SCHOOL RULES FOR LEARNERS

1. Learners must be at school by 07h55.
2. All learners must attend assembly. We stand in our lines quietly.
3. Learners must be dressed in full uniform at all times during the school day.
4. Learners must be neat, clean and tidy at all times.
5. No learner is allowed on verandahs and on stairwells during breaks.
6. No learner is to wander around the school during lesson time.
7. No littering outside and inside the classrooms.
8. Do not take from someone what does not belong to you.
9. The toilets are to be kept clean.
10. No writing on walls and desks.
11. We treat all with absolute respect and dignity.
12. We speak to our fellow learners with respect.
13. When a prefect gives you an instruction, obey it.
14. Learners are not to chew gum on the school premises.
15. All notebooks are to be neatly covered with paper and plastic. Learners must move quickly and quietly during changeovers.
16. Always keep to the left.
17. Homework, when given, must be done to the best of the learner's ability.
18.
 - a) Boys are not allowed to wear jewellery (watch only).
 - b) Girls may only wear one pair of earrings (studs only).
- Hair braides tied up neatly and out of face.
- Nails must be short. No nail varnish.
- Knee-length skirts to be worn.
19. Learners are not allowed to bring tippex to school.
20. Learners may not bring cellular telephones to school. The school will not be held responsible if these or any other valuable items are lost.
21. If valuable items and/or money is brought to school, this should be handed to the school secretary for safe-keeping.
22. No smoking / carrying of cigarettes / carrying or consumption of alcohol is allowed.
23. Fancy hairstyles and/or tinted hair is not allowed.





[REDACTED]

COMMITTED TO EXCELLENCE

[REDACTED]

TEL: [REDACTED]

FAX: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] @ [REDACTED].com

01 February

Dear Parents/Guardian

A special 'welcome back' to all our learners and parents. I trust that we have had a good holiday, and that our learners are ready for the challenges which will face them this year. We call on the entire family of [REDACTED] school (learners, educators, parents, guardians) to give of their best again this year to ensure that we continue to experience success and good results.

We extend a warm welcome to the following newly appointed educators to our school:
 [REDACTED] (permanent appointments) [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] (SGB appointed)

1. An appeal is made to parents/guardians to ensure that they are fully aware of our school rules and that learners abide by these. This year we are firm in our resolve to stamp out disciplinary problems so that our learners may be well prepared for life after matric.
 (copy of school rules attached)
2. Learners must be dressed in full and proper school uniform every day. Parents should ensure that learners do not come with fancy hairstyles/tinted hair etc. Please note the attached page which outlines the dress code for learners in order to maintain our high standards and our good reputation. Learners wearing Dickies, Collies or Yanks trousers are given until July to purchase a grey flannel school trousers.